

## XYZ

I'm not sure why I'm even trying to explain it to you, human. But you keep getting it wrong, and you've somehow got the idea that he's particularly interested in your not very attractive species. He, wide-ruling Zeus, all-screwing, ever curious. You think of Leda, Europa, Semele, Ganymede, all these girls and boys he's had, and you pat your species on its back about how gorgeous you are, at any rate in the few moments between your extended infancy and the senility that almost immediately follows. Then you wonder: why can't he get it at home, with the even sexier population of Olympus? And why does he always take some form - swan, bull or cloud - that makes the consummation at best tricky and sometimes inconceivable?

What you have to get into your tiny skulls is this. It's very different being a god. It's so different that you'd have to be a god to see how different it is. First of all, sex with another god isn't really sex. It's more like your masturbation, because gods aren't distinct in the way that people are. They overlap and fade at the boundaries. When Zeus and Hera fuck they're each thinking of some delicious mortal quite distinct from themselves. So distinct, so much just one thing, that their individuality must eventually fade. They die. That's the main reason the gods made mortal living things, to make their fantasies real. In a way you're nothing but their sexual fantasies.

But not you particularly, not you humans. He'd rather have a sheep, or a dolphin, or a wolf. Best of all he'd rather set up a combination: a wolf with a sheep, a bull with a human. The more distinct the better.

And the more distinct the more interesting the problems. Problems of courtship, anatomical problems, problems about the consequences. He loves the problems.

Wolf-and-sheep particularly fascinates him. I've been roped into so many of them. But one incident sticks particularly in my mind. I was passing through the mountains on one of my messenger days, wearing nothing but a single pair of wings at my heels. He was unmistakable, though it does take one to know one. He was a very handsome wolf, and he was just cruising along in the mountains, looking for bighorns, humming a little ditty to himself.

Wolf in sheepish clothing,  
Mutton dressed as lamb.  
Ewe who see me roaming,  
You don't know who I am.

He must have liked those lines because he hummed them three or four times, trying out various tunes. Anyone but another god would have thought it was the wind rushing around the cliffs. And then around the bend in a cliff path came a sheep, a large female with horns curved right round like a male's. She was trotting along at a good lick and came right up to him, this large sleek wolf murmuring to himself. She didn't turn back. She didn't seem at all fazed. She put down her head and butted him right over so he rolled a couple of times till he recovered and had a good look at her. It's not often that you see Zeus surprised. He usually has it all calculated well in advance. But there was this beautiful sheep, just standing there with her head tilted slightly, and he'd had no idea.

He immediately set the magical shimmering charm oozing out from his pelt and began strolling towards her. She didn't take fright. There was none of the usual business of "it's a large carnivore but somehow I like it". Instead she danced away a few steps and looked back, as an ewe would to a ram. Chase me please and maybe you'll catch me. This went on for an hour or more, him unable not to use his Don't Fear I'm Gorgeous manner, but her showing no fear for him to overcome. They did their little minuet around the rocks, up down left right and round again, and then - He slipped. His left hind paw missed its ledge and he teetered for a moment groping for a new footing. Instantly, she turned and applied her large capable horns to his flank. Over he went and up she went, and down on top of him. Facing his tail, her heavy rump on his belly. Not an elegant position for the god in wolfish clothing, as she held him down with her weight and forced herself down on his scarlet Olympian penis. It did not look as if he was delighted with the turn his seduction had taken, but it was a happy sheep that bounced off him ten minutes later and scampered up a vertical cliff face.

Too vertical. Not even a sheep, not any real sheep. I watched his exhausted wolf face as the truth sunk in, of the laughter on high as Hera added another little gem to the annals of the goddesses.

You can't live on Olympus unless you can take a joke. It's the stuff of life up there. It's more or less a non-stop joke when we're home. Except for the sex, and that's a laughing matter too. So those few gods who don't appreciate laughter stay away from the place. They stay away from other gods, in fact, because you can't put two gods together without getting a trick and a chuckle. It's like wires and

batteries. But, left too much alone, they can get very very serious. They can develop delusions of uniqueness

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There was one in particular, let's just call him Y. Very solemn, very brooding, very solitary. Very unamused by sex. Dignity above all. Y and Z found each other intolerable, so intolerable that Y stalked off far away and found his own little group of worshippers out in the desert, who he didn't need to share with anyone. They were few but they were his. And they didn't like jokes. So that was just fine for Y.

It wasn't completely fine for Z. Even out in the desert Y annoyed him. It irked him that Y had got out of teasing range. And so, being the tactless irrepressible god that he is, he set out for Y's unappetizing playground with mischief in mind.

I wish I could have stayed out of it. But there's no point arguing with the boss when he knows what he wants. Better to jump smartly on board and see if you can influence the navigation. So I did what I was told. I pimped for his thunderousness, as so often before.

He had his eye on a girl. One of Y's faithful. And his plan was to mess around with her in his usual way, but so as to cause Y maximal annoyance. He intended a child to result from this coupling, and he intended to pass the child off as Y's.

I appeared in her chamber at sunrise. In full dress uniform. Wings galore, on feet, hat and shoulders. An iridescent scarf - Hermès of course. And with a message. Z had told me what to say. His chosen words were:

Graceful Mary, in your place  
I wouldn't hide that pretty face  
I'd hold the rosy flower up  
An offering for a god to pluck.

But I had persuaded him not to use that one. It wouldn't appeal to a pious thoughtful girl immune to flattery. She had to see the appeal of the plan itself. Or at any rate a carefully packaged, metaphysically embroidered version of the plan. My first words were.

Little scholar, wise and frum  
Destiny awaits your womb.  
The luftmensch now within your space  
Bears news essential to your race.

She was listening. I continued. I explained that the messiah was overdue. I explained that he needed to be born at the right place and to the right parents. I explained many things, but not who had really sent me. She agreed. Need I say more?

That was a long time ago, and a lot has happened since. One question has come to haunt me, though. Really, in the end, who was the butt of this joke?