

That Time Harold Borgenstein Went Speed Dating And Got Taken Over By All Of The Greek Gods

By Pete Malicki

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Harold: a dull, middle-aged man attending a speed dating event.

So, uh, I suppose that's why office supplies was a natural next step for me. I mean, what would all you ladies think if I was still just the guy managing a small team of programmers for a medium-sized programming firm, am I right? Bet you'd prefer the wholesale price on thirteen GSM ultra-tough tri-colour recycled paper stock, perfect for scrapbooking, am I right? I knew you'd like that.

Ooh, the bell's ringing. I know you can get my details from the MC but here's my card. It's printed on thirteen GSM ultra-tough tri-colour recycled paper stock.

Hey there beautiful. My name's Harold. Harold Borgenstein. Sounds Jewish but it ain't. My warrior's still got his helmet on if you know what I'm saying. Now tell me absolutely everything about yourself and don't leave out any details.

Harold nods as he listens, clearly uninterested but pretending to be. He twitches. Keeps listening. Twitches again. He convulses bodily and reawakens as a different person.

(as Heracles) Heracles! I did it. I am controlling a mortal body again. Pantheon, all you must do is say your name and the body will fall under your command.

(to speed dating partner) Pardon fair maiden, is this *Gaia*? The place of the living?

Harold convulses again and stops, blinking, disoriented.

(as Harold) Jesus, did I... blank out? Yikes. Why are you looking at me like that? Sorry, you were telling me all about your job as a PA. (pause) Criminal defense lawyer, right. (indignant) Why don't you want to talk to me anymore? Look, I have no idea what I said to offend you but I am sincerely, truly, extremely sorry. Did I have a dig at your lazy eye? Oh don't look so surprised – it's hardly a secret. Or did I tell you you looked fat? Because empire line makes *anyone* look like a tree trunk and I'm sure you have a reasonable body under there.

Harold recoils after being slapped, then convulses again, slightly less wildly than the time before. Becomes magnanimous.

(as Zeus) Zeus! Heracles, you are right. I have taken over the mortal. Watch me leap to my feet! (leaps up) Swing my arms like I'm slaying an evil succubus. (swings arm) Pump my legs as I charge into battle.

Harold runs on the spot. Stops. Pants and tries to catch breath.

By the many wenches I've laid to bed and made children with, this man is in terrible shape. Heracles, was he this bad for you?

(as Heracles) Heracles. I did not try, Father Zeus. Let me give it a crack.

Harold/Heracles swings his arms around. He winces when his shoulder's in a particular position.

Youch. You are right. This arm is shoddier than those greaves Hephaestus made last century. Look, it just does *not* go past this point here.

(as Hephaestus) Hephaestus. Uh, shut up Heracles. Uh, when was the last time you made anything? All you can do is, uh, lift things in the air like a baboon.

Harold convulses slightly and returns to being himself. After a moment of confusion, he sees his next speed dating partner.

Sorry, who are you? *(pause)* Janet. I... I think I've been blanking out. *(pause)* Oh no, I'm totally fine. It's that sleeping problem I get occasionally: narcissism. But forget about me – tell me how a gorgeous woman like yourself came to be at a speed dating thing instead of going to world premieres with her movie-star husband.

Harold leans forwards and smiles seductively. He twitches, then convulses fully. Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, has control of him now.

(as Athena) Athena. Oh yes, how wonderful. We have toiled away for thousands of years to reach this moment and here it is! Our return to Gaia has begun in the form of... *(looks at self)* this grotty little peasant. *(smells self)* Oh my, this odour would make flowers wilt.

(becomes Apollo) Apollo. What is wrong with you child-men? This man is perfectly adequate. *(to Janet)* You there, by what name do you go? *(pause)* Ja-net. Do you have a bow? I will show you how a god shoots an apple right out of the sky. *(pause)* Why do you stare at me like cattle?

Zeus, this mortal appears to be afflicted by a minor retardation. *(gesturing broadly)* Perhaps we should seek out others. *(recoiling)* Ooh, this arm really is bugged.

(as Athena) This is very disappointing indeed, Father. I would hope for a more powerful vessel to convey the majesty that is us gods. It *is* curious to have the body of a man, though.

Harold twitches and becomes Ares, God of War.

(as Ares) Ares! Rwoar! Athena, you would find the body of a man curious, seeing how unfamiliar you are with them.

(as Athena) Ares, you fucked your sister. I would rather be a virgin than a sister-fucker.

(as Ares) Whatever, Athena. You are simply bitter because none of your brothers will touch you.

(looks at Janet) Apollo, you are right – she looks just like a dying cow. Close that gaping mouth, wench. *(pause)* You refuse the God of War? I will shut it for you!

Harold/Ares starts attacking Janet, trying to grab her head and close her mouth. After a moment he convulses heavily and ends up on the floor.

(as Harold) Oh dear lord. What is happening to me? *(recoils)* Oof! *(covers face)* Stop it! No! Why are you kicking me in the face? Help! Help!

While being attacked, Harold convulses on the ground then jumps to his feet as Hera, Queen of the Gods.

(as Hera) Hera! You there, you dare strike the Queen of the Gods? *(dodges a blow)* Desist immediately, mortal, or I will crush you like a pansy Trojan warrior.

Harold/Hera dodges another blow, steps in and grabs Janet in a headlock. Momentarily, an event organiser approaches her.

(to organiser) Oh, you wish for me to leave this place? I will do so with the greatest pleasure. *(to Janet)* If I ever lay eyes on you again, young whore, I will have you for breakfast, do you comprehend?

Harold/Hera pushes Janet away and walks off with her head held high. Twitches. Talks while walking.

(as Ares) Geez, mother. I'm the God of War and even *I* thought that was cold.

(as Hera) Quiet, Ares. Greece would still rule the world if not for your pathetic weakness.

(as Ares) Do not blame me, Hera. If we had ploughed into battle and fought like men instead of following Athena's approach of *sitting* and *talking* and *tactics* our enemies' blood would still drip off our blades today.

(as Athena) We would have lasted days and not decades with your cavalier approach. *(sees cars approaching)* Brothers and sisters, what are these giant carriages that speed down the road with no horse to pull them?

(as Hephaestus) Uh, I do not recognise the handiwork. Looks like they would take, uh, quite a lot of steel to construct.

(as Zeus) You all have the commodity of a maiden's breast dangling off the forequarters of a bull. Let me show you how a god halts a carriage.

Harold/Zeus steps in front of a car and puts his arms out wide. He yells "Halt before Zeus!". At the last second, he dives out of the way of an uncaring driver. Convulses on the ground and becomes a very confused and unsettled Harold.

What am I doing in the middle of the street? What is happening to me?! *(sees someone nearby)* Sir, excuse me sir, I need your help. I keep blacking out and I have no idea how I got outside. *(pause)* Yes, do call an ambulance.

Harold convulses again and becomes Artemis, the archer goddess.

(as Artemis) Artemis. I am alive! This truly is wondrous. How shall we take advantage of our return to Gaia?

(as Apollo) Perhaps you and I could practise our beloved archery somewhere, sister.

(as Zeus) That carriage did not so much as slow down!

(as Hera) Did no one teach you to watch the road before you step out, Zeus?

(as Ares) Did no one teach any of you to strike down any obstacle that stands before you with your sword?

(as Artemis) Can you all stop taking him over and let me have a turn?

(as Apollo) Sorry Artemis.

(as Zeus) Sorry, Artemis.

(as Ares) Sorry, Artemis.

(as Athena) Do not look at me, Artemis. I did not even touch it.

(as Artemis) Let me have a turn! *(anticipatory pause)* Good. Now, I have an excellent idea. I am going to...

Convulses and becomes Harold. Stops dead then looks at man.

Did it just happen again? Oh man. What is going on? *(pause)* I'm babbling on about the Greek gods? Why would I be babbling about the Greek Gods? I don't think they have much use for thirteen GSM ultra-tough tri-colour recycled paper stock, do you? Unless they've started a scrapbooking club...

(as Ares) Rwoar! I grow bored of this talk! Let us fight. You there, what do men call you? *(pause)* Bruno. Do you care for a fight to the death, Bruno?

(as Athena) Leave this man alone, Ares, you bloodthirsty dog.

(as Ares) Oh Athena, I have no idea how frustrated you must be. You do not fight and you do not fornicate. What drives do you have?

(as Athena) I do not follow nought but my impulses, Ares.

(as Zeus) My children, I begin to tire of this useless mortal.

(as Harold) It's still happening, isn't it? *(winces and rubs arm)* Ow.

(as Ares) Ah, Aphrodite. I have an idea. Seduce this man and let Athena experience her first taste of sweet love.

(as Demeter) Demeter! Ha ha, finally it is my turn!

(as Ares) Fuck off, Demeter.

(as Aphrodite) Aphrodite. What a fine idea, brother dearest. *(to Bruno)* Handsome man, let me speak boldly. I am Aphrodite, Goddess of Love and Beauty. I find your large frame and impressive volume of bodily hair beyond irresistible. I have bedded many thousands of men and I wish to bed you. Do you share the desire?

Harold/Aphrodite smiles seductively then embraces Bruno. They kiss, then Harold/Aphrodite pulls him to the ground.

Ooh, there is so much flesh to grip!

(as Ares) Good work, Aphrodite. Athena, now it's your turn.

(as Athena) No, I do not want to! *(pause)* Oh my, this is most... well... it is actually a little...

Harold/Athena starts passionately kissing Bruno. She rolls on top of him, continues kissing, then convulses and becomes Harold. Harold pauses, then jerks up, distressed.

(as Harold) Why am I playing tonsil hockey with this hairy giant?!

(as Zeus) Enough! Athena, show some dignity. *(gets up and gestures grandly)* Let us all now... *(winces at shoulder pain)* Bah, this mortal is indeed broken. Let us search for a better vessel.

(as Ares) I agree, Father. Bruno, perhaps we shall have our fight to the death at some other point in time. Here is what you can look forward to enjoying.

Harold/Ares punches Bruno in the face. Convulses. Lurches to his feet and stumbles back from an enraged Bruno, ducking and weaving away from his punches.

(as Harold) Why are you trying to kill me? No, stop swinging at me. I don't know what I did but I'm very sorry. Please leave me alone! I'll give you a free ream of thirteen GSM ultra-tough tri-colour recycled paper stock if you stop hitting me!

Runs off stage.

It's perfect for scrapbooking!

Exits.