

A Modern Version of King Midas

Paul sat comfortably in the swooping branches of a tall oak tree, staring out into the blue sky. The forest was silent apart from the chirping of birds in their nests. Though the day was calm, his head was filled with the taunts of Jack Thorne and his gang, throwing him around on the floor.

He looked over to the horizon, over the fields of corn ready to be harvested, over the houses scattered on the hills, until his eyes met the campsite. The campsite was where he and his family lived, in a little red caravan, parked in a circle of dead grass. It wasn't the best place to live, but at least people didn't call him a dirty gypsy there.

He frowned, he knew his mum would kill him when he got home – he hadn't gone to school. His mum always wanted him to go to school, saying that education was the most important thing in his life. But she didn't understand.

No-one understood.

Paul slept in a little shed near the caravan, where he would spend most of his time. It was just about big enough for him.

He stared into the blue sky, thinking. He felt his vision turning black as he shut his eyes and laid against the trunk of the tree.

When he heard the screaming of kids being let out of school, he shuffled down the branch, onto the tree trunk. He slid down, placing his foot on every niche in the bark, making his way to the ground.

Without stopping to think, he sprinted towards the lane and onto the pavement, making his way around the loud bustle of kids, weaving in and out of crowds.

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He ran through the streets, faster than a wolf, knowing each lane and turning like the back of his hand. But then he stopped. In the corner of his eye he spotted a large boy, dressed in a tailored blazer, with four more skinner-looking boys trailing behind him.

Jack Thorne and his gang.

But they weren't going for him, to Paul's surprise. They were targeting another boy, small and frail like him. He brushed it off and carried on running, barging past anybody in his route.

But as he looked back, he saw the terror in the small boy's eyes, and the menace in the bullies', and he gave in to his morals and charged at Jack.

To Paul's surprise, he hit Jack like a boulder crushing a running man, sending him flying and onto the pavement. The smaller boys, in shock, pounced on Paul but he dodged their blows, stepped in front of the smaller boy and whispered in his ear.

"Run."

The bullies' stare turned from menace to fury and rage. Paul, realising what he had just done, stood there, motionless. As three bullies stepped towards him, with glares that could kill a horse, his heart turned to water and he ran.

In and out the road, across the pavement, past streams, the bullies ran, in pursuit of that dirty gypsy boy.

Paul cut through the wind, past buildings and towers, houses and hills but the bullies were faster. He had only one option. Hide.

He spotted a construction site and ran towards it, the gang following closely. Once he was in, he weaved himself past debris and plaster into a large room, with so many places to hide.

The bullies walked in soon after.

"Come out, come out wherever you are, you dirty gypsy!"

Paul held his breath, his dark hair stuck to his forehead with sweat. He looked around, there must have been something to help him, something he needed near him.

Scouring the area for anything, he saw a strange, golden light. It was as if it was calling to him, beckoning him to touch it. Slowly, being careful not to alert the bullies, he leaned over and grabbed it.

Everything went dark.

Where was he?

It was utter darkness – blank; Until a light emerged from the distance. It was ever-changing in colour, like a polychromatic river cruising against cliffs. Its voiced boomed, echoing on invisible walls.

“I see you have done good, in an age of darkness. That ‘boy’ was my satyr Silenus .And you saved him from mortals. So I grant you one wish.”

Paul stood there, his eyes open like windows on a summer’s day. He mumbled, his eyes focusing on the empty nothingness he was standing on.

“ I wish...”

He felt his stomach rumbling – he hadn’t had any breakfast since they couldn’t afford it. That was it! He knew what he wanted.

“...I wish that everything I touch turns to gold.”

He stood, trembling at the god.

“Are you sure? Your wish may become a curse...”

Paul nodded and as he did, he faded back into reality.

He felt power like no other flowing through his veins, reaching into every limb and part of his body. It spread to his brain like a disease, poisoning and overwhelming it.

“What’s that light?”



The gang looked at the corner of the room with confusion.

Slowly, they trudged forwards, each one gulping. As they got closer, they could feel a random heat radiating the room.

Out of nowhere, one of the boys began to scream, looking down at his feet. A golden metallic substance began flowing up one of his legs, consuming it with a golden sludge, covering his body. His screams filled the room as it reached his head.

Then it stopped.

He remained there, silent, his body encased in a layer of molten, shining, gold.

The room was drowned in screeches as the teenagers sprinted out of the site, running from death.

Standing there, Paul looked at himself, bewildered by his own power. Astonished, a small grin etched onto his face as he stared at the golden statue

“I’m going to be rich!”.

The sun hung in the sky, its rays like fingers grasping the cloud-dappled sky. Paul was slumped on the concrete wall of the construction site, now metallic and golden. Picking himself up, he trudged towards, the gold spreading throughout the ground like a virus.

He wouldn’t normally want to go to school. But this time...

He wanted revenge.

His legs felt like noodles. His eyes were bags of bleach and the tips of his dark hair were poison needles.

Nauseously, he stumbled across the roads, leaving a trail of gold behind him. Cars sped up and down the road, narrowly missing him.

“Get out the way!” Someone shouted in the front seat.

Paul turned to face the man, his cold eyes looking into the man's soul.

He lifted his hand so fast, a single blink would miss it.

Grasping the car, he kept eye contact with the man. That man looked into Paul's lifeless eyes. There was no emotion. No hate, no anger.

Just nothing.

The car was consumed by molten gold, like water flowing onto rocks.

You could barely hear the man scream under the thick layer of it.

Ringling so loudly you could barely hear yourself, the school bell caught Paul's attention, and he switched from walking to sprinting towards the school ground.

As he entered the ground, he saw children give him weird looks, many scurrying away and hiding.

At the end of the path the students had made, was a large boy, dressed in a tailored blazer, with three more skinnier-looking boys trailing behind him.

Jack Thorne and his gang.

Their eyes were full of menace and hate, and Paul's were too.

A trail of gold stained the playground.

One of the bullies charged at Paul, throwing a punch at his emotionless face. He struck Paul with incredible force, but he did not even move.

In shock, the bully looked at his hand, which was encased in that deadly molten gold. It crept up and up onto his shoulder, then his chest then legs.

The golden statue stood there as a reminder of Paul's destructive power.

You could feel the crowd shuddering.

Paul walked towards his friends, waiting to be reunited with his friends after a week of not coming.

But his friends cowered away and screamed.

“Stay away from me you monster!”

Paul stood there in shock. His mouth was gaping open.

Tears rolled like waterfalls down his cheeks and turned to gold when they reached them.

Shrieking in anger and sorrow, Paul placed his hand on the concrete below, and gold exploded on the ground, consuming any trace of what it was before.

Sprinting so fast he couldn't see the trail of gold behind him, he weaved in and out of bushes and foliage.

It was there he saw a little red caravan, parked in a circle of dead grass.

And a lady with long hazel hair stood there in the doorway.

“Mum!” Paul cried, running towards her.

He hugged her so tight that he forgot.

Stumbling back, he'd realised what he'd done.

“Mum! No!”

In the doorway stood a golden statue of a lady with long hazel hair.

Everything went dark.

He remembered this.

Looking down, he saw the inky nothingness he was standing on.

“Please! Please help!”



Something appeared from the shadows, ever-changing in colour, like a polychromatic river cruising against cliffs.

The god stared at Paul.

"I knew this would happen." He mumbled.

"Please just take this curse away!" Paul pleaded with all his heart.

Dionysus sighed in annoyance.

"You really think you deserve it?"

Paul looked down at the inky nothingness, the tears rolling down his cheek, crystallising into gold.

"Fine. Go to the sacred lake in the forest, there you may wash off your golden touch."

He mumbled again to himself.

"You're just like Midas."

Paul faded back into reality and sprinted into the trees, his gold consuming them and suffocating them.

There he saw it.

It was beautiful, its azure water flowed calmly into hot geysers that shot up into the sky. Dipping his hands into the water, he felt it sooth his aching hands, cleansing them of his curse.

He ran back up the hill. He ran past the tress and into the fields to the little red caravan.

Tears flowed down his cheeks and hit the ground as he hugged the golden statue.

"Paul, where have you been?"