

Love Mountain

By Hydra

Synopsis: the gods on Mount Olympus are bored, bored, bored. No one pays any attention to them these days. And they are not allowed to take a trip down into the human realm since ZEUS, or rather his jealous and wife HERA, has decreed that they should leave the humans alone.

APOLLO and APHRODITE scheme to lure a pair of humans onto the mountain to remind ZEUS what fun mere mortals can be. With ZEUS and HERA successfully distracted, the other deities contest for control through a series of increasingly complicate manoeuvres.

Pace – fast and furious.

Characters – big and bold

The Olympians

ZEUS: ruler of the god on Mount Olympus. Appear at the start to be a daft old fellow with only the remnants of his trademark roguish charm.

HERA: wife of ZEUS. Domineering, jealous, impatient. Or is she trying to protect her family?

HERMES: messenger of the gods. Fast-talking, fast moving, trickster. Loves to cause trouble.

APOLLO: god of light, music and male beauty. Gorgeous, musical, bitchy, slightly camp.

DIONYSIS: god of wine. Alternates between party animal and hung-over beast. Fond of humans.

APHRODITE: goddess of love. Beautiful, bitchy and amorous. Resents HERA.

DEMETER: goddess of corn, crops and fruitfulness. Jealous of HERA and ZEUS.

ARTEMIS: APOLLO's twin sister. Goddess of hunting. Sporty spice.

The Humans

RYAN 30s: Gym manager. Has been living with BECCA for a year. On holiday. .

BECCA: late 20s / early 30s. Keen on travel and photography. Has been living with Ryan for a year. On holiday.

Running time: 30 / 35 minutes.

Setting: a mountain top in Greece.

Costumes: tunics and sandals for the Olympians, contemporary summer leisure clothes for the humans (but note changes).

(PART OF THE RUINS OF AN ANCIENT TEMPLE HIGH ON A SUNLIT MOUNTAIN TOP IN GREECE. VARIOUS STONE BLOCKS FORM A ROUGH SEMI-CIRCLE, SUGGESTIVE OF THE UPPER ROWS OF AN AMPHITHEATRE. THERE IS A LARGER BLOCK WITH A BACK IN THE CENTRE. A STONE COLUMN OR TWO PLUS SOME GREENERY. THERE SHOULD BE A FEEL OF SPACE AND AIR AND A BRIGHT, HOT SUN.

CURTAINS OPEN. ZEUS IS SEATED ON THE BLOCK UP CENTRE. HE APPEARS TO BE SLEEPING. DIONYSIS IS LYING FACE-UP ALONG ONE OF THE STONE BLOCKS WITH EYES CLOSED. APHRODITE and DEMETER ARE ARRANGED ON THE BLOCKS IN ATTITUDES OF BOREDOM AND LETHERGY. DEMETER APPEARS TO BE ASLEEP. APOLLO IS LEANING ON A BLOCK OR PILLAR, STARING INTO THE MIDDLE DISTANCE. HE HOLDS A LYRE OR HARP.

ZEUS GIVES A SNORE. DIONYSIS BELCHES. APHRODITE TUTS AND SHIFTS POSITION, FANNING HERSELF. ZEUS GIVES ANOTHER SNORE. APHRODITE SHIFTS POSITION AGAIN IMPATIENTLY. APOLLO TWANGS HIS STRINGS SOFTLY BUT DISCORDANTLY.)

APHRODITE: Do you have to do that?

(APHRODITE stands and moves down right. APOLLO puts down his musical instrument and moves down to stand slightly behind her. He massages her neck and shoulders.)

APOLLO: Why so tense? Could it be that APHRODITE the fair, born of sea-foam, paragon of the physical, isn't getting any?

(APHRODITE pulls away.)

APHRODITE: Bastard! No – don't stop.

(APOLLO resumes the shoulder massage.)

APHRODITE: Don't tell me it's not the same for you. And the rest of them. Ever since laughing boy *(She gestures at the sleeping ZEUS)* put his thunderbolt away -

APOLLO: So to speak -

APHRODITE: - And stopped us from even talking to mortals, my options have been somewhat limited.

APOLLO: Some of us manage.

APHRODITE: Some of us need variety...all we do is sit around and talk. The whole mortal world is out there. And we can't do anything.

APOLLO: I see the problem. But what can we do? Unless we can persuade ZEUS to lift his ban on mixing with mortals, we are stuck here. I know it's hard.

APHRODITE: Huh!

APOLLO: I mean, I know it's difficult but we'll have to come up with a plan. After all, I am an embodiment of light, youthful manly beauty and reason. In the meantime, how about a little music?

APHRODITE: *(Screams) Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!*
(Her scream awakens ZEUS and DEMETER. DIONYSUS twitches but remains unconscious.)

ZEUS: *(Wakes in confusion.)* What? Ump? Must have dozed off for a moment. *(Looks around for HERA. Catches sight of Aphrodite from behind. Stands, stretches and moves over to her.)*

Hello, my dear. Haven't seen you round here before. What's your name?

APHRODITE: Aphrodite..

ZEUS: A pretty name for a pretty girl. Didn't I know your mother?
(APHRODITE glares at him in exasperation. APOLLO looks on in amusement.)

Ah, yes...sorry my dear. Must have had the sun in my eyes. When you get to my age.... *(ZEUS looks around.)* What was I doing?

DEMETER: You were having a little nap. Come on now. It's too hot to get excited. *(She takes Zeus' arm and tries to guide him back to his seat but he resists.)*

ZEUS: What a firm grip. Now I remember, I was having such a lovely dream. There were girls, and young men and music and dancing. Everyone was dancing.
(ZEUS starts to hum a tune and stretches out his arms and tries and few steps to the left and then to the right. DEMETER and APHRODITE stand one either side of ZEUS each with a hand on one of his shoulders and copy the steps. APOLLO strikes chords on his harp / lyre, , DIONYSUS stirs, rouses and claps or drums a rhythm, wincing a little as he does so. ZEUS'S steps grow more confident and he breaks away from the goddesses and tries some more ambitious steps. The others clap and cheer to encourage him. Suddenly, HERA enters left followed by ARTEMIS and HERMES. HERA is wearing a green over tunic and sports a laurel wreath on her head. APOLLO, DEMETER, DIONYSUS and APHRODITE catch sight of HERA, stand still and fall silent. ZEUS finishes his dance steps with a flourish and turns to the others expecting applause but sees HERA.)

ZEUS: Hello dear.

HERA: I'll give you "hello dear". What is the meaning of this spectacle, this exhibition? *(No one answers.)* I turn my back and you forget about all the dignity due to your position. You show be ashamed of yourselves.

DIONYSUS: It was just a dance. Let's have another drink!

HERA: Just a dance! What about the noise you were making last night with the nymphs? It sounded to us as if someone was attempting ...revelry. And you know what my husband thinks about that. The Great ZEUS has decreed that you are all to conduct yourselves with dignity and decorum at all times. So none of this lolling around. Assume the positions. Spit, spot.

(HERA claps her hands and ZEUS sits down on his throne stone, staring straight ahead. The others sit on the steps in stiff, formal poses, except for DIONYSUS who leans slightly and HERMES who tucks in behind a pillar or large stone block.)

HERA: That's better. And while we have your attention, we have a few things to say about your hounds, ARTEMIS. If you can't stop them barking at night, you will have to send them away. The might ZEUS needs his sleep. And APOLLO, we were not at all impressed with your latest composition. Were we, husband?

ZEUS: I, I thought it was quite a jolly little piece...*(ZEUS notices HERA'S expressions.)* Er...yes, dear.

HERA: It's time to move on. All rise.

(Everyone stands except for DIONYSUS who, unseen by HERA has fallen sideways in a stupor.)

Husband!

(HERA signals to ZEUS to stand beside her and she takes his arm.)

Now, with due solemnity, let us process.

(HERA, arm in arm with ZEUS, leads ARTEMIS and DEMETER off left in a slow walk. APOLLO and APHRODITE walk arm in arm towards the left exit but at the last moment swerve away and move down towards the front of the stage. HERMES, unseen by the others is up right, DIONYSUS is lying along one of the steps at the back.

APOLLO: That's not a good colour on her. Those were not the thighs that launched a thousand ships.

APHRODITE: Shut up. I need to think.

APOLLO: And there was I thinking all your skills were purely physical.

APHRODITE: No, no, I'm onto something. Did you see how his high and mightiness perked up when we started dancing?

APOLLO: Until the return of the HERA-dactyl. Talk about dansus interruptus.

APHRODITE: So – if we can get rid of Her for a while, we could remind Him of forgotten pleasures...

APOLLO: And once he starts enjoying himself -

APHRODITE: - so can we!

APOLLO: But HERA hardly ever leaves his side. She hangs on his arm like a badly matched accessory.

APHRODITE: What if she were to have an urgent message from one of her dear brothers? She does love to feel needed...

APOLLO: Inspired. And I've had a tiny thought of my own. How about we lure up a couple of mortals to add to the party? He was always very fond of humans. Let's see whether he can remember any of his animal impressions. Remember that phase he had of seducing mortals in the guise of an animal? Never did it for me.

APHRODITE: You should be more adventurous. A little imagination can liven up the bedroom.

APOLLO: I bow to the mistress.

APHRODITE: In his day, he was inspired, swans, bulls, golden showers.

APOLLO: What?

APHRODITE: Showers of golden coins.

APOLLO: I always wondered how that worked.

APHRODITE: Well, you see..

APOLLO: No, save it. Let's get on.

APHRODITE: Right. To action. I will go and find HERMES and persuade him to carry a false message to HERA that will have her out of here before you can pick out your next tunic.

APOLLO: Already covered. And I will scout for likely mortals on the lower slopes. (*APOLLO strums a note on the harp / lyre and exits left.*)

(APHRODITE exits right.

HERMES, who has been hiding behind up left, comes forward, smiling. HERMES looks around to check that the coast is clear then runs to wake up DIONYSUS.)

HERMES: Quick! Wake up! You must fly!

DIONYSUS: Ugg – what – who –another ten minutes, sweetheart.

HERMES: Wake up! You are in peril!

DIONYSUS: Go away!

HERMES: Wake up!

(DIONYSUS sits up slowly.)

DIONYSUS: Any chance of an eye opener?

HERMES: No time. You must flee this place!

DIONYSUS: What?

HERMES: You’ve done it this time. You must leave. No time to explain.

DIONYSUS: What? What d’you mean?

HERMES: Zeus and Hera are so angry with you.

DIONYSUS: With me? Why? It was just a little dance.

HERMES: They said they have lost patience with you and you are to be banished. You must leave Mount Olympus right away.

DIONYSUS: But why? Where would I go?

HERMES: No time to explain.

DIONYSUS: But I can’t leave. Help me please.

HERMES: I can’t go against his mightiness.

DIONYSUS: You must help me! Please. Surely you can think of something.

HERMES: Well.....I do have an idea. But you must do exactly as I say.

DIONYSUS: Anything.

HERMES: Here’s what you must do. You must disguise yourself as a visitor from far, far away.

DIONYSUS: What sort of visitor?

HERMES: Leave it with me. I know just the thing. Go straight to my apartments and wait for me there. Speak to no one.

(DIONYSUS exits left. APHRODITE enters right.)

APHRODITE: There you are. I need you -

HERMES: So I hear but it wouldn’t be proper: you are my aunt.

APHRODITE: That’s not what I meant. I need you to carry a message for me.

HERMES: Is that all? No challenge there. I'm bored already.

APHRODITE: But there's more to it. It's a joke. A bit of fun.

HERMES: That's more like it. What's the trick?

APHRODITE: I need you, I mean I would like you to take a message to HERA.

HERMES: Well that's not very tricky – she's only over there. Can't you go and tell her yourself? This doesn't sound like fun to me. But each to his own. I remember one time in Sparta -

APHRODITE: Shut up and listen. I want you to take a message to HERA but must not know it is from me.

HERMES: Who is it from then?

APHRODITE: It is from me but you are not to say so because that is the trick. You are to say the message is from Poseidon and she is to go to him quickly as he has need of her help.

HERMES: Is that it?

APHRODITE: Yes. Why? Is it too complicated for you to remember?

HERMES: It's not that. Just that..

APHRODITE: What?

HERMES: When you said it was a joke, I was expecting something with a little more..

APHRODITE: What?

HERMES: Humour. Wit. Originality.

APHRODITE: Well if you won't do it, I'll make my own arrangements.

HERMES: Hang on, I didn't say I wouldn't do it. Just don't think it is very amusing, that's all.

APHRODITE: If you think you could do better...

HERMES: Is that a challenge?

APHRODITE: Yes! No! No, you are the trickster. (*APHRODITE turns on the charm.*) You are the prankster, the punster, the king of confusion. I could never compete. I should just watch and admire. But won't you do this little thing for me?

HERMES: If you put it like that. Here I go.

(*HERMES exits right. APOLLO enters left.*)

APOLLO: Was that the winged nuisance? He reminds me a mosquito, always buzzing around. How goes the grand plan? You will be pleased to hear that my ancient skills are still in trim.

APHRODITE: What are you talking about. You haven't been stalking the goat herders again?

APOLLO: How your mind runs on one track. Banish those erotic visions from your mind and come with me. I think I've found a pair of mortals to remind ZEUS of what fun he could have.

APHRODITE: Where are they?

APOLLO: Approaching the lower slopes. Come with me and have a look. Now all we need is a cover story.

APHRODITE: A what?

APOLLO: A story to explain why they are visiting. If we simply tell ZEUS that two mortals have arrived and want to see him, firstly he won't believe it and secondly, he will be too worried about what HERA would say. We need to find a way for him to get to know them gradually, plausibly, before he gets to know them...physically.

APHRODITE: All right. Don't go on about it. I'm not used to making it so complicated. I usually find a flash of knee or well-spaced shoulder broaches does the trick. What do you suggest?

APOLLO: How about we announce the mortals as delegates from Poseidon?

APHRODITE: Not a good idea. HERMES is bringing a false message to HERA from Poseidon asking her to come and help him. So why would Poseidon send more of his people? Even DIONYSUS would see through that one.

APOLLO: Forget the boozed and confused one. Focus on the Thunderbolt himself. Try to get inside his head – you should be good at this.

APHRODITE: Huh!

APOLLO: In his days of glory, where did most of his bolts end up? Who were his preferred targets?

APHRODITE: Anything female!

APOLLO: So judgemental! You should see his amorous activities as a tribute to you. Think!

APHRODITE: Nymphs?

APOLLO: Less dainty.

APHRODITE: Princesses, serving wenches, Titans. I don't know.

APOLLO: Think aggressive, muscular, bolshie.

APHRODITE: Medusa?

APOLLO: No – worse temper but better hair.

APHRODITE: Oh no! Not them! We'll never get away with Amazons!

APOLLO: You haven't seen these modern humans. Come and have a peep at them.

(APOLLO and APHRODITE exit stage left.

HERA, ZEUS, DEMETER, ARTEMIS and HERMES enter stage right. HERA is wearing a travelling cloak.)

HERA: You will remember what I told you?

ZEUS: Yes, my beloved.

HERA: I will return as quickly as I can but while our dear brother Poseidon needs my help, I must stay with him.

ZEUS: Yes, my sweet.

HERA: Artemis, my daughter, I rely on you to care for your father while I am away.

ARTEMIS: Yes, mother.

HERA: Where is everyone?

HERMES: They are so upset by your imminent departure that they have taken to their beds.

HERA: That's understandable. Would you all walk on ahead? I need to give a few words of motherly advice to my youngest girl.

(ZEUS DEMETER and HERMES exit right.)

HERA: Come closer and concentrate, girl. Now we are alone, I have something important to say to you.

ARTEMIS: I'll miss you too, Mother.

HERA: Yes, well, of course I'll miss you, that goes without saying, but I'm worried about your father.

ARTEMIS: I'll look out for him. I'll make sure he has everything he desires.

HERA: That's what I'm afraid of. Now, I think you are old enough to be trusted. And old enough to know something of what happens between a man and a woman.

ARTEMIS: But Mother, you know I have sworn to remain pure. . I wish to be always chaste.

HERA: And never.....yes, anyway. How to explain? Your father hasa very kind heart and can not stop himself from ...helping people. Particularly female people. So I will be relying on you

to make sure that no women, nymphs, demi-goddess, semi-goddesses, naiads, dryads or particularly, mortal females try to take advantage of him.

ARTEMIS: You can rely on me! I'll fetch my hounds.

(ARTEMIS starts to leave.)

HERA: Wait - don't worry about these hounds. I've something else to tell you.

ARTEMIS: What is it, Mother?

HERA: I'm worried about the message from Poseidon. Something smells fishy.

ARTEMIS: Well, that would be because..

HERA: No, I mean I have my suspicions.

ARTEMIS: Then why don't you stay here?

HERA: No. Someone has gone to a lot of trouble to encourage me to leave. So, I will go, but I'll make sure I come back.

ARTEMIS: Of course we want you to come back!

HERA: Stupid girl! I mean I will go but I will come back in disguise.

ARTEMIS: Oh I love dressing up! What disguise will you choose?

HERA: Let me think. I need to be strong, beautiful, exotic, well armed...

ARTEMIS: I know – a squid!

HERA: A squid? Why a squid?

ARTEMIS: You could make the disguise when you go and visit Uncle Poseidon.

HERA: But I'm not.....look, let me go over it one more time before I go.....

(HERA leads ARTEMIS off left.

HERMES and DEMETER enter right.)

DEMETER: Has HERA left? Has she actually departed from the Mountain? She never leaves ZEUS alone. She is usually so watchful. Maybe she no longer sees me and the other goddesses as a threat.

HERMES: More fool her.

DEMETER: What do you mean?

HERMES: Haven't you heard?

DEMETER: Heard what?

HERMES: I thought you realised. Oh well. Must dash.

(HERMES starts to exit.)

DEMETER: Not so fast. Tell me!

HERMES: If you insist. I thought you knew. The real reason why HERA is going to see Poseidon.

DEMETER: What real reason?

HERMES: The Great ZEUS and Her Highness are - are you sure you don't know -

DEMETER: Tell me!

HERMES: They are planning to take over the undersea realm. HERA has gone on ahead to make the arrangements with Poseidon, ZEUS is remaining here for a time to select his successor, the new ruler of Mount Olympus.

DEMETER: I knew it!

HERMES: You did? Then you know about the tests.

DEMETER: I knew something was up. At last, my opportunity. Who would be more fitting than me to rule? Without me nothing will grow and bloom on the face of the earth. Without me there is no grape, no olive, no fruit of any kind. Without me.....what tests?

HERMES: Just a few simple tasks. Nothing difficult for the right candidate. Provided they know the secret. Nothing to cause you concern, oh Great Demeter.

(HERMES starts to exit.)

DEMETER: Come back! Tell me! What tests?

HERMES: The main one is about the protection of Mount Olympus. You must unmask an impostor.

DEMETER: What impostor? Tell me more!

HERMES: Care, someone comes!

(ARTEMIS enters from the right. HERMES steps back.)

DEMETER: Artemis, has your mother departed on her journey? How we will all miss her. Will you walk with me?

ARTEMIS: Just for a moment. I have so much to do while Mother is away. She has trusted me with so many tasks.

DEMETER: Has she?

ARTEMIS: But I cannot say more. I must go to my father. I will sing to him and talk to him of my hounds.

DEMETER: I will accompany you.

ARTEMIS: That's not necessary.

DEMETER: Nonsense, I insist. We must all pay our respects to the Great ZEUS. I cannot bear the thought of him feeling lonely without HERA.

(DEMETER and ARTEMIS exit right, followed by HERMES.)

(From the left enter RYAN and BECCA. Both wear light backpacks BECCA flops down onto the throne to catch her breath from the climb. RYAN checks his sports watch.)

RYAN: Heart rate on track. Not bad for the altitude. Take a shot of me to show the distance from the road.

BECCA: In a minute. When I can see past the spots in front of my eyes.

RYAN: If you'd followed the cardio programme I set up for you...

BECCA: We can't all spend every waking moment at the gym.

RYAN: Not this again.

BECCA: Sorry. Put it down to the lack of oxygen.

(BECCA starts looking around.)

RYAN: You wanted to come on this holiday. Greece monuments and history. There's plenty of history in Zante. And the good clubs.

BECCA: Sorry, sorry. And you've found us these amazing ruins without a guide. Where are we, anyway?

RYAN: *(RYAN taps his phone.)* GPS is on the blink.

BECCA: Let's have a look around. Not sure I can face the return trip just yet. Do you think we are anywhere near that monastery?

RYAN: What monastery?

BECCA: What the guy was telling us about in the taverna the other night.

RYAN: What are you on about?

BECCA: No – not a monastery. Something else. Bit of an different set up. They've been here for years, apparently. I got the impression they are some sort of alternative community.

RYAN: If there are people living up here, there must be another way up. They'll need a decent road or something to bring in supplies. We must have missed the turning.

BECCA: No – they might be all “back to nature” and live off the land or carry stuff up on the back of goats.

RYAN: Donkeys.

BECCA: Whatever. They are supposed to be very keen on sports and games and fitness and all that.

RYAN: Why don't you have a quick look at the ruins while we are here. I need to get some shots for the 'gram before we head back.

BECCA: It is spectacular up here. Can you smell wild thyme?

(RYAN and BECCA go to the back of the stage. BECCA takes photos of the view. RYAN takes selfies.)

APOLLO, APHRODITE and HERMES enter from right unobserved. APHRODITE is veiled. APOLLO indicates that HERMES should speak to RYAN and BECCA.

APOLLO conceals himself from view. APHRODITE stands to one side of HERMES, slightly behind him.)

HERMES: Greetings, honoured guests.

(RYAN and BECCA are startled.)

RYAN: Ah, hello.

BECCA: Kali mera,

HERMES: And good morning to you, miss.

BECCA: Are we OK to have a look around?

HERMES: You are our guests, please look at all you wish.

BECCA: Do you live near here?

HERMES: Nearby, yes.

BECCA: I've never seen anything so beautiful.

HERMES: *(Gazing at her.)* I can only agree.

(APHRODITE thumps him, unseen by RYAN and BECCA).

RYAN: How many people live up here?

HERMES: Enough. We are a community of great age. Would you like to my companions?

BECCA: Yes, that would be great. Thank you.

HERMES: Come this way. You must be thirsty and weary after your climb. I have refreshments, this way. *(He indicated off right.)*

RYAN *(aside to BECCA)*:

We don't want to get caught up. I'd rather get back to the pool.

BECCA *(aside to RYAN)*:

Shhh.. Hospitality to strangers is part of the culture. It would be rude to refuse.

BECCA: *(to HERMES)*

Thank you. I would love to see where you live.

HERMES: There is just one condition. You are honoured guests, but my companions are very traditional, very remote from everyday life. There is a custom that all who visit here should dress according to our ways. I hope I have not given offence?

BECCA: No, no. It's quite alright. I always carry a headscarf in case I have to go into a church.

HERMES: Please come this way. My servant will provide you with suitable clothing.

(HERMES pushes AHRODITE forward. APHRODITE hits HERMES in passing but indicates to BECCA and RYAN that they should follow her. APHRODITE leads BECCA and RYAN off to the right. They do not notice APOLLO.)

APOLLO: She'll do nicely. I haven't lost my touch. But we'll have to find something to do with him.

HERMES: Leave it with me. But we must not forget.....*(HERMES looks off to the left.)*

Someone comes.

(APOLLO and HERMES conceal themselves.

ZEUS enters from the left. ZEUS looks around as if concerned that he is being followed.)

HERMES: *(Steps forward.)* Greeting, oh Ruler of the Heavens.

ZEUS: Oh, it's you. *(ZEUS drops down into the centre block.)*

APOLLO: What ails the Master of the Thunderbolts?

ZEUS: Those wretched women.

APOLLO: Women?

ZEUS: My daughter ARTEMIS. She never stops talking. And DEMETER is just as bad. They are following me about like two centaurs who've seen a full amphora. Just when I've the chance of a little freedom from HERA...I mean, just when I have a chance of a little relaxation.

APOLLO: I understand completely. A ruler needs some time for relaxation.

HERMES: Contemplation...

APOLLO: Temptation...

HERMES: Anticipation...

APOLLO: Syncopation...

HERMES: Perspiration...

ZEUS: Yes, yes. I know what I want but how can I get it?

APOLLO (*aside to HERMES*):

Has he been talking to APHRODITE?

(*To ZEUS*) But you are ZEUS, the all-powerful. You can have anything you want.

ZEUS: Yes, yes, in theory. But if there's one thing I've learnt over the eons, for a brief moment of heaven, there is Hades to pay when HERA finds out. And she always finds out.

APOLLO: A challenge indeed. How about some soothing music whilst we contemplate.

HERMES: Cogitate.

APOLLO: Meditate.

HERMES: Imagine.

APOLLO: Elucidate.

ZEUS: Don't start that again. And no music.

APOLLO: I'll ignore that. So, to restate the position, if I -

HERMES: - we,

APOLLO: - if we were to find a way for you to enjoy some congenial company without any risk of criticism from HERA

ZEUS: My gratitude would be legendary.

APOLLO: In that case, and changing the subject completely, Oh Great ZEUS, I think HERMES here is about to announce the imminent arrival of a peaceful delegation from a far-off part of your dominion.

ZEUS: On no, not a state visit. Who is it this time? Can't we put them off? It's not the Centaurs again is it? We've only just got rid of the wine stains from last time. HERMES, can't you put them off? Tell them to come back when HERA has returned. She enjoys state visits. One of the few events she does approve of.

APOLLO: Exactly.

ZEUS: What do you mean?

APOLLO: HERA could not object to you offering hospitality to official visitors.

ZEUS: Well, no, but where's the fun for me?

APOLLO: You haven't heard the name of our visitors. Oh, Great ZEUS, return to your apartments and make ready to welcome a delegation from the nation of the Amazons, including their fairest princess. HERMES will bring her to you so you can enjoy a private conversation.

ZEUS: Amazons! I haven't had the pleasure... I mean I haven't met an Amazon since Queen Penthesilea. What a woman!

(To HERMES:) Don't delay – go and welcome our guests. I'll be in my apartments.

(ZEUS stands and starts to leave left but stops.)

But no, wait. Damnation.

HERMES: What is it?

ZEUS: What about ARTEMIS and DEMETER? They won't leave me alone. How can I be expected to carry out high- level diplomatic manoeuvres with them around?

APOLLO: Leave it to us. HERMES will arrange a distraction. Off you go.

(ZEUS exits left.)

HERMES: A distraction?

APOLLO: You'll think of something. You normally do. Let's go and collect the mortal girl then I'll work out what to do about ARTEMIS.

(APOLLO and HERMES exit right.)

DIONYSUS enters left carefully, disguised as an Amazonian princess: leather skirted tunic, bow and arrow, helmet or scarf concealing his beard. DIONYSUS he looks around anxiously then relaxes when he sees that there is no one around.

After a moment or two, RYAN enters right. RYAN is dressed in the short tunic of a slave. He carries a discus or similar piece of sporting apparatus.)

RYAN: Sorry, I didn't realise anyone was here, miss, err madam.

DIONYSUS: *(He attempts to disguise his voice.)* No worries. I mean, I am a stranger here myself.

RYAN: Great outfit. Have you been here before?

DIONYSUS: Err, no. This is my first visit.

RYAN: Where are you from?

DIONYSUS: From the valley of the river Amazon.

RYAN: The one in South America? That's a long way.

DIONYSUS: Er, yes. *(DIONYSUS looks around.)*

RYAN: Are you looking for someone? There's a chap with winged sandals. He seems to be in charge of visitors. There's someone coming now.

(ARTEMIS enters right. She sees DIONYSUS and thinks that he is HERA in disguise.)

ARTEMIS: Here you are, I've didn't think you would be here so soon. Come quick, I don't want to leave him alone any longer than I have to.

(ARTEMIS notices RYAN.)

Who's this?

DIONYSUS: I don't know. I'm a stranger here myself.

ARTEMIS: *(To DIONYSUS)* You've very good at this. Even your voice sounds different. *(To RYAN)* Who are you?

RYAN: I'm RYAN. I'm a visitor.

ARTEMIS: What are you doing here?

RYAN: It's a bit difficult to explain. I'm not sure really.

ARTEMIS: *(Notices the discus or piece of equipment.)*

Do you enjoy the gymnasium?

RYAN: It's my best place.

ARTEMIS: Me too! But the rest of them laugh at me. They say it is not suitable for females.

RYAN: Oh, I see. Your religion forbids you?

ARTEMIS: No, my father. Why do you not know these things?

RYAN: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend.

ARTEMIS: Would you like to try the running track? I will show you.

RYAN: Now you're talking my language!

ARTEMIS: *(ARTEMIS turns round to check that DIONYSUS has not overheard them. DIONYSUS has been adjusting his disguise.)*
Come with me. *(ARTEMIS turns to DIONYSUS.)*
Come quick, both of you. This way.
(ARTEMIS, DIONYSUS and RYAN move towards the right. APOLLO and HERMES enter from the right.)

APOLLO: Where do you think you are going? He's waiting for you. He'll be here any moment.
(To DIONYSUS) Your Highness, could I ask you to wait over here with your slave.
(APOLLO leads DIONYSUS and RYAN over to seats on the left.)
ARTEMIS, I have an urgent message from your dog handler. He thinks the hounds are coming down with hard pad. Go quickly.
(ARTEMIS exits left, rapidly. APOLLO signals to HERMES.)
That's her out the way for a while. Right, you go and get ZEUS.

HERMES: DEMETER is still prowling round. It might be safer if I take these two to his apartments.

APOLLO: Agreed.
(To DIONYSIS and RYAN). This is your lucky day. Our leader himself has asked to see you. This is a very great honour. HERMES will escort you to the private apartments. Best hurry before other visitors arrive and interrupt.
(APOLLO mutters to HERMES.)
Can you try and get the clothes off her as soon as possible? The Amazon outfit does nothing for her.
(APOLLO hurries DIONYSIS and RYAN off right with HERMES.)
(APHRODITE enters left.)

APHRODITE: So far so good. I think this might just work!

APOLLO: I know Amazons are famous for their masculine physiques but I think you over did it a trifle with the girl's disguise. Hope it doesn't take the bang out of Sir's thunderbolts.

APHRODITE: What do you mean? I haven't finished with the girl. She's with my slaves having a scrub in the bath.

APOLLO: The mortal girl is in the baths! But I've just sent her and her slave with HERMES to his High and Mightiness!

APHRODITE: But I've just come from the baths.

APOLLO: So who in Hades have I just sent to ZEUS! You go and stay with the girl. I'll try to catch HERMES!

(APHRODITE exits left and APOLLO exits right.

After a moment or two, DEMETER enters left with HERA, who is disguised as an Amazonian Princess.)

DEMETER: What bad luck to lose all your attendants on the way up the mountain, I am only grateful that you arrived safely. Let me welcome you to Mount Olympus.

HERA *(in a disguised voice)*:

Thank you.

DEMETER: You must have had a very tiring journey. Please rest here and I will send for refreshments.

HERA: Thank you. But I do not want to cause any trouble. My only wish is to pay my respects to the great, the glorious ZEUS.

DEMETER: Plenty of time for that. You are our guest. I will arrange food and drink.

HERA: There is really no need. In fact I'm so excited at the very thought of meeting ZEUS the magnificent that I've quite lost my appetite.

DEMETER: Hummm. I mean, where is everyone?

(DEMETER goes to the right exit and claps her hands. HERMES enters.)

DEMETER: Where are all our attendants?

HERMES: Attending to our honoured guests, oh DEMETER.

DEMETER: What honoured guests?

HERMES: The Amazonian delegation currently in the presence of the Great ZEUS.

DEMETER: If the Amazons are with ZEUS, who's that?

HERMES: Who? (*HERMES notices HERA.*) Her? I don't know.

DEMETER: She says that she became separated from her travelling companions on the journey. She came straight here rather than delay to look for them because she is so eager to pay her respects to ZEUS the magnificent. I think there's something fishy going on.

HERMES: What do you mean?

DEMETER: I think that she is the impostor that we were warned about. In fact, I don't even think that she is female.

HERMES: No! What are we going to do?

DEMETER: We can't let her get near ZEUS. You keep her here and I will go and see who is talking with ZEUS.

HERMES: No! Don't go! How do I keep her here?

DEMETER: You will think of something. You usually do. Where is ZEUS?

HERMES: In his apartments, I believe. But he did say something about going to the bathhouse.

DEMETER: Right. I'm off.

HERMES: No, don't go. I've thought of something.

DEMETER: What?

HERMES: Someone's coming!

(*ARTEMIS enters from the left.*)

ARTEMIS: Totally false alarm about the hounds, thank goodness.

(*ARTEMIS sees HERA but does not recognise her.*)

HERMES: Thank goodness.

ARTEMIS: (*ARTEMIS moves across to DEMETER.*)
Who's that?

DEMETER: We don't know. We think she is an impostor trying to get to your father. You are young and inexperienced in the ways of the world but let me share my wisdom with you and tell you to beware of the Amazon women. We cannot let any Amazonian female get close to ZEUS.

ARTEMIS: Ah. What's so special about these Amazonian females?

DEMETER: Come closer.

(*DEMETER whispers to ARTEMIS who responds with shocked expressions. DEMETER leads ARTEMIS off to the right.*)

HERMES remains on stage but ducks behind a pillar or block.)

HERA's feelings overwhelm her and she starts to cry.

BECCA enters from the left. HERA tries to conceal her emotion.

BECCA moves toward HERA.)

- BECCA: Excuse me – hello – are you OK.
- HERA: Thank you. It is nothing.
- BECCA: Are you sure? You look....can I help?
- HERA: You are very kind. Please, sit with me. I was thinking of my husband.
- (BECCA and HERA sit together.)
- BECCA: Oh, is he...
- HERA: My husband is in excellent spirits, thank you. Do you have a husband?
- BECCA: No, I'm not married. But I do have a partner.
- HERA: And is he the love of your life?
- BECCA: Of course....
- HERA: You seem unsure.
- BECCA: We've been living together for over a year.
- HERA: Ah, springtime days.
- BECCA: How long have you and your husband been married?
- HERA: Long enough to know when he needs me and when he needs his freedom.
- BECCA: I'm not sure I understand.
- HERA: Understanding will come to you my dear. Will you take a word of advice from one who has seen something of the world?
- BECCA: Of course. Thank you.
- HERA: When you look at him, do you see the rest of your life in front of your eyes?
- BECCA: I'm not sure I understand.
- HERA: There is a proverb: love the house and its crow.
- BECCA: Yes..

HERA: Yes – if it is the right person your heart will hold you up even when the world is against you. But I am taking your time. I think they are waiting for you over there.

(HERA indicates off to the right.)

BECCA: OK, thank you.

(BECCA exits to the right. HERA stands and watches BECCA leave.)

(APOLLO enters from the left)

APOLLO: There you are. Thought you were in the bathhouse. Anyway, that outfit looks better. Are you ready to enter the Presence of Greatness?

HERA: Just lead me to him.

APOLLO: Don't be nervous. You are about to have a divine experience.

HERA: I'm counting on it.

(APOLLO leads HERA quietly off left. HERMES remains on stage in his usual place of concealment.)

(DEMETER and ARTEMIS re-enter from the right.)

ARTEMIS: Well – Mother never told me any of that!

DEMETER: All true. That's why we have to stop her...

(DEMETER notices that the bird has flown.)

Where's she gone?

ARTEMIS: I don't know!

DEMETER: HERMES said that ZEUS was on his way to the bathhouse. Let's try to head her off. She can't have got far.

(DEMETER and ARTEMIS dash off left.)

(DIONYSUS and RYAN enter from the right at speed. they have acquired glasses and an amphora of wine. they have been drinking and are merry.)

DIONYSUS:as the High Priestess said to the eunuch!

(DIONYSUS grabs RYAN as he crosses the space and is about to exit left.)

We should be all right here for a while. Let me get my breath back.

RYAN: It is always like this?

DIONYSUS: No. Worse luck. We can go for eons without a good laugh. This reminds me of some of the good times I had down in the mortal realm.

RYAN: The mortal realm?

DIONYSUS: Down there. I went travelling. Saw some things. The people, the places. Good times.

RYAN: So how did you end up here?

DIONYSUS: Family business. You know how it is.

RYAN: Are most people here related?

DIONYSUS: On yes. *(They drink.)*

RYAN: Who was that girl, the one I was talking with earlier on?

DIONYSUS: Who?

RYAN: The one who had to dash off. Something to do with dogs?

DIONYSUS: Oh her. We call her ARTEMIS.

RYAN: Pretty name.

(NOISES OFF right.)

APHRODITE *(Off)*: There she is! Quick!

(APHRODITE enters right and runs up to DIONYSUS.)

APHRODITE: What are you doing hanging around here? Come with me quickly.

DIONYSUS: Why? I'm happy here.

APHRODITE: ZEUS is waiting for you.

DIONYSUS: Help!

(ARTEMIS runs on from the left.)

ARTEMIS: What are you doing here? Quick come with me!

DIONYSUS: Nooooo!

(DIONYSUS jumps to his feet and runs round the stage, trying to avoid ARTEMIS and APHRODITE. APHRODITE trips up ARTEMIS but this allows DIONYSUS to escape off left. RYAN helps ARTEMIS to her feet. she is crying with anger and frustration.)

RYAN: It's OK, calm down.

ARTEMIS: It's not. Everything I touch goes wrong. I hate it here.

RYAN: Then come with me. I think we have a connection.
(RYAN takes her hand and they run off together right.)
(HERA enters left and runs across the closely followed by HERMES, APOLLO and DEMETER. They exit stage left.)
(BECCA enters from right, dressed as an Amazonian princess. The outfit suits her much better than it does DIONYSUS or HERA. she looks around her and enjoys the light, the air and the view.)
(ZEUS enters from left. BECCA does not see him at first.)

ZEUS: I had thought that I would never tire of that view. But I realise that I rarely even glance at it these days. Allow me to enjoy it with you.

BECCA: Excuse me. I didn't know there was anyone else here.

ZEUS: It is fine. Do not be afraid.

BECCA: I'm not really sure where I am supposed to be. The girl who took me to the bathhouse and found these clothes brought me here then she seems to have disappeared.

ZEUS: You look enchanting. Even though I can tell that is not your usual garb.

BECCA: Thank you. Do you live here?

ZEUS: Yes. For as long as I can remember.
(ZEUS claps his hands. HERMES enters left with a tray containing two goblets and a flask of wine. He places the tray on the steps and exits. ZEUS pours two glasses of wine and hands one to BECCA.)

BECCA: Thank you. It is so beautiful here. I wish I could stay.

ZEUS: Do you? Do you really? That could be arranged.
(They stand very close together looking out over the view. a suggestion of beautiful sunset would be excellent if the lighting budget and technical equipment run to it.)
HERMES returns stage left with APOLLO and APHRODITE. they stand close to the entrance and watch ZEUS and BECCA. From stage right appears DEMETER with HERA.
(ZEUS takes BECCA's hand and raises it to his lips. DEMETER jumps forward.)

DEMETER: Stop! She is not who you think she is!

(APOLLO, APHRODITE and HERMES start shouting. as does DEMETER. all is noise and confusion. Cutting through the babble is the sound of a thunderclap and ZEUS's voice, amplified to a great loudness.)

ZEUS: Silence!

(All stop moving and are silent.)

ZEUS *(To BECCA)*: My apologies for shattering the mood. Come forward, all of you. So, you think that I do not know my own mind? Step forward, my two Amazonian lovelies.

(HERMES enters quickly with DIONYSUS who is still in disguise).

HERMES: Your pardon, great ZEUS, but there is another contender.
(HERMES pushes a reluctant DIONYSUS forward.)

ZEUS: A challenge indeed. Stand forward, my three Amazonian lovelies. You are all most fair. In fact, I can't choose between you. So I will not. I am ruler here, I will choose you all.

HERA *(all three together)*: Now look here, don't you know...

DIONYSUS *(all three together)*: Here, hang, on, a joke is a joke but.... -

BECCA *(all three together)*: I don't understand.....

ZEUS *(Shouts)*: Silence! Am I or am I not your ruler?

HERA: There is something you should know...

ZEUS: I said silence! There is something you should all know. I don't yearn for an exotic Amazonian princess. *(ZEUS moves to BECCA)*

I no longer wish for a dalliance with a mortal. (ZEUS kisses her hand.)

No matter how delightful. (ZEUS moves to DIONYSUS.)

And fond as I am of my old drinking companion, I have no wish to take our friendship to a new direction.

(ZEUS removes DIONYSUS' veil and claps him on the shoulder.)

APOLLO: Don't knock it until you've tried it.

ZEUS: Don't think that you invented it! *(He moves to HERA)* All I want is the companion of my soul. *(He raises her veil.)* My own dear HERA. *(They embrace. Everyone cheers.)*

HERA: But how did you know it was me?

ZEUS: Have you never heard the old mortal saying, “you can’t kid a kidder?” But now I have an announcement to make. I have decided that I been too long stagnating here. I want to take a trip and I want HERA to accompany me. HERA and I are going to take a long trip to reacquaint ourselves with some of the more beautiful of the outer islands. We may be gone some time.

HERA: I’m counting on it.

DIONYSUS: Party on, dudes!

APOLLO: Time to crack on!

(APOLLO, DIONYSUS and APHRODITE drop their tunics to reveal underneath modern summer clothes such a beach shorts and t shirts. They pull on sunglasses and run off.)

DEMETER: Well really!

HERA: Let them have their fun.

DEMETER: Oh Great ZEUS?

ZEUS: Yes?

DEMETER: Sad as we will be to see you depart, might we be permitted to know which of us will rule in your stead?

ZEUS: That’s easy. The only one I can trust. My lovely, innocent daughter ARTEMIS. ARTEMIS! Where are you?

(HERMES runs across to the usual pillar and pulls out from behind it RYAN and ARTEMIS who are in a passionate embrace.)

CURTAIN