

PROMPT #1: Write about a god desperately trying to get their chosen hero to follow the path they set out for them.

## To End War

by **L. Nathaniel Adams**

“The Lord of Peace arranged our meeting” Theo said to the corpse as he pulled his sword from its chest. He turned to another opponent as the previous body fell to the ground. “No, no, no! You weren’t supposed to kill him!” The god of Peace screamed at Theo. It was in vain. Theo couldn’t hear him. The gods could not directly communicate with their subjects. He turned at the sound of footsteps behind him to see the god of War walking up to watch the battle, “Sometimes, I think he is your chosen hero, not mine,” Peace lamented.

“He’s certainly doing my work. Can you blame him though? Ever since that mix up with the holy texts at the Council of Lenouge everyone thinks we’re the same god.”

“I’ve sent him clear signs conveying my intent, and he twists them for his own purposes.” Peace winced as Theo cleaved through another man. The symbol of a sword plunging through an “x” was emblazoned on Theo’s shield, and on every shield of his followers. Peace pointed the shields out to War, “That symbol, for example, clearly means, ‘No sword. Do not go to war. Do not commit violence. Do not wield a weapon.’ Do you know what he thought it meant? ‘Conquer in my name.’ I don’t even know how he got that one so wrong.”

“The head of your religion declared that this war was your will. It is your way ‘to bring about world peace through the eradication of those who sought to violate the peace.’” War said, shrugging with an air of superiority.

“Our religion,” Peace corrected, “They don’t know we’re separate gods. That guy is your hero, not mine. Theo is supposed to be the head of my religion, but he’s off doing your work.” One of Theo’s men died. Peace waved his hand as Theo bent to inspect his man. The fallen soldier’s sword bent into the shape of a plowshare, “Maybe that’ll be clear enough.”

Theo examined the sword-plowshare. He raised it above his head and shouted to his men “Victory has been guaranteed! The Lord of Peace has declared that this will be rich and fertile farmland for us. Onward to victory!” Theo charged at his enemy’s front line. Peace slapped his open palm against his face and pulled down on his cheeks as he lowered his hand. War laughed and slapped Peace on the back.

Peace walked away from the battle. All of his plans were unraveling in front of him. Theo was clearly the right choice. He had the charisma to raise an army. He could apply that charisma to peace. He would’ve been an amazing ambassador and spread peace throughout the world if only the holy texts hadn’t been corrupted. If only Peace hadn’t been combined with War to develop this asinine idea of a just war. War watched on and cheered as Theo slaughtered another human being.

Peace felt he should have followed War’s example. War leaned into their accidental combination. He took advantage of it leading to further corruption and misunderstanding of their holy texts. Peace had rebelled against the combination. Resisted it. Look where he was now, inspiring the greatest slaughter of humans yet known.

There was a way around the rules. Preeminent had placed strict guidelines on all the gods after they had caused so much chaos that he had to flood the planet and start over. They could only choose one hero to be the head of their religion, they could only communicate with that hero, they could only communicate through scripture and signs, no direct communication. Lastly, they could, at any time, manifest themselves as human in order to interact with the world more directly. They could only manifest once, and they could not reclaim their godhood. That was Peace’s way to talk some sense into Theo. But that would leave War without a check. If Theo misunderstood again. If Peace failed on earth, War would run rampant.

Peace sighed and turned back to watch Theo and War. War was giddy. The fields were red with the blood of Theo’s enemies. A man on his knees in front of Theo was waving a white flag. He swore fealty to Theo and Peace and turned on his former friends. There was another option. An old human maxim. “If you can’t beat them, join them.”

Peace glanced at War, and then at War’s sword belt. Peace had a small knife on him. He used it to cut fruit. It would end War though. Could he stab another god in the back right now? Become violent to end violence? Does the end justify the means? Peace drew his knife and approached War. He raised the knife then quickly sheathed it.

If he killed War, he would lose himself. He’d be like Theo. He’d give in to the very thing he was trying to prevent. He tapped War on the shoulder. War turned. Peace held out his hand.

“It’s been nice working with you, Brother, but I must stop this. Goodbye.” Peace and War shook hands. Peace vanished before War could protest.

The world was loud. Screams and shouts filled Peace's ears. Luckily, Preeminent let them manifest as adults. He had appeared alone on the battlefield. He couldn't manifest in front of people. The sudden appearance of a fully grown human being in front of someone apparently caused damage to their psyche. Now he just had to find Theo. It shouldn't be too hard he was leading the charge.

Peace looked around and immediately saw Theo charging. At him. Peace looked behind him to see the enemy army. He'd popped up between the clashing armies, and far too close to Theo's opponents. Peace looked through his pockets. Surely he had some white cloth on him. No. All he had on him was the small knife. He raised his hands in an act of surrender. Theo ran up to Peace. The rest of the army ran past and engaged in battle with their foes.

"I surrender. I need to talk to you," Peace said to his Hero "I am the god of Peace, and you have been misunderstanding my signs and words. I did not want any of this!" Theo's sword passed through Peace. Peace coughed up blood and slumped on to Theo.

"To claim to be divine, when you are not, is blasphemy and heresy. You shall not be permitted to live." Theo removed his sword from his god's body and rejoined his army leaving Peace to die alone.