

THE ULTIMATE OLYMPUS

A One Act Play

by

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ISBN 978 1 872475 03 5

Printed and published by
SchoolPlay Productions Limited,
15 Inglis Road,
Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU

Cast

Steinwich

Snodgrass

Zeus

Hermes

Apollo

Ares

Dionysius

Heracles

Hephaestus

THE ULTIMATE OLYMPUS

by Cruden Rodger

The scene is the top of Mount Olympus with a backdrop of sky and clouds. There are several large boulders scattered around the stage. As the curtain rises, the stage is empty.

(HERMES enters, grumbling to himself).

Hermes: I've had enough! Three thousand years of it, surely that's enough for anyone? And why does it always have to be me? Why can't Apollo or Dionysius deal with the situation for a change? Even Zeus might make some sort of an effort sometimes - other than binging the odd bad-tempered thunderbolt about the place. The fact is, they've all got lazy, lying around here on Olympus all day with nothing to do but argue. *(He moves to front stage to look out at the audience).* And you'd think these humans *(indicating the audience)* might have learnt to look after themselves by now. But, oh no! They still jump at every opportunity to slaughter each other. It's really a full-time job, baby-sitting humans. And anyway, it should be done by ALL the immortals - not just me! I'm sick of being the messenger boy. Hermes, do this. Hermes, do that. Hermes, pop over to Moscow and calm the Russians. Hermes, drop in at the White House and tell the president to cool it. Oh, it just never ends and I'm worn out. *(Suddenly, his attention is caught by something down the mountainside, i.e. in the audience).* Oh-oh! What's this? *(Pause while he looks intently).* Well now, if it isn't a couple of humans coming up the mountain. They don't look like shepherds. More like city people. What are they doing here? I can smell it. Trouble! Well, this time I'm not going to do anything about it. I'm going on strike. Let the others sort it out. *(He moves to back stage and sits down against a boulder, closing his eyes).*

(Sounds of a heated argument offstage, approaching. Enter ZEUS, APOLLO, ARES and DIONYSIUS).

Ares: I don't care if you are the boss god around here, Zeus. You're talking nonsense.

Zeus: I'm talking nonsense, am I? You're just out of date, Ares. There isn't room for a god of war any more. We can't afford it.

Ares: And what am I supposed to do? Retire?

Dionysius: Why not switch over to football? Now that's a good idea. Become the god of football.

Apollo: I think England has already made him THAT, Dionysius. You should have seen the fight at the last International!

Ares: Ha very ha! I suppose you think that's humorous. Why don't you go and steal a few cows, Apollo? That's about all you're good for.

Zeus: But seriously, Ares. They're not playing with swords and gunpowder any more.

Dionysius: That's right. They're growing mushrooms. Bigger and better mushrooms.

Ares: You stay out of this, Dionysius. Go and pour yourself another nectar and tonic.

Zeus: You're altogether too flippant, Dionysius. And as for you, Ares, remember what happened to Prometheus. He's still there you know, spread-eagled on the rock with the vultures eating his

Dionysius: Spare us the details, Zeus. We know them anyway.

Apollo: Where's Hermes? He should be back by now.

Hermes: *(rising and walking past the group of gods to front stage).* I'm here.

Zeus: How did it go?

Hermes: So-so. *(As he speaks he keeps looking "down the mountain" at a particular point in the audience).* *[The rest of this speech can be replaced with current affairs news at the time of production].* I've prevented the Lebanese war from spreading into Israel, but the Palestinians are getting restless so it's only temporary.

Zeus: *(To ARES).* There you are, you see. We've really got to do something.

Ares: You can't stop human beings from fighting. It's in their blood.

Zeus: Oh yes I can! A thunderbolt or two ought to fix it.

Ares: You and your thunderbolts! You accuse me of being out of date. They don't care a fig for your thunderbolts. They've fashioned their own a million times more powerful.

Dionysius: Mushrooms. Lovely clouds of mushrooms.

Apollo: Can't we change the subject?

Dionysius: I agree, but what to?

Apollo: Well, for example, I overheard Pallas Athene talking to the other goddesses yesterday.

Dionysius: That was sneaky of you, Apollo. What were they talking about?

Apollo: Women's Lib.

Zeus: Women's what? I won't have any smut, I warn you!

Apollo: Honestly, Zeus, sometimes you amaze me!

Zeus: Then what is this Lib thing?

Apollo: You really have been switched off for the last few hundred years, haven't you?

Zeus: And what's wrong with that? Everyone needs a rest. Besides, Hermes has been doing a perfectly good job, hasn't he?

Apollo: That's not your REAL reason.

Zeus: All right, I admit it. These humans don't pay much attention to me any more. They've even stopped giving me different names.

Ares: That's because you've gone soft Zeus. Now, if you'd let me stir up a really large scale war

Dionysius: Oh, do shut up about your wars, Ares. Can't you ever talk about anything else?

Ares: What else is interesting? None of you seem to realise that human beings need plenty of violence to feel really alive.

Dionysius: Well, I'd argue that lots of loving does the job just as well. But I want to hear Apollo's bit of gossip.

Zeus: Yes, so do I.

Apollo: It's more than gossip, Zeus. It's a serious matter.

Zeus: Serious?

Apollo: Very. You see, the goddesses have been watching - very closely - the way women have been going on in the world and now Pallas Athene is stirring up our own ladies. She's talking about goddesses-lib.

Zeus: Meaning what?

Apollo: Meaning equality for goddesses.

Zeus: With us gods? You mean equal to us?

Apollo: Exactly that.

Zeus: What utter nonsense!

(HEPHAESTUS and HERACLES rush onto the stage, breathless. HEPHAESTUS has a limp. HERMES, during the previous conversation, has been moving steadily across front stage, looking "down the mountain").

Heracles: There's a couple of humans coming up Olympus!

Hephaestus: They look like commercial men. Definitely not outdoor types.

Zeus: What are they doing here?

Hephaestus: We didn't get close enough to find out.

Zeus: Hermes, do you know anything about this?

Hermes: *(grinning)* Not a thing.

Zeus: Then pop on down, will you? Tell 'em to push off.

Hermes: *(shaking his head and speaking very firmly)* No.

Zeus: What do you mean "no"?

Hermes: What I said. No. I won't "pop on down" as you put it. I've had enough of "popping on down" - enough to last me several million years, thank you.

Zeus: (*getting angry*) Who do you think you're talking to? Why I'll

Apollo: Hang on, Zeus. Hang on. It might be rather fun to let them come up, don't you think? A little bit of entertainment on our doorstep for a change. We're always looking at these humans' antics long-distance and my eyes aren't what they used to be, you know. How about it?

Dionysius: Yes, Zeus, it'll be fun.

Hephaestus: I want to know what they've come for.

Heracles: Me too.

Zeus: Oh, very well, but I haven't finished with you, Hermes.

Hermes: I have with you. You can do your own dirty work from now on.

Zeus: I've a good mind to slap you down beside Prometheus!

Hermes: Do what you like. See if I care! I've had it!

Heracles: (*looking offstage into the wings*) They're nearly here.

Apollo: Come on everyone, let's get behind this rock.

Ares: Whatever for? Humans can't see us, can they?

Apollo: True. I forgot.

Ares: You're always forgetting. I think you're altogether too fond of human beings.

Heracles: Here they come.

(SNODGRASS and STEINWICH enter. They walk past HERACLES without seeing him. They are panting and obviously out of condition).

Snodgrass: The things we do for the Corporation!

Steinwich : Please, Snodgrass old man, don't talk for a bit. I can hardly breathe.

(They sit. The GODS crowd around, commenting, making faces, fingering the two humans, etc. [This is a space for ad libs]. Finally, they move back to watch).

Snodgrass: What a desolate spot!

Steinwich: We'll soon change that. The view's good.

Snodgrass: I'd rather see it on video.

Steinwich: I know what you mean, but you have to admit it's got potential, this place. We can soon get rid of the emptiness.

Zeus: What ARE they talking about?

Snodgrass: Yes, a few multi-storey buildings, lots of plate glass and swimming pools, a golf course and some tennis courts, a few putting greens and a fun-fair, a good artificial ski-slope - yes, Steinwich, we could soon make it attractive.

Apollo: I get it. These commercial gents are planning to transform our home into a package tour holiday-centre.

Zeus: They can't do that!

Steinwich: Just think how the advertising department will love it!

Zeus: It's sacrilegious!

Snodgrass: Absolutely! I can just see it, Steinwich. A full page spread in the Sunday supplements. "Come to Olympus, the Home of the Gods".

Ares: This is disastrous!

Snodgrass: "Spend a superhuman holiday".

Steinwich: I say, that's rather good.

Snodgrass: "Sip the nectar of the immortals".

Dionysius: Not if I can help it!

Snodgrass: "Sup on Diana's venison".

Hermes: She won't like that!

Snodgrass: "Sunbathe with Venus".

Heracles: How dare he!

Snodgrass: "Dance to the pipes of Pan and listen to Apollo's harp in the moonlight".

Apollo: Well, they haven't totally forgotten us, have they?

Hephaestus: They haven't mentioned ME!

Ares: Who would want to mention you, Hephaestus? They've got nuclear power. They don't need fire any more.

Steinwich: It's going to be splendid!

Zeus: This is an emergency!

(ZEUS beckons to the other gods and they all move backstage together, in a huddle).

Snodgrass: We'll make a bomb out of it!

Zeus: We've got to do something!

Snodgrass: Company profits will break all records.

Hermes: Don't ask me to do anything. I'm on strike.

Steinwich: No doubt about it. We're onto a real winner here. Mind you, there's a lot to be done. First off, we'll have to flatten some of the mountain to make an airstrip.

Ares: Flatten the mountain! What a nerve! For once you're right, Zeus. We've got to act. We can't allow these humans to mess up our home.

Snodgrass: *(who has moved backstage and intentionally dropped something from his pocket)* I say, Steinwich, come and look at this!

Steinwich: What is it?

Snodgrass: Come and see.

Heracles: How are we going to stop them?

Ares: We've GOT to stop them!

Heracles: Yes, but how?

Ares: We've allowed these humans to get much too big-headed, that's a fact.

Dionysius: What's he up to now?

Apollo: I've been watching him. He's a sly one.

Steinwich: (*bending down and picking up a coin*) Fantastic! But this is amazing!

Snodgrass: You see? I knew this place was dead right.

Dionysius: What's he picked up?

Apollo: A coin.

Steinwich: But isn't this Roman?

Snodgrass: How would I know?

Apollo: Because you planted it there, my friend.

Snodgrass: Anyway, Roman, Greek, what does it matter? We must put it into our feasibility report and make sure it's leaked to the press. "Ancient coin found near mountain top. Archaeological treasures on Mount Olympus". Useful publicity, eh?

Steinwich: There's just one drawback.

Snodgrass: Something more for the advertising people. "Look for buried treasure near the forge of Hephaestus".

Hephaestus: Hooray! He's remembered me!

Snodgrass: "Come and hob-nob with the gods".

All the Gods: (*Together, aghast*). Hob-nob!

Steinwich: Slow down, old man. I really don't think it's advisable to publicise this sort of thing. It might backfire on us. The Greek government might not give us the go-ahead to develop the area.

Zeus: Well done, Stainway Stoonway whatever your name is. He's given us the solution. All we have to do is flood the hillsides with some of that old Greek junk that Venus likes to play with.

Apollo: And make sure the papers get hold of it.

Snodgrass: Wouldn't worry about that, old man. The Corporation already has full title deeds to Olympus. It's all signed and sealed.

Apollo: Which takes care of that idea.

Zeus: We'll have to think again.

Ares: It's your own fault, Zeus. Leaving an underling to handle your affairs with mankind. Now, if you'd

Hermes: Who are you calling an underling?

Ares: Who else but an ass who puts wings on his feet.

Hermes: And you're getting to sassy for your sandals, Ares.

Zeus: Stop squabbling you two. This is a serious matter.

Snodgrass: You see? I told you. We're onto something really big here.

Steinwich: You're right. We're going to make a killing. But it's going to cost a bit. We'll have to put up a few ruins of temples and that sort of thing. Expensive business - building ruins.

Snodgrass: True. But it'll be worth it.

Zeus: I can't listen to any more of this. A pollo, stop time for a minute, will you? We've got to talk this out.

Apollo: Perhaps I'd better make it more than a minute.

Zeus: This is no time for jokes! Get on with it!

(APOLLO goes through a complicated ritual at the end of which there is a flash with, perhaps, a crash of thunder; SNODGRASS and STEINWICH freeze. They remain frozen in these positions throughout the following sequence).

Zeus: Now, listen, you gods. We've GOT to stop these humans from desecrating our home. It's bad enough the way they've spread all over the world wiping out other species everywhere, but when they start talking about making Olympus into a Holiday Centre, well, that's going too far!

Dionysius: Surprisingly, we agree with you, Zeus.

Zeus: I mean, can you imagine what it would be like?

Dionysius: All too easily. They'd be crawling all over Olympus like ants, except that ants are more organised. And the noise! Have you heard the stuff they call music these days?

Hephaestus: I certainly have. It sounds like pigs being prodded with blunt spears.

Dionysius: Exactly. And they'd have it blaring right across the hillsides with those things they call shout-squeakers.

Hermes: You mean loud-speakers.

Dionysius: Whatever they are. Just think. It'd be like living in a slaughter house.

Hermes: I quite like their music.

Ares: You would!

Zeus: We're not holding this council to discuss the aesthetic value of Boulder music.

Hermes: It's rock.

Zeus: Whatever the geological term. Has anyone any suggestions?

Hephaestus: The obvious one.

Zeus: What's that then?

Hephaestus: Well, it's obvious.

Zeus: You're beginning to make me angry, Hephaestus, and you know what happens to gods who make me angry

Apollo: Poor Prometheus. I really think it's time you let him go. Living without a liver must be rather painful.

Hermes: How true!

Ares: It's his own fault. All Prometheus has to do is tell us who the new gods are going to be, who's going to replace us on Olympus. He's an ass!

Zeus: (*shouting*) Silence!

(*Pause while ZEUS controls himself.*)

Zeus: This is a council of gods, not a meeting of the House of Commons! We've got a crisis on our hands. Let me make it totally clear. We are not going to discuss Prometheus, or modern music, or pig-farming, or any other subject that may come to your butterfly minds. Hephaestus. You said you had a solution. Stop messing about and tell me what it is!

Hephaestus: It's obvious.

(*ZEUS makes a threatening gesture with his thunderbolt.*)

Hephaestus: All right, all right. It's quite simple. You've already solved the problem. Just look at 'em! (*He points to SNODGRASS and STEINWICH.*)

Zeus: You mean turn them to stone?

Apollo: That wouldn't be any good. You're forgetting there's an international corporation behind them. They'd just send more men.

Hephaestus: No, I didn't mean that. I meant leave time stopped.

Dionysius: But that would mean nothing would happen in the world!

Hephaestus: True.

Dionysius: Then what would we gods do for entertainment?

Apollo: Can you imagine the goddesses agreeing to that? It's their main interest in immortality, gossiping about the latest things human beings are up to. Like women's lib. I seem to remember mentioning

Zeus: (*ominously*) Apollo (*slight pause*) No. That won't do. Stopping time is too drastic. Come on, everyone! Think!

(*A longer pause.*)

Ares: Well, I know what we should do. It's what I've been suggesting all along anyway and it'd solve the problem as well as provide us with some splendid entertainment.

Zeus: You mean, let mankind have their Third World War which they seem to want so much?

Dionysius: Trust you, Ares, to suggest a cure that's worse than the disease.

Ares: I don't see that it is.

Dionysius: You wouldn't.

Ares: You're just soft, Dionysius. Comes of drinking too much wine.

Dionysius: And you're bloodthirsty enough to be a human, the way you go on.

Zeus: Be silent you two! I'm thinking.

Dionysius: Zeus, you're not seriously considering it, are you?

Zeus: Well, for want of anything better

Apollo: I have a suggestion.

Ares: Don't listen to him, Zeus.

Apollo: I suggest we get Hermes to talk to these two (*He gestures at SNODGRASS and STEINWICH*) before we think of doing anything else. He might be able to talk some sense into them.

Zeus: Yes. Yes, that's the most sensible suggestion so far. We'll do that.

Hermes: Hold on! You've forgotten: I'm on strike.

Zeus: You can't be. I'm giving you an order.

Hermes: And I'm refusing it. You can do what you like to me but get someone else to do your dirty work.

Zeus: I wish there was someone I could appeal to to give me patience! All right. If Hermes won't do it let's see who

(All the GODS start backing away into the wings, all speaking together after HEPHAESTUS' speech).

Hephaestus: Dear me, I nearly forgot. I promised Hades I'd visit him today.

Ares: Which reminds me. Hera asked me to

Heracles: Poseidon sent me a message

Apollo: I think Diana's expecting me

Dionysius: Unfortunately, I've got some new wine to

Zeus: (*Shouts*) Just a minute! Stay where you are, all of you!

(The GODS stop moving away. ZEUS considers each one in turn. Finally, he decides).

Zeus: Heracles. You'll do.

Heracles: But Zeus

Zeus: No excuses. Now be a good hero and show yourself to these two humans. See if you can make them see reason.

Heracles: But what'll I say to them?

Dionysius: That's our Heracles! All brawn and no brain.

Zeus: (*looking at DIONYSIUS*) Maybe you're right. Perhaps you

Dionysius: (*Hurriedly*) No, no. Of course. You're right. After all he was a human once, wasn't he? Oh, clearly he's the right choice!

Zeus: Just give them the facts, Heracles. Threaten them if necessary.

Heracles: Honestly, Zeus, I don't think I'm the right god for this job.

Zeus: Don't worry. We'll tell you what to say, if you're stuck. Go on. Get over there. That's better. Now, Apollo. Make him visible and start time again.

Apollo: As Zeus orders.

(*APOLLO goes through the ritual again, with something added to make HERACLES visible. Flash and thunder. SNODGRASS jumps back on seeing HERACLES close to him, and STEINWICH falls backwards with a screech of terror.*)

Snodgrass: How did you get here? The whole mountain top was empty!

Steinwich: (*sheltering behind SNODGRASS and still on the ground*) Careful, Snodgrass. He looks rather a dodgy character!

Snodgrass: (*Hopefully*) Looks harmless enough to me. Don't suppose he speaks any English.

Heracles: Of course I do. I speak every language in the world.

Snodgrass: EVERY language? Oh, really. That's nice. Jolly good. Live round here, do you?

Heracles: Yes, I live on Olympus.

(*Pause.*)

Zeus: Oh, do get on with it, Heracles!

Heracles: I'm trying to.

Snodgrass: I beg your pardon?

Heracles: Sorry. I was just talking to Zeus.

Snodgrass: Who?

Heracles: Zeus.

Snodgrass: The king of the gods, you mean?

Heracles: Who else?

Snodgrass: It's all right, Steinwich. A simple nutcase. No problem. Do get up off the ground.

Steinwich: (*getting up*) I hope you're right, Snodgrass.

Snodgrass: Of course I'm right. (*Turning back to HERACLES*) Farm around here, do you?

Heracles: Farm? No. I'm resting from my labours.

Snodgrass: Oh really? How interesting. (*To STEINWICH*). We must humour him. (*To HERACLES*). By the way, my name's Snodgrass and this is Mr Steinwich.

Heracles: I know.

Snodgrass: You've heard of us? That's very gratifying, I must say. And you, sir?

Heracles: Me?

Snodgrass: Your name?

Heracles: Heracles.

Snodgrass: Didn't the Romans call you Hercules?

Heracles: That's right.

Snodgrass: I must say I always thought Hercules was a bigger man, more muscly.

Heracles: Oh no, I've never been big, but I am strong. Would you like me to show you?

(HERACLES grabs both of them by the scruff of the neck).

Steinwich: (*nervously*) N..N..No thank you very much! We'll take your word for it.

Heracles: I could throw you round the world, if you like - AND catch you again!

Snodgrass: Not necessary, I assure you.

Zeus: Do get on with it, Heracles!

(HERACLES, turning towards ZEUS backstage, drops SNODGRASS and STEINWICH in a heap on the floor).

Heracles: (*going back to ZEUS*) Really and truly, Zeus, I don't think I can do this.

(ZEUS speaks to HERACLES sotto voce, while STEINWICH and SNODGRASS pick themselves up and converse).

Snodgrass: He's talking to fresh air again.

Steinwich: Honestly, Snodgrass, I'm scared. I think we should leave.

Snodgrass: I agree, but we mustn't be too sudden. Madmen have to be handled gently. Just leave it to me.

Zeus: (*finishing with HERACLES*) Now go on back there and tell them!

Heracles: (*returning to the two humans*) Zeus says you've got to give up the idea of building a Holiday Centre on Mount Olympus.

Snodgrass: (*Sharply*) Now how did you know about that? It was supposed to be top secret!

Steinwich: That's bad. Must be a leak in Head Office.

Snodgrass: Who told you, Mr Heracles?

Heracles: You did.

Snodgrass: I did? When?

Heracles: Just a little while ago.

Snodgrass: Ah, that explains why we didn't see you before. You were hiding up here and overheard our conversation, eh?

Heracles: (*Mildly*) I wasn't hiding.

Snodgrass: No, of course you weren't. Well now, I'm sure we can come to an amicable arrangement.

Heracles: Good. That's what we want.

Snodgrass: Exactly, exactly. Let's see now. How does 20,000 sound to you?

Heracles: 20,000 what?

Snodgrass: Pounds, of course, pounds. Not dollars.

Steinwich: A bit steep isn't it, Snodgrass?

Snodgrass: Let me handle this, Steinwich. I know what I'm doing.

Apollo: He's trying to bribe you, Heracles!

Heracles: Is he? I didn't realise. Thanks, Apollo.

Snodgrass: There's someone else here besides Zeus?

Heracles: Yes, several of the gods and Apollo says you're trying to bribe me.

Snodgrass: Now would I do that? Never! I'm merely trying to arrange a reasonable and honest compensation. Perhaps 20 thou is a bit low. How about 30,000?

(*HERACLES shakes his head*).

Snodgrass: 50,000?

(*HERACLES shakes his head again*).

Snodgrass: 100,000?

Steinwich: Steady on, Snodgrass!

Heracles: It's no good offering me money. All we want is for you and your corporation to go away and leave us in peace.

Steinwich: (*stepping in quickly*) Yes, yes. Of course! Absolutely! We agree.

Heracles: Good. You promise not to bother us any more with your ideas of ruined temples and flattening the mountain and all that sort of thing?

Steinwich: We promise. Definitely.

Heracles: (*To SNODGRASS*) And you? You promise too?

Snodgrass: My dear sir, of course! Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience. And now, if you'll excuse us, we really must leave.

Apollo: They're lying to you, Heracles.

Snodgrass: It's been a pleasure meeting you.

Steinwich: Yes, indeed!

(As they move to walk past him, one on each side, HERACLES puts out both hands and holds them back).

Heracles: Apollo says you're lying.

Steinwich: Oh dear. Oh dear.

Snodgrass: Be quiet, Steinwich! *(To HERACLES)*. Apollo, did you say? *(He makes a sweeping gesture round the stage)*. Which one of these gods is Apollo? Perhaps if you pointed him out to me, I could persuade him how utterly trustworthy we are.

Steinwich: *(fearfully looking around)* What gods?

Heracles: *(pointing)* He's over there.

Snodgrass: Thank you.

(He crosses towards APOLLO but misses him and starts talking to fresh air, while APOLLO stands behind him copying his every gesture).

Snodgrass: How do you do, Mr Apollo. *(He pretends to shake hands)*. Your friend here has advised us that you're not too happy about our agreement. Let me assure you that we belong to one of the world's greatest and most reliable corporations, and I, as an accredited executive, can positively confirm that we will honour the agreement and trouble you no longer. *(He bows)*. Thank you for allowing me so much of your valuable time. I knew you would understand. *(He returns to HERACLES)*. There you are. Apollo says he's quite happy now.

Heracles: Apollo didn't say anything.

Snodgrass: He didn't? Er no, of course he didn't. But we shook hands on it.

Ares: We're wasting time.

Zeus: Freeze them!

(APOLLO does a hurried ritual, thunder and lightning, and catches SNODGRASS and STEINWICH just as they are about to leave the stage).

Zeus: You really made a hash of that, didn't you Heracles?

Heracles: I told you I wouldn't be any good at the job.

Dionysius: Why don't we all appear to the humans? Surely then

Ares: No good. They'd die. They can't take more than one god at a time,

especially these days.

Dionysius: Well then, what are we going to do?

Hephaestus: There's really only one other alternative.

Zeus: And what's that?

Hephaestus: Make them immortal.

Zeus: Hmm ... A bit drastic, isn't it? You mean, make these two city gents one of us?

Apollo: Not one. Two. Two of us.

Ares: Don't do it, Zeus. You're just playing into Apollo's hands. You know very well that's what he'd like to do with all human beings. Make them all into gods.

Apollo: I didn't suggest it. It was Hephaestus' idea. But it's a good one nevertheless. Once they've become immortal, they won't want to build this wretched holiday camp any more.

Zeus: That's true.

Ares: I'm warning you, Zeus: nothing good will come of it! Let me get a full scale war underway. That'll fix it nicely.

Apollo: And how long do you think that would last? With the weapons these humans have nowadays, I'd estimate twenty minutes, perhaps.

Dionysius: And there'd be hardly any of them left to entertain us. I don't think the goddesses would be too happy about that.

Zeus: Oh, very well.

ZEUS crosses to SNODGRASS and STEINWICH and waves his thunderbolt. Thunder and lightning. SNODGRASS and STEINWICH "come alive", move, look around them in consternation at the company of gods.

Snodgrass: What's happening? We were just leaving. Who are all these people?

Apollo: Not people. Gods.

Snodgrass: I feel funny.

Steinwich: Bandits! We've had it, Snodgrass!

Dionysius: No, Steinwich. You'll have to get used to the idea. You're one of us now.

Steinwich: One of you? How do you mean? I don't understand.

Dionysius: You've become an immortal.

Snodgrass: What nonsense!

Apollo: It's a fact, Snodgrass.

Snodgrass: I must be going mad!

Dionysius: I find it a most enjoyable state myself.

Snodgrass: (*Looking at STEINWICH*) But we can't both be going mad in the same way. I've got a sort of tingly feeling.

Steinwich: So have I! Oh dear!

Zeus: Don't worry about that. It's just the after-effects of being transformed. It'll soon wear off. Well everybody, a job well done! Now let's go and join the ladies. I feel like a celebration. We'll have a banquet.

Apollo: Give them a chance, Zeus. They haven't got used to being gods yet.

Snodgrass: Strange. I want to believe it. I sort of feel it. And yet common sense dictates ...

Ares: Common sense? Leave that to the common herd. It's not for us.

Apollo: I understand what you're going through, Snodgrass. Here, let me prove it to you. Come with me! (*He takes SNODGRASS by the arm to front stage and gestures out at the audience*) There you are. Take a look. It's better than your TV, isn't it? The whole world going about its normally underhand business.

Snodgrass: Fantastic! I say, Steinwich, do come and have a look at this!

Steinwich: (*Dazed, after crossing to stand beside SNODGRASS, and looking*) So it's true.

Snodgrass: It MUST be!

Space here to insert extra dialogue on current world news whether ad libbed or scripted.

Snodgrass: Tell me, Mr Apollo ...

Apollo: No need for the "Mister" between gods, Snodgrass old man!

Snodgrass: Thank you. Tell me, Apollo, if we're immortal now ...

Apollo: Which you are.

Snodgrass: What sort of powers have we got?

Apollo: Oh, the usual. You can put thought and feelings into human minds. Most of the time it works but it takes a bit of practice.

Snodgrass: Perfect! How absolutely splendid! Steinwich! Don't you see?

Steinwich: (*Hesitantly*) See what, old man?

Snodgrass: Not even in my wildest dreams ... (*he gives a sudden and unexpected whoop of joy, picks up STEINWICH and dances him around the stage*)

Zeus: It's gratifying to see them so happy.

Apollo: (*Beginning to look worried*) Perhaps.

Steinwich: I say, steady on old boy!

Snodgrass: (*Stopping*) Sorry, old man. Feeling rather light-headed, don't you know. The set-up's so ideal!

Dionysius: Glad you like it. Now you really must come and meet the goddesses. They're going to be fascinated by you two.

Snodgrass: (*Becoming serious and shaking his head*) Naturally we're looking forward to it immensely, but I regret it's just not possible at the moment. Far too much to do.

Dionysius: But you've got all eternity to do it in!

Snodgrass: Nevertheless, work must come first.

Zeus: Work? What work?

Snodgrass: The World Corporation Holiday Centre, of course.

Zeus: Your sense of duty is most commendable. Yes, we must get moving on that and prevent any further developments. You're quite right. By the way, I don't suppose you two are willing to take over Hermes' job, are you? I'll make you the gods of Politics and Economics. How about that?

Snodgrass: We'd be honoured. Very kind of you.

Steinwich: Most kind.

Zeus: Well? How about it then?

Snodgrass: Yes, of course. With pleasure. Don't you agree, Steinwich?

Steinwich: Oh, absolutely!

Zeus: Good. That's settled. *(He turns to the other gods)* Anyone for a pint of nectar?

Dionysius: Aphrodite has a fine brew going at the moment.

Zeus: On we go then. We'll leave the gods of Politics and Economics to their work. *They all troop out chattering, except APOLLO who pretends to go out with the others, but returns and hides behind a boulder.*

Snodgrass: *(Checking that everyone has left)* They've gone. Now we can talk.

Steinwich: A plan of action.

Snodgrass: Quite. Clearly, the first step is to take over the Corporation.

Steinwich: You mean, you and I as joint presidents?

Snodgrass: Not quite. Since it's my idea, I think you should be vice-president.

Steinwich: Oh, I say Snodgrass, aren't you being rather high-handed?

Snodgrass: We mustn't bicker over it. This thing's much too big to argue over such trifles.

Steinwich: I suppose so.

Snodgrass: Once we've got the Corporation under control, then we can go ahead with the development here on Olympus.

Steinwich: Oh. I thought we had to drop that idea.

Snodgrass: Whatever for? It was economically viable before and it's still economically viable.

Steinwich: But didn't Zeus say ...

Snodgrass: He's an old fuddy-duddy. All of 'em need pepping up a bit, don't you think? We'll have to change our approach, customer-wise, of course. No more package-deals for the rabble.

Steinwich: Yes, I see. At least, I think so ...

Snodgrass: We'll be attracting the rich and the powerful. World leaders' holidays. It'll be absolutely ideal! We'll be able to control them all without having to move a foot off Olympus!

Steinwich: Oh, I say! What a fabulous idea!

Snodgrass: Yes, I thought it was rather good. (*Musing*) We'll use every penny the Corporation possesses and build the most fantastic hotel the world has ever seen. The ultimate - yes, we'll call it the Ultimate Olympus. The ultimate in comfort, the ultimate in everything!

Steinwich: What a vision! Brilliant!

Snodgrass: And as for Zeus and the rest, they'll just have to accept the fait accompli. They're so slow and backward. No zip!

Steinwich: Yes, I must admit, for gods, they are rather low-key, aren't they? I mean, living on this barren hillside like peasants.

Snodgrass: We'll soon change all that, don't you worry. Plenty of piped music and vintage port, eh? Come on Steinwich! We've got a lot to do!

Steinwich: Absolutely. Not a minute to waste. I'm with you all the way, Snodgrass!
SNODGRASS and STEINWICH exit.

As soon as the stage is empty, APOLLO comes out from behind the boulder, thoughtfully, talking to himself.

Apollo: I wonder ... Could it be? Prometheus' secret? Is it? It certainly looks like it. First of all the Titans ruled but we conquered them. Then Zeus took over. And now WE'RE going to be beaten. A new ruler: Snodgrass, the god of Money, Economics triumphant! It fits! (*He shakes his head sadly*) Well, I suppose I'd better tell the others. (*He turns and shouts backstage*) Zeus! We're in trouble!

All the GODS except HERMES rush on with "what's happened?", "what's wrong?", etc.

Apollo: They're going ahead with it.

Zeus: What did you say?

Apollo: They're going ahead with it.

Zeus: You must be joking!

Apollo: I promise you I'm not! They intend building a monstrosity called "The Ultimate Olympus". I overheard them talking. It's definite. They've gone off to start work on it straightaway.

Zeus: Oh no! We've got to stop them!

Dionysius: Yes, but how?

Ares: Who knows? YOU made them into gods, Zeus! I told you not to!

Zeus: (*Roaring in anger*) I'll pin 'em down beside Prometheus when they get back!

Hephaestus: IF you can get your hands on them!

Apollo: Exactly! They're not likely to come anywhere near you, are they?

ZEUS gives a roar of frustration. The GODS cower back.

Zeus: (*Shouting*) Hermes! Where's Hermes?

Hermes: (*Strolling on nonchalantly*) I'm here, but simply as an observer. Don't forget, I'm on strike.

Zeus: (*Controlling himself with difficulty*) Have you heard what's happened?

Hermes: I knew about it all along. I haven't been dealing with humans for the last three thousand years for nothing, you know!

Zeus: Then why didn't you SAY something?

Hermes: Didn't need to.

Zeus: (*Roars*) Didn't need to! Here we are facing total disaster and he says he didn't need to! (*Controls himself*) Listen, Hermes. I'm not angry with you. I'm pleading with you! You're the only one of us with the experience. You're the only one who can save us. Please ... please ... Do something!

Hermes: Do you promise not to use me as a messenger ever again?

Zeus: I promise. I promise.

Hermes: Swear on your thunderbolt. Tell it to strike you down if you ever go back on your word!

Zeus: I swear.

Hermes: Go on. Do it properly.

Zeus: I swear on my thunderbolt and may it strike me down if I ever go back on my word; I promise never to use Hermes as a messenger again - except for this one last time!

Hermes: And you won't threaten me ever again with Prometheus' punishment or anything like it?

Zeus: I promise never to threaten Hermes with any sort of a punishment ever again.

Hermes: Good.

Zeus: Then you'll do it?

Hermes: Of course. Except that I don't have to DO anything!

Zeus: What do you mean?

Hermes: Honestly, sometimes I think you've all gone senile!

Zeus: (*Bristling*) I've a good mind to ...

Hermes: Now then! Naughty, naughty!

Zeus: Sorry.

Dionysius: Come on, Hermes, tell us!

Hermes: Well, it's quite simple really. You don't think these two baby gods are going to be able to use their untried powers successfully, do you? It takes centuries of practice. I should know! I've sweated to perfect them! So it's simple: they'll make a hash of it. All we've got to do is watch and enjoy the show!

Zeus: By myself, he's right!

Hermes: Of course I am!

Zeus: What a relief!

Hermes: (*Aside*) Perhaps. It's certainly going to solve MY problem!

Zeus: What did you say?

Hermes: Nothing.

Hephaestus: (*From front stage, looking into the audience*) Come on, everyone.
You're missing it!

All the GODS line themselves along the front of the stage.

Heracles: (*Pointing*) Look at that! Snodgrass has reached the White House!

Dionysius: And Steinwich is drinking vodka with the Russian leaders!

Apollo: Wow! What a deus ex machina this is going to be!

Hephaestus: They're trying to get them to book holidays in the Ultimate Olympus.

Ares: (*Laughing*) And the Russians are convinced it's an evil capitalist plot to wipe out world communism.

Apollo: The Yanks are getting equally paranoid! But what are those two fools up to now? Did I hear right?

Hermes: (*With a smile*) You did. They've persuaded both superpowers that they now have a 100% effective defence against nuclear attack.

Zeus: That ought to stop the arms race.

Apollo: (*Horried*) On the contrary. It's the final straw. Now they feel safe from attack, both sides are planning an immediate first strike! We've got to stop them!

Zeus: Hermes! Do something about it!

Hermes: It's too late. And anyway, I've achieved my brief: there won't be anyone left around, in a few moments, to build the Ultimate Olympus.

Zeus: Oh, no!

Hermes: Oh, yes!

Heracles: Oh dear!

Ares: Hooray!

Apollo: America's pressed the button!

Hephaestus: So have Russia!

Dionysius: Ooh! Don't they look beautiful, gliding through space like silver spears!

Zeus: It's the end!

Total black out.

One bright flash.

A loud explosion, preferably from the back of the auditorium.

CURTAIN