

Zeus, Hera and Little Io

Once upon a time, a long time ago ...

Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades were the three sons of Cronos. When Cronos retired, the boys divided the world up between them. Zeus took the sky, Poseidon took the sea, and Hades ruled under the earth, the home of the dead. At first, it was great fun. But things had been just a bit slow lately.

Zeus thought about what he could do. He could turn himself into an octopus and visit his brother Poseidon under the sea, but he didn't feel much like a swim. He could visit Hades under the earth, but Hades was such a gloomy fellow. He could hurl thunderbolts, but it wasn't much fun without a target. He could hunt up one of the other gods. But the truth was, all the other gods were terrified of Zeus. He did have a terrible temper, but only when someone lied to him. Since the gods often lied, they mostly avoided Zeus. He could call for his wife, Hera. But the truth was, Zeus was a little frightened of his wife, Hera. He could find a beautiful woman. But he couldn't let Hera catch him. His wife Hera was very, very jealous.



Zeus flew down to earth and looked around for something to do. He spotted two men walking along a lane. Zeus cast his voice to make it sound like somebody else was speaking. He was very good at that.

"Hey stupid," Zeus cast his voice loudly, hoping to start a fight. One man turned to the other angrily.

"What did you say?" And before you could say Zeus, fists were flying. Zeus found that very amusing. A glint on the river caught his eye. It was Io, a beautiful river nymph.

"What an amazing young woman," Zeus said. He quickly fell in love.

Hoping to hide himself from the eagle eye of his jealous wife, Zeus covered the world with a large volume of thick, dense clouds. Then, he flew down to Io but Hera was not fooled easily. The thick coat of clouds made her suspicious immediately. Zeus looked up.

"It's Hera!" he gulped. Quickly, Zeus changed Io into a cow hoping to trick her. When Hera landed, all she found was an innocent looking Zeus standing next to a little white cow.

"This little cow appeared out of nowhere," he told his wife, acting surprised. Hera was not fooled.

"What a beautiful cow," she gushed admiringly. "May I have it as a present?"

Not knowing what else to do because he didn't want to get into trouble from his wife, Zeus had to agree. Hera cleverly sent the cow away under guard to ensure that it did not escape. Zeus was still smitten with Io wanted to rescue her from his wife. He arranged for Io to be rescued and set free. He sent his son Apollo to sing the guard asleep. When the guard closed his eyes, Io ran away. When Hera heard about it she immediately sent a gadfly after Io.

"Moo, moo," Io screamed, when the gadfly found her and bit her continuously. Io swam across a sea, hoping the gadfly would drown on the trip. She had no such luck. Feeling very sorry for herself, a dispirited Io travelled next to Egypt. It was then that Hera decided that Io had suffered enough. First, she made Zeus promise that he would never see Io again. Then she changed Io back into human form, and left her in Egypt. Egypt was a dismal place for a river nymph. There are crocodiles in the Nile. Back in Greece, Zeus gave a big sigh. Surely there was *something* he could do