

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

Hard Falling

by **Chris Hong**

I breathed in the earthy smell of grass and the ashes from the fire.

Day in and Day out, I kept firing the Rainbow over and over to see the same game again. A roulette wheel that will determine my own destiny. In order to escape from what was supposed to be heaven.

6 months ago

I remembered breathing the summer air on that day. I heard the sharp clack on the marble when I walked down the hall with boots.

I remembered seeing the flower beds I walked alongside in the courtyard.

I remembered hearing that big bang.

“What the he—?” I ran over to the sound of the racket. I looked inside the source of the sound. There was what looked like a circular machine. It smelled of dirt and fiery smoke. Next to it was a moving mass, at least someone’s alive in this mess.

“Hey, are you ok?” I took one knee and tried to examine the person. They were covered in what looked like ash and dirt. It was hard to make out their face because of the dirt. The pile of dirt moved a little and exclaimed, “Yeah, wasn’t that awesome?” She was a girl. I paused. What kind of question was that? I was so surprised at the answer I couldn’t help but smirk and laugh.

“Wha- what kind of freaking question is that? You blew yourself up!”

“No, I swung for the fences and completely missed, that’s what happened.” The girl wiped her face off, her eyes were orange.

I retorted back to her, “Swung for the fences is an understatement, you were aiming for the moon.”

I stood up and offered my hand to bring her up, she took my hand. They were rough yet warm. I introduced myself to the dirt princess.

“My name is Mark, what’s yours?”

“Ida is the name.” She held out her hand to shake.

I shook it back. “Well Miss Ida, the pleasure is all mine.”

She looked quite surprised, “Quite the gentleman, aren’t you?”

“My dad hammered that into me.” I replied back. “You should know him, he’s the God whose son is in that upcoming fight against another demigod.”

The girl had a wide-eyed expression, “Wow, that’s crazy.”

An awkward silence ensued after.

I looked at her orange eyes for a bit. She looked like she didn’t get it.

“Sorry... I shouldn’t have mentioned it,” I told her sheepishly.

She replied back, “Oh no, that’s really cool.” She looked a little guilty.

“Hey... uh.. sorry, I just don’t really pay attention to that kind of stuff, it’s just that I am busy here.” She pointed at the cinder encrusted circular machine.

I looked at the machine and back at her. I was taken aback. What could possibly be more important than a fight between two gods?

“So wait, you come out here even though there are sacrifices being involved? There are people dying, so that Gods like my Dad can go to the moon.” I couldn’t believe her. “I mean you don’t have to be a sacrifice to be there, but I mean you need to at least be there and be there for the people. How could this possibly be more important?”

Those orange eyes stared back at me with a sharp gaze.

She wiped her face off, and I saw her mouth move.

“Let me show you. First, help me.”

She began dusting off her clothes and began gathering dirt. She gestured towards me.

“Begin to clean off the Rainbow. We are going to fire a pigment into a flower.”

She gathered the dirt within a bin, and I just stood there. She looked back at me.

“Come on, it’ll be worth it. The brush is over on the side.”

Ida and I started to clean the whole setup. I began to see the translucent metal that was underneath that dirt, and Ida finally explained to me what it is.

“It is a thermal accelerator. I put a bed of dirt inside the circular pipe and basically blow a big explosion inside. However, I have one more thing other than dirt.” Ida threw a flower seed after applying the dirt bed inside. “This is a simple daisy seed. Once I toss that big boy in there and fire it up, I hope that energy from the explosion will cause a pigment from the dirt to fly.” She had a switch ready in her hand, and she looked at me with those orange eyes once more.

“I am a girl on fire.” She pressed on the switch.

The bright light blinded me at first. I felt the heat waves bouncing on my face as I heard the wind screaming. Then, I saw the spectrum.

Through that translucent metal, a wave of colors started to flow in the circular tube. It looked like every color in the world was inside that little tube. I still felt the heat radiating from that machine, and the blast wave pushed me back a few inches. But, I just kept on looking at those waves. I think I saw blue, green, red, orange... I couldn’t describe it. I saw colors I had never seen before yet I felt a sense of familiarity. It felt like home. Then, the colors started to fade away, and all that was left was the room covered in darkness. Both Ida and I stood in the silence.

“Well, wasn’t that fucking fun?” Ida said as she gets back up once more and dusted her clothes off. “Right shall we se—”

“OH FUCKING YESSSSSS!!!” I jumped up and down. “Are you serious? Is this an actual thing?”

Ida looked joyful. She laughed and smiled. It’s a beautiful smile.

Suddenly, a sense of dread came over me. My Dad needed me to be at practice today.

“Ida, I have to go. I have to —”

“Go. All I wanted to see was the same look I had when I first fired this up.”

“Thanks alot, let me come back here.” “Sure thing... Come back and see what’s more.”

I looked back into her eyes and said my goodbye.

“You’re late.” My Dad looked at me with contempt. “You were supposed to be at boxing practice an hour ago.”

“Sorry...” I quietly replied.

Both him and I got silent with one another.

“We have a lot of work to do. We do not want to be the ones missing that flight to the moon,” grumbled Dad. “Start hitting the heavy bag.”

I started swinging onto the leather, and Dad stood next to me eyeing me carefully. “Good work, son. Think about what’s waiting for you there on the moon. All the riches and food you can think about. The enlightenment that you attain. Once you become a God of something, people will worship you.” He looked back at me while I was hitting the heavy bag. “Move on to the speed bag.”

I started to get into a rhythm with the little bag.

Dad started to talk to me more.

“Mark... I think you will enjoy it there. My former status as the God of Rain showed me an entire landscape of roses to live on. Flowers to walk alongside while you walk.” Dad looked at me with a sad regret.

“I’m sorry, I couldn’t get us there back... But with you, this opportunity will get us back there in no shot.” Dad gave me water as I took a break from the speed bag.

“Just remember, Mark. Don’t let them hit you.” Dad told me, but he didn’t need to tell me that. I already knew.

I got punched by another demigod once, and I saw all of the faces of the sacrifices when they used their powers against me. I had that same power too. After knowing what those people looked like before they died, I couldn’t use that power knowing what would happen. This time, I had to use what I hate to use in order to win that fight against the other guy like me.

“Listen, Mark. I bought some sausages at home, so let’s enjoy that and do something.” Dad was thrilled to eat with me. I felt tired but not hungry. I had to think about that time once more.

“I have to go somewhere, Dad. Can we do that next time?”

“...Ok. Stay safe.”

It was about sunset when I ended practice with my Dad, so I decided to just take a walk around the flower beds near me. Daisies and Roses. It’s pretty simple, but it’s the easiest thing to take my mind off things for a while.

I thought about what Dad said about what was on the moon. I like the idea of living in possibly the perfect place ever. The Garden of Eden where I get to see everything that has ever happened. Eating and drinking the best and feeling the best. Getting to see my Dad happy is also the best too.

Will it be worth killing 5 people in one punch?

Though not everybody can just go to the moon without paying a price. I just wished it just wasn't me paying for it.

I wanted to talk to Dad about this, but he seems so hellbent on that dream of his.

Another boom.

I look in the direction of the boom. It was in the direction of Ida's.

I just bolted back there once more and managed to get there in record time. As I catch my breath, Ida is once again sitting down but is quite clean now. She has orange hair to match with her eyes. It looks pretty.

And those eyes are busy with thought in them as Ida sits there pondering on as she looks at the Rainbow and turns to see me. She had a glee look on her face.

"Hey Mark."

"Hey Ida. Rough day?"

"On the contrary, look at this magical piece that you created."

Ida held up a strange looking flower.

"Lycoris radiata, red spider lily." Ida said as she twirls it in her fingers.

A flower I have never seen before. I was surprised. I thought that there were only daisies and roses.

"Why do you do this?" I asked Ida.

Ida was silent for a second. She finally responded back.

"My father once told me a fairy tale about a girl with the same name as me. This little girl Ida just heard a rumor that the flowers wither due to them dancing the night away at this oriental ball in a palace somewhere." Ida retold the story.

"So did the girl ever find out whether that ball exists?" I asked Ida.

Ida shrugged her shoulders. "I don't remember how it ended, but I guess that's for me to find out in my own way. That is why I think I am here." Ida looked deeply into my eyes. "Everybody's color blue is different not in the way it looks but what it means to them. What's blue to you isn't blue to me. It could be a circle, a square... Tell me what is the color blue?" Ida asked.

I stood confused. "What the hell do you mean?"

Ida looked smug. “Exactly.”

Both of us spilled our guts out laughing.

I felt good. I forgot about my worries as the feelings wiped them away.

Hanging around here with her must be fun.

Seeing all the colors from the Rainbow was awesome too.

I saw the spider lily in her hands, and it gave me goosebumps like no other.

I felt excited, and I was ready to do something about this.

“Ida, I want to make a new flower.”

It was Ida’s turn to look taken aback.

“Mark... Do.. D-do you know what you are asking for,” stammered Ida. She just couldn’t believe what she just heard.

“Finding a new flower is like an infinite roulette wheel. That wheel will just keep getting bigger and bigger no matter how small you want it to be. Also, you might not even know whether it is the same flower as another, and you just want to find one more undiscovered one?”

Ida looked at me waiting for my response.

I replied back, “I just found out that there were more flowers than daisies and roses.”

Ida looked flabbergasted, but she had that sharp gaze once again.

“Let’s do it.”

Now

I smelled the earthy smell of grass and the ashes from the fire.

I shot the explosion into the Rainbow once more and saw the color wave surf over. I have done this for more than 4 weeks. Ida and I usually take turns putting in the dirtbeds inside. I got to learn more about how the Rainbow works through Ida. From how heat travels through the pipe to just basic maintenance on it. Although exciting, it was very tiring. Both of us took breaks often, and that’s where we got to talk a lot. I found out that she found this passion after finding the machine in the room. She never owned this mysterious machine, but whatever it was the owner of it took great care of it. The machine was in great condition from what she said, and it came with a manual too from the mysterious owner detailing nice reports

behind how it works. She told me about her father and mother being painters who make art for a living. She tells me how often they would leave, but she understands because she gets how they feel with art from the Rainbow.

There was one time I remembered with Ida. Both Ida and I finished dinner together and wash the dishes. She told me.

“Hey Mark, thanks for hanging around me.” She had a smile while doing the dishes. “It feels good knowing I have someone who can share what fire I have.”

It was my time to respond. “Thank you for showing me what my color blue looks like.” Sweet moment, but there was no time to waste.

I also had to think about the fight too. I still hadn’t told Dad exactly what I had planned out, so I just kept going to practice no matter how tired I got. However, my Dad saw how tired I was and accepted the fact that showing up to practice will suffice, but he does worry for me.

“Mark, you can’t be in this kind of condition once fight day is here. Come on, you need to recover asap now.” My Dad coached me over and over again.

I understood Dad, but I just kept going and going behind his back because I actually knew what Dad was. I went back to Ida’s.

After creating what was essentially 30 roses, both of us felt gassed out. For us, this was only an endurance game for us. A waiting game. We just hoped that the dice would roll out nicely for us.

Both of us felt like one more for the night. So we packed the dirtbed together and fired one more explosion. The usual same color spectrum appeared before me, but I got used to the flash. I was hungry for more.

The colors started to fade away, and the room was dark once more.

Even though both of us have seen the same thing over and over, it never got old to us.

We opened the machine up.

Right in front of us, a small flower came up. It was an unusual one.

It had a black stem but the four large arrow-like petals were yellow. However, there was a noticeable large green streak that ran across the stem.

It was a weak one, it looked like it could wither away at any moment.

Ida and I both looked at each other. We finally made it to the finish line. Both of us crossed the line holding hands together.

After what seemed like 3 hours of us admiring what we just made, I had an idea in my head.

Firstly, I had to invite Ida to a celebration dinner together in a week or so.

A week later

“Ida, can we celebrate what we made?” I asked her while harvesting the new batch of the black stemmed flowers we had.

Ida looked up from reading the manual and gave a warming smile to Mark.

“For sure, where are we going?”

I took her near a flower bed park with an overlook. We had a dinner there together, and we both pretty much walked around the park. We both walked by each other silent and busy looking at what the park had to offer. I saw spider lilies, roses, daisies, acacias, and abutilon.

“Hey, remember the 900th time we made this, Mark?” Ida asked me as she held up a agapanthus.

“No, I remembered when I swallowed the ash from the explosion and died.” I start to hold up my hands to my neck and start to play pretend.

“Well I didn’t know I had a ghost by my side this whole time.” Ida said. “Sure is pretty planned out for this type of dinner. What do you have planned?”

I had a huge surprise that I don’t know if it will work.

I told her, “Let me show you, it’s going to be worth it.”

I took her around the corner, and I couldn’t even believe my eyes.

A gust of wind was predicted to hit this park which will bring a breeze of fresh smell of flowers throughout the park. I decided to plant the flower both Ida and I discovered. So I made a whole garden of them within the park.

Those same black-stemmed flowers had its petals turning like a pinwheel when that gust of wind hit them. All of them turning and turning in the wind.

“Ida. Your oriental ball is here.”

When I saw her face, I knew right there that my own desires have turned into something much bigger.

A crying Ida, not out of sadness, but out of so much joy that she had to jump up and down like the first day that I met her.

She was right, it is a joy to see such a person in such joy.

However, I felt all of a sudden light. As I felt the gust of wind, the smell of the black-stemmed flower, and them spinning. I felt 50 pounds lighter all of a sudden. I finally had my way out. I have something to turn back to. I never felt so free in my life where I was finally giving back something instead of taking it. I found my color blue.

A day later

The press conference of the fight was going on merrily.

All the spectators and sacrifices all gathered around the press conference as the God Adolphe walks in with his son Gustave. Both are also fighting for what my father wants as well. I felt sick to my stomach. I have been training with my Dad, but I could not bring myself to tell him what I have been working on. Though I felt scared for what I am about to do, I keep seeing the day I saw Ida crying and the flowers spin like a pinwheel. I couldn't forget about them. This was worth fighting for.

Someone in the crowd yelled, "How do you feel fighting Gustave, Mark?!"

I looked at my Dad, he had a proud look on his face. I stood up and talked.

A moment later

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO DENY THE FIGHT!???"

The crowd all of a sudden swarmed me. Gustave and Adolphe looked shocked at me.

My Dad. I can't even describe it. I was fucked.

We were all in the same room that was meant as a private room for me.

The spectators, the sacrifices, everybody was in that room.

"Everybody out."

A voice loud enough for everyone to hear. A voice calm enough to make everyone silent. My Dad entered the room. Everybody did as he said.

It was just me and him now. The commotion is still outside the room.

“You mind telling me what that was?” My Dad still had the same smile as he did from the press conference but it looks like a bomb waiting to go off.

“I have something to tell you, Dad.”

“Oh. What? Did you manage to find whether the amount of sacrifices I gathered up for this event will be enough for followers? Did you find powers or enlightenment? OH, let me guess. I am guessing you won the lottery, didn’t you?”

“I found something better than all of this, Dad. Dad, I found a new flower. A new fucking thing. I brought something so beautiful to th—”

“You’re giving up heaven for a bunch of plants?”

I looked him straight in the eye. I saw myself in those eyes. They were the same when I fired up the Rainbow, I was just like my Dad.

“Yes, I am.”

My Dad finally broke. He didn’t smile anymore. It was now something I have never seen him as: a depression wore on his face like a mask.

“Mark... I gave you your feet, your eyes, your arms, hands. That brilliant mind that you have is from me. The gift of all five senses have been given to you and only to you. You get to enjoy so many things and have so many opportunities primarily because I have provided you with everything you ever need.” Dad had to sit down.

“You need food. Right? You need to stay healthy. I provide that.” Dad looked into me with his eyes. They were brown.

It was my chance to finally come clean with him.

“Dad, I felt cursed with this power.” I told him as I looked at my hands.

“After that guy punched me that day, I couldn’t wipe the images of all of those sacrifices. One was a man who was wearing glasses with a smile, the other was a girl younger than I am.”

I looked at him directly with the same sharp gaze Ida had.

“I finally feel the same way you do about being a God except I like flowers instead. I want to know more about what this world has to offer first before I go into heaven.”

Dad went on to say, “Everything that I do is for you. Especially after your mother.”

What did he just say? Did he say something about my mother?

“Mark, I know that having Mom not around has been hard for you, I know. It’s been hard for m—”

“What do you mean by that, Dad? What about Mom?” I interrupted him.

Dad paused and continued.

“It’s been hard for me to continue on after your mother has left us. We haven’t been the same since.”

“Weren’t you the one who led her to go away?”

My Dad stared blankly at me after I asked him that.

“Mark...It was hard for me. I loved your mother as much as you do, you know that.” “She didn’t ask for me to be born, but you and your God complex just had to go ahead and have her in me. She didn’t ask for this.” I felt cold.

My Dad contorted his face a little.

“Listen, I know she didn’t ask for you to be born, but it was what I had to do. I am a God, Mark. This is my duty. This is what I am. This is my life.” He looked a little angrier. “I know, I know. For someone like Mom, she couldn’t understand, but I had to have a child in order to actually survive.”

“You knew nothing about her.”

“SHE WAS EVERYTHING TO ME, MARK!” Dad shouted at me. “I gave up my own immortality in order to be in the same essence as her. She was human, I was not.” I began to feel my head boil.

“Oh yeah, I do remember that, but it looks like your Godly patience isn’t that long.

Seems like you weren’t receptive to what Mom wanted from you.”

“Mark, you know I loved her dearly. However, you have to think about me, please.”

“I do not want to hear this anymore.” I got up to leave the room. My Dad grabbed me.

“Where are you going?” My Dad asked.

“Dad, I am not afraid of you anymore. I wanted to tell you so many times about what I had achieved, but I can’t get through to you. I know you want to listen, but you don’t actually take the time to understand. I have to go.”

“You’re not leaving, Mark.”

I looked back at Dad. His brown eyes turned dangerous.

“You can’t make me.”

Dad was a God so he had the same power as I do, so he knows that both me and him can't punch each other.

So Dad tried to subdue me. He wrestled me, but he was only just an old man now. I was about to get out of his godly grip till he said, "You better not go anywhere, you litt-" He punched me.

I saw 5 faces. A child. A middle-aged woman. A elderly man. A teenager. Ida.

Ida had the same smile as she did when I showed her the garden. What was she doing here?

I looked down and saw a pamphlet for the press conference. She was here in support of me.

Her orange eyes disappear in front me. The only sight I saw were the brown eyes of my Dad.

I saw red.

Both me and my Dad duke it out on one another.

With no regard to offense, we escalated to the point where we were blindly punching each other in the face. We couldn't think and we didn't try to either. It was either I was going down or he was.

We kept on punching and punching and punching till we slowed down. All we heard were the punches that thudded against our faces. That was all we heard.

We both stopped and looked at each other. The commotion outside the room stopped. We both opened the doors out of the press conference. There was nobody there and nothing made a sound. It was all silent.

The first thing I saw outside the room was a small black-stemmed flower. It looks like they are finally pollinating now.