

PERUSAL SCRIPT

OLYMPUS ON THE MOON

The History of Western Civilization in One Act

by

J.D. Newman



Newport, Maine

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OLYMPUS ON THE MOON

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CAST OF CHARACTERS (4m 3w)

JUPITER -- King of the Roman gods.

JUNO -- The jealous wife of JUPITER

MINERVA -- Known to the Greeks as ATHENA, MINERVA is a virgin warrior who is said to have sprung from JUPITER's forehead.

MERCURY -- The messenger of the Roman gods. MERCURY, is portrayed as a female spirit who dances and speaks in rhymed couplets.

APOLLO -- The God of Truth and Light

VULCAN -- The ugly God of Forge and Fire. He is married to VENUS, the Goddess of Love and Beauty.

ARMSTRONG -- The first man to set foot on the Moon.

SETTING -- The Moon, in the Sea of Tranquility.

OLYMPUS ON THE MOON: The History of Western Civilization in One Act by J.D. Newman. (4m 3w)

The surface of the moon. At the fall of the Roman Empire, men have scaled Mount Olympus, driving Jupiter and his wife Juno to seek exile on the Moon where they will raise a new race of beings to serve and worship them. Mercury relates what is happening on Earth in the absence of the King and Queen of the Olympian Gods as Apollo and Mars drive men on Earth between creation and destruction. Diana and Athena steal the golden wings that Vulcan crafted for himself and his wife Venus to reach the new Olympus. Removed from human history, centuries pass for Jupiter in seeming instants while his plans of creating a new race fail. In the end, the prophesy is fulfilled that another will conquer Jupiter. A "golden wingless bird" lands on the moon and emits a man who destroys Jupiter's power by conquering his final sanctuary. After the invader leaves, Jupiter is filled with new hope as his Olympus on the Moon becomes a new inspiration for humanity. PREMIERE PLAY FILE
Order #3128

FINALIST: Rocky Mountain Theatre Association Playwriting Contest, Helena, Montana -- 1990 (Reading)

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Scene 1 -- *AT RISE: Lightning flashes. Thunder rolls. JUPITER enters, leading his wife JUNO. They look up at the Earth as people on Earth look up at the Moon.*

JUPITER: Again we are beyond the reach of man.

The prideful Romans climbed Olympus Peak
And there beheld the pinnacles of Gods.

JUNO: *(Trying to gain her husband's attention)* Yes, Jupiter, that's all behind us now.

JUPITER: *(Raising his fist towards the Earth)* I would not suffer mortal eyes to see

What only we as Gods should e'er behold.
To even smell ambrosia's luscious scent
Is something men below should never seek.

JUNO: *(Trying to get JUPITER to look at her rather than at the Earth)* They cannot reach us here upon the Moon.

JUPITER: And so I shook our pinnacles of glass

Until the sky was filled with crystal stars
And what was once the palace of the gods
Dissolved into a rain that falls to earth
As streaks of light across the August sky.

But here we'll build Olympus on the Moon.

We'll build a paradise from vestal dust.

The lightning bolt that bore us through the sky
Will crystalize the sand and make it glass.

The towers of my palace soon will rise
Like silver fingers reaching for the stars.

JUNO: But who will see your towers, Jupiter?

JUPITER: Not man nor god will see what I shall raise.

Upon this virgin world no rivalry
Will ever interfere with my desires.

(He embraces JUNO passionately.)

JUNO: Love, that's the way I like to hear you talk.

JUPITER: The Fates declared Olympus would be found

Where heaven, sea, and underworld all meet.
We stand upon the Moon among the stars
Within an empty sea of blissfulness,
Where all the surface looks like Pluto's cave.

JUNO: But we shall make it blossom, you and I.

JUPITER: Juno, faithful wife, we are alone.

Together we shall bear a race of men
Unlike the race to whom Prometheus
Gave fire and intelligence and pride.
The Romans think they have no need of me;

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The truth is that I have no need of them.
Let Mars, the God of War, direct their hearts
And we will rest within the starry sky.

JUNO: No lovely maid will ever catch your eye
And take you from the warmth of Juno's arms.
Jupiter, you're mine forever now.

(Just as they are about to embrace, MERCURY enters, laughing. She dances playfully about the stage.)

MERCURY: You've disappeared from every eye but mine.
I'll give my word before you drink your wine.

JUNO: *(Scorned)* We do not need your message, Mercury.

MERCURY: *(Tauntingly, to JUNO)* I would not be concerned if I were you,
It just concerns some Sisters, Juno...

JUNO: *(With jealous anger)* Who?!
Is there another woman on the Moon?

MERCURY: A half a woman.

JUNO: Curse. What riddle now?

MERCURY: I am that semi-woman, Juno dear.
A spirit woman shouldn't make you fear.
In shape there is no mortal maid so fair
And yet I've no more substance than the air.
(She dances around JUPITER flirtatiously.)

So this shall be Olympus, Jupiter?

JUPITER: What great creation you will soon behold!

JUNO: *(to MERCURY)* What great creation waits till you are gone!

MERCURY: The triple Sisters, source of all our strife,
Who spin and sew and cut the threads of life...
(Ominously)

Send fearful words to mighty Jupiter.
(Reading, impersonating one of the ancient Sisters.)

"O Jupiter and Juno on the Moon,
Who think you are above the heads of men.
Do not believe you cannot be surpassed.
There will come one far mightier than you
And from the land of stars, he'll reach the Moon
On golden wings like Daedalus of old.
His voice shall travel like a lightning flash,
His messages as swift as Mercury's.
His chariots will bear him every day
As swiftly as the steeds of Helios.
The towers that he builds will reach into the clouds

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And one day they will reach unto the Moon."

JUPITER: You spiteful sprite!

(He raises his hand and tries to strike MERCURY with his lightning bolt.)

MERCURY: You'll stop this great revolt?

You're powerless. Go! Try your lightning bolt!

(JUPITER discovers, to his dismay, that his lightning bolt has no effect.)

The air that mortals need, gods don't require,

And yet they still need air to light their fire.

JUPITER: Be gone! What hinders you from leaving me?

MERCURY: You're positive you don't need Mercury?

Your lightning bolt has dropped you in the dust.

I'll be most glad to leave you, if I must.

But you can never bolt back to the Earth.

I'd think you'd realize what I am worth.

(JUPITER starts at MERCURY.)

JUNO: Dear husband, it is time to curb our pride.

We are not great commanders anymore,

And yet by begging, we may reach our ends.

JUPITER: The Master of the Gods should plead before

A low and impish servant messenger?

MERCURY: Indeed you would be wise to heed her well.

A king could rule his kingdom from a cell

If guards would bear the words which he should write

But you have sent me hence. Farewell! Goodnight!

(She starts to leave.)

JUPITER: No, servant, wait!

MERCURY: *(She turns, offended.)* I'm more than such to you.

JUPITER: My fellow deity

MERCURY: That's better.

JUPITER: Hear!

The Sisters prophesied that I would be

Defeated by a son who would be born.

Prometheus knew who that son would be,

And yet he would not tell me who it was.

I bound Prometheus a thousand years

And still he would not tell me what he knew.

JUNO: *(Away from JUPITER and MERCURY)* At least throughout that long millennium

I knew that Jupiter would never stray

Although when he was home, he was afar

And never seemed to know that I was there.

JUPITER: *(Not having heard JUNO)* The hero Hercules defied my will

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And he released Prometheus from chains.
But still I do not know what son of mine
Will be the one to overthrow my rule.
A thousand years of tension plagued my mind
And I forgot the Sisters' prophesy
But now I have remembered all they said.
It must not happen, Mercury! Stand true!

MERCURY: I do no deed myself, once mighty King.

I sing the songs immortals have me sing.

JUPITER: Which immortal yearns to gain my throne?

Neptune is contented in the sea

And Pluto is content beneath the Earth...

MERCURY: Who said he was immortal?

JUPITER: Come again?

MERCURY: Who said the conqueror must be divine?

JUPITER: If all the gods and goddesses should try

To pull me down from my immortal throne,

They could not do it.

MERCURY: Have they ever tried?

JUPITER: If all immortal entities should fail

Then how could any mortal man succeed?

MERCURY: With wisdom, mighty beasts are overcome.

JUPITER: Yes, wisdom. That's the very clue I need.

Juno, of the twelve Olympians,

Which, besides myself, is cleverest?

JUNO: Apollo is the God who has the light

That lets him see what destiny may bring.

JUPITER: Apollo!

Mercury, you must obey my will!

MERCURY: Oh, must I? I'm returning to the Earth.

(She starts to go.)

JUPITER: No, wait! Don't leave me here!

MERCURY: You beg my help?

JUPITER: I do not beg.

(Beat)

I ask you, as a peer.

MERCURY: I'll listen, then I'll do what serves my end.

JUPITER: Apollo must be stopped from his revolt.

MERCURY: He has no plans to seize your lightning bolt.

JUPITER: But soon enough, he'll seek to gain my throne!

I want him bound! Where is he on the Earth?

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MERCURY: He fled unto the city of Pompeii

Where Vulcan burned his forge both night and day.

It's there that ugly Vulcan showed his pow'rs

And overthrew Apollo's Roman tow'rs.

Thus Vulcan showed Apollo that his fire

Could roar above Apollo's singing lyre.

Now Apollo walks the empty bays

That once were filled with men who sang his praise.

JUPITER: Go tell the other gods Apollo's will.

Tell them of his treasonous desires

And they will banish him from Roman lands.

MERCURY: I'll tell them what the Fates have prophesied

But then the gods themselves will each decide.

I'll tell them all what Jupiter suspects,

But they will choose what course to follow next.

(MERCURY exits.)

JUPITER: Again we are alone, my goddess wife.

I do not know how long our peace shall last,

But let us make the most of what we have.

I cannot fight the Sisters, though I've tried.

By banishing Apollo, I've delayed

What must occur before the end of time.

The Moon is ours, the time is ours, for now.

And so before the end ...

(Slowly and deliberately)

Let us have joy!

JUNO: Let stars and planets spin through endless night.

Let all creation on the azure globe

Forget itself and what it could become.

JUPITER: And when we shall awake, the Earth will rise.

We'll cultivate the Moon, but first, we'll rest.

We'll spend a century in timelessness.

(JUPITER and JUNO walk away arm in arm.)

End of Scene 1

Scene 2 -- *Lapse of a thousand years. We are still in the same location on the Moon. A mysterious music is heard. MERCURY enters and begins a ritualistic dance.*

MERCURY: The azure globe has spun a million times

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And still the Moon is mute.

(Beat)

A million falling stars have streaked the sky,
And still the Moon is mute.

(Beat)

The Romans fell, the Goths have passed away,
And still the Moon is mute.

(Beat)

I brought the message Jupiter pronounced;
The Gods obeyed their high and distant King.
So Neptune bore Apollo 'cross the waves
And brought him to the ocean's greatest isle.
And in this new and ever-changing land,
He found a people thirsting for his light.
Not Rome nor Greece had flowered with such grace,
But in the old world, life is primitive.
And yet, a new day dawns upon that world.

(The music and dance end. JUPITER and JUNO enter, in love and at peace. MERCURY hides.)

JUPITER: Who knows how long we've wandered in the sand
And spent our time in utter blissfulness.
Perhaps an hour, perhaps a century ...

(Suddenly colder)

But still, we have no issue...

JUNO: *(Soothingly)* Give it time.

With patience, time will yield posterity.
Time has no meaning here upon the Moon,
For while the Moon marks time upon the Earth,
It has no meaning when we're here alone.

(JUPITER warms to JUNO again. She looks around.)

This landscape looks familiar.

JUPITER: Nonsense, love.

The gray makes all the features look alike.

JUNO: I know we landed here when we arrived.

(She sighs.)

It makes no difference where we landed first.

JUPITER: *(He surveys the landscape.)* On second thought, you may indeed be right.

There's something quite familiar in this place.
The wind erased our footprints in the sand,
Or else we could be sure that we were here.

JUNO: There is no wind upon the Moon, my love.

The sphere is deadly silent, deadly still.

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JUPITER: *(He listens.)* Indeed it is. I hadn't noticed.

(Beat)

The sand remains forever motionless
Until our footsteps stir it from its rest.

JUNO: Our footsteps are unmarked.

JUPITER: That can't be so!

(He walks, looking for footprints behind him and discovering nothing.)

Now, Mercury did not leave any trace,
But we of flesh and blood must leave our mark.

(JUPITER still finds no footprints.)

There's something wrong. This surely isn't right!

(He jumps and lands as hard as he can. Still he leaves no mark.)

If we return, we'll leave the Moon untouched.

We walk as if we gods were never here.

JUNO: *(Gently teasing)* You're thinking as a mortal man would think!

Each man must leave his mark upon the Earth

As if he were a beast who leaves his scent.

Don't worry if our footsteps are erased.

MERCURY: *(To JUPITER)* You've left no mark upon the empty seas?

What have you done through all these centuries?

JUPITER: Through all these centuries? What time has passed?

MERCURY: On Earth a thousand years have passed away,

And all of it was like a single day,

For when you are removed from history,

And leave no trace and no posterity,

Then time stands still. It has no meaning here.

Without a generation, what's a year?

Without a job to do while skies are light,

What means the start and end of day or night?

JUPITER: A thousand years have passed?!

MERCURY: And even more!

JUPITER: And life continued?

MERCURY: As it did before.

JUPITER: Do... men remember me?

MERCURY: Don't be so vain!

The Greeks and Romans each have spent their reign.

So who will sing your praises since they fell?

JUPITER: I am the King of Gods!

MERCURY: Go ramble on!

You were the king throughout the Roman realm,

But since it died, another's at the helm.

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JUNO: Of all the twelve Olympians, who's left?

MERCURY: The warrior Mars will always show his teeth.

I doubt his sword will ever find its sheath.

Neptune still retains his dignity

For men are always humbled by the sea.

Pluto still keeps legions in the gloom

Although they could be freed from prison's doom.

Apollo...

JUPITER: Yes, Apollo! What of him?

MERCURY: (*Pointing at the Earth*) He's still upon the island of the sea

That stretches pole to pole.

JUPITER: Is he alone?

MERCURY: Alone? He's found a larger following.

While Roman lands are poor as desert soil,

Apollo's lands have overflowed with spoil.

While Mars has led the old world into hate,

Apollo built a new and peaceful state.

JUPITER: A messenger who causes me such pain

Should lose her life!

MERCURY: But I cannot be slain.

I bring the truth. If truth offends you...

JUPITER: Stop! I cannot bear to hear another word.

MERCURY: (*Ignoring JUPITER*) Goddess of the Hearth and Human Birth

Vesta reigns supreme through all the Earth.

However cold and crude a culture turns,

At Vesta's hearth, the fire of life still burns.

(*JUPITER tries to grab MERCURY and feeling only air. MERCURY starts to leave.*)

JUPITER: I'll hear no more!

JUNO: (*To MERCURY*) Proceed! I'm curious.

MERCURY: Minerva and Diana ...

JUPITER: Where are they?

MERCURY: You'll find out soon enough. That's all I'll say.

(*MERCURY rolls on the ground laughing. JUPITER tries in vain to grab her.*)

MERCURY: You'd just as soon lay hold on Mercury

As leave your footprints on this empty sea.

(*She continues, gleefully.*)

And last, there is the beauty and her beast

(*Teasingly, to JUNO*)

Fair Venus, who at Thetis' wedding feast

Was judged the fairest goddess and who ate

The golden apple...

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JUNO: (*Jealously*) Tell me of her fate!

MERCURY: Fair Venus is divided from her mate,
The ugly Vulcan, fiery blacksmith God
Who's every bit as crude, deformed, and odd
As Venus is delightful.

JUNO: (*To MERCURY*) Go! Be gone!

JUPITER: Don't go. You must obey my will.

MERCURY: I must?!

JUPITER: I ... beg you do my bidding.

MERCURY: We shall see.

JUPITER: Tell Mars and Vulcan Jupiter suspects
Apollo soon will come to conquer them.
Tell Vulcan to inspire what he may
To get the warring armies 'cross the sea
And conquer those who soon would conquer them.

MERCURY: You speak a lie, yet I'll convey your word.
Throughout the Earth your message shall be heard.
(*MERCURY disappears.*)

JUNO: Jupiter, look up.

JUPITER: A golden bird!

JUNO: A pair of golden birds... How curious.

JUPITER: They're plummeting! They'll land upon the Moon!

JUNO: I thought this world was void of any life.

JUPITER: Perhaps the two aren't golden birds at all.
Perhaps they're something else... the conquerors!

JUNO: Two fledgelings? Oh, what nonsense!

JUPITER: They descend...
(*Two screams are heard offstage, then two thuds.*)

JUNO: They are not birds.

JUPITER: They are not conquerors.
(*DIANA and MINERVA enter tangled in their twisted wings. They do not notice JUPITER and JUNO at first.*)

DIANA: It's good we're both immortal.

MINERVA: What a fall!
That wretched Vulcan said he'd fly with ease.

DIANA: We each possess the strength of any man.
Why could the forge-man fly when we cannot?

JUPITER: Bold Minerva, seed of Jupiter...

MINERVA: Father?

JUPITER: Child!

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(They embrace. JUNO greets MINERVA respectfully, but coldly.)

JUNO: Hail, my husband's seed.

MINERVA: *(Sharply)* Juno, call me daughter.

JUNO: No, not so.

Your father Jupiter bore you alone
From his own forehead, grown and fully clad.

MINERVA: At least that is the tale you tell the world.

You will not claim the seed you both have borne.

JUPITER: We only have one son and that is Mars!

JUNO: You, Minerva, gained no blood from me!

JUPITER: And Vulcan is not mine. He's Juno's son!

DIANA: *(Removing her wings and presenting them to JUPITER)* My father is the one who flies on wings.

My sire became a swan who came by night
And raped the virgin Leda ...

JUPITER: No more ghosts!

DIANA: He loved my mother Leto, then he left
And all but Delos turned her out as well.

JUPITER: I flee the world and all its sad affairs,
But still I'm haunted by an albatross!

(He examines the wings.)

Who made these wings of gold?

DIANA: They're Vulcan's craft.

JUPITER: Vulcan, silent Vulcan at his forge...

MINERVA: Throughout the many centuries, he planned
Escaping with his wife unto the Moon.
His forge did not give mortals new machines.
Instead Old Vulcan made a work of art.

DIANA: A thousand years the forge-man worked his wings
Until at last they were most delicate
And he and Venus planned to fly away

JUPITER: They planned to join us here?

DIANA: That was their plan.

MINERVA: The world would be much changed if they had left
Without the craft that Vulcan forged with fire,
Without the flames of love that Venus spreads,
The world would be a cold and changeless place.
That's why we stole their wings and took their flight.

The world will never miss a warrioress.

DIANA: A huntress has no place among them now.

JUNO: Why? What's become of women on the Earth?

DIANA: They all give hearty praise at Vesta's hearth

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And she's the only goddess they adore.

MINERVA: The men go off to war, the women mourn.

DIANA: The men go off to hunt, the women wait.

MINERVA: We have no place on Earth, but on the Moon ...

DIANA: Where's Olympus? Is it far from here?

JUPITER: Olympus? I'm Olympus!

JUNO: (*Teasingly*) Vanity!

JUPITER: (*He turns on JUNO.*) You call me vain, then I shall call you void!

You're barren as the craters of the Moon.

A thousand years we've wandered in the dust.

The love that had awaited throughout time

Was consummated here upon the Moon.

We planned to raise a multitude of men

And turn this world into a paradise.

But still we have no issue, all which proves

That Juno's not a goddess after all!

JUNO: You've raised no crystal pillars from the dust.

The Lighting God has lost creation's fire!

JUPITER: What accusations dare you make of me?

JUNO: I don't accuse. I merely speak the truth.

I hoped that I could spare you from that shame,

JUPITER: A thousand years we've spent upon the Moon,

A thousand years of pure fidelity,

But all of that has ended with your speech.

I'll be avenged of your accusing words.

I'll take my passions elsewhere.

JUNO: (*Scorned*) Vanity!

And how do you intend to cheat your wife?

You cannot change yourself into a swan

And rape some lovely maiden as before.

There are no more than four upon the Moon.

You've sworn to leave me barren, so that's three.

Minerva and Diana are still pure

And they won't yield to any man's desire.

So that leaves none with whom to do your deed.

DIANA: (*coquettishly*) I wouldn't say that he should seek in vain.

It's true I will not bend for man's desire

But for the King of Gods...

MINERVA: Diana, no! You can't mean that you'd bend to Jupiter!

DIANA: Perhaps it's true, perhaps it's all a lie.

MINERVA: But Jupiter's your father!

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DIANA: So they say,

And Juno is his sister and his wife.

And how do I know who my father is?

I only had a mother in my youth.

MINERVA: You're not a goddess if you're not his seed.

DIANA: Perhaps I grew up mortal as a girl,

Until I boldly climbed Olympus Peak

And drank ambrosia, just as Psyche did,

And can't remember my mortality.

But now I've reached Olympus on the Moon,

Where I'll become the Queen of All the Gods.

JUPITER: The Queen indeed! You've saved yourself for me,

The virgin huntress lingered in the woods

Until the King of Gods condemned his wife.

I'll have you, fair Diana!

(He tries to embrace DIANA.)

DIANA: Not so fast.

It's possible that you could win my love,

But only if you beat me in a race.

JUPITER: A race with you? What nonsense!

DIANA: That's my wish.

I cannot love a suitor I outrun.

MINERVA: An int'resting proposal ...

JUNO: We shall see.

JUPITER: A river can't run higher than its source.

Indeed I shall outrun Diana.

MINERVA: Try!

2 more pages finish scene 2

7 more pages comprise scene 3