

# The Gods in Suits

*(Os Deuses de Casaca)*

**A Comedy**

*by*

**Machado de Assis**

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

*This libretto is dedicated*

*to*

*José Feliciano de Castilho*

*by the author.*

## INTRODUCTION

The author of this comedy considers himself exempt from offering literary explanations of so unambitious a work. He did, however, wish to explain the how and why of its conception and his thought in composing it. About a year ago, when a few gentlemen hosted literary salons on Quitanda Street, the author was among those invited to contribute to the festivities and wrote *The Gods in Suits*. Until that time it was his gifted friend, Ernesto Cibrão, who wrote the plays staged at the Dramatic Gymnasium Theater (Teatro Gymnasio Dramatico).

In those days, the performance of *The Gods in Suits* was impeded by a public disaster, and in good time the disaster (the egoism of the author!) – because the comedy, once rehearsed and examined – suffered corrections, additions, until it was suitably performed at the salon of the Arcadia Fluminense, on the 28th of December of last year [1865] to the same audience of former salons, omni arcades.

The author cannot confirm that the piece was definitively finished, but at least he became contented with the good will of its reception. One of the constraints imposed on the author of this comedy, like [Camões,] the author of *The Lusians* (1572), was that women would not be represented in the works. Under such conditions, the author could not, as desired, allow the goddesses to enter the fray nor to join in the desertion of Olympus by their peers. Those of insight in such matters will perceive the great difficulty of writing a comedy without the Ladies.

It was less difficult for Garrett and Voltaire to dispense with the feminine element while spurring the Roman virtues and civil strife of the Republic into dramatic action. But a comedy without women, for the entertainment of a social evening, limited to a variation for piano (with tea service), is easier to read than to compose.

The author did not wish to make fun of the gods nor incite the audience to laughter at the expense of the old inhabitants of Olympus. This declaration is necessary to advise any who, giving the title of the comedy an erroneous interpretation, prepare themselves to read a burlesque tale in the style of Paul Scarron's *Virgile travesti* (1648-1653).

This comedy – an innocuous critique, an innocent satire, and a more or less fiery observation – all imagined from the viewpoint of the gods, is a dramaturgy so simple as to be almost non-existent, jammed into short dialogues.

The author gave his gods speech in Alexandrian tone: it was the most proper. The alexandrines have their adversaries even among men of mark, yet some believe that one day they will finally be esteemed and cultivated by all the muses, Brazilian and Portuguese.

This will be the victory of efforts begun by Antonio Feliciano de Castilho, the illustrious author of the *Epistle to the Empress* (1856), who naturalized the alexandrine so well in the language of Garrett and Gonzaga with patience and brilliance. The author has enjoyed the good fortune of seeing his own "Verses to Corina" (*Crisálidas*, 1864), written in the same style, well-received by connoisseurs. Should the alexandrines of this comedy enjoy the same fate it will be a just reward for all those who cultivate consciousness and meditation through their work.

Machado de Assis

Rio de Janeiro,

January 1, 1866.

# **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

**PROLOGUE**

**EPILOGUE**

**JUPITER**

**MARS**

**APOLLO**

**PROTEUS**

**CUPID**

**VULCAN**

**MERCURY**

# ACT ONE

*(a room furnished with elegance and taste, some mythological paintings, bottles of wine and goblets on a table.)*

## PROLOGUE

*(entering)*

Can you guess who I am? I'm the Prologue.

Changed, I return from my origins, dressed not in the fashions of ancient Rome. I don't look half bad! I stick a thick thumb to any evil eye.

Nor am I old. Catching the eye of a lovely dame, the enraptured dancer would increase her fame, if you'll let me have this dance. I'm the New Prologue.

My feet are too long for the Greek leather straps, but dressed in better fare: the house of the champs kicks a boot in the air.

Nor do I shoulder a burden severe, for this flexible body, in accord with the year, is fit in a suit designed by Raunier.

Pocket watch and chain, gloves and pince-nez complete my costume. And the piece? The play is new. The poet, somewhat daring, wanted to start the engines to test the power of his art.

One day, instead of walking down the highway, I found a shortcut – which is nothing unsound – and took my way by a different route. Too many travelers on the road raise so much dust it's a disgrace, and choking to death is of obvious distaste.

So, with peaceful spirit and a tranquil expression, inspiration sought out the righteous path to make of act and scene a finished math.



To reach such heights through agony, ecstasy, I had the reality and the fantasy. Two fields!  
But which of the sides? It was difficult to decide.

Which did the poet finally choose? The former of landscapes and prose, or the latter of psalms  
and myrtle's glow?

Life, abounding in bliss and joy, also contains a tedious woe. What did the poet do? He took  
a middle way to produce a duality and gave right hand to fantasy and his left to reality.

With the first he traversed the invisible ethers to infuse himself with a nobler, dignified tone.  
With the other, armed with an invincible humility, he strolled one night down Listener's Street  
(Rua d'Ouvidor), alone.

No sooner did one element consort with its opposite than one transformed into the other; the  
time had come to complete the desired work.

I hereby apologize for the shyness of the muse: the poet, although committed to poetry, did  
not write a part for the women. Scandalous! Oh, but the fight I put up for you, fairer sex! The  
soul of my argument! It was nothing short of valorous! true heroism! Yet, I was in the minority.  
The opposite came to pass. Ladies, without your approval the work is doomed!

The play will now begin. It's a fantasy in one act. Without puppet strings or projected  
images, you will behold from old Olympus the divine personages deliver their lines in  
alexandrine verse and, from beginning to end, enact and unact a pagan intrigue.

I should be silent!

Now from out the mundane comedy, divine actors take the stage. Please hold your flowers  
and save your applause until the curtain. I'll be off to the side to get the best view of the play by  
the name of

# *The Gods in Suits.*

## Scene I

MERCURY (*seated*), JUPITER (*entering*)

JUPITER

(*enters, stops and puts his hand to his ear*)

I think I hear Pan's flute!

MERCURY

(*rising*)

What flute? That's a guitar.

JUPITER

(*going to him*)

Mercury, you have mail to deliver this morning.

MERCURY

Finally! I thought I'd lost even the functions of a messenger. At the very least I want to serve the gods as my equals. Thank you, father, flower of the nation, you are our divine, honored and ultimate guide!

JUPITER

(*sitting down*)

What a hot day! Give me a glass of ambrosia. Or nectar.

MERCURY

(*laughing*)

Ambrosia or nectar!

JUPITER

Indeed! They're reminders of our divinity in days long passed to the ravages of time.

MERCURY

Ah, but those times will return!

JUPITER

*(sighs)*

Perhaps.

MERCURY

*(offering wine)*

A chalice of Alicante? A chalice of sherry?

*(Jupiter makes a gesture of indifference; Mercury pours wine; Jupiter drinks)*

JUPITER

What a divine elixir!

MERCURY

*(pouring for himself)*

Some call these wines profane; the fortune of mortals, human delight.

*(drinks and grimaces)*

It burns like Stygian water!

JUPITER

Alas! Amalthea, the goat, gave milk better than this wine.

MERCURY

What a thought! The better to sate your thirst, Father!

*(removes the bottles and chalices)*

JUPITER

Here are the letters, Mercury. Take them and go in search of Apollo, Proteus, Vulcan, and all. The oracle is clear and sovereign. It's necessary to discuss, resolve and settle the means to scale and retake Olympus.

## Scene II

JUPITER

*(alone, continuing to reflect)*

... Those were the days when Enceladus and Typhoeus sought to climb against me. Time flew, and I turned from invader to invaded! Law of eternal return! So, I was you; I had the power in my hands, and the universe at my feet. Today, a mortal facing setback after setback I seek to reconquer my sovereign post. You speak truth, Momo, the human heart must have a door to open, where we can read, as in a book, what hides inside. Giving too much care to the judgment of man, I forgot to complete the work and make it sublime. What's this judgment worth? Restless and vacillating, like a ship adrift on a restless sea, man foolishly cedes to the movement of every passion, blown by every wind. He is the slave of fashion and the whimsy of fools. Boastful lord of the animal, this beast whose slaves imitate animals least. Ever in the same way, O, bee, your honey crystalizes. As ever, O, exemplary otter, your home sets sail along the ribs of the sea. Even today, employing the same old laws, you live in your earth, O provident ants. Swallows of the sky, you have the mission still to become, after the winter, summer songs. You alone, uncertain and proud man, not seeking out the vast creation of these lessons so pure... Today you skip off to Paris like Athens past; the shadow of Carthage falls this instant upon London. If only you could return to your ancient state!

## Scene III

JUPITER, MARS, VULCAN

*(arm in arm)*

VULCAN

*(to Jupiter)*

I'm down with Mars. He's my man.

JUPITER

That's more like it! It's time to put behind us vain quarrels over matters of the heart. Higher duties call us, my children. Beautiful Venus has eluded you both. Vanished! She's gone! Where has she disappeared to? Have you seen her?

MARS

Vulcan did.

JUPITER

You did?

VULCAN

Yeah, yeah.

JUPITER

Where?

VULCAN

At a party. It was so lit. She gave the most scintillating appearance for her hosts. Venus, languid and ravishing, eyes burning, giving ear to the cheap talk of some deluded thugs. They all gathered around her, bowed and submissive, reading from some primitive script and cutting each other's skin; they laughing at her, she laughing at them. Father, I tell you, that was not the goddess of inamorata from our ancient days long past: she had been completely transformed. She no longer dazzles with the splendor of that supreme beauty that once modeled and posed for art and nature. She used to be naked, but not anymore. Worldly beauty strives to further purify itself through the favors of human art. In the end, the mother of love became the daughter of garbage, my father, today, Venus is born of clothes.

JUPITER

What a shame.

*(to Mars)*

And, Cupid?

VULCAN

Oh my God, that kid?

MARS

I went looking for him and found him somewhere haggling over the price of a mere horse. The legs of a horse instead of fast wings! A whip instead of an arrow! – atrocious changes! He even went so far as to change his name, father; Cupid is no more; now he's some ... dandy!

JUPITER

Traitors!

VULCAN

You should have lied to conceal this disgrace from us. The weak are not welcome in Olympus.

MARS

What a bastard to desert us like that on the field of battle and conquest!

JUPITER

*(to Mars)*

And what have you been up to?

MARS

Who, me? I'm on track with the general congress. With fire and art, I'll prove to all who doubt that I'm the same ancient Mars who inspired Achilles and Hector to war. But at this very moment? I haven't got much on the burner. You know, it's a crying shame – the way of the world, today. Warfare, the essence of my office, has become the last resort; being replaced with artifice. The name of the game is diplomacy: a mutual deceit. They slowly kill their own selves through this insane labor; wasting their time, cares and talents on argument, their skills amount to tricks and ruses. If something is seen by all to be black, they will say that it is white: they think it heresy to make the case and say it right. If I wish to refer to a certain cat to say the

word should be enough. But, no. Because diplomacy. So, one begins to play a guessing game, speaking of a house pet, black or white, and without a leash, without a mane or wings, and that walks on four little feet. Can you guess what it is? Then the diplomats weigh in: “The answer is obvious. It’s a cat.” “No sir,” says another, “It’s a dog.”

JUPITER

Damn straight, son. You said it!

VULCAN

Boatloads of sense!

MARS

Okay, now – so, what happens next? Down in this here Babylon one thing reigns supreme above all: it’s called paper. It’s their Alpha, Beta and Omega. All hail king Paper! No other force or law is known to them. But what kind of fate is that? Hewers of paper; *papier-mache* honor; even love is made of paper. The value of love is no longer judged by the ardor of burning flame; love is now measured out in bills or weighed in pounds. And on top of all that, this horrific tower of Babel actually finds moral virtue in the waging of paper wars.

VULCAN

If war, today, is waged by paper, weights, and bills, we’ll have to change careers and start producing quills of steel!

## Scene IV

*the same characters, plus CUPID*

CUPID

*(at the door)*

Can I come in?

JUPITER

*(to Mars)*

Go see who it is.

MARS

It's Cupid.

CUPID

*(to Jupiter)*

Dear Grandfather, how are you?

JUPITER

Aren't you sorry for what you've done?

CUPID

Oh, no! I've come to say farewell. Goodbye!

MARS

Leave, you, insolent fool!

CUPID

Father, please...

MARS

Shut it!

CUPID

No way! A word of sage advice: let the gods do as I have. You're all gods, right? Okay, but..., is it really worth it? I wanted to give you this advice, ... as a friend.

MARS

How absurd! The world has fascinated you with rumor and apparatus. Leave, spirit, be gone! I'd rather be poor in heaven than rich in hell.



CUPID

Divinity is expensive!

JUPITER

It does cost us dearly, that's true: the pain, the hurt, the shame, the despair, and pity.

CUPID

Mine is much more affordable.

VULCAN

Oh, and where have you been shopping lately?

CUPID

Dressed in new suits from the tailor, I'm fresh and clean as any god.

VULCAN

This dude's so full of himself.

CUPID

I resent your lack of faith, Vulcan!

MARS

Go on and resent it, then. Our supreme hatred is divine...

CUPID

Chimera!

MARS

...and from our divinity the names, traditions, and the memory of Olympus, and the victory...

CUPID

Illusions!

MARS

...Illusions?

CUPID

I travel now from land to land, a man as any other; the days of my divinity are indeed over. But what a reward I've found in my new estate! I'm the center of attention and guest of honor wherever I go. They have to pry my legs free from the clutches of women; each gesture I make comes off hot as flame. I'm the charm of the city streets and the life of the party, the featured attraction, a veritable magnet at the dances, the finest note of every perfume, the potion of future loves and those elixirs gone down the hatch; the ugly and the beautiful all strive to please me; the sweetest of maidens dream only of me, enchanter to the married, an illusion haunting the bereaved. Whips and telescopes, boots, hoods, and gloves are all superficial trappings: my bow and arrow reign supreme. Arrow and bow are now poetic icons. And so am I. Behold! this slender youth before you armed with nothing but his own corpse.

MARS

Coward!

JUPITER

Come off it, son. You, ingrate!

CUPID

Goodbye.

JUPITER

Begone!

CUPID

Later, Vulcan; goodbye, Jove; peace, Mars!

## Scene V

VULCAN, JUPITER, MARS

*(together)*

This dude has totally lost it ...

VULCAN

He's a goner!

MARS

Jupiter, who would have guessed? Sweet and faithful Cupid? become a fool, and a man, at that!  
So vain.

VULCAN

*(ironic)*

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree ...

MARS

*(dejected)*

Indeed, by Pluto! he is my son.

JUPITER

*(to Vulcan)*

Someone's coming. Let's see who's there.

VULCAN

It's Apollo and Proteus.

## Scene VI

*(enter APOLLO and PROTEUS)*

APOLLO

Good morning!

MARS

Where'd you leave Pegasus?

APOLLO

Who, me? Oh, you don't know about what happened? Alright, so, check this out. It's about this strange creature. Man, you're not going to believe it. What had happened was that ...

VULCAN

I bet you a thunderbolt per verse: Pegasus ran away.

APOLLO

Nah, it wasn't even like that. I went riding yesterday afternoon. Pegasus, was cutting along, shaking their tail as always, unfurling their mane and all like they were receiving the holy ghost. Then, all of a sudden, a whole scene broke out from nowhere on the street and like, mad people just came out and gathered out around 'em. You feel me? So, I just fell back like?? just staring at this crowd of people. It was like a spell had suddenly cast itself over everyone, as far as the eye could see. I drew back, and I wanted to dip but then I found I was caught up in my tracks. My ride was spooked and just started tripping, charging at the mob. Pegasus lifted a front leg, and smacked this one dude right in the head. Blood came out spilling all over the place but, at the same time, so did a sonnet. People went running in every direction. Then, once again, they started checking out this new thing and the whole mess started up again. They would come back around, start dancing around me, falling at Pegasus' hooves and kissing them, and his tail, and mane, chanting a plea to recite more divine inspirations. They were like, "We've found them at last! This is our Apollo!" Yo, that's when I knew I had to get outta dodge, so I dismounted and I figured, hey, why not just let Pegasus stay and horse around a while. So, that's when I bounced. But today I've already seen printed in capital letters on the front page of the daily papers like all these odes and sonnets, and songs!

JUPITER

Another one gone!

APOLLO

That's the story.

MARS

So, it is! – The last disgrace was lamentable. This one, less so.

APOLLO

What you talking 'bout? Pegasus is just a horse ...

PROTEUS

And already kinda old.

APOLLO

So true.

JUPITER

Enough of this!

PROTEUS

*(to Jupiter)*

What time is the divination happening?

JUPITER

When the moonlight strikes the horizon and the Lion of Nemea raises its crown in shining blue.

PROTEUS

Is the sign the same as before?

JUPITER

Now it's: Harpocrates, Minerva – silence, and reason.

APOLLO

That's what's up.

JUPITER

Proteus, don't even worry about the sign; you already have the power and semblance of transfiguration; just be yourself. I mean, ... come as you are...

PROTEUS

Like a crow.

MARS

A crow, then.

PROTEUS

Four days ago, thanks to my talent and mischief, deluding half the world, I transformed into a crow leaving a large crowd enraptured, mesmerized. I held a giant piece of cheese in my sinister beak. They said I had all the bearing of a politician. I wonder if it was from appearing to be a raven, or because I was eating cheese? Anyway, they had a lot to say from what I heard.

JUPITER

The time is ripe for deeds and works, not storytelling! I'm out of here. You already know the sign and the time. Five thousand.

*(exits)*

VULCAN

I have some business to wrap up.

MARS

What kind of business?

VULCAN

Just some... things...

MARS

Like what?

VULCAN

A plan of attack.

MARS

Count me in.

VULCAN

You already know. My project and your project are the same, but it's all been taken care of.

MARS

Alright, then.

VULCAN

Peace.

PROTEUS

*(to Vulcan)*

I'll ride with you.

*(exit Vulcan and Proteus)*

## Scene VII

MARS *and* APOLLO

APOLLO

This case has some complications, Mars! Don't get cold feet on me, now. I feel power from the nectar and ambrosia you gave me. Whether on top of the world or down like a dog, a god is

always a god. But time passes, and you know, it seems like all our efforts have been in vain, and I imagine we haven't even reached the end of days yet. What do you make of all of this?

MARS

I still have a world of hope. Trust me, believe in yourself, in all of us. You are all champions of unyielding, iron-willed, spirited warriors. Just you wait, and see. Within a short period of time, a great and august temple will open to us all....

APOLLO

Okay ...

MARS

...the gates of divinity. Few are chosen, and that infinity of unworthy names is sure to be taken up again under our very own.

APOLLO

Well, your lips to God's ear! As for me...

MARS

Hold up. As for you?

APOLLO

You didn't know? I'm gonna go about my merry way. Birds of a feather flock together, as they say, and the poets are my beloved stock! Already poets are, and are not men of flesh and bone. But they've taken on this belletristic and bourgeois air. Then came an even more serious public enemy, a despot, a tyrant, a veritable Lopez, or Tiberius: he's called the tablet! Do you know what I'm talking about, sketchpads? listen, and tell me if this isn't the most primitive thing you ever heard of. It's made of Russian leather, or sandalwood, or velvet, and has an air of peace and calm; it's silent. To see it up close it appears something like a little lamb under the shade of a poplar tree in placid backwaters. The sketchbook arrives smiling ... These poplars are so leafy and have leaves as skirts. The poet trembles and feels a sudden chill; but the tablet is there, silent, quiet, and cold. The poet tries to escape, but can't, captured by the sovereign sketchbook



and gives in to the thirst for poetry, the new minotaur. It's insane the number who sacrifice themselves to the tragedy of this common law! How this scrapbook craze is swallowing poets whole one by one. Oh, for the days of Homer!

MARS

A change will come and Olympus shall fall into our hands again. Just you wait!

## Scene VIII

*(the same characters, plus CUPID)*

CUPID

Uncle Apollo, my father is deceived.

APOLLO

Cupid!

MARS

Back again, chump?

CUPID

Hark! I mean, listen; you've got it twisted. Humanity doesn't want to accept your divinity. The golden days are over. You've got to seize the day, as the saying goes, rise against the tide. You waste too much time.

MARS

Shut your mouth!

CUPID

No! no! no! I am willing to hang that last illusion. You know that I am love ...

APOLLO

You used to be.

MARS

Now you are love lost.

CUPID

No, I'm still love, brother of Eros, Cupid. Instead of reigning in the domain of ideals, I learned how to dive to the realm of the mortals, but I remain by nature the same.

MARS

Is that right?

CUPID

Ah! My father, don't you see? I can still evoke so many evils, fill up your heart with such burning love, make you lose sight of everything else and beg to Jove to become a mortal.

MARS

No way!

CUPID

*(going to the back of the stage)*

You see over there? It's a carriage. And in the carriage? A car. And in the car? a woman.

MARS

Who is she?

CUPID

*(returning)*

It's Venus!

APOLLO

Venus!

MARS

Alas! Although my faith is great, I am a vengeful god, not a god of love. It's useless.

APOLLO

*(knocking Cupid on the shoulder)*

You see, my darling? It's useless.

MARS

It's just a charade, I'm sure, everything is still the same.

CUPID

Okay, fine.

APOLLO

A word of friendly advice? Get out of sight.

CUPID

*(seats himself)*

No, I'll stay!

APOLLO

What's that? What are you trying to do?

CUPID

I'm trying to teach you, my uncle.

APOLLO

Teach us? O my God, that's hilarious!

CUPID

Listen, uncle, do you hear that sound, a silky little rustle?  
Go see what it is.

APOLLO

*(going over to see)*

It's a woman. Walking down the lane.  
Who is it?

CUPID

Juno, the wife of Jupiter, your father.

APOLLO

Really? It is true! look, and there goes Mars, what do you know.

CUPID

She's beautiful still, even as before, a gorgeous and proud, auspicious woman of gravitas.

APOLLO

*(returning)*

Ah! but I wouldn't risk my divinity ...

*(to Mars)*

Hey, wise guy! ... What's up with you?

MARS

*(absorbed)*

Nothing.

CUPID

O vanity! Human frailties. Juno, however, is, still divine.

APOLLO

What name does she go by now?

CUPID

A more beautiful one: Corina!

APOLLO

Mars, I ... don't know about this ...

MARS

Me either.

APOLLO

I gotta split.

MARS

Me too.

CUPID

You too?

MARS

Yeah, see, I wanna go ... for a walk ...

APOLLO

Let's take a walk.

MARS

You're staying behind?

CUPID

I wanted to stay, but now I don't know ... I'm having second thoughts ...

MARS

Stay then, you were already a god once, you're never out of luck.

CUPID

Are you sure? But I thought...

MARS

Ah! Venus!

APOLLO

Ah! Juno!

## Scene IX

CUPID, MERCURY

CUPID

*(to himself)*

Straight through the heart! Now for the others. It's necessary, thanks to the voice of love, to give them a little sense. With one exception! Often new love removes both bad judgment and the good ... Who's there? It looks like ...

Oh! Mercury!

MERCURY

It's me! Look at you! May it be perchance that you as the actor have committed the most tragic disaster? I hear it said that ...

CUPID

*(plaintive)*

You guessed it.

MERCURY

Oh! Coward!

CUPID

*(to himself)*

Just perfect!

MERCURY

Are you a man?

CUPID

I am love, and yet sorcery, as before.

MERCURY

You are not one of our own. Begone!

CUPID

No! I have something to show you, uncle.

MERCURY

Show us what you got.

CUPID

When Olympus was ours ...

MERCURY

Oh boy!

CUPID

Hebe was out to kill us and Jupiter was a slave. You barely ever saw her. The functions of messenger wore you out. Oh, but what eyes! And, what breasts! Oh, what a face! So sad...

MERCURY

So, what?

CUPID

Hebe's become human.

MERCURY

*(contemptuously)*

Just like you.

CUPID

You guessed it! Hebe has been received with distinction in the charming and playful land of these comely mortals.

MERCURY

Good heavens!

CUPID

*(to himself)*

Got him!

MERCURY

*(to himself)*

I don't know ... what I feel...

CUPID

Goodbye, Mercury!

MERCURY

Hey, wait! Hebe, where is she?

CUPID

I don't know. Bye, now. Nothing more to tell.



MERCURY

*(absorbed)*

To tell?

CUPID

Don't let me influence your decision. Go ahead and scheme away! Scheme, already!

MERCURY

I don't know ... That pulse! That tremor! that giddiness!

CUPID

Ok, see ya! You alright?

MERCURY

Who? Me? Hebe?

CUPID

*(separately)*

May the gods forgive me, by Jove ... and by Vulcan ... and by Proteus.

## Scene X

MERCURY *followed by* MARS, APOLLO

MERCURY

*(alone)*

Am I ill? What's happened to me? It's strange!

*(going to the wine)*

Just a sip! There is no wine that does not comfort pain.

*(drinks silently)*

Hebe... becoming human?

MARS

*(to Apollo)*

Look, it's Mercury.

APOLLO

*(to Mars)*

He's meditating on something! I wonder what it could be.

MARS

I don't know.

MERCURY

*(without seeing them)*

Oh! How it pulses in me, my heart!

APOLLO

*(to Mercury)*

What's up?

MERCURY

Oh..., I don't know ... I was rambling ...Uh, it's hard with so much idle time! I needed to go do something but I forgot ... Is Jove not coming back?

MARS

Why not? Of course.

APOLLO

*(to himself)*

What's that?

*(silence)*

I'll go!

MARS

I'm ready!

MERCURY

I'm in too!

## Scene XI

*the same*, JUPITER

JUPITER

My children, good news!

*(the three turn their backs)*

What? You turn your backs to my face?

MERCURY

Who us, father?

APOLLO

Who, me, father?

MARS

I do not...

JUPITER

Yes, you are – all of you! Geez! Have you totally lost your marbles!?! Has an evil spirit entered here amongst us, cleaving the vanguard from the midmost heavens?

MARS

No, it's actually...

JUPITER

It's actually...?

MARS

I will speak more plainly at the general counsel.

JUPITER

Oh, you will, now?

APOLLO

I declare the same.

JUPITER

*(to Mercury)*

Your statement?

MERCURY

Same theory.

JUPITER

O three hundred Spartans! O age of valor! They who were but men yet ...

APOLLO

Damn right! they were human. Both the Persian strength and the strength of the Spartan. They were men on one side and men on the other; level in their conflict like the boot-stamped earth. Now the case is different. The dismissed gods seek to regain the lost arena. Are they gods on the other side? They are humans. In this suit, we will not even have to open the shallows of the battlefield to warfare.

JUPITER

Well, what's keeping you, then?

APOLLO

Thus, since men cannot lift themselves to the level of the gods, let the gods condescend to make amends. Let them in turn become as men.

MARS

Supported!

MERCURY

Got my vote.

JUPITER

Am I counting sheep? What's this I hear!

MARS

The case is unfortunate. But, ...this is nothing other than the truth.

JUPITER

So, help me gods! Olympus, dismantled!

MERCURY

This is no evil spirit or curse nor tragic infamy. There is a real desire to be fulfilled so that one day this brutal, vain and costly battle shall end. Thus, is true desire, my father, and these are its effects.

JUPITER

Oh, I'm lost!

## Scene XII

*the same*, VULCAN, PROTEUS

JUPITER

Ah! Vulcan, Proteus, come have a look! These three over here are no longer one of us.

VULCAN

Me either.

PROTEUS

Nor am I.

JUPITER

You too?

PROTEUS

We neither!

JUPITER

You've defected?

VULCAN

Capitulated. We've finally reconciled with men.

JUPITER

Am I really the last one standing?

MARS

No, my father. Follow the general example. Resistance is futile; the old ancient temple has forever fallen, nevermore to rise. Let's go down to take place among the mortals. To do so is noble: a god who beheads his divine halo. Becoming human!

JUPITER

No! no! no!

APOLLO

Time instructs that we must submit.

JUPITER

Well yes, maybe for you, but not for me. I will keep fierce watch over another century to come for the honor of divinity and our illustrious antiquity, although I find no protection, although I know nothing but homelessness and exile.

*(to Apollo sarcastically)*

You, Apollo, you will be shepherd to king Admeto? Crucified by the fans of your glorious sonnets? What honor!

APOLLO

No, my father, I am the king of poetry. I have a place in the world, in harmony with the station that we held in our ancient world. My sovereign bearing, the look of deep contemplation in my gaze, the fierce gravitas and perfection of my discernment, nothing of my ways, dear father, is lost on the common man. I want a post of distinction; lofty, posh, and sophisticated. With the feather of truth and the ink of judgement I pen the laws of beauty and taste. I will be the supreme judge; the critic.

JUPITER

But I don't know, 'cause if I assume this new office, the charge of treason...

APOLLO

Just assume it.

JUPITER

And what about you, Mars?

MARS

I am the same; only my old value has changed currency. I cede to the war of paper. I still take risks, but not with arms: the pen is now my weapon. In place of a shield, I wield a folio. My sword I've divided into fine pens. I once condemned morality, religion, politics, and poetry, with soul and passion.

Forgive me, O paper, for the error of my ways, I didn't recognize you at the start, but now I embrace you as my own! It is in my nature, dear father, to possess a faithful heart, a paper citizen, for paper times.

JUPITER

And yet, just a minute ago, you said the exact opposite, and you wanted to tear the header off the stationary ...

MARS

I changed my mind ...

JUPITER

*(to Vulcan)*

And you, O god of lavas, who fashion the lightning bolts of the heavens. How will you make yourself useful in this brave new world?

VULCAN

Just a moment ago, when Mars was drawing the spiral arc of time he said: "If the value of this time is weighed in pounds or papers, I'll change my profession, I will manufacture steel feathers." I will serve someone, here or there, either theirs or ours, my Jove, your Mars. The lightning bolts I'll fashion into feathers will be devastating and razor sharp. The only question is the matter of style.

MARS

*(to Vulcan)*

Thank you.

JUPITER

Proteus, would you be so kind as to explain to us what exactly it is that *you* plan to do?

PROTEUS



Who? me? I'll do what I can; and I think I can't lose: as long as I find I'm being put to good use. My gift of shapeshifting at will and caprice will make of this world my new golden fleece. I'll live secure with the future to win. The trick is to put your back to the wind. Red morning silence, yellow afternoon clamor; an anvil to the friend, to the enemy a hammer. Even changing the name, one can see what's inferior, essence is form in the world of men, so much for the interior.

In stormy weather? I'm an overcoat. In blazing sun, I'm summer dress. Who should come along but Peter and Paul. What great talents! What national glories! and great saints! Or even the power of Sancho or Marino. But if the scene could change so dramatically and vastly in the campos, I would surely give in tribute two living Martinhos, and two Sanchos!

All these things I learned, dear father, and I promise here and now, in the future I will be the biggest name in town. There are no revolutions or human powers that can ever knock me down.  
*(with emphasis)*

Power to the people. This nation is worthy of our sacrifice. Care for them ... they deserve this tribute a thousand times!

*(returning to natural)*

Thus, my father, changing both my language and face, I remain in essence the same Proteus, in Dulcamara's grace... I hasten to attend my duties at their given pace. Good day!

JUPITER

Where are you going?

PROTEUS

Taking my name to the polls!

JUPITER

*(addressing all)*

Come here. Now I hear ... Ah! Mercury...

MERCURY

I'm afraid. To lose the office I perform as messenger would...But...

### Scene XIII

*the same, CUPID*

CUPID

Cupid is here with a solution for this little problem. Stay on in my service.

JUPITER

Ah!

MERCURY

In what capacity?

CUPID

I am love, you be the letter.

MERCURY

No sir. You know what it's like to walk in the path of service to love; to feel the passion of beauty itself added to the beautified senses, the heaving chest, the racing fantasies, and the whispers of a lover to their beloved, like a courier, an echo, a superscript, a nothing? You were a younger god than I was, but now I'm a cuckold, no more, no less. As mortals, we are equals. One day, Mars and Venus, on whom Vulcan had a network of designs, fell madly in love with each other, and longed to escape her husband's wrath, and their freedom was won all thanks to the skill, the known acumen, and the slight of Mercury's hand. Oh, what service I give! Without me on his side, someone else would be in his shoes today! The time has come; you've opened the letter. You're my friend. Spare me and take me with you.

MARS

Come with me: if you get into dark politics you'll get burned, And Proteus is bound to fit you for an urn. I'll address all serious voters through the gazette and announce your person and pedigree. Trust and be victorious. Seek victory and jubilee! Your new life in politics ... has begun:

from the street to the office, from palace to slum, written in your role as Mercury; you will open the secret without its key. The most lucrative thing is the business of scribing.

MERCURY

For the god of eloquence, such employment is most adequate. You will see in my messaging intrigue unmatched. I laud the position and dispatch.

CUPID

Now, may your bright starlight shine like a diamond in the sky. What you going to do, O, Jupiter, divine?

JUPITER

I've taken all I can from these ungodly lessons. I can only stand here and fight, alone, forever.

CUPID

All alone, against time, your plans have been foiled. It seems you'd be better off by ceasing your toil and joining us all in this mortal coil.

JUPITER

Ah! if one day I should win out against both one and all, I would be there on Olympus the sole usurper of Jove!

CUPID

To cure supreme rage and sovereign wrath, add boiling water and a dash of love to a bath. Don't you remember? You once changed into a bull and stole the show in all of Europe? In giving you wings, I made you a swan. You say you want new love? I make the heavens rain gold ...

JUPITER

*(softly)*

Ah! good times!

CUPID

And yet with all the sovereign flames, the goddesses escaped, among them was Diana.

JUPITER

Diana!

CUPID

Yes, Diana, the slender huntress; who once let herself be singed  
by the desolate flame that burning in your chest –  
and once Endymion came to learn the secrets of your fearsome heart.

JUPITER

Still hunting, perhaps?

CUPID

Hunting, but not for deer: her new game is called lovers.

JUPITER

Is she beautiful? Is she lovely?

CUPID

She is, indeed, beautiful and lovely! She's beauty itself in full bloom; sweet and mysterious; a  
goddess become mortal, remaining both human and divine. No one is as fine as she, apart from  
Juno.

APOLLO

Huh? ... Oh! Juno!

JUPITER

*(musing)*

Ah! Diana!

MERCURY

Pity us, O Jove. Don't you see what we each ask of you? In this world you shall find, in different ways, beauties to win, hearts to break, many great conjugations of the verb *to love*. Yes, the world is moving, evolving. Yet, in one aspect, it is changeless: it is forever a sensualist.

Thou shalt not be immortalized in your noble lordship as a swan or golden rain, not even a wild bull. But, by the enchantments of your divine voice, without changing anything, you can be ... formidable.

In fact, someone already has an eye on you: use your power to send her a necklace. Send gloves to Constance, to Ermelinda a shawl, to Adelaide a hat, and to Luísa a bracelet. And thus so, always bowed to the influence of love, as you were before, you will be a philandering Jove!

CUPID

*(patting him on the shoulder)*

What do you think, Grandpa?

JUPITER

Listen, Cupid. This world of yours doesn't seem so bad after all, not as lost as some say. Are you sure divinity will not be disgraced in the passage to humanity?

CUPID

Can't you see me?

JUPITER

It's true, I can. And if all others have passed before, a lot of good men have found themselves.

CUPID

Yes, indeed, it's true, but it's also the case for women.

JUPITER

Ah! tell me, are there still feelings of pleasure?

CUPID

Yes.

JUPITER

*(absorbed)*

Women! Diana!

MARS

Goodbye, my father!

THE OTHERS

So long!

JUPITER

Wait, already? What's the matter? Where have you gone, all my children?

APOLLO

We are men.

JUPITER

Ah! Yes...

CUPID

*(to others)*

Another one down!

JUPITER

*(with a sigh)*

Be gone! Farewell.

OTHERS

*(except Cupid)*

Goodbye, my father.

*(silence)*

JUPITER

*(after reflecting)*

I, too, am a human.

ALL

What?

JUPITER

*(decided)*

I am a man, I am; I'll be going with you. By habits I have already been made half a man, the other half is nebulous. I will be completed as a man and remain by your side showing the world a humanized Olympus.

MERCURY

Thanks, dad!

CUPID

I won!

MARS

*(to Jupiter)*

And your trade?

APOLLO

It must be a high and noble function as worthy of your dominion as the entirety of Olympus.

What could that be?

JUPITER

I dunno, what?

CUPID

*(to Jupiter)*

Think real hard!

JUPITER

*(after reflecting)*

I'll be a banker!

*(they wave their arms to make wings. the Epilogue comes to the front of the stage.)*

## EPILOGUE

Good evening! I'm the Epilogue. I've changed in name alone.

The piece that I opened is the one I now close.

The author, repentant, hidden, embarrassed,  
begs pardon of the illustrious guests;  
and vows, if he has not penned a work to their best liking,  
never again to attempt such a rendering of immortals and men.

The poet asks yet one more favor.  
Unlettered in the scriptures of Mars or Proteus, Apollo or Cupid,  
the gods here speak in the slang of the streets;  
of course, it's bound to draw some critical heat,  
but the author cannot conform himself  
to treat rules and methods superstitiously.



Indeed, he cannot; and yet he loves the gods,  
adores these beautiful fictions, glory days of golden ages.  
He believes they preside over dark mysteries still,  
lurking in the recesses and altars of woods and rivers.

Sometimes at a glance as I pass through a room,  
I swear it's the sovereign Juno I spy,  
the valorous Pallas who catches my eye;  
the sense itself inspires feeling, where belief  
is most deceiving in this eternally youthful being.

If Eros, Minerva, and Mars lie buried in the sands of time,  
art revives and sanctifies them.

If history has scattered and Cavalry banished them,  
art has gathered them all in one embrace.

Out of the two traditions, the muses have produced a single one:  
David gazing on the face of the Cumean Sibyl.

If you approve what has been performed here,  
Ladies and Gentlemen, I applaud you and cheer.

**THE END**

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*(from the first edition)*

*The penultimate verse recited by the Epilogue:*

*DAVID GAZING ON THE FACE OF THE CUMEAN SYBL*

*is a translation of the verse with which the marquis of Belloy  
closes one of his beautiful sonnets:*

*EN REGARD DE DAVID LA SYBILLENE DE CUME,*

*which is itself a paraphrase of the eponymous hymn of the Church:*

*TESTE DAVID CUM SIBYLLA.*

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