Zeus the Mighty was not lost. He’d been wandering in a warren of metal passages for the past hour. He was deep underground, a long way from his palace on Mount Olympus, where he ruled over the other Greek gods. He wasn’t even sure if he was still in Greece. But Zeus was definitely, absolutely, not lost.

“Are we lost?” asked Demeter, Zeus’s most frequent Olympian companion. “This maze is just so … so …”

“Mazelike?” Zeus finished her thought. “And no, we’re not lost—I don’t get lost.” He rubbed his chin as he inspected yet another fork in the tunnel. The two passages ahead appeared no different than every tunnel behind them: halls with metal walls lit by a distant orange glow.
“Sure, why would you get lost?” replied Demeter. The goddess of harvests nibbled nervously from the lettuce sash she wore across her shoulder. “I mean, mazes are, like, a hamster thing.”

“This isn’t a hamster thing, pal,” Zeus said. “I don’t get lost because I’m Zeus, the king of the gods. Always knowing where to go comes with the job.”

“True.” Demeter nodded. “You always know where to go. Most of the time … Sometimes…” She looked at the fork in the tunnel. “So … where do we go?”

Zeus sniffed at one of the tunnels, then shrugged. “This-a-way.” He picked a direction and wandered onward, his gilded laurel-wreath crown and the golden thunderbolt emblem on his shoulder gleaming faintly in the dim orange light.

Demeter watched him fade into the gloom. An odd shiver ran up her back, and she had the sudden urge to check behind her. “Someone there?” she asked, glancing over her shoulder. But she was alone. Shuddering, Demeter quickly caught up with Zeus on her powerful grasshopper legs.

The two Olympians had come across the entrance to this underground maze earlier that night while exploring Crete, an area of land surrounded on three sides by the Aegean Sea. Here they had nearly stumbled into a rectangular pit, more than big enough to fit the hamster and his companion. Zeus had paid little mind to this pit during past excursions to Crete; it had always been blocked by a metal grate. Tonight, the grate was gone—just one of the many strange changes happening in Greece ever since Artie’s friend Callie had arrived to meddle with the landscape.

Zeus had wondered if this pit led to a shortcut across Greece, or to a new underworld realm, or maybe to the secret lair of Phineus, the mysterious soothsayer who had helped Zeus on a previous adventure. If nothing else, Zeus thought, going underground might give them an escape from the heat wave that gripped Greece.

So they had entered. But this maze offered no relief from the blistering temperatures. In fact, the deeper they delved, the hotter it got. The normally spiky fur on Zeus’s head flopped over his crown. Soon he was overheating beneath the white fabric of his royal chiton, even though, like all Olympian attire, it felt like it was barely there.
“You see that big bull … thing standing there, too, don’t you, Zeus?” Demeter asked flatly. “Or is this heat playing tricks on my eyes?”

Zeus’s head was swimming. He shook it and tried to focus on the monster’s eyes, its nostrils, that chain. Then he saw its mouth, locked in a grimace of square teeth shut tight.

“I see it,” Zeus whispered. “Do you see what I see poking from its teeth?”

“That’s not …” Demeter answered slowly. “That’s not fur, is it?”

“I think we should go,” Zeus said. He turned and searched for the tunnel they had come from but saw dozens of openings all around the cavern. “Blast it, which one’s the way out?” Zeus dared not look back at the horned beast in the center of the cavern. He could practically feel the monster bearing down on them. He couldn’t think clearly. Both Zeus and Demeter felt like they were moments away from melting.

Just as he was about to collapse, a pair of what felt like furry posts tapped Zeus on his shoulder.

“I swear we’ve walked under every part of Greece,” Demeter muttered, her antennae sagging. “It’s a good thing we’re not lost or I’d be worried—”

“What in blazes is that?” Zeus interrupted as they rounded a corner. The two had reached the entrance to a much larger cavern. Heat crashed over them like a tsunami. The air shimmered with it. Out of the gloom loomed a terrifying sight: a towering monstrous beast with ash-covered horns. It fixed them with beady eyes set above fiery orange nostrils linked by a silver chain.
Zeus saw that the web thread stretched into one of the tunnels along the cavern's edge—and suddenly recognized it as the tunnel from which they had entered. “Wait, how’d you get that thread behind us?” Zeus looked from the tunnel to the spider and back again. “Have you been following us?”

“I knew I sensed someone behind us!” Demeter said. “What, like some sort of spider sense?” Zeus asked weakly. He was a bit wobbly on his feet.

Demeter ignored his comment and eyed the spider. “I don’t know if I trust her. I mean, grasshoppers and spiders don’t typically get along.”

The spider returned her gaze coldly.

“Anyway,” Zeus pressed on, “I’d rather not do a job at all than do it badly, you know?”

“Then you need to skitter out of this place,” the spider said.

“Skitter where?” Zeus said. “We’re lost.”

“You said you don’t get lost!” Demeter yelled.

“Take this.” The spider raised a fuzzy leg holding the end of a long strand of web. “Follow it. It will lead you from the beast, away from the heat, to where you began tonight’s journey.”

He whirled to see a brown spider as tall as he was standing behind them, its eight legs covered with prickly hairs. The spider fixed them both with two large dark eyes set above four smaller ones. A tiara encrusted with red stones sat atop the spider’s head.

“Now I’m definitely seeing stuff,” Demeter muttered.

The spider stared at Zeus and said in a raspy voice, “Greetings, two-eyes. Are you here to defeat the heat?”

Zeus blinked. “Well, uh, of course I could do that,” he stammered, “but, honestly, I’m just feeling kind of bleh right now. You ever have one of those days?”

The spider stared at Zeus with her dark eyes.

“Anyway,” Zeus pressed on, “I’d rather not do a job at all than do it badly, you know?”

“Then you need to skitter out of this place,” the spider said.

“Skitter where?” Zeus said. “We’re lost.”

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“Take this.” The spider raised a fuzzy leg holding the end of a long strand of web. “Follow it. It will lead you from the beast, away from the heat, to where you began tonight’s journey.”
Thena, goddess of wisdom, sat tall at the helm of the Argo, her gray mane ruffling in the hot breeze as she held a steady course across the Aegean Sea’s southern coastline. At the bow sat Poseidon, lord of the sea, floating in his dive helmet. Ares, the god of war, trotted on foot behind the Argo.

“Thanks, um … ” Zeus said, prompting for her name. “Ariadne,” the spider replied.

“Air-ee-add-nee,” Zeus repeated, careful to get the name just right. “I’m Zeus, but I’m sure you already knew that. I’m a pretty big deal.”

“I know who you are.” Ariadne’s dark eyes glittered more brightly than the rubies in her tiara.

The webbing tugged Zeus’s paw as Demeter hopped ahead. “Okay, then. I’ll be back to beat this heat.”

Ariadne stared but said nothing.

“I just need to rest up,” Zeus continued awkwardly, “get back on top of my game. Maybe bring a few friends.” The thread tugged again. “Okay, gotta go.” Zeus turned and followed Demeter out of the cavern as quickly as his unsteady legs could carry him, eager to escape the horned monster that had nearly melted them on the spot.