

TOILETTE OF THE GODS

A ten-minute play

by Philip Heckman

Characters

ZEUS -- male, ageless, out of shape but used to power

HwERA -- female, ageless, past her prime but used to
privilege

ATTENDANT -- female, 20s, attractive but nondescript

Time

Any.

Place

An upscale bedroom, with a bed upstage and a vanity and chair
downstage. The vanity's surface is covered with cosmetics
and accessories, its mirror removed so that the audience can
see through its frame. A wardrobe, table, and/or clothes
rack as needed for costumes and props.

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701 Panther Trl.

Monona, WI 53716

608-221-4087

pheckman02@gmail.com

TOILETTE OF THE GODS

ZEUS and HERA are getting dressed in elegant formal wear. HERA sits at the vanity, facing the audience, applying makeup while ZEUS paces behind her.

A simply clad ATTENDANT waits unobtrusively on the couple. She quietly anticipates every cosmetic and article of clothing they require. Although constantly dutiful, she does nothing to draw attention to herself until necessary.

ZEUS

...outrageous. You have to give me more notice.

HERA

Of dinner? Don't be silly. It's every day at this time.

ZEUS

Hera, you know what I mean -- how I detest dress up.

HERA

You? With a mirror on the ceiling of your closet...

ZEUS

You know what I mean. These infernal social events.

HERA

They're your family, Zeus. Your personal friends.

ZEUS

You know what I mean. I had plans.

HERA

To do what?

ZEUS

All you need to know is that I had them. Plans.

HERA

Don't expect me to accommodate your schedule if I'm not on it.

ZEUS

All I'm saying is I deserve a little consideration. Don't spring these things on me without warning.

HERA

Whom should I spring them on if not you?

ZEUS

Damn it, Hera! You know what I mean.

HERA

Anyway, I'd think you'd be eager to dine with your brothers. You haven't seen Randy since last fall.

ZEUS

Randy be damned. Most guests steal the silverware. The last time Randy was here he packed half my kitchen staff into his limo.

HERA

And Roger will be there, too. He steals from Randy and you steal from him. So it all evens out, doesn't it?

(Beat.)

Lighten up. You'll enjoy yourself. You always do.

ZEUS

We could've done this another time.

HERA

But when the stars are aligned, one must act.

ZEUS

What's so special about tonight that couldn't wait?

HERA

Really, you don't think I'd stop with Randy and Roger, do you? I know how to put a guest list together.

ZEUS

So who?

HERA

(Beat, for effect.)

Crazy Lennie.

ZEUS

What!?

HERA

Crazy Humvee Lennie. You know, the car dealer.

ZEUS

That faker, that officious windbag, that pretentious poseur.

HERA

If you felt that way, why'd you buy your new Lamborghini Veneno from him?

ZEUS

I didn't know he was going to drive the very same model to the club and try to pass himself off as me.

HERA

Relax, nobody thought it was you.

ZEUS

Of course not, but the ridicule was equally distributed.

HERA

You're just upset he put the most expensive audio/video system with voice command in his Veneno and not yours.

ZEUS

He painted flames on the sides and drove up to the clubhouse blowing his horn and yelling, "All hail, Big Zoo!"

(Beat.)

I know your brother's spreading the tale everywhere. When I get my hands on him...

HERA

Well, my brother's not invited tonight. You'll have to content yourself with Lennie.

ZEUS

Oh, I'll content myself all right. I agree, this little dinner party couldn't have come at a better time.

HERA

I knew you'd see it my way.

ZEUS

Crazy Lennie. I intend to make him eat his own organs one by one. Too bad the little toad doesn't have one of those self-regenerating livers...

HERA

Don't make too big a mess. I just had the carpet cleaned.

ZEUS

...with a sorbet between courses perhaps, to cleanse his palette.

HERA

And you insist you hate ceremony.

ZEUS

I never said ceremony, I said dress up.

HERA

Still, I don't see you appearing in public naked.

ZEUS

Perhaps I should -- that'd discourage would-be imposters.

HERA
 Yes, that would be discouraging.
 (Beat.)
 Hmmmm, dear...

ZEUS
 Yes?

HERA
 Have you chosen something for your lapel?

ZEUS
 I don't know -- whatever they give me. What difference does it make?

HERA
 I'd like you to wear a white feather tonight.

ZEUS
 Huh?

HERA
 (Watching his reaction in the mirror.)
 In your lapel -- the feather of a swan.

ZEUS
 A feather? What for?

HERA
 Come, come, it'll be perfect. Don't tell me you don't remember the swan suit you wore to the costume ball.

ZEUS
 Out with it, you old harpy. What are you driving at?

HERA
 I just thought you'd take pleasure in seeing some old friends.

ZEUS
 Who?

HERA
 You remember lovely Rita, don't you? The ornithologist. You danced with her that night. Rita has those adorable toddlers -- they have your eyes.

ZEUS
 I did not have sex with that woman!

HERA
 Birds do it, bees do it, even educated sleaze do it.

ZEUS

I will not stand here and listen to this... slanderous fabrication--

HERA

Of course you will. Because you had your fun and now I'll have mine. I promised your brothers a veritable chorus line of sluts.

ZEUS

Who else?

HERA

Don't act surprised. Your tastes are so... eclectic it takes more than one cheap harlot to satisfy them all. I'm going to expose your most recent dalliances, all four of them. It'll be an extended family reunion.

ZEUS

One of these days you'll cut yourself on that tongue of yours. Who else?

HERA

The beachcomber.

ZEUS

(Miserable.)

Dannie.

HERA

There, doesn't owning up to it feel good? I hear she's partial to a golden shower.

ZEUS

Don't push me. Who else?

HERA

The archer.

ZEUS

Callie.

HERA

I've asked her to wear leather -- you like that, I'm told.

ZEUS

You vicious gorgon. And the fourth?

HERA

That heifer, Viola.

ZEUS

Now you've gone too far!

HERA

An odd charge from a sodomite.

ZEUS

I swear by the Titans--

HERA

--Swear all you want. You think you can whore around heaven and Earth, and I'll not protest. Well, you're wrong.

HERA signals to ATTENDANT, who retrieves a fancy cushion topped by a single white feather.

HERA (CONT'D)

Your vulgar appetites defile our marriage and my name and I won't stand for it.

HERA nods and ATTENDANT presents the cushion. ZEUS notes the feather and flies into a rage, violently knocking the pillow from the ATTENDANT's grasp. The blow terrorizes ATTENDANT, who flees, sobbing.

ZEUS

And this little party is your revenge -- my public humiliation.

HERA

Your sexual proclivities suggest you're incapable of being humiliated. No, this calls for something more.

ZEUS

That's it. I've had it. I'm calling off your dinner show. I won't be a party to my own--

HERA

--Oh, yes, you will.

ZEUS

How do you know I won't trump your hand? I could make charges of my own against you.

HERA

Your best interests won't allow it.

ZEUS

Meaning what?

HERA

Meaning you can't show any weakness or it's all over for you. Let's face it, being unable to control your wife is an unforgivable fault. Any sign of marital incompetence and the people will tear you to pieces.

ZEUS

You underestimate me.

HERA

I estimate you exactly -- you're Crazy Humvee Lennie without top-of-the-line audio.

ZEUS

I'll destroy you.

HERA

You won't even divorce me.

ZEUS

What makes you so sure?

HERA

Because your image couldn't stand it. Who'd hail Big Zoo after I threw your clothes out of the house? Only losers get dressed on the sidewalk.

ZEUS

(Slumps on the edge of the bed.)

What exactly do you have in mind for tonight?

HERA

Your indiscretions have created a disturbance of the peace. You need to return the cosmos to equilibrium.

ZEUS

You want me to eliminate your rivals, then.

HERA

They're not my rivals, dear, they're your flaws. Do what you have to do to maintain your illusion of perfection.

ZEUS

You won't relent.

HERA

What kind of role model would I be if I showed such weakness?

ZEUS

That's what tonight is all about then -- establishing who's really in charge.

HERA

I prefer to think of it as clearing the Olympian air.

(Laughs delightedly.)

Poor baby, to lose your toys. If it's any consolation, they don't have to suffer much.

ZEUS

What do you have in mind?

HERA

Well, if you were really the deity you think you are, I'd have you change Callie into a bear so that her own huntsman son will mistakenly shoot her through the heart -- but...

(Beat.)

We both know your limitations, so let's keep this simple, shall we? They're your trollops. You decide their fates.

ZEUS

Hera, I cannot--

HERA

--Sure you can, if you delegate properly. Why else have minions? Just don't be predictable -- it encourages complacency among the witnesses.

ZEUS

I will not play along--

HERA

--Oh, it'll be fun. Pick something that fits each one's personality. Callie likes to sail, doesn't she? You took her out on our yacht--

ZEUS

(Gets to his feet.)

How did you--

HERA

--Never mind how I found out. Let's just agree that Callie deserves a watery curse. I know -- suppose you serve her an E. coli cocktail.

ZEUS

For God's sake, Hera. You know how delicate she is -- she won't be able to handle that.

HERA

The point, Zeus dear, is to purge her of you and you of her. Diarrhea, vomiting, and severe dehydration should do the trick. And now that you get the idea, what special treatment can you devise for Dannie?

ZEUS

(Beat, giving up.)

I don't care. Whatever you want.

HERA

Zeus, we can't heal this rift between us if you won't take your medicine. So, what'll you do to your golden Dannie?

ZEUS

I don't know -- steal her identity, trash her credit, leave her penniless.

HERA

There you go. That'll teach her a life lesson, I should think. And for your beloved moo-cow Viola?

ZEUS

A whipping. Is that good enough?

HERA

Hmmm, yes, a dozen lashes will brand her nicely. And for your ugly duckling Rita...

ZEUS

(Beat.)

Acid -- in her face. That ought to make you happy.

HERA

Scarred as well as feathered -- perfect.

ZEUS

You know I'll find a way to remember them.

HERA

You can put their names in lights across the sky, for all I care, as long as you're not fucking them any more.

ZEUS

(Beat.)

And after this we'll be even again?

HERA

All will once more be right with our world.

(Gets up, finished.)

Are you ready, dear?

ZEUS

(Beat.)

No. Give me a minute... to compose myself.

(Beat.)

You go ahead.

HERA

Don't be long.

*(Over her shoulder as she
exits.)*

And don't forget the feather.

(Stops, beat.)

Oh, on second thought, Zoo-ie, feel free to go wild with the entertainment tonight -- it'll give me an excuse to replace the carpet.

ZEUS stares at himself in the mirror for a moment, then, unable to find his dignity, he sighs and claps his hands. ATTENDANT appears, her face flushed, and advances fearfully. ZEUS gestures toward the white feather on the floor. ATTENDANT picks it up and holds it out to him at arm's length.

Taking the feather, ZEUS pulls ATTENDANT toward him. Lifting her face gently with his fingertips, he gazes into her eyes. She flinches, expecting more violence, but after brushing her lips sensuously with his thumb, ZEUS dismisses her with a longing pat on the ass. ATTENDANT exits hurriedly.

ZEUS turns to the mirror to place the white feather in his lapel. Then, after straightening his jacket and giving himself the once-over, ZEUS exits, his steps becoming jauntier one by one.

THE END