

## Golf with the Gods

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“And *then*,” Odin sighed through his ashy-grey beard, “Loki just swaggered in with the apples. Like nothing happened! Like it isn’t a huge deal when the apples of youth are stolen from *immortals*.” The grizzled god tipped his head back to the Milky Way, groaning in exasperation as a solid *thunk* echoed through the heavens.

“Fore!” hollered Zeus as he lowered the lightning bolt he was using to drive the meteor to the next hole on the cosmic golf range. Electricity wrapped around his sculpted, toga-clad body. He took a swig from the clay jug they were sharing and swiped at his chin when some violet wine dribbled down his tanned skin. Odin frowned at his own pallid hands; too much time spent in an Asgardian winter. He contemplated taking a quick vacation to Olympus the next chance he got.

“At least,” Zeus said, finally turning away from following the arc of the meteor through the depths of space. “You don’t have to live with Loki. Hera is driving me insane.” Maybe Odin would put off that vacation... No good ever came from getting in the middle of Zeus and Hera’s marital issues.

“Hey, we all warned you that you wouldn’t get along with Hera in the long run,” Ra jumped in from where he lounged in the chariot, waiting to take them to the next hole in the course. “She’s too good for you. But *nooo*, you just had to marry her. Kicked us out of your stupid wedding party over it too.” Zeus raised his thunderbolt threateningly in the direction of the Egyptian god who glowed slightly from the sun magic he wielded.

“I already apologized for that!” Zeus growled. Then muttered under his breath, “make *one* mistake half a millennia ago and they never let you live it down.”

“What’s Hera’s problem with you now anyways?” Odin jumped in. If Zeus didn’t get his complaining off his chest now, it would completely ruin the rest of the game of golf. The opportunity to take this time with his friends only came about when they were all between wars, which was to say, not very often.

Zeus backed away a few paces as Odin took his place at the tee where the next meteor was already waiting. The Asgardian god examined his caddy thoroughly before selecting a hefty broadsword. The eighth hole on the Planetary Golf Course was a doozy; you had to get the meteor all the way through the rings of Saturn to make it even close to the hole. Anything less than Herculean strength wasn't going to cut it. Come to think of it, even Hercules had trouble with this hole, although the younger generation just didn't have the same knack for the game.

Zeus continued his tale as Odin lined up the sword and meteor. "Well, if you ask me, congratulations are in order! I'm a father."

"Is this baby number 1,006 or 1,007?" Ra muttered through his falcon's beak. The sarcasm in the god's voice skyrocketed over Zeus' head.

"1,008, actually! It's a boy."

"Congratulations," Odin said drily, hiding his eye roll with a practice swing of his broadsword. And Zeus wondered why Hera was always mad. Finally, with a long breath in and a slow sigh out, Odin pulled back his sword and launched it forward. It landed with a solid *kerchunk* on the meteor, sending the space stone flying and wheeling through the stars. The sweet squeeze of anticipation gripped Odin's stomach as his non-eyepatched eye tracked the meteor's progress through the galaxy. It sailed like a breeze through the planet's rings and landed with a bounce and roll before stalling barely a hairsbreadth from the hole.

Odin cursed under his breath as Zeus broke out into gales of booming laughter. The king of Olympus had managed three holes-in-one over the course of the millennia they played together but Odin always came up just a little bit short. As the Asgardian king slid his broadsword back into his bristling caddy, Ra offered up the jug of wine. Odin gratefully accepted as he slid into the chariot with as much dignity as he could muster. Wiping tears from his eyes, Zeus slid into the back seat and Ra set the chariot in motion, flying them across the broad expanse of the cosmos.

In no time they were at the ninth and final hole of the game. Silver dust plumed up around their feet as the trio slid from the chariot and onto the moon locked into the orbit of the little blue and green planet named Earth. This was the hardest hole of the course but also the most fun because of the precision it required. The goal was to launch a meteor with just enough

force at the planet so that it was sucked into orbit, circumvented the planet once, then slingshotted out and into the sun. Not enough force and the meteor would drift into space, lost forever. Too much force and the effect on the planet would be devastating. At least it was only inhabited by a gaggle of giant lizards right now; a pet project of God, who was in an experimental phase of creation.

“I’ll go first,” Zeus volunteered—for the ninth hole in a row. By now, Odin and Ra knew better than to argue. But as the towering god of Olympus selected a lightning bolt to line up with his tee, a small puff-like cloud popped up beside him.

“Apologies, my king,” a smaller god stammered once the smoke cleared. Hermes, messenger of Olympus. “But I have a message for you. From Hera. It seems you now have a 1,009th son. She wants you home. Now.” With another cloud puff, the messenger was gone. Ra’s keen falcon eyes noticed the white-clenched knuckles Zeus held on his lightning bolt at the message but before he or Odin could offer up calming words, the god flew into a rage.

“COULD SHE NOT JUST LET ME HAVE THIS ONE GAME?” he bellowed, waves of electricity rolling off of him. In a massive display of power, Zeus wrenched back his tree-trunk arms, took aim and unleashed all his might on the meteor resting on his tee. It raced straight for Earth just as the god vanished into smoke. With dread mirrored on each of their faces, Odin and Ra looked towards the little planet and the mushroom cloud now billowing up from its surface. So much for those lizards.

“Oh my, God’s going to be pissed,” Odin sighed.

“At least it was only dinosaurs,” Ra tried. “Last time he blew half of Pluto to smithereens. I’m not even sure we can call it a planet anymore.”

The End