



# Who Let the Gods Out?

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We begin where Elliot Hooper begins most of his days in school ? in the office of the headmaster, Mr Sopweed, who oozes empathy and so is also known as Call Me Graham. Mr Boil, his deputy, shouts all the time in BLOCK CAPITALS; he?s a ?stumpy, piggy little man? with ?fat eyes... squashed behind a pair of thick, bottle-lensed glasses?, whose shirt smells ?like three-week-old vegetable soup?. 12-year-old Elliot cares for his gentle, confused mum in their farmhouse near Stonehenge; he loves his home, but it?s under threat from land-grabbing neighbour, Patricia Porshley-Plum (Elliot?s mum calls her Patricia Horse?s-Bum). So far, it?s one of those quickfire stories triggering explosive laughs from young listeners or readers. Silly names, body odours, caricature grown-ups, fat-is-funny stuff - a kind of noisy pantomime, if you like.

Turn the page to Chapter 3, and we are translated to the Heavens and the monthly meeting of the Zodiac Council, appointed by Zeus to order immortal affairs when he and the other Olympians opted for a kind of early retirement. The Council maintains everything in Elysium is just perfect, thanks to its administrative strategy which focuses on the trivial (Is a Cyclops entitled to half-price eyecare?) and ignores anything at all messy. Our heroine, young Virgo, plays her part by getting the stationery order in on time for the Muses and ensuring everyone?s got enough paper clips. But is this all there is? she wonders. So she volunteers for one of the few dangerous jobs around ? delivering a necessary dose of Ambrosia to Prisoner Forty-two, an Immortal who has been incarcerated in the cold and dirty mortal realm below.

Virgo goes anyway and speeds down to Earth where she bumps into Elliot near Stonehenge. After a few misunderstandings, inevitable when mortal meets immortal, they find Prisoner Forty-two chained in a cavern under the Stones and Elliot is tricked into releasing him; only to find he?s Thanatos, Daemon of Death. At a stroke, the future of Earth, Elysium, Olympus, and Elliot?s farm-house hangs in the balance. Now the story whirls forward in a Keystone Cops frenzy. The Gods are comic echoes of their mythological selves. We find the genial Zeus sporting a light-blue tuxedo with a frilly shirt and nibbling a cheese-and-ham vol-au-vont ? he?s getting married again but can?t remember the name of his latest bride...either of his latest brides, it seems, since he?s carelessly arranged to be married twice on the same day. He and Bertie Wooster would have been good chums. Charon is a seen-it-all water cabbie, steering his fares along the Styx, Hermes is a garrulous fashionista, Aphrodite flirts with anything male when needs must, or even mustn?t, to the disgust of her cerebral sister, Athene. Poor Sisyphus hath a lithp. Queen Elizabeth II gets drawn into the story with an agile cameo in Olympics Opening vein as a Ninja Super-Warrior (?KISS ONE?S ROYAL BOTTOM!?

she commands a vanquished foe). The world's still not quite safe so we conclude with 'THE END (for now...)' which will surely delight many, many readers.

Variations on the basic joke 'the Gods are all too human in their foibles and their failings when loosed into our modern world' are manipulated by Maz Evans with tireless comic invention; you feel she's entertaining, but not indulging, herself as well as her readers. You might wonder whether those who don't know their Gods will find this a highly enjoyable romp, but somehow feel they are missing out on so much of the humour; even that clever title works best if you know a song that died well before these readers were born. But those who are mythologically savvy will relish the extra pleasure of all those implicit references.

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