

Zeus Takes a Day Job

by Michael Gillan Maxwell

Remember the Titans? After those guys, the first few centuries were a piece of cake. Sure, I was Ruler of the World, but once things got rolling, I delegated most of my workload to underlings and spent most of my time lounging around on Mt. Olympus with the other Gods, occasionally hurling one of my famous bolts from the blue, if it looked like things were getting out of hand. That's probably when I started to lose my edge.

Things really went south when the Romans changed my name to Jupiter. Then, in the centuries that followed, people got me mixed up with Thor, which was a real pain in the ass. I still blame the Vikings for *that* clusterfuck. But at least I was still a player then. Things went from bad to worse and the demand for the whole pantheon of classical Gods started to dry up.

Christianity really drove the stake through our hearts. It was a whole new ball game and the Catholic saints were the new movers and shakers. It was tough on all of us. The Greek Gods were yesterday's news and we faded into obscurity like old vaudeville performers. We became the stuff of legend and myth, characters in books on dusty shelves, before blipping off the radar screen altogether.

Time's a cruel bitch and we didn't age gracefully. Most of the Gods became cartoon characters and action figures, although our names are still trendy for family pets, candy bars, winter storms, princesses and porn stars. Small comfort, indeed.

I don't know how it came down to this, toiling away as a barista in some back alley Starbucks in Olympia, Washington. I guess I'm lucky to find any kind of work at all. With the gaps in my resume, nobody wants to take a chance on a chronically unemployed, classically trained God whose last gig was on some distant mountaintop 2500 years ago. I hired on as a fry cook at the Greek diner across town, but got canned the same day after I zapped a cheeseburger with a thunderbolt and started a grease fire that cleared the place out.

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Now I'm whipping up frothing frappuccinos that smell of nutmeg and cinnamon. I can almost hear Dionysius mocking me.

This damn hair net looks silly as a hat and totally ridiculous on my magnificent beard. I'm not even allowed to use a thunderbolt to whip up a good mocha latte. That's demeaning enough, but not as hard to take as the customers. They're all jaded hipsters, thumb diddling smartphone freaks, pretending their online interactions actually count as relationships and that "tweets" are real conversations. It's sad, really. Always in a hurry and so distracted, they rarely even look me in the eye as they order their five dollar caffeine concoctions. Don't they understand that *I* have feelings too? They should've seen me in my salad days when I really used to *be* somebody.

