Potatoes & Politics

Disclaimer:
For this larp you will need potatoes! :-)
(+ olive oil, garlic, salt, a lemon and bread)

1. Overview

In this larp you will play Greek Gods living in today's world, having an online hangout.
During the hangout:

- You will decide if you help humanity to change one of their problems for the better.
- You will cook and eat together online with the other deities (recipe for an easily to prepare Greek vegan dish with 5 ingredients called "Skordalia" in the appendix).
- You will play on conflicts and emotional connections according to the relations & memories you co-create in the preparatory phase of the larp.

This larp is structured into different acts by cooking and eating together. This may sound tricky but the acts are designed to go well with the respective cooking activity. And don't worry, the cooking-activities you need to carry out can even be done if you have never cooked in your life before (and you have tons of extra-time - it actually takes less than 25 minutes to prepare this dish from scratch).

This larp was inspired by Neil Gaiman's "American Gods" and can be played with 4-8 players. It doesn't need a gamemaster but one of you might want to keep an eye on the time and read out some stuff.
Title Song: Mikis Theodorakis - Sirtaki (Zorbas, the Greek OST), might be played at the beginning of act 1, the beginning of act 2 and the end of act 3.

1.1 Themes

- Cooking & eating together
- SDGs (Sustainable development goals)
- interpersonal conflicts
- Greek mythology

1.2 Necessary Equipment:

- Laptop or or smartphone or tablet
- Online video chat + text chat (e.g. Zoom, Discord, ..)
- A kitchen where you can place your webcam / laptop / smartphone so that it can film you while you are cooking.
- potatoes, garlic, olive oil, salt, lemon, bread (recipe in the appendix)
- A table or some other place where you can eat and video-chat.

1.3 Time-Table:

Prep: Character selection (by discussion or online randomizer -> see appendix)	15 min
Prep: Fleshing-out your character	10 min
Prep: Speed-Dating: Creating relations & shared memories throughout history	45 min
Prep: Introduction of characters + creation of one memory shared by everybody	15 min
ACT 1: Boil up! *Grab your ingredients, prepare and then boil the potatoes while your emotions are also boiling up.*	45 min
ACT 2: (S)mash! *Mash the goddamn potatoes and escalate!*	10 min
ACT 3: Let's eat together! *Try to find common ground while sharing a meal.*	45 min
Post-Larp Reflection	15 min

1.4 Roles:

Each Greek deity (Zeus, Athena, Aphrodite, Apollo, Ares, Hades, Hermes, Dionysos) can be played by any gender. Each player chooses the ingame gender their role identifies with nowadays (this can have changed multiple times throughout the centuries).
Although they use different names in the mortal world, the deities address each other with their original names. For a description of the characters (classical attributes + present day job) see chapter 3.

2. Introduction

When people's faith in you vanished, you fell into a deep hole and it took you some time to climb out of it again. You had to learn how to live without being worshiped. After a while you realized that even if people forgot about you, they still worshiped some of the aspects you represented. Although it wasn't the same as being prayed to directly, it still gave you some power and so you started to prosper again. Through the centuries you had ups and downs, some of you thought about regaining their old status and power, some of you thought about leaving this world forever.

Today, all of you prosper in one way or the other. You live in the world the humans created, without being recognized, and you have found your place there. All of you have highly influential positions. You still send your heroes on quests and play games with the fate of single humans.

The last time, you met the rest of your family, was at the peak of the Cold War, in 1962. During the Cuba crisis some of you feared that the world might suddenly end in a nuclear holocaust. You knew, if all of you worked together, you would have the power to influence the world's fate on the large scale, not just the lives of single humans.

However, as always you disagreed on what to do. While Ares & Hades suggested to simply destroy one of the two nuclear powers and thereby ending the war, Athena and Apollo argued that planting ideas of peace into the heads of the presidents of the USA and the UDSSR was the right way. You weren't able to come to terms and since any big intervention changing the whole world's fate would have needed everyone's united powers, nothing happened. Luckily, the humans managed to get out of this crisis on their own..

Now the humans are back on track to disaster. Climate Change is almost inevitable, political conflicts are on the rise again and on top of other ongoing problems a global pandemic, COVID, causes suffering.

Apollo called for a meeting and all of you agreed. You always loved your feasts and extensive family dinners but as busy and as spread out around the world as you are, there is only time for an online meeting. Since you can't eat together in person, you decided to prepare a traditional Greek meal together and then eat it, all while having a video conference. Although you expect conflicts, you are looking forward to finally see your family again after all those decades. The most important question is though: Will you work together to help solve one of humanity's biggest problems? You are indeed worried, that the humans might blow up the world for real this time - in a literal sense or a metaphorical one. Will you unite your powers and help them reach one of their sustainable development goals?

3. Characters

- **Zeus**
  King of the gods, ruler of Mount Olympus, and god of the sky, weather, thunder, lightning, law, order, and justice.
  Today: A judge at the international Court of Justice

- **Athena**
  Goddess of reason, wisdom, intelligence, skill, peace, battle strategy, and handicrafts.
  Today: Harvard professor on sociology and economy, best seller author

- **Aphrodite**
  Goddess of beauty, love, desire, and pleasure.
  Today: Well-known influencer on social media

- **Ares**
  God of war, bloodshed, and violence.

Today: Co-owner of one of the biggest weapon industries & lobbyist

- **Hades**
  King of the underworld and the dead. God of wealth.
  Today: Senior advisor of Mark Zuckerberg & consultant of the Google management team

- **Hermes**
  God of boundaries, travel, communication, trade, language, thieves and writing.
  Today: Head of the American airlines group, major investor in Elon Musk's companies (PayPal, Tesla, SpaceX)

- **Dionysos**
  God of wine, fruitfulness, parties, festivals, madness, chaos, drunkenness, vegetation, ecstasy, and the theater.
  Today: Event manager & creative mind behind festivals like Burning Man and the Venice Biennale

- **Apollo**
  God of archery, music and dance, truth and prophecy, healing and diseases
  Today: After an extraordinary successful career at the famous Charité in Berlin (a renowned hospital & medical research facility), they work now for Doctors Without Worders.

You do not need to know more than this short info about your character to start into the preparatory phase. However, if you want to know a bit more, have a look at:
https://www.theoi.com/greek-mythology/olympian-gods.html

4.Preparatory Phase

4.1 Fleshing out your character

For this process the whole world history is open to you. You might choose to incorporate major historical events in your character's personal history or you just keep it low. Your character might have taken on several disguises and might have influenced important people. However, they never took the role of a historic person themselves, for example they never became a leader of a state or kingdom. They might have been Winston Churchill's closest confidant, even his wife but not Winston Churchill himself. They might have helped Marie Curie to discover x-rays but they weren't Marie Curie herself.

Questions for you to answer:
1. Think of a short scene which describes the essence of your character! When did they feel most alive? Paint a vivid picture and be ready to describe it in 30 to 60 seconds to the rest of the players in order to introduce your character.
2. Look at the SDGs in the Appendix. Which one appeals the most to your character?

3. What is humanity's worst side? What is it's best side?
4. Which group of people (a nation / a professional group / a religious group / etc.) is especially important to you? Why?

4.2 Speed-Dating: Creating Character relations & memorable moments

Instead of exactly defining relationships with other characters you will create memorable moments in pairs.

For this you have 6 minutes with each other player (42 minutes in total).
Answer the following questions and don't forget - all of history lies open for you!

1. When and where does your memory take place?
2. What happened?
3. How did each of you feel?
4. Define an unanswered question for each of your characters in relation to this moment!

4.3 Introductions + one memory shared by all

1. Take turns and introduce your characters. Use the picture of the vivid memory you painted in preparatory phase 1 ("Fleshing-out your character")! Take no longer than 1 minute per person!
2. Create a shared memory where all of you were together! Take turns to add details to this memory.

5. It's time to Play!

You might choose one person in your group, who has the duty of keeping an eye on the time. Naturally, cooking will also help all of you to get a feeling for the time passed but somebody keeping an extra eye on it, doesn't hurt. Don't worry if you don't reach the exact amount of time, let your feelings guide you.
If you decide to use the suggested title-song (Mikis Theodorakis - "Sirtaki" from Zorbas, the Greek OST), then the chosen person should play the song at the beginning of act 1, the beginning of act 2 and at the end of act 3.

The main means of communication is the video channel in the platform you choose (e.g. Zoom, Discord, etc.). Every player should always be online in this main channel.
Additionally, use a text channel for any off-game calibration during the game. The off-game

channel should also be used to announce the last 15 minutes of play-time in act 3. Just type "end in 15 minutes" into the common text channel to announce it.
If your character wants to talk to another character in private, this can be done via text message / a private text channel.

It can open up interesting play to have others notice that your characters are talking privately. To make this possible, over-act typing the text message. If still nobody notices, just type "PM" in the main common chat with all other players to signal you want somebody noticing.

Here are some instructions for each act. They should be read out by a volunteer.

ACT 1 (45 minutes):

Your characters haven't seen each other for the last 60 years. There's a lot of catching up to do but also old memories come to mind and old conflicts start to surface.

There is also the reason why you all meet today. Humanity is steering towards a catastrophe again. Although the humans came up with some nice ideas - the UN's Sustainable development goals, the SDGs - they don't seem to be able to get close to any of their goals. They will need your help this time. But reaching such an SDG would mean all of you had to agree on one thing and work together. Discussions on this are slowly starting and emotions are boiling up.

During all of this you also start cooking. At the end of the act the potatoes should be boiled and ready to mash. Make sure that everybody had time to talk and share something (a memory / their opinion / etc.), don't end the act (aka start mashing) before this.

ACT 2 (10 minutes):

Time to escalate! While mashing the potatoes your discussions / conflicts / emotions escalate!

ACT 3 (45 minutes):

While you finish the preparation of the Skordalia and arrange your plate, your emotions might cool off a bit. Or they don't. However, the world is still on the road to disaster. Will you work together and agree on an SDG to solve to support humanity or is the price for a compromise too high?

6.Post-Larp Reflection

Take turns and answer the following questions, taking no longer than a minute to answer. If you like you can use a timer to make sure nobody talks too long.

1. Say your real name. What will you take with you from this larp?
2. What SDG is the most important one in your opinion?

Feel free to choose any other way of reflection after the larp.

Appendix

A) Recipe: Skordalia

Source:
https://www.olivetomato.com/three-recipes-for-skordalia-greek-garlic-sauce-and-its-nutritional-value/
Some minor details are changed to adapt it to the larp.

Ingredients

- 7-8 garlic cloves
- 1 pound of potatoes
- 1 cup olive oil
- lemon juice or red wine vinegar
- Salt

Instructions

- Peel the potatoes cut in cubes and boil in water until soft, about 15 minutes
- Once boiled, strain and mash with a potato masher. You can also use a fork but it might take a while. A hand mixer is also an option but I recommend the potato masher in order to be able to play out your character's escalating emotions in a very physical way.
- Use a garlic crusher to crush the garlic or grind / hash it in another way
- Put the garlic, some salt and ½ of the olive oil in a bowl and mix..
- Add the garlic paste to the potato and mix with a wooden spoon.
- Add the rest of the olive oil gradually, 1 tablespoon at a time, mixing until oil is absorbed.
- Add a bit of lemon juice red wine vinegar for taste, mix well.
- Serve with bread

B) Online Randomizer

Instructions:
- Add the player names to "items"
- Choose 8 groups
- Assigned group 1 = Zeus
  Assigned group 2 = Athena
  Assigned group 3 = Aphrodite
  Assigned group 4 = Ares
  Assigned group 5 = Hades
  Assigned group 6 = Hermes
  Assigned group 7 = Dionysos
  Assigned group 8 = Apollo

C) SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

- GOAL 1: No Poverty
  "End poverty in all its forms everywhere"

- GOAL 2: Zero Hunger
  "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable

agriculture".

- GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being
  "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".

- GOAL 4: Quality Education
  "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

- GOAL 5: Gender Equality
  "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

- GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
  "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".

- GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
  "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all".

- GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
  "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".

- GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
  "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation".

- GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality
  "Reduce income inequality within and among countries".

- GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
  "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable".

- GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
  "Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns".

- GOAL 13: Climate Action
  "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy".

- GOAL 14: Life Below Water
  "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development"

- GOAL 15: Life on Land
  "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss".

- GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions
  "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at

all levels".

- GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal
"Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development".