On The Styx

Runbook

v2.1

A larp by Evolution Events

Tell me, O Muse...

Introduction

The gods of Olympus have fallen on hard times. It is the era of cynicism. Faith is hard to come by and their stories have become funny anecdotes and theatre plays, rather than dogma. Without priests, temples or followers, using their divine influence on the world is more difficult every day...

On the Styx is a larp for 16 players where participants will play the Greek gods in the modern age. While some of them have adjusted to the current era by getting a job and a life, all of them are struggling to come to terms with their growing irrelevance. Immortality has become a curse rather than a blessing. Something has to change.

Zeus has called for a long-postponed family meeting in order to mend fences and make a game plan. Some may propose to just wait it out. They assume that once their powers have completely waned they will just become mortal, and that after they die they will join the afterlife of the gods that are currently in power. As none of the gods really knows what mortality is like, it is a tempting mystery.

Others will choose to be proactive. In a few weeks' time the stars will be right and an opportunity will present itself to cross over to the closest thing gods and pantheons have to an afterlife. An unknown place where many gods, such as the Meso-Americans and the Egyptians, have already gone. The Olympians would be able to continue to exist together, though cut off from every aspect of the mortal world. And who knows, maybe they will be given the opportunity for a new beginning. But are they prepared to leave everything they have ever known behind?

Because even after all these millennia, life is sweet - and rather than figuring out how to get to which afterlife, maybe the gods should fight like hell to become relevant again, some way or somehow...

What the Olympians all agree on is that they need a plan. It will take a united and concerted push, because they have precious little power left in this world. But it has proven difficult to have constructive discussions in a family that has struggled for centuries- with the changing modern times, with each other and with themselves.

This is a game about family drama. About alliances, love, anger, forgiveness, difficult decisions, and above all about acceptance. The gods are inclined to fight the passage of time, while it seems abundantly clear to most that this is useless. Who will be the first to acquiesce, and why? Or is it still possible to reinvent oneself when you are 3000 years old?

Is it true that you are never really too old to learn?

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Goal of This Runbook And What's In It

From the first run of *On the Styx* we had the idea to turn it into a re-runnable format, both to make it easy on ourselves but also for others who would like to use or adapt this formula in the future.

We have written this book as a one-stop-shop for running the game, with all the designs we have made, the tools we have used or developed and the characters we have written. It is intended to be both a manual to run the game and a means of documenting how our runs went and what we learned from them.

We hope that this will inspire future runs of *On the Styx*, or that it will help a larp that you are developing yourself with practical tips and tricks. We have also included our musings or alternate options where appropriate, so that you can hopefully use this in your own decision making to localise *Styx* and make it easier to adapt in the future, or to be used as an inspiration for something different entirely.

History and Development

On the Styx began as a new edition in our '*Exit*' series, which is our name for a series of one-shot games in which a small group of characters find themselves in an enclosed space with minimal organizer interaction or NPC. But as the design took shape we realised that while we were using a lot of elements from the Exit series, this was a new larp that required a good re-think about the shape of the game and our role in it.

The first *Styx* was run in Dutch in the Ardennes on 7-10th of September 2018. It received very positive feedback from the participants. Afterwards many international players expressed interest, and so we decided to set up an international run. An English-language website was created while the character descriptions were being translated (we were particularly blessed with two professional translators as players in our Dutch language run), and we opened sign-ups for an international audience.

The first two international runs were on the 12-15th and 19-22nd of July 2019. Seeing the continued interest for the larp and hearing from people who expressed a desire to run it themselves, we then decided to plan two extra runs for 2020. The idea to publish the scenario at one point for others to use also took shape.

The last two runs were originally planned in 2020, but as the world locked down we found ourselves having to postpone them twice. They were finally run as the Odyssey and Iliad runs on the 19th to 22nd of August and the 26th to 29th of August 2022. Both runs ran smoothly despite the rocky times and multiple postponements, and we got a lot of good feedback on updating certain characters and character traits.

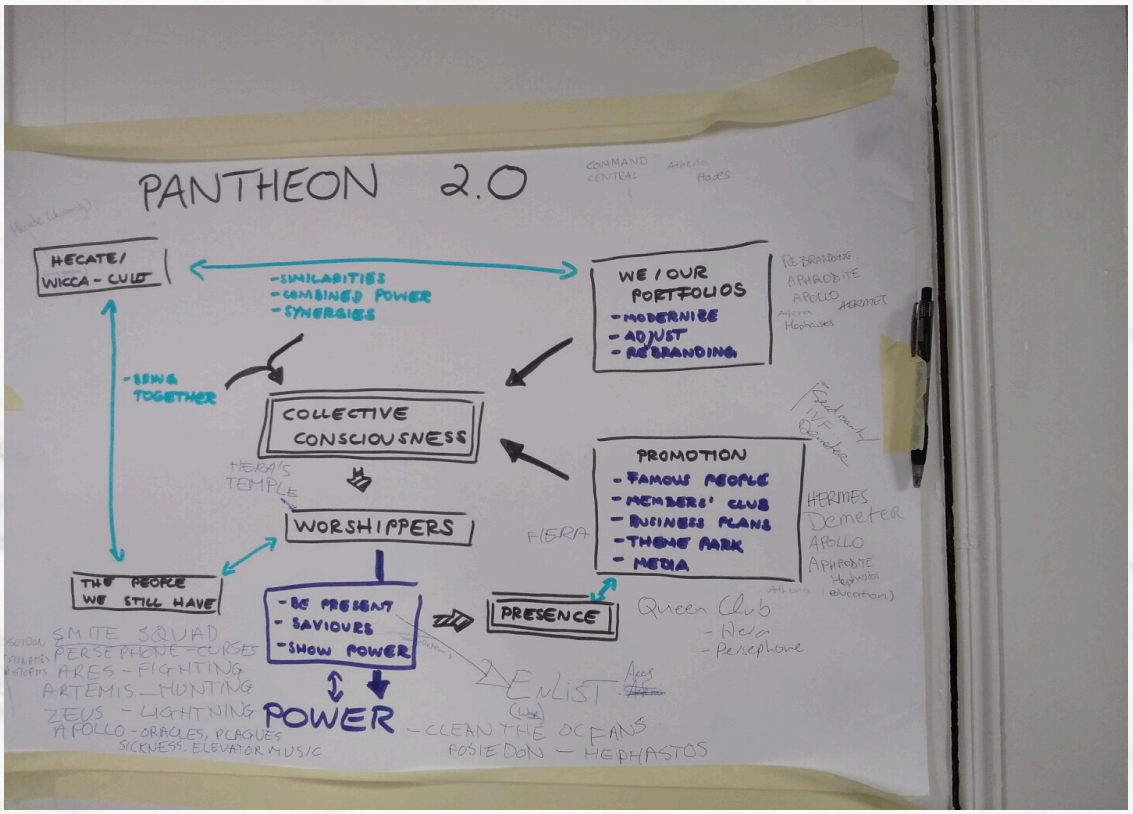
After that we started writing the outline for what would eventually become this runbook.

Game Design

On the Styx is about family.

This larp is intended as a 'family drama in a soap opera'-style game, where the relationships between the characters become strained, blow up and are put back together again. That means the tone is overall serious and can be tragic, but there is always a nod towards humour and beauty too.

But just like in a soap opera there will also be psychologically challenging themes. Social exclusion, infidelity, family fights, addiction and regret will be a part of the game, and quite a central part for some characters. Besides that, it is also a game about accepting the inevitable and the choice between giving up and fighting back, which can be difficult themes for some.



On the Styx is not a game about power and combat. It is also not about solving the problem that the Gods are ostensibly here to solve; 'solving it' can be a character goal for the weekend, but is not a player goal; it should serve as something that can generate play and conflict between the various Gods, not as the Big Plot to be solved by the end of the game.

The following section details the vision and design philosophy behind the choices that we made that we feel make *On the Styx* what it is.

Why the Greek Gods work particularly well

We always wrote this game with the Greek Gods in mind, and attempted to design a game that inherently supports melodramatic interactions and high emotions. We explicitly wanted a larp suitable for playing a deeply flawed character - one that makes mistakes, fights with their family, chooses irrational options, lets themselves be driven by selfish motivations or dramatic emotions, but will still be welcomed into the game. And the Greek Gods fit that bill perfectly.

To contextualise this: we as designers have experience with games like *Vampire: the Masquerade*. While the love for settings like this runs quite deep, there is an aspect that makes it hard to "play to fail" in such larps: it is easy to get into a place where your character gets ostracised, and *playing a character that becomes socially isolated is rarely fun.*

The setting of such games often demands that characters have a cutthroat approach to their social interactions, and being associated with someone who has made obvious mistakes or social faux pas is dangerous to the characters themselves. While this makes for a very brooding in-game atmosphere, it limits the bandwidth of play types that are 'safe to play'. Deciding that your flawed character should make the wrong choice, fail at something, or do something that is obviously "wrong" might be the death knell for their relations - and, as a result, for a large part of your play.

Only while we were running the game for the first time did we fully realize why the game provided an extra safe space for players to make many different kinds of mistakes *and still have their characters be playable*. Less than an hour after a huge in-game fight, one of the players was heard saying something like "I am *so* mad

Photo by Roos S.

at you... but you're *still* my brother, and I know some things will never change. Come and have dinner with us". The game design not only worked as hoped to create a compelling family dynamic, but significantly exceeded our expectations by making even the most risky and acerbic confrontations feel safe to play with.

There are some aspects to this:

1. The characters have literally been doing this for millennia. It makes sense to extrapolate some of the drama from the ancient writings to the time between then and now (something we've tried to do while designing the characters) and assume that over the years there have been uncountable positive and negative interactions between the characters. It is therefore reasonable to assume that this latest one will not be the straw that breaks the camel's back - and any irreversible fallout can be postponed to the end of the game.

2. There is no social demerit for being associated with a character who has done something dramatic, terrible, stupid or otherwise negative. The ties that bind are already in place, and while fights may ensue and sides may be chosen, there can always be reasons to make up, or gloss over the issue for now.

3. The gods are aware that they are a conceptualization, and they can not help or change what they are. So Eris can easily be forgiven for manipulation, Aphrodite for flirting etc.

This means that while the actions of melodrama can be played and the big emotions can be experienced, the consequences do not (have to) stick. The players will be able to get back into the game and the other character's good (or merely "ok") graces, simply because every Greek god knows that their family is messed up to begin with, and all their family members are, in their own way, slaves to their true nature - but while they can barely live with each other, they most certainly can't live without each other.

Playing style

On the Styx has a setting and characters but no plot. All the play we provide for the game has been written into the characters and expressed as interactions between them. These interactions can be based in the dramatic conflicts of the history of the characters, achieving or failing to achieve the character's goals, or events as they unfold during play, but in the end each god's story will not be an organiser-written narrative but rather a personal journey.

This means the initiative for the pacing and intensity of the game lies with the players themselves. They will have more responsibility for their own game and that of others than at many other events. Participants are expected to put effort into trying to identify the needs of others when it comes to play, and react when they need support or adversity. It also means that the choice for the optimal moment to reveal character traits or story, and how and when to work towards your character's goals, is up to the player. Because this is a standalone larp with an emphasis on interpersonal relationships it will (we hope) lead to intense play where failure is OK and where it feels safe to take risks.

The game is best approached as a melodrama, which can be a tricky playstyle to catch. This larp needs to find a balance: the topics and interactions are not always serious from our point of view, but they are almost always deadly serious and important to the gods. There is a lot of fun and humour to find in *Styx*, but it is not a slapstick or farce. It is the wry fun of 'this is so like you' or 'we can't really expect them to improve themselves, huh' that permeate family dynamics. Zeus is gonna Zeus, after all...

The Role of the Organisers - "The Servants"

Contrary to some of our past events (like the preceding *Exit*-series) where the organisers tried to steer clear of the play area entirely, at this game we wanted to make the participants feel like they were important Olympians to the best of our abilities. We cooked for them, poured their drinks when called and tried to grant their requests wherever possible within the limited means of this woefully depowered 21st century. In short we wore cheap togas and played the overworked nymphs, muses, heroes, and other mythological bit players serving the gods.

The servants do not make calls, are never part of any plot or story and are solely there to facilitate the play and stay. For their names we choose from the long list of Greek demi-gods, heroes, nymphs and muses. In our lore they have been reduced to the status of eternal servants to maintain some sort of immortality.

Player Guidelines

The following guidelines for players were part of our website, and we offer them here 'as-is'. It is important to communicate these, so feel free to put them on your own *Styx* website.

Play to lift

The aim is to encourage all participants to share with each other how they can play each other up at the start of the larp. Pre-game workshops allocate time to do this, but the more they do this the better. Players should ask themselves questions such as: *What is the other person trying to portray and how can I help them to achieve that? Could I be afraid of them, spread rumours, look in the box underneath their bed that says DO NOT LOOK?*

Encourage participants to actively contribute to this atmosphere, even if it is not through clear escalation but smaller continuous contributions to the other's game. *"I have many positive relationships so I am looking for a nemesis"* is a clear request for conflict, but playing up a famous character as such is also important.

'Play to lift' means that the group is responsible for everybody having a good time, which is extra important for an ensemble-based game like *On the Styx*. It also means that you can dare to make your character fail because you know your co-players will create a glorious opportunity to reconcile and not shun you for the rest of the game.

Play to flow

Accept what is going on around you and roll with it. Try to work with the play impulses as they come along, whether it will create a good or bad outcome for your character. Strive to see what others are trying to build and add to it to make it even better. This also encapsulates the two golden rules: play begets play so do *something* in reaction to what the others give you, and respect the choices others make regarding where to steer their story. There is no such thing as a 'wrong' reaction to what you are trying to do.

'Yes and' or 'no but'

We probably all know the improv rule that saying 'yes' to a request is the way to create play. If you can not say yes to something because you feel like it is really something your character would refuse, try to say 'no, but' instead of a flat out no. You can do that literally but also figuratively. By not only *saying* you are not interested in the one night stand but storming off, slamming doors and getting disproportionately angry. Or telling the other person in no uncertain terms why he of all people will never stand a chance. This will give the others something to continue playing on in exchange for the idea you just 'blocked'.

Keep Communicating and Dare to Ask for Play

Communication is always important, but especially so at small games like these where the players are responsible for the quality of each other's game. Don't shy away from speaking up

about how your game is going and what you need, be it through the poster (we'll explain the use of it later), the organisers or directly with your co-players. Nobody has a complete picture of the game, especially when they are involved in their own story, so chances are they will not notice that you are struggling unless you tell them.

If you are bored, need a play impulse or want a certain direction of play to stop: say so. If the player who is supposed to create conflict for you forgets to do so, they will undoubtedly apologise if you tell them afterwards. But they would probably have preferred to know while the game was still on, so they could have adjusted.

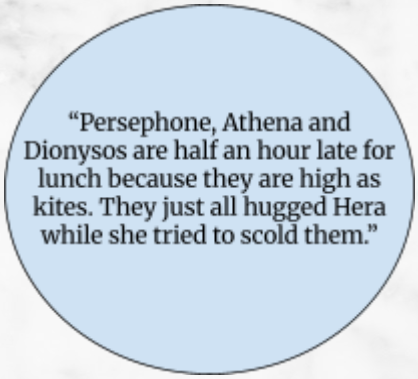
Relationships are Core

Because this game fully leans on player-created content, and because it is a game about family, the character relationships are central to experiencing the game. The pre-written relationships form a safety net intended to ensure that every player has a few characters to fall back on for play. That means that players should not ignore those particular characters during the game. Of course they are more than welcome to make additional connections.

It is very possible that a player, for example, turns out to not have great chemistry with the player of a romantic connection. If that happens, they should be encouraged to actively look for ways to enhance that co-player's game in another way (maybe they could go through a convoluted breakup, or turn out to be best friends) but not entirely ignore them. If play remains difficult, please keep the previous point in mind and (help them) communicate about what is happening, what the play is lacking and how it can possibly be resolved.

Poster for Play Requests

There should be a large sheet of paper on the wall in a central location (like the bathroom or kitchen) that will be pointed out before the game. Here you can write an out of game message at any time during the game, requesting your co-players to escalate or de-escalate certain aspects of play. You can ask people to give you a harder time about some topic, request them to reveal a secret, or you can just say 'I am rather bored, please help me find play'. This makes it easier for them to give you the game you want.



The Role of Difficult Topics

The mythology about most characters contains themes like (sexual) violence, torture, murder, suicide, loss, incest and slavery. Some of those topics will be part of backgrounds or could be addressed by others during the larp.

Casting has been designed to give players the opportunity to tell us what topics they want to try to avoid; game organisers can not guarantee they will never come up altogether, but roles can be tweaked to remove references and allusions to it. If the theme is considered to be core to the *Styx* experience, we advise telling the player or players in question to consider not running or participating in this game.

But *Styx* is still mainly about family dynamics that have gone awry, and the difficult topics will probably only pop up in the background. The topics players struggle with in the game are more likely to be family-themed in play around rejection, miscommunication, feelings of inadequacy, anger and frustration. Being clear about that beforehand will help participants with making the right choices.

There are a few characters that contain heavy concepts in their daily existence instead of only in the mythology: Ares for example has a form of PTSD, Dionysos has substance abuse problems and depression and Aphrodite has body image issues. We fully recognize that these are in reality very real and complex problems that can be hard to grasp as part of a larp character. Even though the style of *Styx* prevents the players having to take too deep a dive into these topics if they do not want to, they are more than welcome to leave things out or tone them down if they feel like it. Players in the past have engaged with it to different degrees and they all worked out fine. Under no circumstances should these topics be played for laughs. Don't hesitate to take players apart and talk to them if they seem to do so.

On the Embodying of the Gods' Genders

We found it very important that any player is able to embody any of the characters regardless of sex or gender identity.

Within the fiction of the game we explained this as 'gods take many forms', as in mythology the Greek gods regularly take other physiques.

The gods do have a set and mythological gender, but they can choose to manifest however they want. This means that all characters are open to anybody, and able to be portrayed in any form that the player feels comfortable playing.

Interesting observations from our own runs on Gods & Genders:

- Apollo has rarely been played male presenting
- Aphrodite has always been played female presenting
- Athena has often been played male presenting
- Zeus has been played both male and female presenting...
- ...though Hera has never been male-presenting.
- Poseidon has always been played male-presenting
- Hecate has always been played female-presenting
- Dionysos, Hermes and Persephone have been all over the place

A nice side-effect is that we have found that the mythological nature of the game lowers the bar for players to play with gender presentation: because any god can look however they want, players can portray other genders without feeling like they have to conform to a certain outward appearance to do so.

Just to be entirely clear: character gender can be a wholly different thing than player gender which can also be a wholly different thing from outward gender presentation. Encourage your participants to portray their Gods as they see fit.

Look and Feel of the Game

Styx is ideally played in a group/family accommodation. This location should have enough room to have several different conversations going at once, but not enough room to be able to fully avoid one another. If possible, a luxurious look will benefit the game, especially if it is or can be made to look a bit faded, outdated or tacky.

Greek-style ornaments and accoutrements will also work, with the bonus that genuine items work just as well as cheap touristy things. The location we used for our four international runs had a number of faux Greek statuettes that worked very well within the context of the game, and we did not have to add much for the right vibe. But if your location is a bit more plain, some extra set dressing is easily and cheaply purchased.

Encourage players to dress as they feel comfortable portraying their Gods. As there is 3000 years of history to choose from for each character, any number of costumes and costume options will do without problem. As a matter of fact, clashing costumes will only add greatly to the game. Make sure to communicate that there is no wrong way to dress for this game to alleviate the pre-game costume stress that larpers are prone to.

Inspiration (Books & Movies)

- All the works of classical Greek mythology, with a special mention of the Iliad & Odyssey attributed to the poet Homerus.
- Gods Behaving Badly by Marie Philips for a good look at how the Gods would fare in the modern age. A movie was apparently once made, but disappeared entirely after screening - we suspect divine intervention.
- Mythos by Stephen Fry and its sequels 'Troy' and 'Heroes', for a very tongue-in-cheek and quite comprehensive look at Greek mythology. The audiobooks are also worth it, and narrated by Stephen Fry himself.
- Clash of the Titans (1981), the classic Greek mythology fantasy movie that defined the genre. Its tropes of vengeful, petty gods and the plucky hero that opposed them serve as a good inspiration for the characters as they were in the mythic age.
- Kaos (2024), a Netflix series that is about the Greek Gods in a modern setting but with classic morality. An interesting reimagining that can definitively serve as good *Styx* inspiration despite it coming out well after writing the larp.

So You Want to Organise Your Own *Styx*

Are you considering organising your own (version of) *On the Styx*? First and foremost, thank you.

As weekend larps go we consider *On the Styx* to be a pretty manageable larp to put together. With 16 characters and a small crew, the game fits in accommodations that are normally designed for family- and work outings, and are generally comfortable and affordable. Cooking requires care and planning, but can be done by one or two people with sufficient experience and preparation. Logistics for a game this size should not include the need for car or van rentals unless you decide to get particularly ambitious with props; regular cars should have all transportation needs covered. So while definitely a challenge, we do feel that *Styx* could be run as the first larp a person or group organises.

We do insist on a few ground rules for the use of this material as it is written.

If You Organise a *Styx*, It is Your *Styx*

We would really love to hear from you if you organize a run, but in the end what you organise is your own. Feel free to contact us with any questions you may have, but we can't be the authority on your *Styx*.

If You Fully Change the Material, It is Not *Styx*

If you significantly modify the concept, file off the serial numbers, adapt mechanics yourself and in short make it an entirely different game, it is not *Styx*. And that is 100% okay. In doubt? Feel free to contact us!

We Consider These Things to be Irrevocably Part of *On the Styx*

- Gender blind casting
- Workshops & calibration
- Creating a very safe environment where trying new things is less scary
- Use of flagging or ensuring in some other way that the relatively small player group is comfortable with each other.

Practical - How to Organise *On the Styx*

For this document we have used our own best practices when it comes to every practical aspect. We fully acknowledge that your circumstances and opinions may vary, and though some guidelines may seem prescriptive they are usually not intended as such.

In this chapter we will detail how we organised the various runs of *Styx*. Feel free to use it as-is to run your own version of this larp, or use it to give you generalized ideas about organising a (similarly-sized) larp.

Size

On the Styx is designed for sixteen characters and a small support staff / organising team, bringing the size of the game to 20-25 people. We felt this was ideal for this type of experience. Coincidentally, it is also the ideal size in regards to renting group accommodations, as this is roughly what large family weekends require. This means that a wide variety of locations are open to running a version of this game.

Runtime

We organised *Styx* on full weekends. We used Friday for the arrival day, with people arriving in the afternoon and starting the workshops after dinner. The game itself would start on Saturday morning, with the players waking up as their characters and coming down for in-game breakfast. On Sunday the game would continue until just after dinner, with the rest of the evening for the afterparty.

The weekend format made the game accessible to a lot of people, but we did find the timeline a little rushed. Some people would arrive late, limiting the time for workshops, and some people would leave early on Sunday evening for travel and work the next day, opting out of the afterparty.

Our recommendation would be to ask participants to arrive early in the afternoon on Friday and start the workshops a little earlier. Alternatively one could find a longer weekend where a holiday also allows for the Monday off, making for a more relaxed ending of the weekend where everybody can fully enjoy the afterparty. This might be easier for local runs than international ones, so it is wise to see what you are comfortable organising and how you want to fill up the time. Nothing says that you can't run *Styx* in a midweek on a school-vacation or summer break, after all.

Location

A philosophy that we share with many larp organisers is that “the location is our biggest prop”, which held true for *Styx* as well.

Necessities

- Enough room, but not too much. This allows for semi-private conversations that are never quite private, and only a very limited ability to completely avoid one another.
- Central dining table that can hold or be made to hold all 16 Gods.
- Decent kitchen, preferably near the dining area so the food can be served out visibly to add to the ambiance.
- Good sleeping arrangements, preferably multiple rooms with a modicum of privacy.
- Accessibility, preferably all playing spaces on the same floor so the game can be easier to access for those with mobility issues.

Nice to have

- Enclosed garden space
- Luxurious look
- Multiple entrances and exits from the main playing areas.
- Games such as billiards and/or an activity room for leisure time.
- Good door to exit the game through - we have found this to be an effective way of allowing characters to pass a visible threshold to depart the game as the runtime ends.

Further considerations

- Easy to reach by public transport
- Enough parking space for cars
- For international runs: reachable from a nearby airport or international train station.

We have found that family holiday style locations for 20-25 people are ideal, and often have a stylish look, plus they occasionally have amenities such as a hot tub and/or a nice outdoor space that is conducive to the game.

Launch/how to get players

In our case we built the website and posted it on our various pages and socials. We were able to leverage an existing group of participants familiar with our organising style to quickly fill up our first run. It is still our experience that due to the limited number of players, word of mouth is very effective to fill up all sixteen player spots.

Our initial international run required a broader process, such as posting on international pages on various social media. Our later international runs filled up very quickly due to positive hype from earlier participants, so no additional posting on social media was necessary for us, though it is undoubtedly effective.
For selecting players, you can use a system of your choosing. We think a lottery is fairest, but we have also worked with first-come-first serve, or you can invite players yourself.

Website

Our own website can be found at https://onthestyx.evolution-events.nl. It includes practical information, brief character descriptions, a 'before you register' disclaimer, and notes and tips on play style. Most of the texts on the website have been incorporated in this book as their own chapters, and if you decide to run this game with general signups we encourage you to use these resources in your own website.

An important aspect of the website is a section to ensure that participants know what they sign up for, seeing that they will be largely responsible for each other's game flow and storylines, and that all events during the game will be part of co-creation.

Communication Milestones

What follows is the list of communication steps that we have used to send information and inform our participants, on a rough timeline. This will hopefully give you an idea about what to do and when, while still being adaptive enough to work for your own planning.
Feel free to use these milestones in any way you deem necessary or useful.

General considerations

- Be communicative, don't go dark for a few months.
- Be early and proactive in your flagging and casting.
- Be early and proactive with dropouts and reserve list management.
- Consider posting to your Discord server and/or interest group when you have sent important communications in order to keep people informed.

Some time before

- Message to your mailing list / Discord server / FB group / interest group (any or all) that you are running the game, preferably with a link to the completed website and information about when and how signups will open.

At the opening of signups

- Reminder that signups will be open from this point.
- Signup confirmations and the expected date for the lottery and casting.

When the lottery is done

- Send confirmations to those that got in, and inform of the expected date of casting.
- Let people that did not make the lottery know that they are not in, and ask if they would like to be added to the reserve list or opt out of it.
- If you have more runs planned, feel free to add sign up dates of those so that players can make an informed decision on whether to stay on the list, try for a next run or opt out entirely .
- Send out the full list of participants to everyone in the lottery so that the flagging process can start.

At the end of the flagging process

- See if there are any red, orange or yellow flags. Discuss who and how these people will be contacted in order to see if their participation is possible, should/can be moved to a different run or should be cancelled altogether.
- Inform people that have flagged someone how you have acted on them as an organisation to ensure a good baseline of safety.
- If anyone dropped out due to flagging: add reserves and let them pass through the flagging process. You can also let players flag the waiting list proactively.
- If no red flags remain, send out the casting form.

At the end of the casting process

- Send out the casting results.

- See if the casting works for the participants.
- If not, see if some character editing will solve the issue, otherwise consider reserve participants or run switching.
- Once everything is sorted and if there are no objections, send out the casting confirmations.

In case of dropouts (up to the day before the larp)

- Mail the first few people on the reserve list of the role that has become available. Remember to check if your version of the flagging process requires any actions at this point.
- If no flags are raised, let them know they are in and send the role information.

Two weeks before the larp

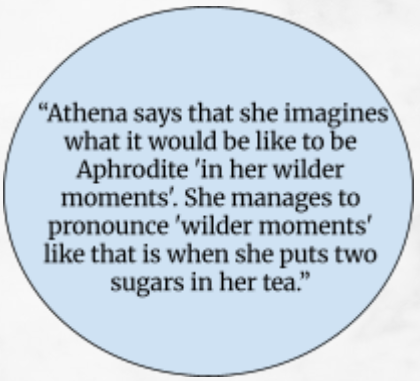
- Send a final confirmation email, with reminders of the logistics, arrival times and schedule for Friday night.
- Send out an email to the reserve list to ask if they are available to come to the larp last minute, in order to generate a rapid response list of active reserves.

In the last week

- In case of dropouts: mail the rapid response list and run through the flagging process on tight deadlines.
- If there are any travel or weather related advisories (we had a flood warning in our last week) consider sending out an email.

After the larp

- Send a debriefing with a thank you, a reminder of the photo policy and expectation of when the photos will become available, and whatever else may still be needed to be communicated.
- Send an email with the photo links and the process to ask for removal of specific pictures. If the photographers are particularly quick you can combine this with the above mail to reduce the number of communications to send.
- Send a final confirmation when the photo flagging deadline has passed. This will likely be the last formal communication for that particular event. You can always combine it with a save-the-date message if you have follow-up events planned.



Reserve list maintenance

As alluded to under the Communication Milestones, a measure of reserve list maintenance is important. Due to the nature of the connected relationships, On the *Styx* is a game that ideally runs with all 16 characters. Ensuring that the people on the reserve list are still interested in participating is important, and grows even more important as the game nears.

We recommend actively communicating in the last two to four weeks before the game, in order to create a rapid reaction reserve list. In our experience, people on the reserve list often stop being available, but will not actively communicate this to you. This might leave you without an effective reserve list. If that happens you could consider sending out a mailing and/or posting on social media that last minute spots are or may become available.
If you have enough helpers or crew it is possible to assign one as a possible last-minute character player.

In the years since writing *Styx* several methods to ensure that the cast is complete have emerged, such as 'standby players' that attend as helpers as a reduced fee but can be tapped as reserve cast at the last minute. Feel free to mix in any of those methods if you think they can work for you.

Casting & Casting Tools

As a larp with prewritten characters, a significant amount of player's enjoyment of the larp depends on the role they are cast in. Even in a game as small as this one, tastes will vary and the very experience that one player may be after could be a nightmare for another player. Basically, casting matters.

Photo by Demeter, Iliad run

Our personal casting method (the one we share in this book) is close to our hearts, because we have worked hard to eliminate organiser bias as much as we can from the process - our basic belief is that if a player *wants* to portray a certain role, it is not up to us as organisers to tell

them they cannot or should not. Organisers are also human beings and in the words of one of them, “I refuse to subject the players to my or anyone’s judgement regarding who the best candidate for playing Aphrodite would be.”

There are obvious limits to this belief - in some cases it may just not, for example, be *safe* for a person to (have someone else) play a given role, so this does not absolve the organisation of a certain amount of responsibility. Our approach is chosen purely to eliminate or at least minimise favouritism and bias - because we believe that players should be allowed to play roles that might surprise us, that we don’t think are their “go-to type of role,” or that they themselves might find challenging, exciting or just plain fun.

In practice, we actively encouraged our players to be daring in their choice of preferred characters. We phrased this in the materials as follows: *Please do not let your character choice be guided by the way you look, think you are perceived or other people's (alleged) expectations of you.*

Casting and Gender

As mentioned before, we consider it an integral part of *On the Styx* that players are allowed to portray characters of any mythological gender, whether that matches their off-game gender presentation or not. Therefore, during the initial registration, players are allowed to choose from three options regarding the gender of their role:

- I *only* want to play a male god,
- I *only* want to play a female god, or
- I do not care about the gender of my character.

The first two options were limited to at most 8 registrations each to prevent casting difficulties, as there are 8 canonically male and 8 canonically female gods in the game. Even this limitation does not necessarily guarantee that the role assignment can always be done in a way that makes every player happy, but this approach makes it more likely to succeed; otherwise you may end up with a mismatch between players who are willing to play a certain gender and the number of available characters of said gender.

Casting Tools

From the very first run of *On the Styx* - the Dutch language run called “*Bij de Styx*” - we used an automated process to both simplify the casting process and eliminate the aforementioned organiser bias as much as possible.

Players who were admitted to the game were sent a link to a form. In that form each player had to select 5 or more characters they were willing to play in their order of preference. See

“Appendix II: Casting Technology” for links to the form and other information on how to perform the algorithmic casting. Of course, given the limited amount of characters it would be very possible to do a manual casting if preferred.

After filling out this form, the players were automatically taken to a Google Form where more in-depth questions could be answered. Importantly, this form also contained the “ingredient list” of trigger topics that players needed to opt into playing with.
We chose an opt-in approach based on research that clearly demonstrates respondents to surveys more easily provided consent if the “opt-out” approach was chosen; seeing as how this is a safety tool, we want players to carefully consider which topics they opt in to versus leaving it selected because it was the default. We wanted the form to be as non-coercive as possible.

The output of the Google Form was fed into an automated tool by the developer. It then spat out a couple of optimal or close to optimal solutions for the casting, which the organisers then checked against preferences such as yellow flags and other potential issues, like players who did not realise that a certain topic they opted out of features prominently in their character’s background or personality.

Mismatches

None of these tools guarantee a successful casting; although we think it unlikely, it is possible to end up with a situation in which certain roles cannot be cast because no player had them in their preferred characters. We haven’t encountered this issue in practice, but it is impossible to say for sure that no issues would ever come up. We encourage organisers who run into such trouble to openly and actively work with their player base to resolve such issues. All of this should obviously happen within the limits of privacy, which means the exact limitations you run into should be kept vague, because it may enable players to deduct who flagged who; such info is sensitive and your players should be able to trust you to keep such information as safe as possible.

The Role of Flagging

The concept of flagging procedures has generated plenty of discussion within the larp community. For the purposes of organising *On the Styx*, we consider it an imperfect but necessary tool to ensure participant safety at our games. We strongly recommend using a form of flagging, but the how is up to you.

Be aware that the choices you make in designing your flagging system can have consequences for your communication. For example, if you choose a system where people are only passed through flagging once they are admitted to the game, that can make it hard to find a last minute replacement for a player dropping out because the players on your waiting list exist in a “flagging limbo” - you don’t know whether they can be admitted to the game at the drop of a dime, because the other players should have time to flag them if needed.

Logistics

With the location being the biggest prop, *Styx* is relatively light on logistics. However, you might need the following things:

<u>General supplies</u>

- An on-site printer plus paper
- Power strip(s) with extension cord(s) for printer and laptops
- A big sheet of paper, markers and cord to hang them for the ‘bathroom play request poster’
- Other general office supplies like sturdy paper, pens, scissors, markers, scotch tape, duct tape
- First aid kit and list of nearest doctor/dentist/hospital
- Pre-printed signs to mark the location: bathroom, bedrooms (who sleeps where), safety person room(s) and misc signage that is location dependent.

<u>Check-in</u>

- Name tags for all people present with their character name, off game name and pronouns for both, in convenient holders to put on clothes without poking holes
- Costumes for the in game staff. We used simple green sheets with safety pins and a belt as chiton/tunic style clothes, but there are many possibilities.
- Checklist for check in and (additional) payments

<u>Kitchen related</u>

- Lists with food sensitivities/allergies and alcohol preference of all players (with character name) for the kitchen staff
- Things you want to use to dress up your food display (like napkins, baskets, white tea towels)
- Large table cloth for the main table if location does not supply it

- Kitchen tools that (you suspect) the location lacks, like sharp knives, kitchen scale, mixer and food processor if needed for your meals.
- Recipes and meal plan
- Labels (or label printer) to mark bottles with “vintage” (non-alcoholic) beverages

Groceries

Our strategy was to get groceries locally. Some supermarkets do delivery or collecting of orders, which can streamline logistics considerably. We do recommend ensuring you can get groceries yourself as a backup option in case of unexpected events, botched deliveries or sudden need.

Alcohol

You have to make a decision on whether your game allows off-game drinking during the game, and give the players instructions on what and how much they can have, and what the consequences for inebriation are. We served some alcohol for players who wanted it (at added cost), and the fact we served it meant we could keep track of how much people had. That worked well for us, but the game could easily be run without any alcohol. We had the code word ‘vintage’ to order something that was non-alcoholic but looked the part. Whatever you decide, the gods are likely to drink, even if the players don’t. Red grape juice works well for red wine. White grape juice is hard to find and very expensive, but most green ice tea is a good substitute for white wine. Apple juice is decent for mock whiskey and water can pose as ouzo.

Accessible Audio System

Having an audio system on which players can easily play music can help to set ambiance and allow characters to express themselves. We also used the audio system to facilitate a soft game ending by playing a long and soothing piece of music as a signal that the game would end in at most 30 minutes. Our implementation used the existing audio systems in a few different rooms, supporting both Spotify Connect and bluetooth streaming for each room individually. Most players used their own phone for streaming, but we also provided a tablet preconfigured for Spotify streaming in each room (using a one-month trial subscription works fine for this). The receiving end of this streaming was implemented using Raspberry Pi minicomputers with audio output add-on boards, running max2play with multisqueeze, which also supports playing a single track synchronised over all audio systems for the end game music.

General Purpose Supplies / Box of Many Things

A good habit on some larps that we happily adopted, is to buy a number of general supplies that are free to take for people if they have forgotten or unexpectedly need those items. We had a small box that included toothpaste, toothbrushes, hygiene supplies, earplugs, basic painkillers and condoms. This box was put in the main bathroom for easy access.

Briefing and Debriefing

This is the briefing and debriefing document that we used to start and end the game. We present it here as-is in order to get an idea what we briefed about, so please adapt this in whole or in part to your specific game.

Opening briefing

- **Introductions**: Introduce organisers and crew.
- **Thanks**: Extra crew, Translators, Players.
- **First off**: Please speak English at all times, even amongst yourselves, even if you share a language, even if English is your second language, even when you're off-game, as to keep everyone included.
- **Logistics**: Who is sleeping together in the same room is not in-game. However, the rooms can be used in-game (but consult with your roommates).
- **Logistics**: We've put door hangers on every room, including the servant (counsellor / safety person) rooms. You can make it clear that you're not available while inside the

room (for example, you've gone to bed already or need to be left alone for a bit) by turning the door hanger to the obvious side. Of course, that does not prevent your roommates from coming in - just people looking for you in-game.

- ❏ **Logistics**: Photos will be shared with you before being widely published. You'll get the opportunity to veto any pictures you're in. What you can or cannot do with the pictures is between you and the photographer, but once the pictures are on social media, *do not tag anyone* without their permission.
- ❏ **Logistics**: Emergency protocol / First Aid - Discuss location-specific points last, like gathering spots in case of calamity and/or fire alarm.
- ❏ **Logistics**: Practical stuff about the location - what doors to use, where is smoking allowed, guides on how to use any on-site amenities, etc.
- ❏ **Logistics**: Brief your chosen alcohol policy.
- ❏ **Logistics:** We will be nicely presenting most food in bowls and such, but only small amounts to prevent food waste. If something runs out, we probably have more, just ask. If you cannot reach something you want, just ask and we will happily fetch it for you.
- ❏ **Logistics**: If you need anything (extra toilet paper, extra sheets, specific groceries, a big sheet of paper, whatever), ask us and we'll do our best to facilitate.
- ❏ **Logistics**: We have a "box of many things" available in case you find you've forgotten something like your toothbrush, toothpaste, sanitary towels, tampons, deodorant, earplugs or any such thing. The box is underneath the sink near the ground floor bathrooms. Feel free to grab anything you need.
- ❏ **Logistics**: We use flags to mark allergy-sensitive food, so please leave them in place.
- ❏ **Workshops**: Mechanics and such will be discussed during the workshops, so if you have any questions about that, please postpone them until the workshops.
- ❏ **Workshops**: Yes, we have workshops, but if you still want to discuss some things with your fellow players, there will be some time between and after the workshops.
- ❏ **Start / End of Game**: You can go to bed at whatever time you please, but your personnel - us - will come and wake you tomorrow at 10:00 so that you can have breakfast together at 10:30.
- ❏ **Start / End of Game**: Once the game starts, there is no formal downtime until it ends. On Sunday evening, shortly after dinner, we will play some music on repeat for half an hour. This signals that the end of the game is coming up - you have half an hour to finish your in-game business before the game ends.
- ❏ **Start / End of Game**: (Only for second run) On Monday, we will have to leave the location before 10:00.

- ❏ **Orga**: The crew are available as servants, so do not hesitate to let them get you drinks or do other work, or fetch food from the other side of the table. Doing so validates our presence, which makes things *more* fun for us, not *less*. Also, we can be easily recognised by our Emerald Green (Doric) Chitons.
- ❏ **Orga**: We will do our best to serve you at your every whim, but sometimes we might be a bit too busy or your request may be impossible. We'll discuss this in the workshops.
- ❏ **Orga**: Also come to us if you find yourself stuck somehow. The game mostly works by creating opportunities for play for yourself and others but we might be able to help you somehow - but only if you come to us before the game ends, of course.
- ❏ **IC**: As things stand, the gods are still "immortal." There's *probably* a way around it but you would have to look it up in the prophecies, et cetera et cetera. Long story short: there's no way to commit murder or suicide or die during the runtime of the game.
- ❏ **IC**: None of the servants (including the cook) are part of any kind of plot or whatever. You're free to drag us into your game as (un)willing arbiters, but the game should not ever revolve around any of us or what we're doing.
- ❏ **IC**: Sense & Panthenonsense. A player made this for the first run and we got his permission to add it to the design afterwards, so now it's something you've played since the dawn of time. It's a good way to measure shifting allegiances, friendships and budding romances. We recommend that you play this game together In Character and participate, but it's voluntary of course.. It is a mix of light-hearted and serious questions and can be played with the whole group or smaller groups. During the weekend we will add a few more questions.
- ❏ **Conclusion**: When and where do the workshops start, what order are they in - planning for the evening.
- ❏ **Conclusion**: If you're not wearing a nametag yet, please get it (where). It's for tonight and the after-party only, you're not expected to wear them during the game itself. The servants will, though.
- ❏ **Conclusion**: If you haven't given us your signature yet for the registration form, please do so now, we have the forms here.

End Speech

- ❏ Logistics: Please remove the linen from your bed (duvet cover, pillow cover and one layer of mattress cover) and bring it down.
- ❏ Logistics: Please return your badge-holder.
- ❏ Logistics: If you have any in-game drugs, please make sure they don't get left behind at the location - we don't want to get in any kind of off-game trouble, please.
- ❏ Logistics: Time planning and cleaning.

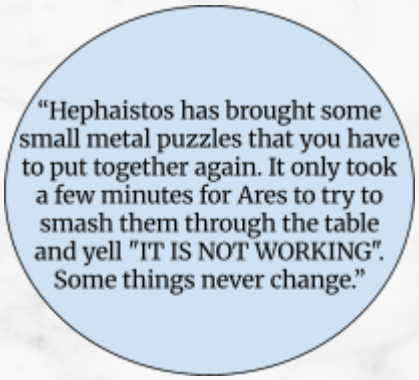
- ❏ Please wear your name badges again during the party, but hand in badgeholder before you leave (keep the card).
- ❏ Please send us your pictures.
- ❏ Safety Counsellors are still available.
- ❏ Who is leaving tonight?
- ❏ Deroleing & afterparty.

Food and drink

As part of the look and feel of the game we'd recommend ensuring that the participants are well-fed and waited upon by the crew throughout the day. You can choose to cook as a crew, or ask external cooks and/or catering to help. In all cases, ensure that the cooks have the allergen information of all participants well ahead of time. We recommend a regular spread of (healthy) snacks in central rooms that the players can access through the day.

<u>Role of the meals and mealtime</u>

Sharing the daily meals together is a moment where all the family will gather around the table, and within the game these can be excellent flashpoints that the smaller meetings throughout the day can lead up to. For this reason, aim to take your time with the meals and try to ensure that everyone is there.



Food allergies and intolerances can be quite the challenge, so we encourage you to plan early and double check with participants in order to ensure that everything runs smoothly come gametime.

<u>Sample meal serving times</u>

- 09:00-10:00: Breakfast
- 12:00-13:00: Lunch
- 15:00: Afternoon tea or coffee
- 18:00-19:00: Dinner

We used a reactive snack policy to take into account the weather and participant preferences, but at least two (healthy) snack moments are recommended in between every meal time.

Photos & photographers

Styx can be quite the photogenic game. We recommend having an explicit photo policy for photographers and participants. We have posted our policy by way of an example below. For instance, we have an explicit option for participants to opt-out of pictures, which we brief beforehand, and clear agreements have been made about proofing the photosets before publication so no one ends up with their face on pictures if they do not want to.

Evolution Events Photo Policy

We used the following photo policy during our games.

- There will be pictures taken. If you do not want this, please use our opt-out list, present at the event.
- Everyone is free to take pictures. If you do, please respect our opt-out list.
- If you take photos and want to publish them, we would also like to publish them on our own site.
- Any photoset published will only be accessible for participants for a specific period of time, during which they can flag any photo they would not like to see published.
- After this period, any photos remaining are available for use by the participants.
- If you publish photos on the internet, do not mention (unsolicited) names of other participants. This includes tagging on any social media.
- If you do not want (specific) photos of you to be published, please contact the photographers yourself during or after the event.

With this being a modern game, phones can be present in the in-game space. In some cases a mobile phone can even be an important prop for a character, for example in the case of Aphrodite. Selfies are perfectly okay, but all participants should be reminded that the photo policies are in place for everyone who takes pictures.

Techniques, Workshops and Safety

Meta Techniques

Styx needs no mechanical rule system to run, but it does use two meta techniques: one to portray the (remaining) power of the Gods, and one to make the game flow more smoothly by cooperatively picking and choosing what myths and legends to play with. This is how we communicated those techniques to our players:

Energeia

The power the Olympian gods wield is called *energeia*. There is not much left of it, after all they are dearly lacking in active worship. But it is enough to remain immortal and to influence the world in minor ways.

It is, however, a finite source. It is easy to make small adjustments to the world three or four times a day. Examples could be "you do not remember what happened in the last five minutes", "you suddenly hate the taste of wine" or "you are madly in love with the cactus in the corner".

Photo by Roos S.

In the old days the gods used endless supplies of energeia to taunt, trick and seduce each other, but today it is a riskier choice. The gods would however not be the gods if they did not make bad choices every once in a while. They can choose to strain themselves when it comes to using energeia, but that will make them feel very bad, and experience the unpleasant sensation of starting to disconnect from reality. Attempts at major power use will have this effect more often.

We assume you will trust your gut when judging what is possible, how much power something should take, and what gives the most game to you and your fellow players.

After the effect wears off the victim will realise something is amiss, and of course in most cases they will guess that divine influence is at play. That does not mean they will automatically know who is responsible.

The effect lasts exactly as long as the victim thinks is fun to play. It is fine to use a quick calibration for this (maybe it is very important for you that the influence is in play at a certain moment or with a certain person), but in the end the victim always decides.

You can transfer energeia to some extent and create bigger things together- as with everything in this game it is more about creating play than rules.

Very important: no god can undo what another god has done. It is impossible to cancel the use of energeia by another god. Of course you can try to lay on another effect to soften the consequences. Again: the victim decides on the effect.

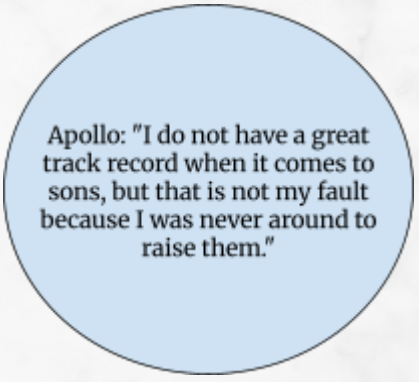
Energeia is meant to create play for everyone and to help you give the story of the characters unexpected twists and turns. That is why you can't use it to block play and you should, if taking something away, actively strive to give something in replacement. Try going for "you are no longer interested in this business project, but only in your wife" instead of "you are no longer interested in your business project".

Apart from that try to avoid using energeia for things that require calls or extreme suspension of disbelief. Though it would technically be possible for a god to turn all the leaves on a tree blue we can not really make that happen.

Using energeia on actions that fit your mythological portfolio is always a plus.

Knowledge of Mythology

Not everybody has an encyclopaedic knowledge of Greek mythology, and of course that is fine. But because it is a large part of the shared history of our characters, it can be really fun to use myths to create play for others. It can give a character reasons to want revenge, to call in a favour or feel like they owe someone. These things are eminently important to the gods, no matter how long ago they happened. Time is different when you are immortal.



If you have an idea for a mythology-based scene but you are unsure if the other player knows the myth or wants to play on it and how, we created a system to make it playable:

Make sure it is clear that you refer to a myth. Don't say "you know very well why I am mad" but "you know I will not forgive you for causing Semele's death".

I remember that: if the other person knows the story and would like to engage in play based on it they can use a phrase like "I remember it well, probably better than you!" and then start play.

The Zeus of the past: if the other person does not want to play on this story for any reason (because it is uncomfortable, does not align with your vision of the character, etc.), they can signal that by using a phrase close to "that is very long ago, that is the [character name] of the past".

You can then proceed by turning the discussion to something of the current time - something that happened on the event itself for example. "But you haven't changed at all! Just yesterday you set me up by making me look bad in front of Aphrodite!"

Fog of Memories: if the other person does not know the story (well) they can signal that in a similar fashion: "that is very long ago" followed by some phrase that has the word 'remember' in it.

For example: "Really? That was ages ago, after all this time I hardly remember who Semele was!" or "A lot of time has passed. I can not even remember what I had for lunch, how am I supposed to remember what mortal I allegedly stole from you three thousand years ago".

This is a request to the initial player to start telling the story, clueing you in on that part of mythology in the process. You can then still decide not to play on it, using the '[character] of the past'-phrase.

Ask the players to use eye contact, clear language and big gestures when using this technique to make certain that other people notice that it's not just talking.

Swearing on the Styx

If you want to show you are really serious about something, you can use the words *"I swear this on the Styx"*. According to myths, breaking an oath sworn on the Styx leads to 90 years of imprisonment without food or water and being struck dumb. Of course we will not play on this, but it goes to show how very serious this oath is to the gods. Feeling compelled to swear on the Styx is exactly the sort of unfortunate thing that will create great play and drama in the style of Greek mythology. Once you swear on Styx you are completely bound to this oath. Of course we will count on player honesty here.

This is mostly intended to swear to do certain things or abstain from them, like *"I swear on the Styx I will never hit you"*. It is less useful as 'proof' that you believe in something, like *"I swear*

on the Styx I saw Zeus kiss Aphrodite". That will not work because it is not an oath you can break or keep. You can choose to use it to show others how serious you are, but they will know it is not really an oath on Styx.

Immortal Servants Have Off-Days, Too

You can ask the servants/organisers anything but of course we will not always be able to comply with everything.

If a servant answers *"one of the other servants will help you with that"*, they do not have time at the moment but you can ask one of the others. Sometimes this may mean you have to ask multiple times or come back later.

When the answer is *"Hercules will help you with that"* it is an impossible request and you'll have to find a workaround.

Creating Group Safety

It was extremely important for us that the game would stimulate the players to experiment with play and challenge themselves to try new things.

Since *On the Styx* is a game about immortal beings in which moods can shift fast and mistakes will be easily glossed over, and heartbreak will either not last forever or transform the story in interesting ways, we think the players will have room to make a mess of things or half-ass plans.

The fact that the game is very small means that it will be relatively easy to build an ensemble cast in which every character matters and the group will help lift everyone. It is small enough for the participants to remember what others want to be played up as and have those things actually happen.

We seem to have succeeded at this, because many players reported feeling very connected to the group, very lifted and indeed very safe. They felt like these people would truly have their backs during the game.

In order to make this happen we put a spotlight on certain aspects of the game continuously, in all our communications: the fact that it is co-creative and the fact that it is about family foremost. The small size also meant we could take the time to immediately introduce players to their primary relations when they arrived, and the extensive workshops really helped them to start feeling like a family. Things like the exercises to build intimacy, the creation of communal memories and taking extensive time to ask people what they needed from the

game in the workshops turned out to be very important. We would strongly advise any game-runner not to cut any of those workshops for that reason.

We see the conscious building of this feeling of safety, family and group cohesion as an essential part of the game.

Consent & Safety Mechanics

Due to the often emotional nature of *On the Styx*, consent and safety mechanics are required. We used the workshops to brief these extensively (see below).

The role of counsellors

One or more members of the crew - preferably of different genders - serve as Safety Counsellors during the game.

Their primary responsibility is assisting the participants in guarding their own emotional well-being within the context of the game, ensuring that everybody can play their character securely. We are big proponents of the concept of group safety, as highlighted in our ‘musings on design philosophies’ chapter.

However, counsellors are not (necessarily) trained professionals and cannot be expected to act as such.

Pre-game Workshops

We start the game with workshops, in order to build group cohesion, brief the safety mechanics and meta techniques one more time and to encourage last minute calibrations.
We have included our full list about what to brief and workshop here. Again, this is a list as we ran it, and adaptations are possible, though in the case of safety instructions please use caution.

Altogether the workshops took about four hours with small breaks, but as mentioned before this was sometimes uncomfortably crammed and the ending-time around midnight was not ideal for some.

Some random observations from the interpretation of the Gods as we have seen them played.

- Ares' energy level fluctuates wildly depending on players choices, as does Apollo's intelligence.
- Gods will start doing drugs like crazy at some point, and most likely try to drug the more serious gods like Hades.
- Some gods like Athena will take point on the Plan and try to keep everyone to it whatever happens, with much groaning as a result.
- Something will happen on the first evening/night that will make the second morning breakfast table very tense.
- Ares and Hephaistos will become an awkward duo of sorts.
- Artemis and Apollo will be a bit too close for comfort, as siblings, which Zeus will not exactly be in a position to critique.
- Either Hera and Zeus or Hades and Persephone will be on the verge of a complete breakup, and then most likely get back together again.

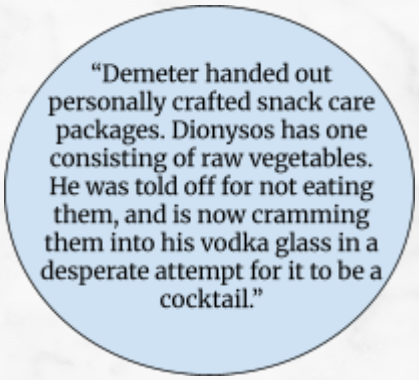
Briefing: Meta Techniques

- Explain the role of the Servants/game runners. Emphasize that you can roleplay with them, but playing with your co-players should always take precedence. Introduce the code phrases:
    - "One of the other servants will take care of that"
    - "Hercules will take care of that"
- Explain and demonstrate the Knowledge of Mythology meta technique as described earlier in the book:
    - Make it clear that you're playing on mythology
    - "I remember that" means "I'm ready to go"
    - "That was a long time ago" / "can't remember" means "please tell the story"
    - "The Zeus of the past" means "don't engage, I don't feel comfortable with this myth"
- If alcohol is a part of the game, communicate a code phrase (we used 'vintage') to get an alcohol free wine alternative.

- Explain what the poster for play requests is for, and where it is situated.
- Explain the end-of-game music ("this music signals you have half an hour left to finalise your game")

Briefing: Safety & Consent

- Central theme: *People are more important than larps*
- Playing on violence, bullying and/or intimacy requires calibration, implicitly or explicitly negotiating play style and/or intensity. Outside of those, calibration can be used anytime you think it would enhance the game. Do not be afraid to take a moment to talk about how to play. It's also a fine way to get new roleplay incentives if you feel you need some. If you only let people know how you feel after the game it is too late.
- The calibration for violence and/or intimacy involves consent. Consent is permission to do certain things in-game that have been negotiated off-game. Consent is *specific*, it is *personal,* it is *explicit,* it is *only valid until the situation changes,* and it can *always* be retracted. If no consent has been granted for a violent and/or intimate act, that act is *forbidden* - even if you think, for example, it's "less intimate than what we've negotiated" because this is subjective. For example, even if you're roleplaying a wild sexual scene, pulling the other's hair is only OK if it has been specifically discussed off-game. For that reason, "I'm OK with everything" is *not* a valid statement during calibration.



- *Only "yes" means "yes" - anything else means "no." Drunk also means "no." "No" does not mean "convince me."*
    - Never, *ever* pressure another player during consent negotiations.
    - Don't ask again.
    - Don't ask for an explanation.
- Brief and explain any safety techniques you have chosen to use, as well as any escalation- or de-escalation mechanics.
- For intimacy, any technique you know and feel comfortable with is allowed, as long as you both agree on it. Not actually *doing* anything and deciding together that you *have* is also OK! In this game, the consequences of the act are probably more important than the act itself anyway - and if you don't believe that, try and get on Hera's bad side.
- Once more: never ever use somebody's out of game characteristics as the base of bullying or gossiping.

- The tone of this game may be that of a lighthearted soap opera now and then, but that does not mean we don't take things seriously. Sensitive topics are not necessarily to be avoided, but neither are they to be trivialised or made light of. Once again: calibrate. If you think something might add to the game but is potentially sensitive, discuss it with the others involved before creating play with it. Players are never required to engage with content they don't feel comfortable with. A clear example is sexual assault in mythology. Do not play on such content without consulting with the player. Also, remember the mythology meta techniques - a simple "Zeus of the past" can be used to play around such issues in case they arise.

Workshops specific to *Styx*

Explain the reason for the Meeting of the Gods, explain the options and why this is credible information:

- Waiting for mortality
- Actively crossing over to the hereafter
- Becoming relevant again and harvesting worship

Mostly just stress that there is no mystery to solve and there is no correct answer. Make people think about which 'team' they would be on, and consider picking one that does not have much representation, or shifting during the larp if that creates more play.

Speaking of metaphysics: a lot of it is deliberately left vague. This is mostly a larp about family drama, so if you think something is fun go for it, within the limitations that have been established: you do not have much power or many followers, and you are immortal and set in your ways.

Visualize the family tree by giving a short recap of the mythology and put people in the room/make them position themselves the room accordingly. We have mostly treated this as optional if there is leftover time.

Encourage participation: "But if something is unclear and seems to limit your play better say so now. Questions so far?"

Warmup

Friend/enemy chase

The players spread across the room. They will silently and without signaling in any way randomly pick one friend and one enemy. The goal is to move through the room and get as

close as possible to your friend and stay as far away as possible from your enemy at the same time. Hilarity ensues.

Human knot

Divide the players in smaller groups, about six per group is probably ok. Ask them to make circles, put their hands towards the middle of the circle and randomly grab a hand in each hand. This will put the players in a human knot that they have to solve without letting go of any hands so that they end up in a circle again. It is ok if this proves to be impossible. Usually it is best to first have a round where they can verbally coordinate and after that do a silent round where they have to pay attention to nonverbal cues and signal in other ways.

Workshops for Character Development/Calibration:

Lineups

The participants will make a few lineups, meant to visualize and communicate their character's stance on core principles and their general status to the group. Invite them to really look at what this means. "Extraverted characters on the left, introverted ones on the right" will also mean that the people on the right need more help during the game, and you can call that out. The placing does not need to be exact, but if a fight ensues it is interesting to try to understand why.

In-game workshops

Even though there is no plot for On the Styx and there are no organizer-initiated events apart from the meals, it can be nice to have some activities for the characters to create play over.

We have always requested the players to give in-game workshops or come up with family activities if they feel like it, while making certain to stress that it is in no way an obligation.

Examples of ideas that have worked successfully are videogame tournaments, poetry slams, beauty/spa treatments, drinking games, tango workshops, yoga, archery and crafts.

Example questions

- I am an open book / I'd rather not talk about feelings
- I am focused on status / I'm modest
- People should serve us / We should serve the people
- I believe in true love / True love is bullshit
- I am happy with my portfolio / I am not happy with my portfolio
- This gathering is about me / This gathering is about my family
- Life is a party / Life is a tragedy
- If time permits you can ask the participants if there is something they are curious about.

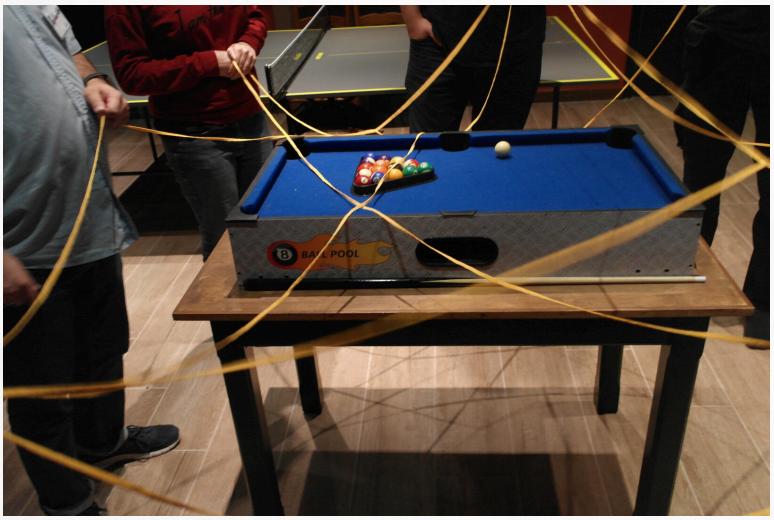
Hotseat

Players are divided into three groups of six. One player takes place in the center of the group. The others will ask that person fast-paced questions. The answers to those questions are not binding: the exercise is meant to force you to think about your character, not to inform others about it. Of course you are free to establish things as fact and ask your workshop group to play on it during the game.
After a few minutes the person in the hotseat changes until everybody has had a turn.

"How can I play you up"

One of the play tips we mentioned on the website is "play to lift." But your players need to know *how*. This is simply a round of allowing them to tell their fellow players what they need and how they can be lifted. This can be "Please take my authority seriously", "please don't let me get away with my in-game drinking" or "do not mention my out of game blushing as an in-game thing please"
Keep it short but complete. It is OK to not know anything, you can always calibrate later. If something is unclear, you can ask for clarifications as well, as long as it's related to the theme of the workshop.

Chemistry Building Workshop



This workshop can be repeated several times if needed. Make certain that players are aware they can skip any part of this (or any) workshop if it makes them uncomfortable.

1. Look each other in the eyes, aim for 1 minute. It is normal that this becomes slightly uncomfortable.
2. The next step is an escalation of physical contact, make sure to tell the other person if you do not want to do something as this is also a mini-calibration. The exercise can also be good practice for characters who are friends or siblings. In order: shake hands, hold wrists, stroke arm, hands on the other person's waist, quick hug, hands on the other person's neck, kiss on cheek, extended hug.
3. Describe the other person neutrally for about half a minute and end in a compliment, then change sides. Certain things can be neutral but they are not nice. Practice looking with positive intent. Try for a good compliment: "I love your taste in clothes" is nice, "nice shoes" seems like you are reaching.
4. Do a round of statements starting in "you love me because" to establish the relationship. The good thing about this is that it keeps the power with the person making the statements and it goes beyond looks, for example "you love me because I always do something special for our anniversary". Stress that the other person is allowed to cancel or influence these for use in play if it crosses a boundary for them.
5. Both people describe their best memory about the relationship, this is then established as fact unless the other person has a reason why they can't play it, in which case you can discuss an alternative.

Memory Creation

The players make duos. The goal of this exercise is to create a shared memory that can be used to create play and depth during the event. You can pick someone you already have a close connection to, but try to also pick people you seem to have very little in common with at first sight. Try to mix.

Repeat this 2-4 times, depending on time.

Ball of Yarn (Old and New)

Ball of yarn is a workshop that can be used to build a relationship web. Someone throws the yarn to another player and states (an aspect of) the relationship to that person. That person throws it at someone else, attempting for an even spread, until a spider web shape emerges.

In the first round the players will make two random groups of eight and use the wool to visualize things that are already known ("I am your daughter") until all existing relationships are mentioned and the web is 'done'.

After that they can use one or two rounds (mixing groups is an option) to establish new things, for example "I used to have the biggest crush on you". One can always throw the ball back to veto. Try to be respectful (do not suggest things that clash with the characters as known and respect a veto) and try to be open to the suggestions. If not vetoed the suggestion is now fact. This continues until everybody has at least one incoming and one outgoing relationship.

Secrets > Confessions > Rumors > Confrontations

At larps like this the main dynamic is often based on this quartet: a character has a secret, confesses it to others, those people in turn will spread the secret and eventually act on it. Explain this and stress that this loop has many possible motivations: a rumor can for example be spread both out of malice and out of concern. If you feel like your character would never

'Help, Demeter is my mom'

Something we learned is that because family dynamics are so central to this game, it can get way more personal for players than they initially expected given its apparent lightheartedness. Family is a complex issue for most people.

We often have certain hangups about the way our own family treats us or communicates with us that we are not actively aware of, and thus cannot warn others about, but they can surely pop up during the larp. Innocuous scenes can suddenly hit very hard.

When talking about safety and consent in the briefings, it may be a good idea to make players aware of this and explain that they can always use the lookdown and take a break if they encounter these feelings, and that there are no 'stupid reasons' to go off game for a bit. You simply can't know in advance.

For example, the writer of the characters had no idea how much she had written well-meaning but stifling helicopter parent Demeter to resemble her own mother until she saw the character in play. It happens to all of us.

spread a rumor, take a trusted person and make them promise not to tell. If they do the same with another character the information will spread anyway.

End of the game

The dinner on Sunday generally serves as a natural ending of the game, where the final disposition of the Gods is clear. We recommend that you let the players know beforehand that the game is winding down so they can finish their game and round off their stories. It is usually Zeus that ends the meeting and sends people on their way, but feel free to let the players figure this out amongst themselves with gentle guidance of the servants.
We used a long (about half an hour) piece of classical music to signal to players that the game would end soon and it was time to start their last scenes.

The First Outside Run - 13 Seelen Kollektiv

The following is provided courtesy of 13 Seelen Kollektiv from Germany, who ran On the Styx in German based on this runbook. We have included their observations and ideas as-is, as an excellent example of the implementation of this runbook. Thank you to Sascha, Dani and Clara for providing us with valuable feedback and ideas.

We had the opportunity to translate the OTS design doc into German and host our own prerun (with official runs coming soon). We were excited to take on this challenge, as it came with some questions: How would we perform at organizing a LARP that was not written by us and thus not our “brainchild”? Would we be faced with questions from players that we would not be able to confidently answer? Would we be overwhelmed because we had not prepared enough in regard to mythology and the individual gods?

These thoughts are probably natural, as it is not often that one hosts a LARP written by another team. To overcome this lingering feeling, we decided to add some elements to the game that proved fun and valuable to the players:

1. Pre-Game Activities

We wanted to test-drive the LARP before hosting it officially, which is why we decided to have a pre-run in May 2025. We cast some of our friends and LARPers we knew and felt would fit their designated characters.To get our players in the mood and create a sense of closeness with us as organizers, we hosted FAQ sessions on our Discord server. This gave us the chance to share our ideas with the players, hear their opinions, and allow them to formulate questions to ease their minds—especially for those wary of the completely player-driven LARP concept. Plus, these meetings helped build hype for the upcoming event and introduced the players to each other.

In addition, I offered one-on-one calls with individual players. This helped me better understand their wishes and visions, and it created familiarity between organizers and participants. While these calls took quite a lot of time and effort, I felt they made players more comfortable with their characters. In situations where none of the organizers personally know a player, a call like this can be a good way to evaluate play style and personality—though this is really only feasible in a small, intimate setting like ours.

2. The Grand Entrance

When planning how to start the LARP, we decided to give each character their own special arrival moment. We asked our players to submit ideas for their gods’ entrance—something

fitting for each character. Once we had their visions, we arranged the order of arrivals so that less elaborate ones happened between more extravagant ones, giving us more time for setup.

While some players preferred a laid-back arrival (Poseidon simply rang the doorbell and walked in), others opted for dramatic flair (Ares had us light the staircase blood red, play heavy metal music, and send an NPC down the stairs in front of him throwing empty cartridge cases). Since our prerun began in the evening, we could take full advantage of the dark for lighting effects. We used different light sources, soundboxes, a fog machine, props, and NPCs. Dionysos arrived with a sex worker who left angrily after being denied payment; Artemis was in pursuit of someone guilty of environmental pollution; Aphrodite had Ares carry her into the house as her personal NSC, using her energaia to command him.

It was an exhausting but very fun evening, and having players start with this "springboard" gave the game an immediate burst of energy, leaving little room for doldrums.

3. Decoration and Special Effects

Zeus' Thunder: We decorated the house with mythical pictures and tapestries, but also hid a large speaker under one of the main dining hall tables. This speaker connected via Bluetooth to a ring worn by Zeus' player. At the push of a button, they could unleash a roar of thunder—especially effective when Zeus got angry during meals.

Shrines: We also asked players to bring their gods' own shrine—anything from a simple photo to a full altar. This served both as decoration and to make the house feel more like the gods' actual home. Although the setting was Zeus and Hera's residence, we decided they would have a shrine for each visiting relative to show goodwill. This way, all players could feel more welcome, and seeing personal items in the space helped with immersion. It also reduced the amount of decoration we organizers needed to buy and transport.

Nectar and ambrosia: To make players feel "at home," we asked them to think of their favorite snacks and drinks, bring them to us before the game, and we served them on demand during play. This meant every god had their own special nectar and ambrosia without needing to retreat to their rooms. The stock was kept in our blue room, where players could always relax and help themselves to their snacks.

4. Our Players' Input

We were fortunate to have a motivated cast for our prerun, which led to many creative ideas worth sharing.

Date drugs: Adding colored food glitter to drinks as a way to simulate spiking a character's beverage. Pre-game calibration is essential to avoid unwanted trauma play. This simple trick enabled playful sabotage and dramatic scenes.

Zeus' megaphone: As Zeus was played by a smaller woman, she carried a megaphone to make her voice more thunderous—simple and effective.

Social media simulation: Some players created mock websites for their characters' businesses (e.g., Zeus & Hera's Olympos Mediation, Ares' Gym) and Instagram profiles with AI-generated images. During the game, to avoid real privacy issues, we simulated social media with Discord channels called "Social Media" and "Family WhatsApp." Gods posted funny, weird, cringe, or damning pictures and texts there, adding to the absurd family-reunion vibe. Highlights included Zeus and Hades posing like middle-aged dads for Snapchat pictures with filters.

Players also suggested adding more written connections to character sheets. While we believe connection workshops before the game make this unnecessary, casts used to Nordic-style LARPs may otherwise feel a lack of initial structure. They also requested more basic IT/contextual information—such as confirming Zeus and Hera's ownership of the house or the in-world location (Germany, USA, or Greece). We realized that providing this in a concise "service post" for players unfamiliar with the design doc would help them better inhabit their characters.

We are very excited to be hosting more runs in the future—Run 1 in September 2025 and Run 2 in May 2026 at the time of writing. Thanks once again for creating this wonderful LARP. It is an honor to be a part of it.

Sascha, Dani, Clara

Shards of the Stygian Dream - Alternate Takes

These were ideas we have pondered, either during the initial writing or while evaluating runs. While they were ultimately discarded we have included some of our thoughts here. They can possibly serve as inspiration to design your own *Styx*-variant or not-*Styx*.

Alternate Gods

We chose our sixteen gods as a compromise between well-known names, reasonable balance and interesting playability. We started with the classic Greek dōdekátheon ("the twelve Olympians") as the basis. This filled out our core cast quite quickly.

This did give us our first dilemma, as the traditional Twelve have either Dionysos or Hestia in the final line-up. Of the two, we chose Dionysos because we thought he would be a character that would speak to the imagination more. We filled up the rest of our spots with two of the so-called Chthonic Gods, Hades and Persephone, and added the probably much older Eris and Hecate for both their interesting character traits and potential for drama, and to seek balance in regards to female-embodying and male-embodying Gods.

That did leave out a fair number of lesser known Olympians or almost-Olympians. Some of these are relatively unknown, such as Hestia (Home and Hearth), Eleuthia (Childbirth) and Aeolus (The Winds), but also much more famous Gods such as Asclepius (Medicine) and Pan (The Wild).

We also did our best to ensure we chose female Gods with interesting portfolios to play with as Greek Mythology tends towards giving them variants of motherhood and home-related powers which have a lot of overlap, and we decided they were probably not particularly interesting to play on within the context of the game.

Future runs of *Styx* could easily exchange a few of the core Olympians, or perhaps even (carefully!) expand the cast. We also considered the Moirai (The Fates) Clotho, Lachesis and

Atropos; their Maiden / Mother / Crone dynamic could have been cool, but as a trinity this did not suit (our) *Styx* formula well. Thinking further afield, the Greek mythologies offer us the Primordial Gods, like Gaia, and the Titans, such as Chronos. All of these could be used to mix in some alternate options (and more family issues) for the Olympians.

Another alternate option is the Romanized versions of the Greek Pantheon, which also has the option of mixing in all sorts of Romanized Gods from other cultures appropriated by the ever conquest-happy Romans.

Different Pantheons

As previously said, *Styx* was always written with the Greek Pantheon in mind. We have grown up with the stories of these flawed Gods and their very human foibles, which we were sure would inspire the kind of drama we wanted to see at this larp. But alternate Pantheons were considered at one time, or suggested by our participants.

If you want to entertain this option, we encourage you to research this well and include subject matter experts where possible to ensure that you write with intention and respect. While *Styx* is meant to have a humorous slant, it is not meant to be disrespectful or sacrilegious.

Aesir & Vanir

The Norse pantheon shares many of the traits that made the Greek gods such a good fit. There are enough of them, the principal gods are somewhat-to-very-well known in popular culture and they exhibit very human foibles and drama. As such, they may be a good fit. We did not choose them because of our own lack of familiarity with the source materials.

It is also an active faith that has struggled with being co-opted by less-than-savoury extreme right ideologies, which means that inclusion of this pantheon must be done carefully, and with attention to detail, respect and care.

The Ennead

The Egyptian pantheon is another in the set of Mediterranean Deities, who may rightly be considered the grandparents of the pantheons that developed after Egypt's heyday. This does mean that they informed a lot of what came after, but they are very mystical and we do not

really learn much about their personalities. That would make building playable characters quite tricky.

Others

Games such as Scion, a tabletop RPG by White Wolf, provide entire pantheons to play with. TV shows such as ‘Kaos' provide an interesting take as well. And nothing is stopping you from running the *Styx* formula in an entirely localised version, with mythical figures and deities unique to a country or country's culture. Any pantheon or collection of deities can work, if there is enough for them to form the basis of a good character description, and each character has enough material to be at odds with other characters. Once again, especially if you are adopting any local culture, ensure attention to detail, respect and care.

Appendix I - Full Character Descriptions

Below you will find the full character descriptions of the characters as written for On The Styx. The game was principally written in 2017 and 2018, with some minor updates added to characters as we translated the larp to run internationally. Still, we did not change much, and recent events have inspired players to add a few updates to the roles of their own.

Player-Requested Updates and Versions

As the Greek myths have varied over the literal millenia they were told, every interpretation of an *On the Styx* character will be different by picking and choosing those mythological aspects that a participant considers engaging to play with.

We heartily encourage this, with the caveat of keeping the relationships written into the characters intact as much as possible. Encourage your players to communicate proactively if they make changes to their character or pick a different primary mythological source, as choices one player makes may influence other characters and relationships. This way any gaps or oddities that may occur because of these changes can be spotted and solved before the game begins.
Examples of changes that were communicated well and decided between players:

- In some runs Zeus was the father of Persephone, which is one mythological option.
- There is a variant myth in which Eris and Ares are twins.

Other examples of changes that may not have influenced other's characters as much:

- In the last two runs Hermes was played as a part of the Crypto-bro / NFT crowd, updating the shady stockbroker to the shady quick-buck financial culture-du-jour.
- Aphrodite has also seen minor tweaks by players as the idea of the Influencer has grown and changed over the years. We have also upped her follower count.

Feel free to give other characters the same treatment if that helps to reflect a particular element of the now.

Aphrodite

***Central concepts*:** image is everything, self-torment, just-drawn-that-way, yearning

***Goddess of*:** love and beauty

Mythology

Depending on who you ask, Aphrodite might or might not be related to the other Olympians. The generally accepted tale is that she was born from the dismembered member of Ouranos when Chronos threw it into the sea after he had cut it off. However, it is a certainty that almost every Olympian - male or female - and almost every non-Olympian has entertained impure thoughts about Aphrodite. She claims she can't help it - as the goddess of beauty, she was simply born attractive. Aphrodite has the talent and skill to adapt to the desires of every individual.

Even Zeus knew how attractive Aphrodite was, and promised her hand in marriage to whomever could set Hera free from the trap Hephaistos had sprung on her. (Even though Aphrodite was already involved with Ares) When it was Hephaistos himself who achieved this, Zeus could do no other than welcome him to Olympus and ratify the marriage. However, Aphrodite had other plans and continued her relationship with Ares. Hephaistos arranged a trap for them as well, and put their adultery on display for all of Olympus to see. Eventually, Aphrodite's infidelity resulted in the marriage ending.

Aphrodite was especially revered by artists, prostitutes and really anyone she had set her mind to - and woe betide you if you scorned her. She has been romantically connected with Hephaistos, Ares, Poseidon, Hermes and Dionysos.
Aphrodite was one of the three goddesses that Paris judged to choose the most beautiful. She eventually won, not in the least through effective bribery: she promised the most beautiful mortal woman to Paris if he would award her the prize. That Helen - at that time, of Sparta - was already married to Menelaos was only a mere detail that would lead to the Trojan War.

In this war, she immediately sided with the Trojans. Paris, who had named her the most beautiful goddess and awarded her Eris' apple was a Trojan, after all. As was her son Aeneas, a child of her union with the mortal Anchises. Consequently, she played a most crucial role in convincing Ares to abandon the Greeks and join the Trojans as well.

In Modern Times

Aphrodite has built herself an online personality imperium. She is simultaneously a most successful Instagram idol and a popular - and therefore expensive - cam girl. She earns her money with the way she looks and spends almost every moment concerning herself with her looks and health, whether it's a comprehensive beauty routine, the careful planning of the best nutrition or just considering the perfect angle/location/light for an Instagram share.

It is her nature. Still, even your own nature can become tiresome after three millennia. To her many Instagram followers she seems perfect, but in reality she is fairly lonely and rather tired of it all. Not that she'd ever let her fans suspect even an inkling of that. She needs them, as she is energised by the adoration of others: whether you want her to do a cam show or want to be her on Instagram doesn't matter. As long as you're thinking about her. Everyone who dreams about her, provides her with a little bit of veneration.

She can get almost any man she wants, and their girlfriends to boot if she so desired, but it would always be superficial and trite. Real love doesn't seem to be in the cards for her, though that may be because she wants too much out of it all. Attention from just one partner isn't satisfactory, everyone else should want her or adore her as well. She yearns for something sincere, genuine, though she quickly becomes bored with it, considers it a rut. So she ends it again and is filled with regret. Or not. It varies. She doesn't quite understand how others manage it.

Personality

Aphrodite is used to positive attention and has a need for it. She is vain and knows what she can do and how she presents, and is more than capable of using that to get exactly what she wants.

Leaving herself exposed, rather important in any real relationship, is something she cannot - or will not - do. It is all a glamour, a mask, 'quick fixes' without any real devotion. All the sex, beauty and worship in the world can't cover up the fact that she is actually continuously struggling to learn to accept herself. She is fully aware of the futility of it all and is basically constantly teetering on the edge of a carefully hidden depression.

Aphrodite really thrives in social situations. She is a master at giving people just the right attention and keeping the conversation going, ensuring a good mood for all present. She really wants to learn how she can appreciate other people, not just for the attention they can pay her but for who they really are. She is intelligent, and well aware that this in part the source of her loneliness. Can someone really fundamentally change their nature, though?

She is searching for authenticity, both in relationships and outside of that. She's so concerned with her image that she's lost touch with who she really is, and she is both curious and anxious about what she might find if she goes looking. Or worse, if there's anything to find at all.

At her best, she is: charming, the center of attention, social

At her worst, she is: dependent on compliments and affirmation, jealous (due to uncertainty), manipulative

Connections

Ares (ex, ex-brother-in-law): Every time you are determined to ban him from your thoughts, but every time you see him, you can't help but give in to him. And you know he hasn't forgotten you either. He does rather ignore you a lot more than you'd like.

Hephaistos (ex-husband, ex-brother-in-law): You've tried - and failed - to feel guilty about what happened with him for centuries. You just weren't a good fit. Though it does sting a bit that it seems like you can't open a magazine nowadays without seeing his face. You don't know if you're jealous of the attention he's receiving, or perhaps finally starting to see something in him that would have been more welcome three centuries ago. Success is sexy.

Hecate (friend): Solid, independent goddess. You admire her and you're fast friends. As no other person you know she seems to understand how you can get a sense of self-worth purely from yourself instead of others. Perhaps it is something you can learn through being near her.

Demeter (aunt): Your aunt can be pretty insufferable, what with her obsession with the fact that her daughter chose a different man than she had intended. Prime makeover material. The rest of the family will probably consider it a favor, as well.

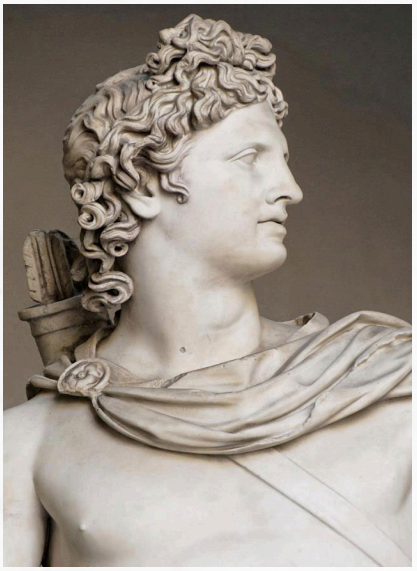
Athena (acquaintance): Decidedly non-sexy nerd whom you really don't understand at all. Still, she's your sister, sort of, so you keep trying. Sadly though, half the time you haven't got a clue what she's on about, and the other half of the time you simply don't care.

Poseidon (ex): One of your exes. It can't hurt to see if you can get him back. If only because his outbursts were always a source of excitement. It used to be fun to provoke him. Perhaps it still is?

Suggestions for Play

- Try to get Ares back. You're not even sure if you still want him, but him deciding that it's over is simply unacceptable.
- Take selfies, shoot videos, send retweets, schedule things to expand your social media emporium. In addition, you're constantly concerned with your looks and health. This can present itself in any way, shape or form: from raw food to an obsession with exercise to an eating disorder, that's up to you.
- Schedule spa moments (masks, nail polish, hair, whatever you feel like) for your fellow goddesses or perhaps even an adventurous god? Some might be lost causes in that regard, but it will probably boost their confidence and you love the feelings of social bonding that accompany these things. Let's braid each other's hair and talk about boys.
- Try to establish an earnest friendship or family tie that is based on honesty and vulnerability, even though it scares the shit out of you.
- Offer unsolicited love advice to the other gods and goddesses. Tell them whom they should try to start something with - bonus points if you can tell them from personal experience *why* they should get on with a specific person.

Apollo



***Central concepts*:** golden boy, renaissance man, pompous, romantic

God of: music and healing

Mythology

Apollo is the brother of Artemis, child of Zeus and the Titaness Leto - and has been suave and slick since the beginning of time. Ravens, dolphins, laurels and pythons are sacred to him. The “golden boy” of Olympus was used to getting his way, especially whenever he made romantic overtures to any mortal of any gender. Apollo did not hesitate to punish the few who would dare resist him. One of these legendary tales is the one of Marsyas, whom he defeated in a musical contest through unsportsmanlike behaviour - though technically not cheating - after which he punished him by flaying him alive.

Apollo, as well as Artemis, has always been a thorn in the side of Hera, an omnipresent and very visible sign of Zeus’ infidelity. Shortly after they were born she already sent the snake Python to devour them, but with the help of a bow and arrow he had been given by Hephaistos, he managed to kill the beast. As punishment for killing a child of Gaia, he was tasked with the organisation of the Pythian Games, which took place every four years.

Hermes gifted Apollo with the art of the lyre, to make up for stealing Apollo’s cattle. It was also Apollo who caused the death of Orion by Artemis, knowing that he was her lover. It took a long time before Artemis forgave him for that, but he is certain she has, now. He also joined her in killing the fourteen children of Niobe after she had insulted Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis. In addition, it was Artemis who killed Coronis at Apollo’s request after she had cheated on Apollo while being pregnant with his son, Asclepius.

Twice, Zeus has killed a son of Apollo. The first time, Apollo’s son Phaeton made Apollo swear on the river Styx that his father would do as he asked. He asked to be allowed to drive the chariot of the sun around the earth for one day instead of Apollo, but Phaeton could not control the horses and scorched the earth. In order to prevent further harm, Zeus stopped him with a lightning bolt. The second time, Asclepius had received a serum from Athena which he could use to raise the dead back to life. Due to the loud complaints by Hades and the other gods that this disturbed the natural way of things, Zeus once again intervened and took up his

lighting bolt. In revenge, Apollo killed the Cyclopes who made the lightning bolts that Zeus used. In the end, Zeus revived Asclepius and raised him to be a god.

As the god of mathematics, reason, logic, poetry, healing, knowledge, oracles and many more, he was widely revered by musicians, scientists and physicians. In the Trojan War he sided with the Trojans, as he was the patron god of that city. He sent plagues to the Greeks and helped Paris kill Achilles.

In Modern Times

Apollo has had many different careers. Sometimes he is a priest, sometimes an actor, sometimes a medium. He will always be something that takes the spotlight in the current day and age, and which can inspire others. Inspiration is a side of himself he takes very seriously. In his own way, he loves the many talents mortals can possess and really wants to ensure they are the best they can be.

In the past decade he has enjoyed a modest career as a pop musician. He was never a high-flyer but he managed to sell out some music halls. This particular career has pretty much run its course: he's still booked occasionally, but he's become rather done with it all.

Right now, he's much more successful with the seminars he gives on flirting and how to get what you want as a real man. For some reason there's a huge market for that kind of thing nowadays. And he enjoys it when people are hanging on his every word like that, he really feels like the source of inspiration he desires to be. That he himself has been way better at pursuing romance than actually keeping people interested does not really matter.

He's starting to get lonely, though. Making people love him is easy. He is literally the sun, and mortals are simple folk. He has dated thousands of them and he's always successful. However, making someone sincerely love him seems a complicated concept to him. He hasn't had much of an experience with losing, and sooner or later his temper and frustration usually win out and cause him to ruin everything. He yearns for love and sincere connections, but is incapable of making them.

Personality

Apollo is used to being the golden boy. Highly revered in both the Greek and Roman eras and with the largest portfolio of everyone. He possesses the type of arrogance of a person who simply doesn't know any better: everything he touches turns to gold.

For that reason, it is even more frustrating if something *doesn't* work out. He's not used to failure. He will try to laugh it off and distract himself. But it will eat at him. Especially the fact that he has trouble judging love and with that has harmed lovers of both himself and others. It's a kind of an urge that is stronger than himself. He *needs* them to want him, admire him.

In his own braggy manner, Apollo is a good enough guy. His desire to see the best in others also translates to his immortal family, and his way of enjoying his existence is catching. The only problem is, he's so used to always being welcome that he's completely unaware if he crosses people's boundaries, doesn't really hear what they're trying to tell him and fills in the blanks for them. With the best of intentions, but that doesn't make it any less annoying.

At his best, he is: versatile, engaging, charming

At his worst, he is: imperative, huffy, attention-seeking

Connections

Ares (half-brother): Ares is your BFF. A real man, no nonsense. In the past fifty years or so he's become a bit downtrodden, but you'll help him get over it. If anyone can inspire him to be better again, it's you.

Artemis (twin sister): Your twin sister is the most important person in your life. You would never do anything to hurt her. Or, well, not intentionally anyway: you suspect she might not quite be over that mortal you couldn't allow to live, Orion. You're not sure how angry she still is about that. In any case, you try to keep the ties strong. Still, she's so intense that it scares you a little sometimes.

Hecate (crush): Hecate is a babe. There's more to her than she lets on and she's a hard worker, just like you. It's important to approach her in a neutral manner, to not just talk about yourself and to politely break it off if it turns out she's not interested. Dear lord, you give workshops about this nonsense, how hard can it be.

Dionysos (half-brother): You don't much like sharing the spotlight. It used to be that Hermes was your best friend, but how he's Dionysos' friend. Who, in everything, is a less complex, less interesting version of you. Quite sad, really.

Eris (friend): Misunderstood in your eyes, it must be really hard to be so unpopular for something you can't really help. Not that you'd know what that's like. That reminds you of another story about you...

Poseidon (uncle): Your uncle is interesting. He's really quite different from you. Perhaps he's a more useful man to talk about love with, as opposed to your father, as being like your father is a feat you've made your own. Still, it's a delicate subject, and he can be a bit volatile.

Suggestions for Play

- Try to be a source of inspiration to your fellow Olympians at all times. Is someone indecisive, scared or procrastinating? Fear not! Apollo is here with advice, a word of encouragement or, if needed, to build them up.
- Of course, you are still the god of oracles. Sometimes you just have a strong premonition. Sometimes you catch yourself mumbling something that could be perceived as a prophecy, without you really being aware of it. Bonus points if you make others feel uncomfortable with it.
- Seize the moment to be in the spotlight. It's what you're used to. Whether it's karaoke, exchanging tall tales or making a point, if Apollo is speaking, the rest is silent.
- The seminars you give undeniably make you the right person to advise others on flirting. Not just romantic flirting, but professional as well: the moment you realise someone comes across differently than they intended, it's time for a pep talk. Power words. Power mantra.
- Notwithstanding this: you also have a vulnerable, lonely side. Perhaps you can confide in someone that you don't know everything and that you could actually use some advice yourself. What are you doing wrong?

Ares

***Central concepts*:** Power, still waters run deep, life is a battlefield, PTSD

God of: war, embodiment of struggle

Mythology

In Greek mythology, Ares is both the god of the virtues of war and the one who is obsessed with it, and who feels happy when there's death and slaughter. However, he is not the one to start a war, though he'll definitely show up when humanity has caused one. His sister Athena is the rational side of war, Ares is purely violence. Still, according to mythology, even Ares plays by the rules. Ares is the only god who with a 100% certainty is a child of Zeus and Hera, which means he holds a special place in Hera's heart.

Ares had been in a relationship with Aphrodite for a long time, but when Hera was trapped on a throne she could not stand up from by Hephaistos, Zeus promised Aphrodite's hand in marriage to the person who could free his queen. To his dismay, Ares had to watch Aphrodite marry Hephaistos... though irrespective of this union, Ares and Aphrodite continued with their affair. Hephaistos knew damn well what was going on and managed to trap the couple in a compromising position and exposed them to the ridicule and mockery of the other Olympians.

Ares was mostly revered by soldiers and heads of state heading into war. During the Trojan War, Aphrodite and Apollo convinced him to fight on the side of the Trojans. During one of the battles he was injured by, among others, Athena and had to retreat. He did lead the final battle, despite knowing that he was driving the Trojans to their demise.

Ares is the father of Romulus and Remus, the twins who founded Rome. He's pretty proud of them.

In Modern Times

Ares has remained a soldier for centuries. He always made sure he would not be promoted to a rank where he would be chained to a desk; he wanted to be in the thick of it and smell blood. Up until the second half of the previous century that was working pretty well for him, but

after that it became more and more difficult to enjoy what war had become and he grew increasingly frustrated with what it wasn't anymore. Soldiers who keep fiddling with machines and prefer to take tea with tribal leaders rather than fight aren't soldiers in his eyes. Things grew even worse through the years. Heavier weaponry. More chemical nastiness. Cowardly dogs who bomb children in Pakistan using drones while sitting pretty on the other side of the world.

Ares has seen too much. Too much misery he could no longer reconcile with what he knew of war. Every time he signed up for a new tour of duty he could see the clouds gathering. He was god of a concept he himself no longer really understood, no longer *wants* to understand. And he has nightmares. Fits of rage. Fits of weeping. Which he carefully keeps hidden from his family, because he thinks he always needs to be the strong one.

After he quit, he stayed home for decades. He became more and more angry and increasingly kept to himself, until it was clear to his family that he needed an outlet. They organised an intervention and found him a job.

Lucky for him that in the past couple of years the world has become obsessed with physical fitness, and his career as a personal trainer was born. The struggle to achieve a 10% body fat percentage is a war as well, he tells himself.

Personality

Ares is short-tempered and direct, though years of familial pressure have resulted in him being able to keep his temper in check a little bit longer than before. He's still made of aggression and fire, however. Ares is a man of grand gestures. He has little patience with gods or people who are indecisive and cowardly in his eyes. He's a man of action, not of words.

He has decided to adapt to modern times as best he can, as it's not exactly possible to turn back time, but it proves difficult for him. He is more than aware that time has quite surpassed him. The way in which he allowed himself to be set aside in the new world and the extent of the mental damage this has caused him have left him feeling alternately furious with the rest of the world and disappointed with himself. Which he's trying his best to hide from the others: he's a classic macho and real men don't cry.

On the other hand, Ares is a person one can depend on and a good friend to have in one's corner. He has a healthy sense of humour and is skilled at keeping it real when faced with the exaggerated drama of some of the gods. Whether or not he can inject some realism depends on his mood at the time – his emotions and feelings can swing wildly from one moment to the other.

At his best, he is: go-getter, plain-speaking, loyal

At his worst, he is: aggressive, unreasonable, plaintive

Connections

Athena (half-sister): Your relationship with your cerebral half-sister is twofold. On the one hand, she knows and understands you better than anyone, on the other hand she has an utterly contrary opinion about basically everything. Water and fire. In addition, you can never keep up with her thought processes, which is frustrating.

Aphrodite (ex): Not just an ex – *the* ex. You still want her, but you also think that's not very loyal towards the rest of the family, so you try to ignore her whenever possible. Not that she's going to stand for that, of course. She just keeps trying again and again.

Hephaistos ((half?)brother): You have never felt so much guilt towards someone. You never really got along with your brainy little brother, but carrying on with his wife was rather a bad thing to do, in retrospect. Ironically, the arguments and subsequent amends have ensured that you get along great now, even if you remain suspicious of your brother's technological innovations.

Apollo (half-brother): BFF. Apollo is a great guy. Funny, strong, persistent, a real man.

Zeus (father): "Dear old dad" is still the one who gave Aphrodite to Hephaistos, even though he knew perfectly well that you were already in a relationship with her. This still rankles, and the Trojan war didn't offer any respite either.... And you always feel like Zeus is looking down his nose at you because of your violent tendencies.

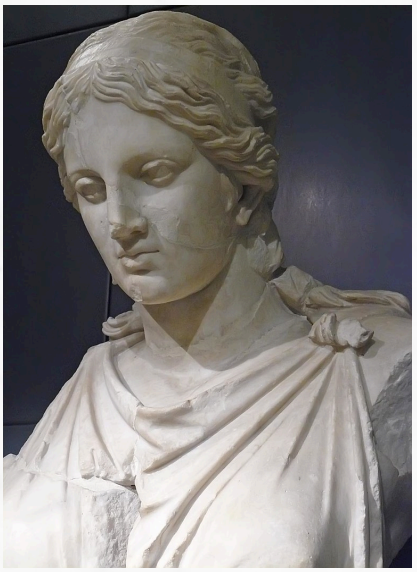
Persephone (half-sister): You always thought she was nice. Maybe a little bit too nice, she does seem to be a bit confused lately. It has made you feel like you need to protect her a little, and it's rather a welcome feeling after so many years.

Suggestions for Play

- Try new physical exercises and ask others whether they might like to join you. The others need to be in shape as well. For the future.
- Try to bond with your brothers. You have a clear need for friendship, even if it's only bro-style drinking games.

- Earnestly take someone into your confidence about the fact that you're not doing as well as you appear to be. This is a very vulnerable moment for Ares, so there's a good chance he'll skip on it halfway or will try to make it into a joke.
- Be the strong person in a difficult situation, even if it's only to feel better about yourself. Try to keep your fellow Olympians grounded in the present and be the one to confront them with the fact that they're beating around the bush, or that they are unnecessarily escalating a situation.
- Epically lose your temper when someone provokes you and threaten violence, but break down when no-one is looking or have a panic attack.

Artemis



***Central concepts*:** marathon rather than a sprint, avenging angel, time will not heal all wounds, longing

Goddess of: hunting and the moon

Mythology

Artemis is the twin sister of Apollo, the offspring of Zeus and the Titaness Leto – and since the dawn of time, she has been the more virtuous of the two. While Apollo preferred gold, Artemis would settle for the silver of the moon. While Apollo is arrogant, Artemis is modest. While Apollo is the eternal seducer, Artemis chose a life of chastity – and even went so far as having her father, Zeus, confirm this.

Only once did she ever really love a man, Orion. But Apollo, feeling that Orion wasn't worthy of her, created a situation that led to Orion's death by Artemis' hand. She never got over this, and even though she eventually forgave Apollo, she will never fully forget.

Just as her brother Apollo, Artemis, due to her illegitimacy, suffers Hera's disapproval. She, too, was targeted by the snake Python, sent by Hera to kill her and her brother, though Apollo managed to kill the snake with a weapon forged by Hephaistos.

One of Artemis' areas of interest was childbirth. Where possible, she eased women's pain as they gave birth, or granted a quick death to those mothers who would not survive the birth. It is even said that, immediately after her own birth, she helped her mother in the delivery of her brother Apollo.

However, Artemis also has a dark side. At Artemis' behest, Apollo helped defend their mother Leto's honour when Niobe had insulted her, by teaming up to kill all fourteen of Niobe's children. When Coronis cheated on Apollo, Artemis killed her while she was pregnant with their son Asclepius. On top of that, when Poseidon's sons stormed Mount Olympus, Artemis was the one who fearlessly defended it by using a ruse to get the brothers to kill each other by accident. When Actaeon caught her bathing in a river, she forbade him from ever speaking again – and if he were to do so anyway, she would transform him into a deer. Of course, he couldn't manage this for very long, and so, in the shape of a deer, was killed by his own hounds when they did not recognise their master in his new shape.

Artemis could count on the worship of countless hunters, anyone who lived by night and pregnant women. In the Trojan War, she supported her brother by siding with Troy. She calmed the seas and so impeded the Greeks' passage to Troy, until Agamemnon was prepared to sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia to her in order to see their journey continue. She even went so far as to challenge Hera to a fight. Even though she lost in the end, this clearly showed her dedication to her brother.

In Modern Times

Artemis is a forester. Nature is struggling more and more and it pains her to see this. While hunting used to be necessary to keep animal populations intact, she now has to watch with sorrow as one species after the other disappears. She cares for mortals less and less, they are messing up. Is it her, or did they use to be more noble?

When she could still boast many followers, she was the only one in her family who would sometimes be honoured with human sacrifices. She always considered it something special. Blood, power, the natural course of things. Obviously, in 'civilised' times, mortals stopped doing this. It was to be expected that she would go looking for these herself when time began to feel everlasting and she, the eternal virgin and reclusive lady of the woods, got ever more lonely.

It all started with her forest, and a man who was dumping toxic waste there. At first, she just wanted to talk, but she was turned away. So she needed to do some research to get through to him for a conversation. That conversation did not go well, the man showed not one single bit of remorse. And she was really, really frustrated at this point. Things escalated, and he... broke.

Destroying bad guys is something she does well. There's more potential targets now. Other polluters. Liars. People who can't keep their hands where they belong. People who manage to evade justice. They all break.

Personality

Artemis does things with the fervour of the hunt; fully and entirely committed, or not at all. Mortals and even her fellow immortals sometimes see this intensity as frightening. Her behaviour isn't arbitrary to her, but it can seem that way. As if she's a lion, ready to pounce at any moment. Even in a regular conversation, others can see something smouldering in her eyes, an inner fire. She has always been quick to anger, but this past century, she has seemed more frustrated than ever.

This is one of the things that keeps her apart from the others. Although she gets along well with several of her relatives, especially with her brother Apollo, she is the goddess who used to withdraw into the woods for weeks on end. Who preferred to stay out of the others' games. And who, on top of that, had sworn an oath of virginity that she cannot get rid of, due to the unchanging nature of the gods.

She feels better when she takes things into her own hands. Her new role as a goddess of vengeance is also a hunt. And that it might not be a good thing to be judge, jury and executioner all at once is something she prefers not to think about. She needs some manner of outlet for her anger and her instinct to follow prey and never give up until she is victorious. Plus, she knows she really doesn't regret it. Hunting favours the strong, and she is always the strongest of them all. At least that's what she'd like them to think.

At her best, she is: patient, intense, brave

At her worst, she is: vengeful, weird, accusing

Connections

Poseidon (uncle): Your uncle is a good guy. He also worries about the current state of the world and of nature, so he's a good one to talk to or even rant with. Until he starts crying and pretends you won't notice.

Zeus (father): One of your father's gifts, your chastity, has caused you so much loneliness. On the other hand, you once wanted it yourself, and he can't just undo the things he did. The downside to being a god. It's come between you, but you do blame yourself for thinking that way. You don't know whether or not you're angry with him.

Apollo (twin): You may have missed your brother the most. You love him more than anyone. You don't actually care that much what this meeting is about; getting close to your brother again is at the top of your agenda. That, and telling him you forgave him for Orion. You're ready for that now, aren't you? You can almost feel it.

Hades (uncle): You don't quite understand him. Your uncle is such a bone-dry planner that you'd expect him to clash horribly with your own impulsive nature, but you like him. You respect his portfolio, death is an inseparable part of life. And he's good at helping you figure things out when the situation gets out of hand.

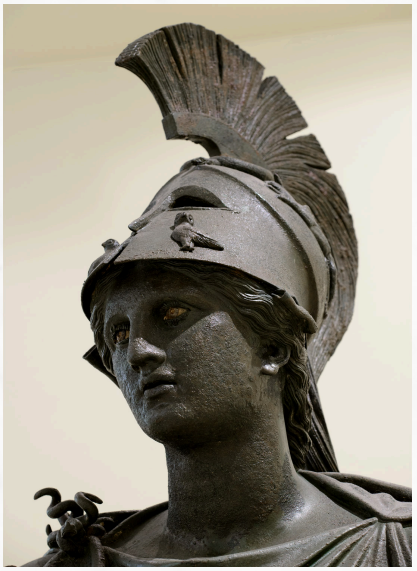
Eris (half-sister, as Enyo): She's one to keep an eye on. Though you know like no other that no god can avoid their nature, you have a nose for trouble, and her nature *is* trouble. If this meeting gets out of hand, it will be due to her.

Athena (half-sister): A kindred soul. Also misunderstood at times, also someone afflicted by that accursed virgin role. You don't always get each other, but at least there is an understanding.

Suggestions for Play

- Talk to someone about what you do, how you track people through the internet and their social circles and eventually corner them. Maybe somebody needs your help? Has a problem with someone? You can fix it. You'd love to, for your family.
- Try to get closer to Apollo. You feel like the two of you grew apart, and out of all your family members, you're bothered about him the most. Maybe you just need to have a proper chat with him over a glass of wine. You're supposed to be inseparable.
- Or maybe, despite wanting to forgive your brother for the death of Orion, you simply cannot. Come up with a revenge ploy to get even with him, preferably one targeting someone or something *he* loves.
- Try to flirt and struggle with this, because it's counter to your nature. Maybe you can ask one of the others for advice. Maybe you try a flirty remark, then quickly back away because you don't recognise yourself anymore. Mythology does know various versions of the gift Zeus bestowed on you; that she would never be with a man, that she would forever remain a virgin, and more. So there are ways around it – for instance, flirting with those who aren't men, or limiting activities to those that won't cost you your virginity. Whether or not you want to play with this is up to you.
- Also, try to fight your loneliness by investing in others. If you can't have a romantic relationship, you'd like to spend some more time with your friends.
- Show that there's still only one goddess of hunting by deciding what you want, latching onto it and not letting go. Stalk it, isolate it, claim it. Whether it's a new friend, a philosophical opinion or the last beer.

Athena



Central concepts: genius, weirdness factor, desire to belong, socially inept

***Goddess of*:** wisdom and warfare

Mythology

Metis was one of the first lovers of Zeus. When she became pregnant, he feared that the child would kill him, as he and his father had done to their fathers before. Through trickery he convinced her to turn into a fly, after which he immediately ate her. She gave birth to their daughter while inside him, and the child had to be brought out by splitting Zeus' head with an axe. Inside was Pallas Athena, goddess of wisdom, in full suit of armour including spear and shield.

Athena was mostly revered by higher-ranking officers who needed her wisdom to win the battle, philosophers, heroes and soldiers. She is one of the virgin goddesses of the Greek Pantheon. She never aspired to this, she simply never got around to changing it. She did take it as a point of pride – she has always considered Artemis and herself to be the purest of the Olympians.

Even though Athena wasn't known for vengefulness or rage, she had a dangerous streak that sometimes reared its head. After a mortal, Tiresias, had accidentally seen her bathe in the river, she took away his sight. His mother begged her to forgive him, but as everyone knows, not even a god can undo what a god has wrought, even if it was something they did themselves. Instead, she gave him the gift of being able to speak to birds and predict the future. In another story, she punished Arachne for the insolent images she had chosen to depict during a weaving contest, and destroyed her tapestry. Arachne hung herself in fear of the consequences of her actions, but Athena wanted to preserve her talent and brought her back as the world's first spider.

Athena was one of the three goddesses that vied for Paris to name them "the most beautiful" and win Eris' apple – the apple that would eventually be the bone of contention that started the Trojan War. She lost the contest to Aphrodite, despite her attempt to bribe Paris with wisdom, fame and glory in battle. In the following war, Athena initially fought on the side of the Greeks – seeing as Paris was a Trojan – but later destroyed a large portion of the Greek

fleet after a Greek warrior had violently dragged Cassandra away from Athena's protective statue in the city.

In Modern Times

Athena is professor in the theory and history of archaeology. Even though she is an absolute expert in her field of study, her students aren't so keen on her since her style of teaching is dry as dust. Those rare moments when she attempts to insert some levity and humour, it ends in uncomfortable silence; nobody gets the joke and the subsequent explanation doesn't really improve things either. Colleagues also think she's a bit stiff in her manner, though they appreciate her brilliant insights, especially when it comes to Greek archaeology. It's almost like she lived it.

After a long day at the university, her way to relax is to scroll through Wikipedia over a microwave dinner. She is one of the most active Wikipedia editors and truly enjoys the expanse of information the internet contains. The internet is the best invention humanity has ever come up with, though she avoids opinion fora, YouTube comments and all other places where facts go to die like the plague.

One of her other favorite pastimes is playing real-time strategy games, and in the online world her multiple accounts are notorious for their infallible strategies and the fact that she is seemingly unbeatable. These mortals. If only they knew.

However, Athena is very much aware of the fact that with the digital world continuing to grow, she continues to retreat from the world behind her computer more and more, cosied up at home. As a virgin goddess, and the one with a higher IQ than all the others together, she had always been a little lonely, but it has started to rankle a bit over the past few years. She knows no god can change their nature, but wouldn't it be better if she put in a bit of an effort herself?

Personality

Athena is an analytical thinker, but definitely not a pushover. She has a lot of respect for people or gods who (try to) achieve their goals with wit, wisdom and tactics instead of brute force or intimidation. She would help these people in any way imaginable, and if it results in conflict, so be it. Reason should win at all times.

Ironically, her lengthy and dry lectures at the university are the times she really tries to be accessible. Whenever she's tired, her thoughts will sometimes start to wander and she will literally be ten steps ahead of everyone else, causing her to give answers that have absolutely

nothing to do with the original conversation. This causes her to sometimes be considered an oddity by both mortals and her family.

Emotionally, Athena can simply not keep up with the world at all. This causes her pain, a pain she painstakingly - and unsuccessfully – tries to keep hidden from the other Olympians. It can seem like she is not even aware that her family is around, but she is as interested in them as she is in everything (which is a lot), and in her analytical manner she can be the greatest support you can have. That is why she has many allies as well.

At her best, she is: brilliant, a quick thinker, animated, strategic

At her worst, she is: withdrawn, (unintentionally) blunt and insensitive, lonely

Connections

Zeus (father): You were born from his head after Zeus had swallowed your mother in fear of (too strong) a son. You always looked down on your father a little, who mostly seemed to follow his own member and, with that, embodied the opposite of your own cool rationale. He seems to want to change, and you're not quite sure if you believe him yet.

Hephaistos (half-brother): Split Zeus' skull to free you. You get along fairly well, as Hephaistos, due to his physical disability, has always been more cerebral than many of the other gods. Even though Hephaistos does not always seem to understand you either, you can certainly share some interesting discussions, for example, about metalworking, at a level you cannot always find with others.

Ares (half-brother): You have a lot in common and differ like day and night, like any typical brother-sister relationship. Water and fire. You can talk war and strategy for hours, only for it to dissolve into a flaming row over a small difference of opinion. Not that it's much sport: your brother has never been much of a thinker.

Aphrodite (acquaintance): Your complete opposite – Aphrodite really has nothing of your social awkwardness and she really wants nothing to do with celibacy. You really don't get each other at all, though you keep making fruitless attempts to close the gap. However, you've never really forgotten that it was Aphrodite who was chosen to be 'the most beautiful' by Paris.

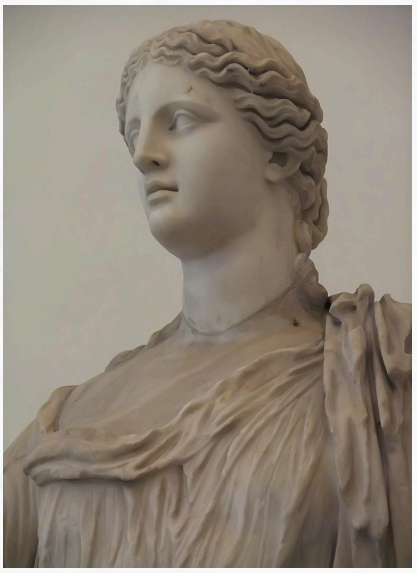
Persephone (half-sister): Sometimes she is at odds with herself as well, that much is clear. Sometimes you can carry a good conversation with her, and she comes close to someone you would consider a friend. You think. In any case, your conversations are also about emotions and such.

Artemis (half-sister): She is a bit like you, the others think she is strange as well and she's lonely. Because of this, it is very hard to become closer, though it's also very easy to feel sympathy for her.

Suggestions for Play

- Decide that after a few thousand years, celibacy is *really* rather outdated. Draft an overly detailed, scientifically substantiated and tested and, of course, completely unworkable plan to steal the heart of a mortal or a fellow Olympian. See: https://xkcd.com/55/
  If you really want to stoke a fire, create a relationship chart or diagram based on the previous dalliances of the other gods. Of course with an honest desire to understand, no matter how much they may dislike seeing their behavior mapped out like that.
- Fake it till you make it. Choose something to be angry, sad, euphoric about. Subsequently cause a row, have an emotional breakdown or dance through the living room. Stop suddenly halfway through and ask onlookers for feedback.
- Start a discussion about a theme that is important to you, or bluntly or subtly try to turn a casual conversation into a difficult political or scientific discourse. Bonus points if it takes a while before the rest realizes what is going on.
- Try to be there for your family and sincerely try to get to know them better, even if you often don't understand them. You are lonely and want to have closer relationships with them. Ask questions at their level. Succeed or fail spectacularly.
- Escalate a conversation with Hephaistos or Ares. You don't know if you find it more annoying that the former doesn't quite get it, or the latter doesn't get it at all, but both are great targets to vent your frustrations at.

Demeter



***Central concepts*:** disappointment, Mother of All, control, you hurt the ones you love

***Goddess of*:** harvest and agriculture

Mythology

Demeter is the sister of Zeus, Hera, Hestia, Poseidon and Hades. Zeus granted her dominion over and responsibility for harvest, agriculture and fertility – and later developments would also make her the goddess of the seasons.

She had children by both Poseidon and Zeus, and Persephone, her child by Zeus, would become the focal point of the most popular tale about Demeter. After her own experience of unwanted attention by the male gods, Demeter chose to keep Persephone well out of reach of those brutes. Despite these efforts, though, Hades still managed to abduct her and take her to the underworld. For months, Demeter, aided by Hecate, searched for her daughter, until they finally found out that she was residing in the underworld.

Beseeched by Demeter, Zeus sent his messenger Hermes to collect her. Hades, however, wanted one last day with Persephone – an indulgence Hermes granted him. During that day, though, Hades managed to trick Persephone into sharing pomegranate seeds with him – and whoever ate or drank anything in the afterlife, would forever stay in the afterlife. Even for the six seeds she ate, she would have to spend six months out of every year in Hades' realm, until the end of time.

Demeter was affected immensely by all this. During the months Persephone spends with her mother, Demeter is happy as can be and grants wonderful weather, golden sun and a bountiful harvest to the earth. But the time always comes when Hermes has to return her, and from that moment on Demeter will be moody and unhappy and will keep the earth barren and infertile.

But there were yet more consequences to the abduction of Persephone and Demeter's grief over losing her. It was in the days before Persephone had been located in the underworld that Tantalus stole ambrosia and nectar from the gods and, on top of that, aired the dirty details of the gods' private lives. To get back in their good graces, he threw the gods a banquet. But as the earth had been so barren of late, preparing a suitable dinner for the gods proved a

challenge, and so Tantalus decided to serve up his son Pelops to the gods. Nearly all gods caught on to this straight away and refused to eat – except for Demeter who, distracted by emotion, took a bite from the boy's left shoulder before she realised. Pelops was resurrected and restored by the gods – Hephaistos even restored his shoulder – and Tantalus was taken to Tartarus, where he would forever long for food and drink that would always be just out of reach.

Just like the other gods, though, Demeter could be extremely vengeful when taunted. When the mortal King Erysichthon – despite the protests of his entourage – had one of Demeter's sacred trees cut down, Demeter sent Limos, one of the escaped tortures from Pandora's jar, to pay him back. Limos represented hunger and she represented it well: Erysichthon found himself needing to sell all his earthly possessions in exchange for food. But even that did not prove sufficient, and so he eventually started on his own hand – followed by his arm, his shoulder and, in the end, his whole body, until he had eaten himself whole.

Farmers and those tilling the soil would routinely beg Demeter's favour, hoping to be blessed with a bountiful harvest. Demeter was one of the few big names to stay out of the Trojan War. The fact that Hades made that same choice is purely coincidental and does not show any similarity to her son-in-law whatsoever.

In Modern Times

After the deal with Hades was struck, Demeter basically wandered about aimlessly for centuries. The crops grew once more and everything seemed fine on earth, but Demeter felt lost and heartbroken. An overabundance of maternal attention was lacking an outlet, especially in winters. Until she realized that she could not undo what had been done, but she could help prevent others from feeling the same.

Ever since, she has had a goal on top of her godly duties: Though everything she oversees will always be fine, she has also always run some form of adoption agency for over a millennium now. To make sure that those who want a child will have a child. They have always been the warmest, most ethical agencies around, even in times when nobody else would give serious consideration to that.

Demeter tries hard to be less angry than she used to be. If only because she realizes full well that Persephone will only grow more distant if she goes too far. She will have to accept that Persephone has made her choice. But this is about her *baby*. Despite her best intentions, when she sees Hades, she'll usually be furious again in no time. But she tries to hold her tongue as best she can. To be honest, it's changed how she relates to her family; she isn't sure who she

can trust. And now more than ever, she needs to be in charge of the nature of her relationships.

Personality

Demeter focuses her attention on things in order to make them grow. That's the nature of her divine task, whether it's about crops or about the communities growing the crops. The catch is that over time, she has come to believe this means that more attention will mean more growth. That there is no upper limit to her fixation.

This has not improved with her inability to save Persephone. Instead of drawing a lesson from the fact that her daughter sometimes distances herself from her, she has decided that she has been unable to protect the one thing she cared most about in this world, and that this means she should probably make even more of an effort. This is bad for others, but mainly for herself. Demeter cares about people and about her Olympian family. She's just quite bad at protecting herself by maybe caring 80% about people sometimes, instead of 300%.

It is important to note that this all comes from a place of love and true caring; if she honestly notices it's causing someone more harm than good, she will try to stop and distance herself. That is, until her nature takes over again. This makes her both the best, most compassionate friend anyone could ever have and the worst busybody. She is like the seasons: whether big changes or creeping ones, change she will.

At her best, she is: caring, down to earth, interested

At her worst, she is: interfering, resentful, claiming

Connections

Hades (brother): Yeah. Complicated. He does try, even now that Persephone wants more space. But it's true that you've always been bad at forgiving transgressions. And his was unforgivable. But having your daughter caught up in the rivalry between the two of you won't help your bond with her, or your own peace of mind. Perhaps it's time to bury the hatchet. If only you knew how. And he sometimes just angers you *so badly* when you so much as look at him...

Persephone (daughter): Your everything. She used to be such a sweet girl, always obedient, beautiful as the morning sun and so clever. You won't claim it's because of Hades, but it's certainly an interesting coincidence that she's been more trouble ever since the incident.

Maybe she's traumatised, maybe she's growing up. You don't want to stay angry – that might only make you grow apart even further. You really just want to repair your bond.

Dionysos (nephew): The kid needs help. That much is certain. To be honest, you really want to project all the care you can't invest in Persephone onto your nephew. He's a long-term project, considering the pace at which he's self-destructing.

Hecate (friend): Older than most gods, she seems to know what she's doing and possesses a certain self-control that you kind of envy. Plus she helped search for Persephone when she was missing, and she has never forgot. You're eternally grateful that she chose your side, and you will make that abundantly clear to her.

Hermes (nephew): You know it's not fair of you to blame Hermes for taking Persephone back and forth – it's part of his portfolio, after all. No god gets to choose their portfolio. And yet you still do.

Hera (sister): She has first-hand expertise in dealing with the most difficult of your brothers. If she could take Zeus, she should be able to teach you to live with Hades somehow, shouldn't she? You've always thought of her as just a friend. But you're so frustrated, and Hera understands you so well. As of late, you're friends with benefits, and it feels good. You could really use feeling butterflies again, as it turns out.

Suggestions for Play

- Try to divert yourself by initiating some fun with the others (let's all visit an amusement park together soon!) and/or enthusiastically supporting people's plans. Someone wants to limbo dance? You're game! As long as it's *fun* stuff. Drinking yourself into a stupor isn't fun.
- Have honest kitchen table discussions with others by asking them how they really are, including free friendly advice. You feel important when others consider you important.
- Try and be the mum to Persephone's entire generation. Maybe that way you can make up for the mistakes you made with her. You only want what's best for them.
- Switch this up by throwing a huge fit of anger directed at Hades, Persephone, Zeus, the whole situation and how *incredibly* ungrateful everyone is and how *incredibly* unfair it all is.
- Try to find a way to live with Hades, or fail epically at this, or alternate both. Turn this into a rollercoaster.

Dionysos

***Central concepts*:** party boy, aimlessness, addiction, man of the hour

***God of*:** wine and debauchery

Mythology

Dionysos is the son of Zeus and the mortal Semele. When Zeus had bagged a pretty mortal for the umpteenth time, Hera had had enough. She appeared to Semele in the guise of an old woman and soon managed to pry from her that she was in a relationship with Zeus. Hera, however, pretended not to believe her and surreptitiously instilled doubt in her. She convinced Semele that it was probably a liar pretending to be Zeus, and that she needed to convince him to show her his true face.

The next time Zeus visited her, Semele got him to swear on the Styx that he would fulfil her next wish. When she asked him to show his true face, he – aware of the consequences – tried to get out of it, but with an oath on the Styx, that's impossible. She kept him to his promise and as expected, in the eternal light of Zeus' appearance, shrouded in fog and lightning, Semele, now convinced, met her unfortunate end.

However, the child of Zeus that Semele was carrying had survived Hera's ruse. Zeus decided to save the child by letting it grow to term in his own thigh, from which Hermes delivered it alive and well some months after. In Dionysus' childhood, Persephone and Hermes, among others, functioned as his nannies.

At a young age, Dionysos discovered the intoxicating properties of the wine that would make him famous. Dionysos, as it happens, was best friends with and even in love with Ampelos. Because Dionysos, out of love, always let Ampelos win in whatever sport they were competing in, Ampelos unfortunately held his own skills in higher regard than was warranted. And so it happened that Ampelos, while riding a wild bull, boasted that he rode it better than Selene could drive the moon. In anger and frustration, Selene sent a gadfly which stung the bull, spooking it and causing it to throw and trample Ampelos. Dionysos couldn't save him, but turned him into a vine in his last moment. From this vine, Dionysos created the very first wine – an invention not all mortals feel blessed by, to say the least.

Dionysos was associated with losing one's own inhibitions, with the incredible feeling of surrendering control to something greater or more powerful. His cult would often include members from every social station, who, by various customs, behaved entirely counter to their everyday lives. Among them we find the Maenads, who, enraptured by Dionysos, celebrated life in an orgy of sex and violence.

For some time, Dionysos, in the throes of a madness Hera had cast upon him out of anger, wandered the world. He became part of the OIympian pantheon when Hestia, sister of Zeus, indicated that she'd be prepared to give up her seat in his favour. As the goddess of home and hearth, she felt the need to be among humans more often. Hera was furious at this, as she considered Dionysos' existence the ultimate insult; not only was he Zeus' umpteenth extramarital offspring, he'd been conceived of a mortal and as such was only semi-divine. Hera therefore swore that she would never drink Dionysos' disgraceful concoction – though that oath perished with their hostilities. Drinking *with* Dionysos doesn't break it, after all...

In the Trojan War, Dionysos remained neutral. Naysayers claim this was because of a drunken stupor, he himself maintains it was mainly disinterest.

In Modern Times

Dionysos is a very successful DJ and bartender. Sometimes in high-end clubs, but he's also spent some of his best years in shady Victorian pubs. He is present wherever people come together to have fun, and he gets a big kick out of shaping and spicing up the party. Entertainment culture is only getting bigger and bigger, so by comparison he is doing really well.

He doesn't need to be the centre of attention per se, but he does want to be surrounded by beautiful people having the time of their lives. In summer, he can usually be found in Salou and similar holiday hotspots. He enjoys the sun and uncomplicated mortals.

Over the centuries, Dionysos has more or less tried everything and been everywhere. If you catch him on a good day, he'll have myriads of stories to tell and will always smile and say "Oh yeah, I was there, too!" and tell you all about all the people he's known. That one time on a boat in Fiji with Marilyn Monroe, a setting sun and a lobster barbecue.

However, he hasn't the faintest what he can do anymore to experience anything new. Maybe it's in his nature that he's never really built long-term relationships or projects, but for centuries, that's made him kind of drift from high to high. It was mainly about satisfying his immediate needs, about experiencing that one thrill he hadn't felt yet. But he's been around

for a long time. Extreme sports can get boring, too. A crash is looming. He's on the edge of the precipice and he doesn't know if he can resist the urge to jump.

Personality

Dionysos can rapidly shift from your best, most fun friend to bored and grouchy. Both of these sides are genuine. He has a natural need for new things and for action that he hasn't been able to satisfy for quite some time.

He likes seeing people respond to the unexpected and in the eyes of others, he will sometimes seem to be provoking them for the sake of it, or taking things less seriously than they deserve to be taken. In doing so, however, he is merely acting in his own nature, just as every god does. The enjoyment of life will cast a light on what's truly important. And besides, he and his family used to do the most *amazing* things, and though he is clever enough to understand that there used to be far more power to do those things *with*, he is sometimes frustrated by how sedate it has all become.

However, he is also burning the candle at both ends. He is the one to keep the vibe going, but also the one who can't experience anything new anymore. And the worst thing – he doesn't really know how to fight that anymore, and, more worryingly, isn't entirely sure if he *wants* to fight it.

At his best, he is: creative, open-minded, modern

At his worst, he is: hedonistic, unmotivated, bored

Connections

Demeter (aunt): Demeter is mothering you. Maybe because it's not working out so well with her own daughter. You're annoyed by it one moment, enjoying it the next. It's not like you've ever known a warm motherly influence.

Persephone (half-sister): She's clearly trying to figure out who she is and who she could be. As it happens, you've known a lot of chicks with that issue. She just needs some new experiences. Leave that to you.

Zeus (father): You don't think he's very proud of you. And in some ways, that hurts. Your father believes in results and in building things from the ground up. You're not very good at that, but maybe you need to show him he's not always right about you.

Hermes (half-brother): Hermes is also a party animal who knows not to take life too seriously. You appreciate that. When you're at risk of wallowing in self-pity, he's usually the one to cheer you up again. He's a boss.

Artemis (half-sister): By far the weirdest of them all, but also the most surprising one. Whereas you have come to care less and less, she seems to only latch on harder to the things she believes in, and you can only respect that immensely. She deserves the first beer.

Hera (stepmother): Your stepmother is far, far more fun than she used to be. So much fun, even, that you've had a few dalliances. That's nothing special to you, you've done nearly everyone on and off Mount Olympus, but you'd never thought it possible before. And yeah, sure, it might be kind of weird because she's married to your father.

Suggestions for Play

- Drugs. Find new drugs, see what they do. Use drugs you're already familiar with to see if anything has changed. See if anyone wants to join you. Secretly feed them to a family member to see what happens.
- Try and get That Party started, especially at night. You kind of suspect That Party won't happen here, but you can at least try.
- Corrupt the good girl goddesses like your sisters Athena and Artemis, and especially confused Persephone, or at least give it your best effort.
- Conversely, try and impress mainly your father by suddenly proposing extremely serious plans or structuring something. Keep checking whether or not he's noticing. Of course, in the end this is doomed to fail horribly; you can't change your nature.
- Decide for yourself how to act on your latent depression. Will you turn self-destructive? Will you confide in someone and break down crying? Will you lash out at those trying to help you? Will you overdose? All of the above?

Eris

***Central concepts*:** controversy, you love to hate me, steering, duality

***Goddess of*:** discord and strife

Mythology

Eris is a goddess older than the Olympians. After all, discord is of all ages and Eris feeds on it. Family feuds, wars and souring relationships - it all plays right into her hands. Eris doesn't simply wait for an argument to break out - she actively stirs up strife. This is one trait Hera gratefully exploits; every couple that once said to love each other more than Hera and Zeus, would soon be visited by Eris.

Eris has always been a dual goddess. There is a side to her personality that no one can venerate or love - a side that sows resentment and reaps war, causes tragedies without a higher purpose, causes struggles simply in the name of strife. But there's another side, striving for more - seeing what someone else has and wanting it as well, improving yourself, healthy competition. For that reason, Eris is also worshipped by sportspeople, prize fighters and organisers of sporting events.

Eris is often conflated with Enyo, the goddess of war. She is a sister of Ares and together they stirred the soldiers on the battlefield to more heroic acts. She is also the mother of various "cacodemons" - the essences of evil that were locked in Pandora's jar and have been plaguing humankind since her slip up, such as lies, forgetfulness and discord.

Eris is sometimes used as an example or a riddle by Athena, with the central tenet always being that Eris and strife remain small if you ignore them, but the moment you try to resist it, it will grow to enormous proportions.

Eris is the immediate cause of the Trojan War. She wasn't invited to a party by the gods and in vengeance threw a golden apple amidst the gods that said, "to the most beautiful", after which Hera, Athena and Aphrodite all claimed to be the rightful owner of the apple. Eventually, Aphrodite bribed the mortal Paris (who had been chosen to judge) with the promise to give him the most beautiful mortal woman (Helen of Sparta), who was already married to Menelaos. Paris kidnapped Helen and brought her to Troy, which provoked the start of the

Trojan War. In this war, Eris sided with the Trojans and motivated them by sowing hate for the Greeks.

In Modern Times

Eris organises children's beauty pageants; contests where parents (often the mothers) try their best to make their children look their very best. Of course, this deteriorates into strife between the mothers, though sometimes also between the mother and her 'little princess'. Even in sports at the highest level, things are not as vicious as they are in these contests. Which is why Eris does it, of course. Or actually, she has a hand in it.

There's a rumour going around that Eris has also masterminded reality TV shows such as Big Brother and America's Next Top Model. Programmes where contrary personalities are put close together and with a nice prize for the winner.

Where Athena stays far, far away from discussion fora and YouTube comments, Eris lives for that and jumps right in. Long live the anonymity and diversity of internet accounts. It seems to take less and less to derail a discussion and she is enjoying it to the full.

Still, vitriol and hatred are often not her sole purpose. A little bit - or a lot - of healthy competition and envy will also result in progress. Jealousy doesn't just keep the economy going ("I need my daughter to wear prettier dresses than she does!"), it also fuels creativity. Mutual relationships constantly change under fights and reconciliation. It keeps the world going. Dynamics over conservatism and movement over stagnation, or the world would fall to slumber.

Perhaps it is due to her many hours trolling the internet that she is closer to humans than most others of her family. Even though she doesn't always bring out the best in people, she also sees their versatility and originality. She sometimes feels like only seeing the worst in people is sort of the family sport, and she's never really understood that. If anyone would know whether they were all bad, it would be her.

Personality

Eris is the personification of a dark side of humanity. However, this does not mean her own personality matches this as well. It therefore sometimes rather hurts her that both history and her family often only see her as a driving force behind bad things. She sometimes feels misunderstood: the importance of catharsis is constantly underestimated. For that reason, she also tries hard to be the supporter, who is proud of someone who comes out of conflict stronger or with more self-knowledge. There is no worse enemy than Eris; there is no better

cheerleader than Eris. She likes to show that side of herself as well, the side who offers you a glass of wine and asks you how it went.

She's also a workaholic. Wherever there's people, there's fighting. That's not a choice, that's part of human nature. However, she's not entirely sure anymore if she really has to work this hard or if she's exaggerating because she's scared she's not really wanted by her family. In any case, she's truly proud of everything she's accomplished. She's made the best of a difficult starting point, she's still here and she's doing well. And she knows not every one of her family members can say the same.

At her best, she is: constructive, cheerful, passionate

At her worst, she is: malicious, avoiding, stressed

Connections

Hecate (acquaintance): You don't know her as well as you'd like. It is said that she still has a lot of followers that literally worship her, as it used to be. In addition, you notice that she also has a sincere appreciation of everything mortals can think of.

Poseidon (Enyo's uncle): He is much easier to provoke than even he knows. He is one of your favourites; he can go off with such majestic force.

Hera (Enyo's aunt): Another great project. The reformed jealous bitch, who is completely over the whole Paris thing and is perfectly fine with it whenever Zeus sleeps around again. You don't believe a word of it. What's more, you need to keep an eye on women like that; before you know it, they blame you for their own character flaws.

Apollo (Enyo's half-brother): You are nominally friends. Still, he only ever thinks about himself, and every time you try to broach the subject it just slides off that slick face of his. He's great to have a laugh with and you know he means well, but sooner or later this will *completely* blow up in your face.

Hephaistos (Enyo's half-brother): Your best friend. You never thought you'd end up in a corner with a bottle of wine and the nerd of family, but sometimes Destiny has a strange sense of humour. Originally, you felt a bit sorry for him, but he turned out to be the textbook example of the strength you can find in overcoming strife and misfortune.

Hermes (Enyo's half-brother): If you didn't know any better, you'd think he was flirting with you. But he's a pathological liar, so you're not sure what to think of him. If that's something you're looking for, you can have any mortal. Or is there something about him?

Suggestions for Play

- Stir up trouble in a good relationship. If only to test its merits.
- Pitch the idea of a new reality show where the gloves really come off, and enthusiastically takes notes of the ideas of others.
- Try to make - and keep - friends. You know your nature is stronger than you are, but you also understand that this meeting is important to all of you, so it would be better if you were not quite as successful as usual.
- Take someone into your confidence about how hurtful it can be to be rejected solely on the basis of a portfolio that you had no choice over, just like the others. Perhaps someone who is also struggling with their image?
- Share funny anecdotes about things mortals do, both juicy gossip and proud shares about when they grew into their potential, especially to the more cynical family members who can only see everything as a move to the bottom.

Hades

Central concepts: misunderstood, thinking in absolutes, good intentions, white knight

***God of*:** the dead and the underworld

Mythology

After the Titanomachy - the war between the gods and their Titan forebears - Hades, firstborn brother of Zeus, was given reign of the underworld – the afterlife as the Greeks imagined it – which was also named Hades. Other than that, he was associated with the riches of the earth; jewels and precious metals.

The underworld, named after its ruler, was home to various gods; the rivers of the underworld each had one, ferryman Charon was appointed to help mortals cross the river Styx, the Furies made their home in the underworld, and then there was Thanatos, the personification of non-violent death itself. On top of that, the underworld was guarded by Kerberos, the three-headed hellhound that made sure nobody was allowed out or in without permission.

As Hades had his sights set on the beautiful Persephone – daughter of Zeus and Demeter – he decided simply to abduct her. When Zeus, beseeched by Demeter, set him an ultimatum for the return of Persephone to her mother, Hades managed to trick Persephone into eating pomegranate seeds. Because she had eaten the food of the underworld, she would have to return there; for each of the six seeds she ate, she would need to spend one month out of each year with him. Every year thereafter, Hermes faithfully brought her to Hades and returned for her six months later.

Hades' realm consisted of multiple separate areas. The Elysian Fields were a gorgeous place for demigods to finally rest after their lives of heroism. The Meadows of Asphodel were the place most regular mortals would end up in. But Tartarus was where the most wicked of mortals would bear the consequences of their evil lives. Famous denizens of this hellish area are, among others, Ixion, the Danaids, Sisyphus and Tantalus. The Greek gods were very creative when it came to inventing fitting punishments for people like that, most of which are based on the hopelessness of the situation the deceased find themselves in.

Hades was also the one who asked Zeus to stop Apollo's son Asclepius when he used a medical remedy that was far too powerful, keeping mortals out of Hades' reach. For that reason, Zeus killed Asclepius, though he was later resurrected and even raised to godhood.

Hades was revered by anyone who had anything to do with death; the recently bereaved, undertakers, but also soldiers, who often decided it wouldn't be unwise to appease the one who is soon to judge you. In the Trojan War, Hades remained neutral; one of the few things he has in common with his mother-in-law.

In Modern Times

Hades is an insurance broker. He likes calculating risk, and there isn't a life story he hasn't already heard. Sometimes he'll grin to himself about his colleagues, who always seem to think things 'have never happened before'. If only they knew. Unlike many of his fellow Olympians, Hades is a true conservative in all things. He does not like change. He has lived in the same house for eighty years and worked for the same company for one hundred and five, though tactical changes in outward appearance have made sure the company is unaware of this.

He has not yet decided if he agrees with the way death is treated in this modern era, with how it's feared and pushed away. He's seen better in previous millennia. He gets much of his self-worth from his volunteer work at a hospice, an invention he can appreciate. He's the one you want by people's side in the moment of their passing.

His marriage is okay at the moment. He thinks. He's noticed Persephone is struggling a bit, but so is anyone in this new era. To be completely honest, her fickleness is driving him up the wall, but what are you gonna do? He just tries to be there for her as best he can. After all they've been through, an identity crisis won't be the end of them.

His mother-in-law is still an issue, but even that has been worse before. She seems to hold back more than she used to. He suspects that's mostly for her daughter's sake, but that's okay by him.

Personality

Hades wants to do everything as well and as clearly as possible. Millennia of dealing with the dead have given him a strong sense that things happen the way they are meant to happen. He's well-organised and tends to set roadmaps. In doing so, he is always working in everyone's best interest. Which is why it gets him rather grouchy when people not only ignore his planning, but actively go against it. He is doing it for them, too, after all. In his eyes, anything that goes wrong is the result of chaos.

He cares about his fellow gods and has good standing as a stable factor, but they do sometimes frustrate him; it seems like some gods have made a sport out of escalating things, the more he tries to regulate them. Hades also has trouble with spontaneity. He will laugh with the others but never seems to entirely get the joke the way the others do. He also experiences some things differently; the other gods love to make fun of the campy Iron Maiden tribute band Hades has started with some mortal colleagues, whereas Hades isn't trying to be campy at all and takes it extremely seriously. That sort of thing does tend to happen to him.

At his best, he is: analytical, friendly, problem solver

At his worst, he is: easily influenced, rigid, lacking in humour

Connections

Hera (sister): Somehow, she has always been more approachable than your brother (Zeus). You would usually go through her when you needed something from Zeus. You feel she's more organised in how she handles things, less likely to pull rank. She's a friend, to a certain extent. You like hearing her opinion on things.

Persephone (niece, wife): You love her. You would do anything for her. Despite some people's opinions, she was never a fling. At the moment, her fickleness is driving you up the wall, but she does seem happy and Styx knows that hasn't always been the case. You try to humour her as best you can.

Demeter (sister): As of late, she seems to be making an effort to get over the past. She's tried that before, though. You don't like the look in her eyes. But for Persephone's sake, you're willing to give her the benefit of the doubt.

Hermes (nephew, colleague): Your psychopomp, the one who accompanies souls to the banks of the river Styx. A hard worker for whom you have a great deal of respect, though you tend to avoid him in private because he's too much of a smooth talker and a party animal.

Eris (acquaintance): You feel for her. Discord, like death, is always seen as a destructive force, even though it also has a creative side to it that people like to ignore for convenience's sake. Maybe she'd like to discuss this sometime.

Apollo (nephew): You're always happy to see your nephew. As if someone has tried to create some kind of anti-Hades, with all that glamour of his. You enjoy observing him and asking him questions. Unlike other sly guys, he fascinates rather than annoys you.

Suggestions for Play

- Draw up a plan for the weekend and try to keep others to it. Create risk analyses, bar charts, whatever you like. Make them promise to try their best, and to keep to what's been agreed on. Support Zeus in this.
- Have philosophical discussions with your fellow Olympians about mortals and what motivates them. As a hospice volunteer, you see people at a very intense time in their lives. You've never been a fan of the anecdote exchange about the silly things mortals do, but you're always up for a good and genuine story about what it must be like to be so short-lived.
- In conversations, be slightly out of tune. Try to insert humour into the conversation at the wrong time, respond earnestly to someone who is clearly pulling your leg, accidentally turn a light-hearted conversation morbid or extremely serious.
- Try to find a hobby or a way to relax. You're stressed enough. Try to avoid making it something you will regret. But then perhaps find fault with your new-found stress relief anyway.
- Find out what you can do for Persephone. You understand she needs time to herself, but you do need her too in these confusing times. Try to make it work with her.

Hecate

***Central concepts*:** adaptable, it's a kind of magic, moving up in the world, bluff

***Goddess of*:** crossroads, spirits, magic and witchcraft

Mythology

Hecate is an old goddess – so old that her followers have come up with several myths about her origin. Between all the stories told of her, Hecate herself has kind of lost sight of her true parentage and considers various gods her fathers and mothers. She may have even existed before the gods, but then again, maybe she didn't.

Hecate is the goddess of magic and witchcraft, which makes her a powerful goddess – one who found worshipers among every social station, for the powerless want power and the powerful want more power. Warriors, athletes, hunters, shepherds, fishermen, children and those nearing death would often beg the favours of Hecate. Almost every crossroads in antiquity was marked with so-called *Hecateae* – three masks on a pole, as she was often depicted with three faces; one to see the past, one to see the present and one to see the future. It was by these landmarks that mortals would sacrifice to Hecate.

Hecate is one of the gods who were capable of both great blessings and great evil. The changing nature of magic is definitely to blame for that, but she herself, too, was possessed of a temperament which sometimes simply demanded that unworthy mortals were not to be blessed – not even at crucial times. In antiquity, she worked in tandem with the Furies, winged creatures who punished those who treated others unjustly. Nothing about her magic was inherently evil, though – everything could be made to serve good as well as evil. As the goddess of witchcraft, she is also often seen as the eldest of the famous 'Maiden, Mother and Crone' trifecta. Either way, Hecate was known as a wise goddess who played a key role in many of the gods' victories in the war against the giants.

To add to that, she was a goddess who felt most comfortable under the night skies, and it was at night that she undertook many of her journeys. Many of those journeys led to the underworld. She was, after all, capable of leading the souls of the deceased through and to Hades – a task she had in common with Hermes. It was in this capacity that she helped Demeter find her daughter Persephone – although she had already helped her search outside the underworld (also confusingly named Hades) as well. Demeter is still grateful for the help

she offered, even though in the end it was too late to rescue Persephone entirely. Once it became clear that Persephone would have to reside in Hades for six months out of every year, it was also Hecate who descended into the underworld to help Persephone adapt to her new circumstances. For this, Hades was so grateful that he promised her she'd always be welcome in his realm.

In the Trojan War, Hecate did not choose sides.

In Modern Times

Hecate has kept up with the times, and since the last decade of the previous century she has been an air traffic controller. She has changed appearances and employers often enough not to stand out, and she's good at what she does. It brings her a lot of satisfaction as well. Who would have ever thought she could one day guide people on their paths through the *sky*? Change is awesome. Next to that, she runs an online esoterics shop. She might as well give her people all the support they need.

She's the success story of Project Olympian Relaunch – the reason for this 'family weekend'. In contrast to the other gods, she has gained followers in recent years, and it's mainly young people who lead their lives according to one of the pagan religions. They frequently invoke her, and although it isn't the organized religion of the past, this improvised worship does grant her much needed energy. She is shown as an example of how the pantheon can adapt to these times.

But to be honest, she has no clue as to *how*. She likes the compliments, but this was a bolt out of the blue for her as well. Several Olympians have pinned their hopes on her success, so it's high time she figures out why it did work for her... or is this a matter of "fake it 'til you make it"?

Personality

Out of all the Olympians, Hecate is probably best equipped to deal with change, the modern era and the increasing futility of their existence as gods. Not only because she still has adherents, but probably mostly because she has always been a bit of an outlier in the family. Nobody knows exactly where she stands, and for a long time, that caused her to be closer to mortals than to the Olympians.

Because they are so interesting. Her portfolio has been a constant throughout the centuries; however the world changes, there will always be magic users and there will always be crossroads. But the ways in which humans choose to express it continue to fascinate her;

there's slight variations each time. Whenever she thinks humans can't surprise her anymore, they do so anyway. It sometimes frustrates her when the others can't see that.

She's worried about this get-together. In a way, she feels like she's bluffing. On the other hand, she's never claimed to know exactly how she does it all; that's what the others have made of it. She likes the thought of seeing them again and will approach their weekend together just as she is: optimistic and pragmatic, with a healthy dose of *joie de vivre*. And maybe a bit of ever-changing emotion. Just a little bit.

At her best, she is: organised, open-minded, original

At her worst, she is: fickle, unpredictable, avoidant

Connections

Aphrodite (friend): A good friend. She's fun, she's very energetic and she tends to set the tone. You feel she sometimes struggles more than she wants to let on, and you'd like to help her. Though it will be hard work to get her to go against her nature.

Eris (ally): Unlike many other gods, you find the commotion she causes hilarious. Apart from that, she's a nice ally in appreciating mortals; just like you, she's still in a bit more contact with them and understands them better. You might want to have a glass of wine with her.

Demeter ("friend"): You helped her get her daughter back from the underworld. However, that was mainly to do with you feeling that the girl should be allowed her own choice. She, on the other hand, interpreted it as some sort of unconditional support and now she won't leave you alone.

Apollo (acquaintance): Interesting man. You don't know him as well as some of the others. You know he's very busy, too. You kind of want to prank him to get him to be a bit less conceited. You know, like you and the other gods used to always do to one another.

Hermes (acquaintance): He's way too smooth. You remember how he used to be, and though it would be fun to shake things up a bit, you really want to keep him well away from those you care about. He manages to fool a lot of people into thinking everything about him is innocent, but not you.

Ares (crush): You might just have a bit of a crush on him. He's the type of strong, hurt man you've got a weak spot for. You do feel a bit guilty towards Aphrodite, though. Maybe you should try and find out how much she really does still want him?

Suggestions for Play

- Get fed up with gods acting all negative about mortals and give plenty of counterexamples of things that are exciting, unexpected, fun and original. I mean, would any of them ever have thought of BDSM? Mimes? Netflix? Voluntarily moving to the South Pole to count penguins?
- Try and act avoidant as long as possible when gods want to know how you managed it, holding on to mortal worship. There must be a way in which you did it, but if you just promise to give a talk tomorrow you'll have a full night to think about it.
- However, do take the lead and take charge based on that same claim, if you think it will benefit the group. You've got something valuable to tell them and if this makes them listen to you, so much the better.
- Think of yourself as the goddess of crossroads and help those in doubt by clarifying their choices.
- Do mini rituals, murmur spells, throw salt eastward, perform a sunrise libation, leave a chicken bone on thresholds. You believe it will always help a little. If even mortals can change things using magic, imagine what happens when their goddess does it.

Hephaistos

***Central concepts*:** master craftsman, comeback king, trauma, betterment

***God of*:** fire and the forge

Mythology

Depending on who you believe, Hephaistos was either created by Hera alone or is her son by Zeus. Whichever it was, Hera was not quite satisfied with the end result - Hephaistos was born crippled and malformed, and she banished him from Olympus for that.

However, Hephaistos is a bona fide genius - not like Athena is in purely theoretical fields, but mostly in practical applications. He gifted his mother a throne - anonymously, of course - which took her prisoner the moment she sat down on it. Zeus then promised the hand of Aphrodite in marriage (although she was already in a relationship with Ares at that time) as a reward for the person who could free her. Only Hephaistos could do this, and eventually he did.

Aphrodite married him, but she could never stay faithful to him. Hephaistos discovered her infidelity with Ares and captured both of them together in a fine net, and subsequently displayed them to all the gods. Apollo, Hermes and Poseidon all felt sorry for Ares, however - they quite understood why he had done it - and Poseidon eventually paid Hephaistos to release the couple.

After Zeus started to fear the power of humans because they had gained access to divine fire, he came up with a plan. Because all the people he had crafted from clay up until this point had been of the same sex, he asked Hephaistos to create a female human. Hephaistos crafted Pandora, whose curiosity eventually released all evil into the world - exactly as Zeus had intended.

Due to his ingenuity and skill in creating artefacts, Hephaistos was mostly a source of inspiration for smiths, metalworkers, artists and craftsmen.

In the Trojan War, Hephaistos sided with the Greeks, which certainly did not simplify things in his relationship with Aphrodite. Even though he never confirmed the rumours, he's fairly

proud of the fact that the Trojan War *finally* ended thanks to the Horse, which was a product of his inspiration...

In Modern Times

Hephaistos has had some success as a paralympic athlete for several years, something he is immensely proud of. With this he has proven that he's more than his disability. His paralympic achievements are partially the result of his own endurance and partially of modern technology. Everything that's currently possible in terms of prosthetics is amazing and Hephaistos is one of the innovators in the field. It started in the 16th century with the iron hands of a German mercenary and it has improved from there. We're currently living in an age where people can have a 3D printer at home and all kinds of nanomaterials are newly made available every year.

After several successful businesses and innovative sprints he is no longer lacking in money and attention. He won't be recognised in the grocery shop, but he's on the covers of magazines on innovative management and big ideas for the future. He's sort of become the poster child of the 'age of the nerd'. He does rather miss crafting things with his own two hands.

In his free time he can often be found in a Makerspace or Fab Lab, where he thoroughly enjoys seeing all the new discoveries and the knowledge and creativity that live there. When he's visiting his divine family he can sometimes be persuaded to "fix something" or he comes up with an improvement for the household or the interior.

Personality

Nowadays, Hephaistos is a success story in every way. Despite that, he still feels insecure around his family; even the highest sports achievements or the greatest successes in business will still not win you the unconditional love of your family. The great appreciation received from the mortals makes this easier to deal with on the one hand, but also more difficult on the other.

He enjoys the way his family treats him a lot better nowadays for being 'skilled', but despite that he still feels like they don't really see him: after everything he has done and achieved, they still consider him the man who can fix the printer. It's not entirely clear how many of these frustrations are the result of actual interactions, and how much of it is just in his head.

Hephaistos is generally an extremely well-meaning man, the type who tries to lighten your load without being asked, but afterwards does expect to be appreciated for it. This implicit behaviour is obviously rooted in trauma, but does sometimes annoy his family members.

At his best, he is: incredibly creative, sharp-witted, resilient

At his worst, he is: insecure, bitter, indecisive

Connections

Zeus (father): There's not much you blame your father for anymore. At least, you try. Of course, everything that has happened still stings (for example, you'd love to be able to talk about how, through making Pandora, you doomed humanity), but most of all you want his recognition. As a result, you constantly want his approval and are fearful of contradicting him, for fear of more rejection.

Athena (possible half-sister): If you'd married *her*, it would not have been nearly as bad. She is a bit odd, but cerebral and interesting. You feel connected to her, based in a strong admiration of her mind. A potential 'drinking buddy'.

Artemis (possible half-sister): You feel like you recognise something in her, that she feels lonely and rejected somehow. Something you recognise which hurts, and which can fester. You feel like you should maybe talk to her, but you're also a bit scared of her.

Ares ((half?) brother): Nowadays, your relationship with your brother is actually really good. You think he might feel guilty about what happened in the past. And somewhat rightly so, really. Now you have the bond you'd have liked to have before. He is a bit wary of the influence of technology on war.

Eris (friend): For some strange reason she became your best friend. You're not sure how that happened and you never expected it, but despite her nature she is sincere in a way. That's a trait not many in the family share. She can goad you, but she would never lie to you. You can tell her everything.

Aphrodite (ex-wife): You're not sure. She has caused you a lot of pain and you were a terrible match from the very start. But she was *so beautiful*. She ignored you for centuries but recently tried to reconcile again. Is she just looking for a friend and, if so, is that even possible between you?

Suggestions for Play

- See if you can improve, repair or redesign something in the house. Try to get the others to share your enthusiasm, even if it's only so they can affirm your talents. You need that bit of encouragement.
- Try to be one of the boys. Now that you have your own success stories, it should be easier to connect with the fat cats like Hermes and Dionysos?
- The Trojan Horse is yours. It's a secret you've cherished for a long time, but perhaps the time is right for the others to know that the largest conflict in the realm of the Greek gods after the Titan Wars was won by your Horse. Brag about it when they act like they're better than you. Better living through technology.
- Keep an eye open for love. Aphrodite is nicer to you than ever, perhaps you have misjudged her? Or someone else? I mean, you're a much better catch than before, this should certainly work in your advantage.
- The more people are gathered in one place, the higher the odds that you will revert to your old, insecure behaviour. Impostor Syndrome strikes. Can you overcome this or will you fail in public again?
- Strive to receive sincere recognition for what you have achieved, because when push comes to shove, it is considerable. They want to talk about the future? You *are* the future. TIME Magazine said so. Seize the moment.

Hera

***Central concepts*:** control, complicated relationships, self-made woman, don't get mad - get everything

***Goddess of*:** marriage and childbirth

Mythology

Hera is married to her brother Zeus, the king of the gods. This gains her power and everyone's respect, but has also been a ceaseless source of frustration for millennia. No matter how many times Zeus promised to be better, he was simply incapable of remaining faithful to her. Because of this, Hera is known to many as a vengeful goddess - her husband's one-night stands and any children resulting from his side action can count on her enmity.

For example, she ordered Argus - who had a hundred eyes - to guard Zeus's lover Io, whom he had quickly changed into a cow to prevent Hera from catching them in the act, to ensure Zeus could no longer visit her. However, Hermes managed through subterfuge to make Argus fall asleep and close all his eyes. After he killed him, Hera in grief placed Argus's eyes on a bird that had been rather unassuming up until that point. We now know that bird as the peacock, a bird still associated with Hera to this day.

Hera even went as far as attempting to kill Artemis and Apollo by sending the snake Python to attack them. Only because Apollo had had a weapon made by Hera's treacherous son Hephaistos did he manage to kill the snake and subsequently save himself and his sister.

Hera was also the one who schemed for Semele, Zeus's mortal concubine, to see the true form of Zeus. Because no mere mortal could see such glory and live, the pregnant Semele died as Hera intended. However, Zeus saved the child and named it Dionysos.

When Hestia decided to give up her seat on Olympus in favour of Dionysos, Hera protested fiercely. After all, Dionysos was nothing more than an illegitimate child of Zeus, but above all, he was only a *demi*god. The child Dionysos had with Aphrodite, Priapus, Hera cursed with ugliness and impotence.

Hera does know that her husband, in all his unreasonableness, is very possessive of her - and in some strange way she feels rather valued by him at those times. For example, Zeus punished the mortal king Ixion not just for violating the principles of *xenia*, but especially

because he (unsuccessfully, of course) had tried to make a pass at Hera - or was that only what she told herself to be true?

Hera gave birth to Hephaistos and banished him from Olympus for his appearance and disability, which resulted in Hephaistos taking revenge, which in turn led to his marriage to Aphrodite.

As the queen of heaven and spouse of Zeus, Hera was often called upon to mediate on behalf of mortals. Furthermore, as goddess of marriage and childbirth she was naturally revered by young couples or newlyweds, as well as couples who were expecting a baby.

Hera was one of the three goddesses who vied to be awarded the apple stating “to the most beautiful” in the Judgement of Paris, completely unaware of the fact that it had been Eris who had used the apple to cause discord among the gods. Because Paris awarded the apple to Aphrodite despite Hera’s attempts to influence him, Hera decided that Troy had to be destroyed. Eventually she would even act contrary to the wishes of Zeus by seducing and distracting him, to ensure he wouldn’t notice that the other gods became involved in the Trojan war against his orders and helped the Greeks gain victory.

In Modern Times

Nowadays, Hera has a much more interesting love life. Not that she is copying Zeus in his endless pursuit of mortals, that would be childish. Gone are the days where she was the endlessly loyal, obedient wife sitting at home while he flirted with everything that drew breath, however. And at first glance, it only seems to have improved their marriage.

Over the course of the last century, she has presented as an assertive, successful career woman in everything, who enjoys life and knows what she wants. She has friends, clubs, hobbies and volunteer work and is perpetually short on time. These days, she uses her ability to incite and network to actually achieve something instead of only sabotaging, and it obviously does her a world of good.

Hera started a practice for mediation in divorces called Olympos and even managed to persuade Zeus to become her partner in this endeavour. Helping others energises her, especially when their relationships are the reason they are unhappy. Every time a woman leaves her office determined to finally put an end to a toxic marriage, she celebrates.

She herself will probably never reach that point, though. Even though she is still an expert in stylish revenge, ever since she started putting herself first she hasn’t often felt the need. At least, that’s the plan. She’s a *work in progress* herself.

Personality

Hera struggles with herself and the changes she has made in her life. On the one hand she is happier than she's ever been. She is a success for who she is, not for who she's with. She is universally valued for her strong and calm personality and has easy manner with people. The problem is that her unprecedented urge to be in control and her inability to deal with disappointment have not changed.

Even though she now has positive things in her life to energise her, the smallest things can still push her right over that edge, resulting in her taking on even more to avoid losing her temper. Vicious, that's the old Hera. That's not who she is anymore. So there.

Still, she can't get away from being the mother figure, as it is her nature, nor from Zeus, for despite everything he is still the one and only true love of her life. Sometimes the changes alarm her, no matter how good it has been for her. At those times she catches herself longing for the times where all she had to do was react.

On some days she feels like she has achieved it all. She is now a success and has completely freed herself of coercion, jealousy and spite. On other days, though, she is aware that the only thing she's become better at, is pretending. Still, who knows, if she keeps it up, it might all become real after all.

At her best, she is: powerful, enthusiastic, patient

At her worst, she is: projecting on others, resentful, putting a good face on it

Connections

Zeus (brother, husband): Well… how to find the words for something so complex. He is the one and only love of your life *and* the source of all your unhappiness. The reason you wake up in the morning *and* the reason you can't get to sleep. It's become painfully obvious that you should have distanced yourself from him sooner: ever since you found yourself, things have been better between you. You think. Try to support him at this meeting: no matter what people think, you're still hand in glove.

Demeter (sister): Demeter is a darling and a really good mother. A friend you love sharing a glass of wine with. She is still struggling a bit with that whole thing with her daughter and Hades. You hope to be able to cut away a bit at how much control this obsession has over her. You have been friends with benefits for a while now and it feels both pleasantly familiar and very exciting. She is the first woman you have started something with in your quest for self-knowledge. Butterflies.

Aphrodite (acquaintance): You have never forgiven her for so many things: Troy, how she used Ares as her personal plaything, that she used to have a thing with Zeus... the list is endless. And she hasn't changed one bit. Still the center of all attention. This isn't jealousy, there are simply people you like and people you don't like.

Dionysos (cousin): By Olympus how you hated his mother - which caused him to have never known her. Anyway, that was the old Hera. Over the last couple of centuries you have had several casual hookups with him, whenever the both of you were done with the world for a bit. Zeus has never asked about it and he therefore doesn't have to know.

Ares (son): Your golden boy. That's why it hurts so much that he has allowed himself to be dragged into aimlessness as much. He needs to recover himself and be the tough guy he used to be. He lets himself be talked into things too easily, that's why.

Hades (brother): Your brother (in law) is a friend. He is a calm man with the right ideas and he doesn't always have it easy himself.

Suggestions for Play

- Flirt with others. Because these days you to deserve to get some attention. And, alright, also to make Zeus a bit jealous.
- In opposite: try to give a new boost to your relationship with Zeus or try to talk things over, and defend your marriage whenever someone criticises it. It has much more depth than any of the relationships they have had and they simply don't understand at all.
- Find the limits of your successful facade. You are trying to be someone else, but the gods can't help their Nature. Become more and more overworked and whenever someone asks, empathically emphasise that *It Is Going Very Well thankyouverymuch.*
- You now have a chance to speak with your children and your cousins and you're really looking forward to it. A family gathering might not have been the purpose of the meeting, but you can still enjoy the side effects.
- Use this gathering to make amends with some of the Olympians you might have hurt in the past (for example: Hermes was Zeus' wingman during his sleeping around, you hate him) and make truly genuine attempts to make up, only to lose to your true nature. You may be *so over it*, but in essence you're still vengeful and envious. See who wins.

Hermes

***Central concepts*:** smooth operator, wolf of Wall Street, melancholy, addiction

***God of*:** trade, thieves and messengers

Mythology

Hermes is the offspring of the eldest of the Pleiades, Maia, and – who else – Zeus. Knowing, like all beautiful women in Greece and the surrounding area, how Hera treated Zeus' concubines, while pregnant she fled to a remote and hidden cave where she would give birth to the child.

From the first moment on, Hermes was a special boy. Literally in the first hours of his life, he designed the lyre. As soon as he had taught himself how to play it – before night had even fallen – he decided, bored, to go for a walk. When the enormous distance he had covered made him hungry, he decided to steal fifty cattle from Apollo's herd. He did this by crafting himself a pair of sandals that would leave no imprints, and by making the cattle move backwards, so that their tracks would point the wrong way.

That morning, he killed two of the cattle and used them as a burnt offering to the twelve Olympian gods. His attempts to convince his mother that nothing was the matter failed, but he cleverly told her he would one day be the god of thieves and then considered the matter settled.

Apollo, however, soon noted that part of his herd was missing, and using his skills as a seer (Apollo was the god of oracles, after all), he finally managed to find the cave where Maia had concealed herself and her one-day-old. He took the infant with him to Mount Olympus to get justice. Although Hermes told a fair few lies and even swore some false oaths, in the end, Zeus was laughing as he told him to show Apollo where he hid his cattle.

Eventually, Hermes made it up to Apollo by giving him the brand new lyre he had invented the day before and teaching him how to play it, making him the god of the musical arts. Apollo, in turn, granted him a magical whip, enabling him to become the god of animal husbandry. In addition, Hermes promised Apollo never to steal any of his possessions again.

Hermes has always liked a bit of fun and so, in the Greek pantheon, tended to be the one who'd always have some mischief or another on his conscience. He was the messenger of the gods

and the one tasked with transporting souls to Hades' realm, including the task of ferrying Persephone back and forth to Hades every year. He was always close with Zeus and has often helped to keep his affairs a secret to Hera, something that wasn't always appreciated. Apart from that, Hermes was often the one sent to aid legendary heroes like Perseus and Odysseus on their travels.

He could count on the worship of, among others, those who kept livestock, traders, sportsmen and thieves. He always remained close to Apollo and consequently, the two have a lot in common. In the Trojan War, their friendship did not always come easy, since Hermes insisted on remaining neutral whereas Apollo was fiercely on the Trojan side.

In Modern Times

Hermes trades in whatever stock makes the most money. It's simultaneously extremely fun and extremely embarrassing to see how easily mortals will part with their money. That's been a constant throughout the centuries. Two thousand years ago, you could sell the Colosseum to a different idiot four times a day if you were bored. Now it's stock in the e-tech bubble of some company that won't be around in three years' time. But it's the same idea.

And Hermes still finds the lifestyle it yields him enjoyable. Many gods complain that they're bored of doing the same thing over and over again, but as he always tells them, maybe they're just not doing the right things. Hanging out in a penthouse while dressed in an expensive tailored suit, doing top quality coke while beautiful people try their hardest to please you, that's definitely still fun next week as well. He likes to just take things as they come. But deep within, even he can feel the senselessness of it all lurking. That coke isn't really something he can do without anymore. And the beautiful people are starting to mainly look like other beautiful people.

Still, it gives him an intense sense of satisfaction when everything he's good at comes together. There's a certain thrill, a certain energy when the moment of the deal is nearing and he can look people in the eye and tell that he's got them. He is the god of trade and of travel, absolutely.

Everyone who paid attention at school knows that. But what most mortals have long since forgotten is that he is also the trickster and the god of thieves. And usually, they only realise this far, far too late. He used to deceive his family with his games. Now it's Texan oil barons. The game just got more expensive over time. And okay, the opponents got more boring. That's something he misses.

Personality

Hermes is someone who knows what to say and do to be liked. People realise he's playing them, but due to his charm, they always choose to explain this away as the big-hearted thief or the benevolent trickster. Even though when push comes to shove, he really isn't just doing it because he doesn't know any better or can't change the way he is; Hermes likes to win. And he especially loves the look in people's eyes when they think they got one over on him, instead of the other way around. That's what motivates him. And even then, when all is said and done, they'll often blame someone else.

That's always created opportunities for him, but it also means he's really always had it too easy. This has caused him to be a little too certain of his own skills, and given him an unshakeable confidence in the fact that anything that goes wrong can't be his fault. He will easily steamroller others and won't even notice it in his ego bubble.

Due to his sense of humour and his quick wit, he can be very fun to interact with, but also very annoying. His fellow gods don't always fully trust him, as he used to be the one to pull the wool over their eyes and because they are never entirely sure if he's honest in what he's saying.

At his best, he is: charming, quick-witted, funny

At his worst, he is: conceited, laissez-faire, rude

Connections

Eris (half-sister, as Enyo): What is it with you and the bitchy types? Something about her is immensely attractive to you. And Eris is single. She's just always working. But this weekend is about connecting with one another, and simply giving things a try has never hurt anyone.

Hades (uncle, colleague): That man is so artlessly well-meaning it's almost laughable. One of your tasks is to take souls to his realm. While that should be a reason to keep him on your side, he's a favourite target for some ribbing and riling up. That armour needs a dent in it.

Dionysos (half-brother): A true friend and by far the least boring of your family. You look forward to seeing him again. He always has the best stories and the most drugs and whatever you want, he can get you.

Hephaistos (possible half-brother): It's kind of painful to see your brother struggle with himself. So successful in this modern era, and yet you still sometimes see the sad cripple of Mount Olympus, waiting for his cookie. He deserves better. Maybe you need to help him.

Poseidon (uncle): Nice guy to have a beer with. The fun thing about Poseidon is that he's so down-to-earth. The other fun thing about Poseidon is that one word is enough to set him off.

Aphrodite (acquaintance): Fellow master manipulator. Which makes her both someone you admire, and competition. You don't like ending up on different sides of the same argument with her.

Suggestions for Play

- Find a moment to do drugs and get the party started with your boy Dionysos. He always manages to cheer you up.
- Steal something. Just out of habit. Happens to be how you're wired, you know?
- Tease your family. You are still a bit of a trickster and you like setting it up so someone can't really get away without losing face. Reminds you of the good old days, when everyone did that all the time. And the *stories* that resulted in, right?
- You're a clever guy and you know you didn't all come here to socialise. Make sure you figure out what the different factions are thinking and who's opposed to whom.
- Try to make short work of defeatism and the 'everything was better in the old days' mentality. If that's how everyone's going to be, you're halfway to the grave already. Even if you're only doing it to drown out your own insecurities about exactly this.
- Get a modest party going, having a drink and telling stories, reminiscing and joking. You did miss your family in a way, and this is the way you like to see them.

Persephone

***Central concepts*:** future, identity crisis, pleaser, still-your-queen

***Goddess of*:** afterlife and curses

Mythology

Persephone was the result of Zeus' unwanted attention towards Demeter. When her comely daughter also began to garner popularity among the male gods, Demeter decided to protect her daughter from the unwanted attentions of hypermasculine men by keeping her as far away from Mount Olympus as possible.

Eventually Hades, too, found himself wanting a lover, and as befits a Greek god, decided that no courting would be needed. As the Fates would have it, it was, of course, none other than Persephone who had caught his eye.

In the blink of an eye, Demeter's beautiful daughter disappeared into a chariot, which made its way back into the earth and disappeared as fast as it had appeared. Demeter asked Hecate for help in locating Persephone, but for months on end, they did not succeed. In the end, it was Helios who let slip that Hades was the one who had abducted her.

Even Zeus was unable to convince Hades to return Persephone, until he threatened to keep Hermes from taking the souls of the deceased to Hades. Hades asked for one last day with Persephone – and on that day, managed to convince her to eat six pomegranate seeds from his kingdom. The rule as it stood was that whoever ate or drank anything from the underworld would have to return to the underworld. For the six seeds she ate, Persephone would have to spend six months out of each year in the underworld with her husband, Hades.

As we all know, the six months that Persephone spends with her mother are the warm and nice – and most of all, fertile – months of the year, but Demeter just sort of lets things run their course in the months she is forced to be without her beloved daughter. Of course, we know these periods as the seasons.

Persephone, being the queen of the underworld, was often seen as the ideal recipient of prayers regarding the recently deceased or those soon to pass on. The hope always was that Persephone would put in a word for the mortal in question with her husband, Hades. Orpheus,

too, directed his songs at both Hades and Persephone to convince them to give him a chance at saving his beloved Eurydice.

In a rare moment of agreement, both her mother and her husband stayed neutral in the Trojan War, and so she did as well. She maintains that this was 'out of solidarity', when in truth she simply wasn't asked – she settled once again.

In Modern Times

For a long time, Persephone wasn't employed. She would help either her mother or Hades. For centuries, that was the usual thing to do for a woman, wait at home for one's husband to return, and if she's good at anything it's compliance. Until fifteen years ago, she discovered that that had all changed and that she was also allowed to do her own thing now. Fascinated by all the options, she ended up as a career counsellor. Now, she advises mortals on something she really isn't too sure of herself, but she does it so charmingly that nobody tends to notice.

Persephone also gets out of the house a lot more than she used to. She seems to change hobbies every month, much to the concern of her rather conservative husband. One week she'll have bought a BMX bike, the next day she'll be running a modern art website, and two days later she's off to St. Tropez for a week of clubbing. It's like she's catching up on all the things she never did in those centuries of being a good daughter and millennia of being a supportive wife.

This will sometimes cause her to clash with her husband, but they are still together and their marriage won't come apart that easily. They still live together. Lately, her mother has been more trouble: the more freedom she tries to take for herself, the more Demeter attempts to smother her. Out of love, no doubt, but it does cause some frustration.

Personality

She's been through with it for about a century by now. She's only ever been 'daughter of' or 'wife of', the subject of dispute. She's hurt that nobody ever even wondered what *she* wanted. But that ends here. If they don't care about her opinion, then she doesn't need their opinion on what she's going to be. Both of these relationships are complicated: she's loyal to both her husband and her mother and she sometimes hates both of them.

She needs time to herself, to figure out who she is and what she will become. Personally, she thinks that her duality – between two realms and two generations – makes her quite capable

of building bridges and of helping her family into the future. But that does require her trying things to figure out what that future should be like.

Apart from being a well-meaning goddess, after all those millennia she is also used to being the frickin' goddess of the underworld, and those sides sometimes come out in quick and ruthless succession. There is a reason she is also the goddess of curses. She's easily convinced, maybe a bit too easily, but woe betide the idiot who manages to really anger her.

At her best, she is: open-minded, happy, charismatic

At her worst, she is: naive, indecisive, cold

Connections

Dionysos (half-brother): If there's one person who can get the party started, it's him. If you want to try new things and see if they're for you, he's clearly the one to go to. Bonus points for the fact that it's probably things Hades and your mother won't approve of.

Demeter (mother): She's always fought for you. The problem is that you were merely treated as the object of contention and you find it hard to escape the image. You'd love for your mother to be proud of you and to think of you as an ally, rather than as the princess in eternal need of rescue. You know, like the one from that video game.

Hades (uncle, husband): You truly love your husband, let that be said. Whether it's entirely by choice doesn't really matter that much to you anymore. It runs deep and true. He'll never refuse you anything. But he is the god of the underworld, and though it's clear that he'd do anything for you, you want to be something as well. Maybe you expect a bit more fire from him, maybe you expect him to allow you to figure this out all on your own. A bit of both? At the same time? You don't know.

Hera (aunt): Your aunt is too close to your mother, and on top of that, you're kind of scared she might start bombarding you with unasked-for marital advice sooner or later. One meddling old goddess is quite enough to deal with, thank you. You sort of want to avoid her, but you can also see that she's been successful at completely reinventing herself... Difficult.

Athena (half-sister): Athena clearly finds it hard to talk about feelings rather than about aerodynamics or whatever she's caught up in at the moment, so you're trying to be a friend to her, someone she can have genuine conversations with.

Artemis (half-sister): You think she's cool. She's authentic and does exactly what she feels is right. She's something of an idol to you, and you're captivated when she talks about hunting. Maybe she's willing to teach you something?

Suggestions for Play

- Try to start at least one serious conversation about boundaries with your mother, and try to escalate it nicely into a blazing row or some other kind of misunderstanding. And then make up tearfully. Your bond is complicated.
- Try out new things. Doesn't matter what, if you've never done it before, you *need* to do it. It might be Your Thing.
- To further test your limits, this goes double for things that might give your mother and Hades a headache. If there's a bacchanal happening somewhere, or drugs are being used, you're absolutely first in line. This way, you can combine your thirst for new things with your self-imposed rebelliousness. For this reason, also try and get close with bad boys like Hermes and Dionysos.
- Try to keep Hades on his toes by constantly demanding different things. Give me space. Why didn't you come with me? You need to do something nice for me. You're too clingy.
- Impress people by suddenly, when nobody expects it, going from girl adrift to Queen of the Underworld. You are quite capable when you need to be.

Poseidon

***Central concepts*:** capricious as the ocean, Rainbow Warrior, solid, explosive

***God of*:** seas and earthquakes

Mythology

After Zeus had freed his brothers Hades and Poseidon from the stomach of his father, the Titan Kronos, they divided the universe amongst themselves. While Zeus claimed the heavens and Hades took the underworld, Poseidon was granted the seas and the oceans.

Poseidon and Athena once struck a bet over the patronage of the city of Cecropia and its surrounding region, Attica. The bet revolved around whose creation would be of more use to the inhabitants of the wider area. The country dwellers and townsfolk of Attica were extremely impressed by the salty flow of seawater that Poseidon created by striking a rock with his trident, but saltwater wasn't of much use to them. The endless uses of Athena's olive tree, on the other hand, ensured her the win. The name of the city was subsequently changed to Athens in her honour, but Poseidon, too, was worshipped fervently in the city that blossomed thanks to its overwhelming naval force.

In the past, Poseidon has known romantic (as well as less romantic) moments with Aphrodite and Demeter, among others. He was one of the contenders for Aphrodite's hand in marriage when he tried to free Hera from the throne on which Hephaistos had ensnared her, and he created the horse to impress Demeter, but in the end, the sea nymph Amphitrite became his true love and he married her.

Poseidon has always felt that he was just as capable of ruling Mount Olympus as Zeus, if not more so. When his extramarital affair with Iphimedeia resulted in two giant and vastly powerful sons, he suggested they storm the heavens by creating a mountain higher than Mount Olympus and ruling from there. To accomplish this, they were to stack Mount Ossa on Mount Olympus, and Mount Pelion on top of that. Zeus, however, discovered this plan prematurely and sent Artemis to fell the giants. As a punishment, they were strung to pillars in Tartarus with snakes, there to remain for all eternity.

Poseidon could count on the worship of anyone who depended on the sea for their income and anyone who lived in fear of the sea; sailors, fishermen and denizens of coastal provinces did well to appease the most fickle in a pantheon of fickle gods.

Poseidon and Apollo had once built the walls of Troy together, but were not given their promised reward by King Laomedon. Out of anger at this slight, Poseidon joined the Trojan War on the side of the Greeks. But when Odysseus blinded one of Poseidon's children, he made him wander inhospitable seas for years before he was allowed to return home.

In Modern Times

He is the skipper of one of Greenpeace's ships. Poseidon longs for the world, nature and the sea as it was two centuries ago and always had been before: unpredictable and cruel, but also full of fresh impulses. Sailor was an honourable profession once. A sailor is and always will be a sailor, wherever he goes. It was hard work, but trade routes by sea were the arteries of the world and brought together all knowledge, goods and people imaginable.

And what's left of that? Men in safety harnesses, letting their route be determined by a computer rather than the winds, ploughing through a sea of plastic with a hold filled with more plastic.

Hence, Greenpeace. Though this ship is no longer guided by the stars and the currents either, he at least feels that his ship and this organisation can still accomplish something. Death to whaling, end the plastic soup. It provides him with a sliver of hope that there are still mortals who understand, who are even willing to fight for his domain.

When he isn't at sea, he sings in a shanty choir. Nostalgic, melancholy songs about life at sea. He often expresses himself that same way in the shower. Over the years, he has withdrawn more and more from his family and his social circle. He is disappointed, but not in them, and he has missed them.

Personality

Poseidon knows what he and others are about. He's a good listener, likes exchanging stories and can be the life of the party in his own way. You won't get one over on him and while he's no Mr. Happy Go Lucky, he can be very good company.

On the other hand, he can get extremely nostalgic for life as it used to be. If he ever cries, that's why. Or because he's got something in his eye. That must be it. His duality lies in the fact that

he is a dynamic god by nature, just as nature itself, but that personally he would have liked to stop time.

He appreciates things and people that remind him of his life at sea and of nature as he knew it. Unexpected actions or unwavering support for principles can get him fiercely on your side.

Usually. Because he is capricious as the ocean. And the smallest things can get him outraged. Furious. Or extremely sad. Or disappointed. And at those times, it's really hard to get him back. That's when his family remembers that earthquakes are also in his portfolio. Don't you hate it when you get something in your eye?

At his best, he is: passionate, flexible, the anchor

At his worst, he is: moody, merciless, unreasonable

Connections

Persephone (niece, sister-in-law): You can tell that she's been struggling these past few centuries, trying to see who she really is without her husband and her mother. She deserves freedom. Maybe you can help her a bit, let her know that she can be herself and she should make some waves.

Ares (nephew): You worry about this kid. You know his struggles, to a certain extent; the moment you realise you don't understand your own area of expertise anymore. What with your plastic sea. And his drone wars. High time for a beer and some proper chat about the old days.

Zeus (brother): You can appreciate Zeus' turnaround as such; after all, he's actively trying to fix his flaws in an attempt to save his marriage. And that's admirable and he's still your brother, but he doesn't seem to have much energy left for this whole Ruler of the Gods thing. If the restart is a success, you doubt he's the man for that important a job. Looking at the past few centuries, it might be Zeus, rather than Olympus, who's past his prime.

Hecate (acquaintance): If you wouldn't want to take over from Zeus, and you don't know that you would, she could. Extraordinarily clever woman, who seems to have no trouble bending mortals to her will. You'd all better listen carefully when she explains how she does it.

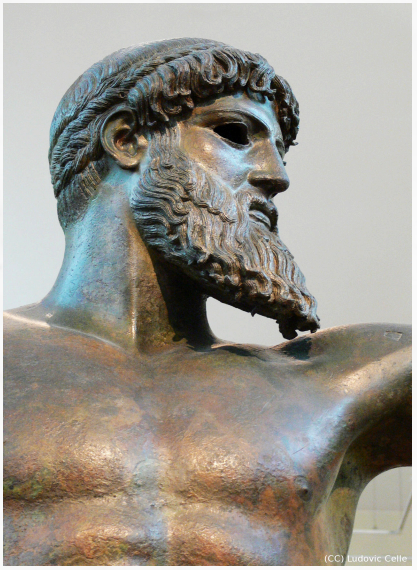
Aphrodite (ex): A gorgeous ex, but also one that drags drama along with her wherever she goes, and you feel you're getting too old for all that. But still.

Dionysos (nephew): Sailors drink. The sea and drink are inextricably linked, and both are a rich source of songs and love. You look forward to seeing him and if he doesn't get the party started soon enough, you'll be the first to egg him on.

Suggestions for Play

- Fly off the handle in a conversation, and remain angry. Don't quit until the other party admits they were wrong about that... thing. That. The thing you're angry about. Which is unforgivable. No matter who was actually in the wrong.
- Keep to your principles and let others know when they don't. That fickleness and tendency for convenience of the younger generation, that's the one thing that will be your undoing someday.
- Act on your doubts about your brother's leadership. Whether you end up concluding that his throne suits him better than you thought, that you need to be the one on it, Hecate or someone else entirely, we will leave up to you.
- Sing sea shanties or get others to sing them. You like to sing. Whether or not it's in tune does not matter.
- These past decades, you've really only spent time alone or among mortals. Recently, you've been thinking more and more about the Olympian banquets, the pranks you used to play with your family... In short, you've missed them. And you want to spend as much time with them as possible. But in a way that won't *show* them that you've missed them, obviously.

Zeus



Central concepts: badass, father, 'redemption arc', boss

God of: all-father, ruler of the Greek Pantheon

Mythology

For fear of getting a son that would kill him - as he himself had killed his father Ouranos - the Titan Kronos devoured all his children immediately after they were born. Of the six children, Zeus was the youngest, but also the only one who hadn't been eaten by him. Zeus' mother Rhea came up with a plan: instead of baby Zeus, she fed Kronos a stone and allowed the child to be raised by Metis, a friendly Titan, out of sight of Kronos.

Once grown, Zeus killed his father as predicted and freed his brothers (Poseidon and Hades) and sisters (Hera, Hestia and Demeter) from his stomach. What followed was the Titanomachy, the war against the Titans that eventually resulted in them having to give way to the gods. Afterwards, Zeus took his sister Hera as his wife, but he has never been faithful to her for very long.

Metis for example finally answered Zeus' pushy expression of love, but for fear of continuing the cycle of sons murdering their father, he devoured his lover before she could give birth to their child. However, Metis continued to live within him and eventually gave birth to their daughter Athena, who was later freed from the head of Zeus in full armour with a well-aimed strike of an axe by Hephaistos.

Other stories of Zeus' infidelity are innumerable. Maia, who birthed Hermes as a result of their coupling. Io, whom he changed into a cow to prevent Hera from catching them, and who was eventually freed from the giant Argus - sent by Hera to guard her - by Hermes. Semele, who was manipulated by Hera to demand of Zeus to show her his true form (which he could not refuse, after having sworn on the River Styx that he would do as she asked), resulting in her death. The Titaness Leto, with the twins Artemis and Apollo as a result. Demeter, who became the mother of Persephone after a romantic adventure with Zeus. In the end, Zeus had numerous divine and semi-divine children with dozens of different women.

Zeus is a violent and demanding god. He has no qualms about killing people in order to get his way. Enraged by a barbaric human sacrifice, he once even wiped out almost all of humanity by

sending a massive flood, leaving only two - Deucalion and Pyrrha - alive. Every human would do well to worship Zeus - either out of fear or to receive his blessing.

It is rumoured that the Trojan War was a plan of Zeus, to limit the growth of the human race and to kill many of his own demigod offspring as well, for fear of eventually being killed by them. In this war Zeus, at the insistence of Achilles' mother Thetis, sided with the Trojans until Agamemnon made amends for the wrong he had done Achilles.

The easiest way to be at the receiving end of Zeus' wrath is by violating *xenia* - the old Greek norms of guest right and hospitality. The stories of Philemon and Baucis on the one hand, and Ixion on the other hand show the high value Zeus puts on complying with this principle, and how he either rewards or punishes by it.

In Modern Times

Zeus is still the absolute head of his family. They might have been running circles around each other for millennia now, when push comes to shove they are still his people and he will ensure that they will gather at least every now and then and remain on speaking terms, nominally. This is both because he's proud of them and because he sees the bigger picture: once in a while there will be a time where each and every one of them needs to get over themselves, because there's something going on that affects them all. And if necessary, he'd be the first to subtly remind them that, not counting a few exceptions, they'd not exist without him. There is but one king of the gods running this show.

That doesn't mean he's frozen in time. Centuries have come and gone, and everything's changed. He's had a lot of time to think about himself and his nature. His thoughts about whether that was not enough or too much time change by the day. He has no regrets. He thinks. Usually. But he's still not entirely sure what it is that he *is* feeling.

Together with his wife Hera, he runs a divorce mediation practice called 'Olympos'. It was actually mostly her idea. And to be honest, he considered it a sick sort of joke at the start. After a while, though, it became clear that using authority to prevent or solve stupid decisions was something he excelled at. In addition, he thinks it's about time he unconditionally supported her in her plans.

Because he knows he has hurt people. Being solely led by his own needs and desires seemed self-evident when he was still almighty and everything was about him, and he has some fond memories of those times of light and opportunity. It seems a very long time ago, now. As his power declined and the world became more and more complex, he started to consider things

more. That doesn't mean he's changed completely: he's still a huge flirt and a creative adulterer who enjoys appealing to this status. Whether the fact that he's now more aware of it is an improvement remains to be seen.

Personality

Zeus is someone who has never been anywhere but on top. Everyone in the pantheon thanks their existence to him in one way or another, or has always been below him. And they better not forget it. That doesn't necessarily mean he's arrogant or bossy, but that in his eyes, his position simply *is*. And he has always done a good job, so when push comes to shove he expects respect. He does not have a very aggressive style of leadership, but if he is provoked or passed over, thunderstorms will form.

Zeus is the one who keeps track of everything and sometimes knows more about what is best for the others than they themselves do. He is proud of what he and his family have achieved and how well they have managed to remain standing in an ever-changing world. He has led them through all these years and can lead them to a new future, no matter the outcome. He is completely sure of that.

Still, he is at odds with himself. He's had millennia to analyse his own behaviour and he knows he's made mistakes. He is slowly but surely adapting, turning into a version of himself that is future proof. Where he mostly hopes he will not hurt his family members as much. But he struggles with his nature and he's not entirely sure whether he's actually working on changing himself because he feels like he needs to, or because others expect it of him. And how much change is desired, anyway: perhaps the mentor he can now be to others is because of who he truly is inside.

At his best, he is: diplomatic, fatherly, sincere

At his worst, he is: authoritative, impulsive, dispirited

Connections

Hera (sister, wife): You have never loved anyone else as much and you never will. Period. Your relationship is complicated and not everyone understands it. You don't really understand it yourselves sometimes, either. You know you have often hurt her feelings, but you've come to the realisation that you regret that she suffered because of what you did, more than you regret the acts themselves. That's saying something, certainly.

Dionysos (illegitimate son): Your son is more popular than ever, people have never escaped into partying more than they do now. This means he could be the linchpin of a possible future for all of you. If he can sober up and take responsibility, that is. Sometimes it seems like he's tired of it all, which can be dangerous. You will have to encourage him to stay true to himself as much as possible.

Hecate (acquaintance): Hecate is possibly old, very old. You know you were there before her, but she was also there before you. It's all very confusing. Anyway, you're not entirely clear on how she managed to still - or again? - gain so many followers in this new age. You're not even sure she knows herself. But you'd better try to find out fast.

Poseidon (brother): As far as you're concerned you've always been on good terms with your brother, even back then he never really caused any trouble. There were times where he thought he'd be able to do better, but you were always able to put him back in his place and that was that. Silent ally. You don't see him as often as you'd like.

Hermes (illegitimate son): Always the son who had your back in your quest for love. Your 'wingman', pun intended. He reminds you of how much you miss that excitement, especially because he reminds you of a younger version of yourself: a smooth talker who has the world at his feet.

Artemis (illegitimate daughter): One of the examples of things you hadn't properly considered and which have caused others pain: you should never have given her eternal chastity as a gift, even when she asked for it herself. It hurts to see how lonely she is now.

Suggestions for Play

- In an argument or situation that doesn't concern you, stand on your dignity and serve as arbitrator. Especially if it concerns your children, done is really done at some point.
- Flirt. It's in your nature and it's stronger than you are. Whether you behave yourself or take it a bit too far again at some point is up to you.
- Try to steer this meeting in the right direction. Even if they're all running around now and need a bit of time to catch up with one another, tease a bit and to settle old disputes: this is not Playground Olympus. It has taken considerable effort on your part to gather everyone here, it concerns everyone's continued existence and everyone *will* put their best foot forward.
- Be an advisor and a father. This is one aspect of yourself you're discovering anew, and you like it. You know more than a lot of the others, are more powerful, have more life experience. That's how you see it, anyway. Share it.

- This is the first time in many many years - decades even - that everyone's gathered in one place. Initiate serious conversations with as many Olympians as possible to figure out how they're doing and what they need. Try to steer conversations from what happened before (where your difficulties lie) to what could happen in the future, which is a more comfortable topic.

Appendix II - Casting Technology

Player experience

A sample of the user experience for players filling out their “character ranking” can be found here: https://onthestyx.evolution-events.nl/casting/run3/. Players are required to pick and order *at least* five characters, but are encouraged to select and order *all* the characters that they’d be willing to play in order to increase the likelihood of a successful casting. If memory serves, the lowest ranked assignment we ever gave a player was probably a fourth place, but it may have been a fifth.

The source code for this page is available here: https://github.com/evolution-events/casting-tool. The only *required* changes should be in the `js/casting-tool-config.js` file.

Processing the input

The source code for the automated tool that actually performed the casting calculations is, at this moment, not directly available due to being on an old laptop of one of the organizers. It was written in Ruby and made use of the https://github.com/deliveroo/hungarian_algorithm_c Ruby Gem. This library implements the “Hungarian algorithm” (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungarian_algorithm) that solves the so-called “assignment problem” - a mathematical problem which is close to our casting challenge.

In principle, it requires a “complete” preference matrix, which means players would have to rank *every* character in the order of their preference, but in practice we solve that by assuming that the “cost” for assigning a non-preferred role (that is, a role that was *not* “dragged to the right column” (in other words, not selected as a role that a player would be willing to play) would be “infinite” (or just 10,000 or so), while the cost of any other assignment would be the *rank* of that players preference (so giving a player their first choice would cost 1, their second choice would cost 2, et cetera).

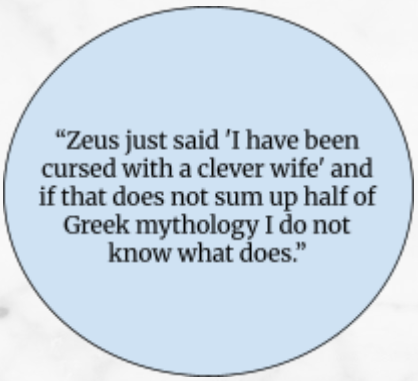
The Hungarian algorithm optimises these “costs.” Since multiple assignments can potentially have the same “cost,” our tool used a randomizer to shuffle the input matrix to create different assignments, so that *all* optimal assignments would be found.

In situations where the optimal assignments were not possible - for example, because of yellow flagging - the organisers had to make judgement calls. In such situations, new variants

of the cost matrix were fed into the tool; in each of these variants, one of the “clashing” player preferences was assigned an “infinite” cost, and the new casting variants were evaluated instead.

The Hungarian Algorithm is available in (among other languages) Python as well (in the `SciPy` package as `linear_sum_assignment`).

Contact `rene@evolution-events.nl` for more info about the tool or if you want to use this for your run of *On the Styx* or a similar larp. The tool is not currently available, but if there’s any interest, he would be happy to work on a toolset to improve the casting process and enable the minimisation of organiser bias in casting.



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Game design

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Consent & Safety design: Karijn van der Heij & René van den Berg

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Runbook writing / editing: Sander Burger, Karijn van der Heij, René van den Berg
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Runtime

Logistics & food planning: Brenda Hellenthal & Matthijs Kooijman
Technical support: Matthijs Kooijman
Game and character support: Cora Korsman, Karijn van der Heij & René van den Berg
Safety team: Cora Korsman, Karijn van der Heij, Matthijs Kooijman & René van den Berg
Photographers:
- *Bij de Styx* (Dutch Run): Brenda Hellenthal, Cora Korsman, Nieske Den Heijer
- First international: Brenda Hellenthal, Joris Sikkema, Matthijs Kooijman, Tina Reißig
- Second international: Jeffrey Mann, Matthijs Kooijman, Sean Sauren, Iridiscope
- Iliad: Cora Korsman, Demeter (Iliad run), Lindexlieke, Sandy Bailly
- Odyssey: Christian Hansen, Iris van Vulpen, Roos S., Warren, Werner Mikolasch

Cooks: Brenda Hellenthal, Ramon Bergsma & Martijn Ketelaars
Helpers: Erik Visser & Jaap Lommerse
International run translators: Berber Anne Wierda & Marlies Kok

Contact information

We created the website linked below for the game, feel free to use it in whole or in part.
Website: **https://onthestyx.evolution-events.nl**
Contact: **algemeen@evolution-events.nl**

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Version history

- v2.0
  First version publicly presented at Knutpunkt 2026.
- v2.1
  Clarified photo licensing and added version history.

Tell me, O Muse...

On the Styx is a weekend-long melodramatic larp for sixteen players, in which they portray the gods of Greek mythology during a family brainstorm about their relevance in the modern era. It is an intimate larp about all the emotional impossibilities of dealing with family, which is not exactly easier if that family is immortal.

Some of the gods are here for a good time, and some are here for a long time. Some desperately wish for change that will most likely never come, and others cannot help but cling to what was.

The designers and organizers of the previous runs have attempted to gather all their practical tips, design choice information and workshops in this book. It of course also includes all sixteen characters, so that you can run the game yourself. We consider it relatively easy to do so, and hope you will have at least as much fun as we had. We'd love to hear about it.

https://onthestyx.evolution-events.nl

ISBN