# Jesus on Olympus

{Northern Greece these days around Thessaly does not inspire dreams of majestic divinity. In fact it could legitimately be claimed, albeit with a sigh, that either the gods are sleeping or else have long deserted this their legendary habitat. The occasional sheep crops at grass that reluctantly pushes its way toward the sun past obstinate limestone pebbles that if snow would make moguls for the mad skier. These slopes are not so prized, now.

In the nearest town, the bells ring for the gathering of another flock, as Orthodox priests toss on their clerical garbs to ceremoniously ensure the continuation of the cosmos. With a language more ancient than its worship, the community gathers to lift hearts and hope out of a simple struggle for survival, to connect with the beat of the Beyond.

Sitting in that hot sun one can easily start to swim, thoughts turning into liquid longing for that shift within. Bell ringing recedes, only sun and sky and olive scent and rugged mound are real. This frame, this combination of external energy and internal elation merged into a golden grandeur that became Greece’s moment to shine. South of here, in Athens, that fruit ripened but the seeds were planted here long before, when the Horse People came off the steppes as grass grew scarce for their animals and they followed the dream of the horse into the nightmare of the earth people’s dark womb. Not the nine muses who later graced Apollo’s anterooms, but their mother Memory is the most devious and creative, making story of survival and making myth of madness. But she is truth also, this womb of sun seed, she does not lie, then or now. Cellular or canonical, scientific or sacred, the text of the tale is her task, imprinted on each successive generation.

Sitting in the hot sun of Greece, Memory is close since this is where she was incarnated in sisters who encircle the senses. She whispers her story in the patterns formed of this place, of the warp and woof set in motion by Moira and tapestried by the Three. Who would gainsay this, since it is a pattern discernable in dreams and dancing? Many now claim that we see what we expect so we form the pattern to suit ourselves, but the ancients knew better, and any one who is losing will laugh at such sophistry.

Sitting in the hot sun of winter, its gentle warmth easier on the eyes than summer’s sauna, one lets go of limits, and allows the place to be itself, timeless in its solar and lunar cycles meeting and matching and mating. History was not born here, but in the Crossroad Land. Here is only Memory and for her, even my poor story will do.}

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“Who is this coming up the slope, sister? He looks weary and his clothes speak of long travel.”

“Not a rich man. Look at the patches along the arm seams.”

“See how he pauses by the olive grove, eyeing how far it is to the top. Has he come to visit us?”

“If he hasn’t he’d better be back in the valley by sundown.”

“Sister, cease threats. If he does not summon us we cannot touch him.”

“Brother, you are always a man, you have lain with Memory in vain! I speak of The Others.”

“The — Older Ones?”

“Not The Oldest, they would not pay attention to the passage of human feet in the dark, but the Older Ones hate us and take advantage of the absence of our light.”

“See, he continues. Where is he from? His skin is too dark for our people, even the Older Ones.”

“Not the South Lands, he hasn’t the slender height and high head.”

“Not the East Lands, his beard is too thick.”

“Not the North Lands, his hair and eyes are too dark”

“Not there, not there, not here. A small tribe, perhaps, part of several there’s.”

“Brother, I see how you gained your reputation for clarity of thought.”

“I make no claim to conclusions until I have more facts on which to focus!”

“And poetry.”

“You laugh at me?”

“Of course! Cannot the Moon laugh at the Sun? How else contain your mad splendour?”

“Come, let us warn the others we have an intruder.”

“Don’t let them frighten him off, visitors are too few these centuries.”

(It was not a wonderful place, hot in sun and dry to tongue. Some places stank of sheep manure and others of swift herbal growth and death. He struggled past the highest sloping turn then paused, aware of watchers. None to see, he didn’t expect that, but he was seen.

So he waited for a sign, a welcome, knowing he didn’t belong, knowing this visit was twisting his trained tendons of thought.

Then it came, a touch on his hand, a touch fleet but felt within. And he moved forward carefully, placing his sandals only on earth and not on stones blackened from long centuries of use as altar blocks. When he came within the small grove of aspens reaching skyward and swaying in the slight vibration of the watchers gathered, he stopped again.

It was enough to sense them, to know they were still trapped on this mountain by the weight of expectations, prayers, yearnings, centuries of chanting names that controlled and bound their vibrancies and enforced conformation to the poetry of pleading. Divided in their tasks, united in their power, a family of quarrelsome aspirations in quandary. No one had built a temple to them here, it was their home, their assigned portion of the planet. From here the stories wove outward into the minds of mortals, facing here the petitioners padded their prayers with the smoke of bloody offerings. He pitied them.}

“Then why come to us?”

*I come in a dream*.

“Ah, that explains it. Most of the dreamers still stay at my temple where Asklepios healed.”

*Explains what?*

“Why we didn’t sense you before you came to the foot of the mountain. Usually we hear the call from far away and meet the mortal halfway, and none come so far.”

*Even now?*

“So you know of our demise in the dominion of day.”

*You are the word worker, the sun shaper, the music maker.*

“I am, and the Others have chosen me to speak with you but they are willing to join in if your dream can maintain itself in their presenting.”

*You are more hospitable than my people credit.*

“Yes, tell us of your people. You appear a stranger to us. We do not remember ever seeing one like you in our land, at our temples, in all the centuries we welcomed wanderers as well as our own worshipers.”

*My people are contracted to follow and obey One God only. All others we avoid, or at least we have for the past five centuries, since although they seem better than our own in practice they only have led us into chaos.*

“Chaos was our grandmother, not one to welcome failure to adhere to a promise.”

*So we learned.*

“Ah, humour in the face of divinity! I like this man, brothers and sisters. He understands! Can you be clearer about who you are and where you are from -- or at least what temple you sleep in while you visit us?”

*I sit in a desert place beyond the mountains of my birth. Those mountains line the east cost of this Middle Sea, facing east toward the place our forefathers left to follow a dream sent by our God, and facing west overlooking the Land that dream promised but which we have lost time without number because we abandon the Giver of the Land, and expect we shall possess it no matter what, even in the face of our loss.*

“You have thought long on this, I think. I hear much sorrow and anger in you at your people.”

*We are stupid. We are weak. Yet we are still loved, and this I cannot understand as yet. The God of our forefathers still pursues us like a lover, through the dark ways and splendid days we have chosen instead of the way offered that is for us alone.*

“Perhaps there are not enough rewards along this way to entice you. Mortals are ever more fond of wealth than wisdom, and health than heroism. Look at Midas. Look at Heracles!”

*Our heroes are the ones who brought us back into the path chosen and contracted, but they even in their days had too many enemies. Now? The path is partially seen, partially accepted, but we huddle in fear before taking our steps into it. Some do, and are mocked, or mistreated. I see it all the time! And I do not see the God to whom we pray daily in our synagogues paying attention.*

“Ah, how mortal you are, even in your dream! Are you so bound by the cycle of days and years that you don’t know we hear prayers before they are uttered, which is why we are there to hear and not here?”

*I don’t understand.*

“Man, we weave the ways, we sense the sorrows, we herald the happiness. Time is part of us, not outside of us. We participate in the dance.”

*Some of our wise ones say that when God created the first act was the dance, the joy which sprang out and then opened in love.*

“So you are followers of that One? We heard rumours even here!”

*You know of our God? Some other wise ones say that ours is the supreme, the highest one. Others say there is only one, and I am one of them, but since many of the tribes still follow you and others it seemed a good idea to learn if I could, the truth of the matter.*

“But you have come to the place where truth has many faces. The wise mortals write my words in poetry that is acted out, in stories that wind through the warp and woof of mystery. Each act has a face, each face has a name, each name is a god.”

*But there is only One!*

“We know that. It is only the children or the stupid among mortals who think there are more. We are the steps in the dance, the notes of the lyre, the words on the wind. But we are not the wind.”

“Brother, may I speak?”

“Ask him, it is his dream. Mortal man, can you bear the weight of my sister? Be warned, I have heard that your people fear the female darkness.”

*We know wisdom is from the dark movements of the night and that the dance began in the dark.*

“Then you can hear me, mortal. I am sister to the sun, sister to the sky, sister to the star maker. I am mother of mystery, mother of mating, mother of mourning.”

*I hear you. My heart is full of fear that is also like flying. Why is this?*

“Your people are careful, I think, and have been taught by centuries of experience to fear me, as well you should. There is nothing light about me. Our people here grew careless of me and saw me as a simple woman no matter what face I wore. They forgot their poets as your people forget their prophets. And now? You are in a desert, which is not one of my places. I cannot come to you there, so it is as well you come to me here. My brothers rule the deserts and the seas and the grasslands and the mountains. I wait for the wanderer in the darkness, but too often he runs away in fear.”

*I am afraid.*

“Then once you know me, you will not fear again what comes to all mortals, which is death.”

*Is that the wisdom you teach?*

“It is the beginning and the end of wisdom. I am the tomb and the womb, mortal. My brothers weave the ways of day, I haunt the niches of night. It is well to hear me,”

*My people have a saying. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

“Your people are wiser than they know, since without fear you cannot become wise, and without wisdom you cannot outgrow fear into the love which prompted the dance of creation.”

*Who are you?*

“Our people have many names for me, many masks. I began before the dance, and will watch it fade. My brothers are my sons, their fathers are my sons, my sisters are my mothers. It is a mystery and it is beyond words, since words are the playground of my sons.”

*I came for wisdom but I am afraid now that you are here. How did your people bear you?*

“They did not. I bore them. I told you, I am the mother.”

*Our God is called Father.*

“Sister, you confuse him. Dreams are not for reasoning, and you are beneath him and he cannot dig below you. Let me try.”

*I am more afraid of you than of her. Why?*

“I cannot love. I can only end. I am her son and her husband and without her I have no power. I am caught in my own conflict, which is death. It is the only gift I can give to you, mortal.”

“Brothers, you are frightening the stranger. Give him time, he is mortal! You forget how it is with them, it is so long since one took the time... and gave us space. Now, son of a prophet, son of a dreamer. You sleep, you need not combat us or fear us. We do not invade you, you sought us out. Be at peace. It is a mystery. Our people knew this and worshiped us as mystery and told the stories which explore the light we cast and the dark we denied. Each of us who is brother is also father and son. Our sisters are also our mother in her many masks, and our daughters. The mortals to whom we gave seed produced amazing children to our names, and in our names they made of this country a golden splendour which we know will haunt humanity until it goes beyond the stars which limit your time and space.”

*Only our God lies beyond.*

“Then you will meet him face to face.”

*Only one, the prophet and dreamer you spoke of just now, has been so honoured.*

“Perhaps as the end draws near, the end which you perceive, more will have such an honour. The one woman who saw me burnt to ashes in an instant and I still mourn and honour her. She had high courage and went beyond my name and my mask, and in love we embraced and in love she died. What else, for a mortal?”

*You I think are the one who rules here as king.*

“It is the title given in poetry and song, which my son the sun shaper molded in the minds of men. I am the seed and the seeder, the line and the line drawer.”

“Brother, that is a good image for this one, since I sense he is not familiar with the stones made in our image. They give him anger, so we can give him the image behind the stone. You are line and I am circle. You are seed and I am womb. You are the path and I am the ground which you walk upon. You are the sky and I am the rain. You are the sea and I am the wave. It is good!”

*I think you are the one called queen here.*

“You sense my oneness with my husband? You are a good dreamer, mortal!”

{It is the end of day, the end of the dream.}

“Do you think he will return, brother?”

“Ah, you all frightened him! None of you have my expertise in handling dreams, and I learned it with the best in my healing temple. I listened to Asklepios my son, and he taught me the fears and follies of the ones we accidentally fashioned so long ago, grew to tolerate and sometimes even love. But the rest of you! Like Our Father The Penis, always penetrating the woman as she goes to rest after her bathing. Or Great Aunt Vulva, widening her yearning to embrace the whole of a man instead of simply his power. You are all so greedy! Especially you, my sister!”

“So the Solar Flare is engulfing me again. What is the source of your rage this time?”

“Did you *have* to show off all of your masks at once? He *told* you he was dreaming in a desert, that his people are followers of the righteous Male who created from the Formless Female. We’re lucky he didn’t awaken in terror right then! But he clung to us and followed the logic of our interlacing. That tells me he’s not a fool. But you! You’re too used to the lascivious lunatics who slavered after your statues in the temples. “

“Well...it’s been a long time, brother – “