



## The Transformation of Io

### CAST

<b>IO</b>	<i>A Transformed Princess</i>
<b>ZEUS</b>	<i>Lord of the Heavens</i>
<b>HERA</b>	<i>Queen of Heaven</i>
<b>HERMES</b>	<i>Messenger God</i>
<b>ARGUS</b>	<i>Many-Eyed Monster</i>

**NARRATOR:** For years, a lone white heifer roamed the highways and by-ways of ancient Greece. No one tried to stand in her way or stop her progress, for they knew she was no normal beast. She had once been a beautiful princess, but was now cursed to live life in such an unflattering form. Her name was Io.

Her misfortune had begun many years before, when Zeus had appeared to her in a restless dream and requested to be her lover.

**ZEUS:** Fair Princess. I am Zeus, Lord of the Gods. I have seen your *charms* from above. The arrows of desire have pierced me—and I am on

fire. Will you consent to be mine? I will make you happier than any woman upon the Earth.

**NARRATOR:** Io found this quite shocking, and within her breast her heart beat desirously. To be the lover of a god—what prestige. She had no idea what gifts the immortals bestowed upon those they loved, but she was sure it was something undreamt of.

**IO:** I agree, my lord. Tee Hee.

**NARRATOR:** And so the affair was begun. As the sun rose, Zeus spirited her away to a faraway meadow and appeared to her in all his glory.

**ZEUS:** Long have I waited for this, my sweet. But, first, let me overcast the sky so that my wife's spying eye cannot see us.

**IO:** (*nervously*) Your wife?

**ZEUS:** (*confidently*) Ah. Don't worry about her. She's a hideous old thing. I'm only concerned with *you* right now.

**NARRATOR:** With a wave of his mighty hand, mist filled the meadow—until the sun was all but obstructed. He smiled upon this with satisfaction and swept the maiden quickly into his arms.

Within the hanging gardens of Olympus, Hera strolled casually. Her husband had left the palace early that day. "Business among the mortals," he had said. But she had her suspicions.

**HERA:** (*to herself*) I must have Iris follow him. That fool thinks he's pulled the wool over my eyes. If only I were a bit more mighty, I would punish him *permanently* for his unfaithfulness.

**NARRATOR:** As she said these words, her gaze happened to stray over the balcony to the world below.

**HERA:** What the—

**NARRATOR:** A haze lay over one portion of the countryside. Nothing could be seen beneath it.

**HERA:** Ha! I knew it! You arrogant fool!

**NARRATOR:** Swift as an arrow, Hera vaulted over the railing of the balcony and shot down through the atmosphere toward the hideaway of her amorous husband. The fog beat at her vision, and she slammed to the ground with an earth-shaking jolt.

**ZEUS:** Mother Earth save us all! It's my wife!

**IO:** (*frightened*) Oh gods.

**HERA:** (*screaming*) Where are you, you dolt? I know you're around here somewhere—hiding in the smoke with your mortal hussy!

**IO:** What will she do to me?

**ZEUS:** Shhhh. Be still. I will transform you—until she has left.

**IO:** But...

**ZEUS:** Trust me.

**NARRATOR:** The Queen of Heaven began swiping at the cloud around her—growing angrier by the second.

**HERA:** (*raging*) I know you're here! Show yourself! Be a man!

**NARRATOR:** The haze was at once whisked away—revealing Zeus standing beside a pristinely white—though somewhat scared—heifer.

**ZEUS:** (*acting surprised*) Hera? What a surprise!

**HERA:** (*calmly*) Zeus, what are you doing?

**ZEUS:** Me? Oh, nothing. I was just admiring this gorgeous cow here.

**HERA:** Oh really. And what about this atmospheric disturbance? Clouds aren't commonly found on the ground! You weren't trying to obstruct someone's view, were you?

**ZEUS:** Atmospheric disturbance? Oh, you mean the fog. That must be my fault. I've had a headache today. Whenever I have one of those, for some reason, the weather seems to change. (*nervous laugh*) Ahem. Yes. That's it.

**NARRATOR:** Hera eyed her husband suspiciously.

**HERA:** Uh-huh. And why exactly were you so interested in this cow, did you say?

**NARRATOR:** Zeus looked nervously to his transformed lover and began to stammer.

**ZEUS:** Well, you know—it's a beautiful specimen—and—uh—

**HERA:** Fine eyes? Large udders?

**ZEUS:** No—no—you see, I was looking at it—because—because—(*sudden idea*) it's a present!

**HERA:** For whom?

**ZEUS:** For you, of course!

**IO:** Moo?

**ZEUS:** I knew how you—love—cows...

**NARRATOR:** His wife's frown quickly transformed into a smile.

**HERA:** (*fake happiness*) Well, why didn't you say so, Husband? And here I was thinking that it was one of your little hussies—transformed. Whew. What a relief.

**ZEUS:** Nope. None of that here.

**NARRATOR:** Hera stepped forward and began to stroke the shaking haunches of the princess.

**HERA:** Thank you so much. I know exactly what I will do with it, too.

**ZEUS:** And what's that, my dear?

**HERA:** (*slyly*) I will butcher it at once, of course.

**ZEUS:** (*shocked*) What? Butcher it?

**IO:** (*shocked*) Moo?

**HERA:** Of course, Dear. What else would I do with this? I can't have a smelly old cow stinking up my chambers, can I?

**ZEUS:** I meant for you to keep it—as a pet, you know. But I'll need to take it and have it groomed first, of course.

**NARRATOR:** The goddess stepped between Zeus and his lover.

**HERA:** I think it's been *groomed* enough. Very well. I will not butcher it *yet*. I'll keep it, but it's such a fine cow. I'm afraid someone will steal it. Aphrodite might want a cow of her own and try to steal mine! I'll have to put a guard on it.

**ZEUS:** A guard? No, no, Dear. No one would try to steal this beast away. Even if they did, I would replace it immediately—with an even finer one.

**HERA:** I could not bear it, Zeus. I love *this* cow. In fact, I think I will name her. I'll name her, Whitey. Do you like that name, Whitey?

**IO:** (*negative*) Moo.

**HERA:** See? We're inseparable. Thank you so much, my husband. This is the best gift a wife can ask for.

**NARRATOR:** She smiled good-naturedly at Zeus, who began to say something but stopped.

**ZEUS:** Well—I guess I'll be going—now that you have your—your—

**NARRATOR:** He waved a hand at Io, who looked back at him helplessly.

**HERA:** (*cheerfully*) Goodbye!

**ZEUS:** Hmmmm.

**NARRATOR:** The Lord of Olympus turned—his shoulders slumped in regret—and disappeared in a puff of smoke. Smirking to herself, Hera rounded on her animal ward.

**HERA:** (*gloating*) So—thought you would get away with it, didn't you? What a pathetic disguise. I mean, *really*. I'll teach you the hard way to stay away from my husband.

**NARRATOR:** Io cowered in fright.

**HERA:** I cannot undo Zeus's transformation, or I would choose a much worse form for you. What I *can* do is put a guard about you—so that no one can get near you while I think of a suitable end for a cow such as yourself.

**NARRATOR:** Hera cupped her celestial hands together and bellowed toward the sky.

**HERA:** (*yelling*) Iris! Iris! Get that good-for-nothing Argus down here at once. I need his services.

**NARRATOR:** The air was silent for a moment, and then a faraway sizzling sound could be heard. Spreading across the sky, a magnificent rainbow headed directly for their location. The meadow filled with color, and a towering form was shadowed within.

**HERA:** Argus!

**NARRATOR:** The shimmering light disappeared, and Argus appeared. Muscle on top of muscle padded his gargantuan body, and

upon his brow were a hundred eyes—all blinking and staring in different directions.

**HERA:** Over here! I have a job for you.

**ARGUS:** (*dumb voice*) Yes, my queen.

**HERA:** Argus, please look at me when I speaking to you.

**ARGUS:** (*defensively*) Argus is looking at his queen.

**HERA:** (*grumbling*) I hate that. I can never tell. (*pause*) Anyway, this heifer here is one of Zeus's hussies. Watch her. Keep her guarded, until I can dream up a fitting punishment for her.

**ARGUS:** Duh. Yes, melody.

**HERA:** (*evilily*) I was thinking she'd make some nice steaks—or maybe some beef jerky.

**ARGUS:** (*licking lips*) Mmmm. Sounds good!

**HERA:** Watch her! Let no one near her! And whatever you do, don't fall asleep on the job!

**ARGUS:** Do not worry. Argus' eyes sleep one at a time. That way Argus is always seeing, and eyes still get rest.

**HERA:** (*sarcastically*) Fascinating. Apparently, being a freak of nature has its advantages. Well, I'm off. There are three other wenches I have to deal with today. My husband has been a busy man. Remember your job. If you fail me, I'll put each of those eyes out myself.

**ARGUS:** (*whimper*)

**IO:** (*whimper*)

**NARRATOR:** Hera raised her arms above her and with a flash of flame disappeared.

Io's monstrous guardian turned to her.

**ARGUS:** Moo Cow, do not be afraid. Argus will not eat you. Argus is vegetarian.

**IO:** (*relieved*) Moooo.

**NARRATOR:** And so Argus of the Hundred Eyes seated himself upon the grass beside the white heifer. Io—though her mind reeled with tormenting thoughts—made the best of the situation and began to graze upon the lush turf. Every move she made, her watcher's gaze followed. So they spent the day—guard and guardian.

Up on Olympus, a frustrated Zeus had frantically called his son Hermes to him.

**ZEUS:** Hermes, I have a mission for you.

**HERMES:** In trouble with Hera again?

**ZEUS:** You have no idea. That woman won't give up. Of course, I can't really blame her. It is adultery. I just can't help myself, y'know. I have *needs*.

**HERMES:** You don't have to explain yourself to me, Father. I'm thankful for your adultery. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here—or Apollo for that matter—or Artemis—or Dionysus—or about half of the mortal world—

**ZEUS:** (*irritated*) I get the point. Anyway, Hera has taken captive one of my lovers, a white heifer.

**HERMES:** (*nudgingly*) A cow? Why, you old bull-god, you...

**ZEUS:** (*angrily*) She wasn't a cow to begin with! She was a gorgeous princess!

**HERMES:** Hey, I'm not judgin' you.

**ZEUS:** *As I was saying*, the Argus is watching her—and that's a problem. You must trick him and steal Princess Io back for me.

**HERMES:** Argus is the guy with the excellent vision—right?

**ZEUS:** Yes, I'm afraid so.

**HERMES:** So—let me get this straight. You want me to sneak up on a creature that can see in every direction and steal one of your mortal merry-makers out from under his very nose?

**ZEUS:** You got it.

**HERMES:** (*sigh*) Being the cleverest really is a curse, isn't it?

**NARRATOR:** Hermes flew from the mountain—wrecking his brain frantically, trying to come up with a scheme and achieve the impossible.

**HERMES:** He can't keep all those eyes open all the time. There's got to be some way to lull him to sleep.

**NARRATOR:** He dug in the satchel slung at his side and produced a set of reed pipes.

**HERMES:** These should do nicely. I haven't found a being yet who doesn't think pipe playing is the most boring thing on Earth.

**NARRATOR:** Beating his way down through banks of clouds, the golden form of Hermes started to change—becoming common, coarse, and badly dressed. A ragged tunic and a large floppy hat replaced his Olympian garb. He touched down not far away from the Argus and his bovine captive.

(*pipe music*)

**ARGUS:** (*speaking to Io*) And then, Moo Cow, that is when mighty queen take Argus in and give Argus job. (*pause*) Argus hears music.

**IO:** (*surprised*) Moo?

**NARRATOR:** The eyes of the monster tracked to where a scraggly-looking man was frolicking down the path—playing jubilantly upon his instrument.

**ARGUS:** Stop! Who are you, Pipeman?

**NARRATOR:** Hermes stopped in his tracks and addressed one-hundred inquisitive glances.

**HERMES:** (*happily*) I am a shepherd, of course. See my ridiculous clothes and my dirty hands? I will admit at the moment I am rather sheep-less, but today is my day for pipe-playing instead. Mondays, sheep-watching. Tuesdays, pipe-playing.

**ARGUS:** (*happily*) Music is very pretty. Can Pipeman play more?

**HERMES:** Certainly, my good monstrosity. Care if I pull up a rock?

**NARRATOR:** The shepherd god jauntily perched himself upon a nearby boulder.

**HERMES:** My, my. What a wonderful heifer! Say—I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

**ARGUS:** (*excitedly*) Play! Play for Argus! But no funny business. Argus sees everything.

**HERMES:** Obviously. That's a face only a mother could love—maybe not even her.

**NARRATOR:** Hermes winked at the confused cow and began to produce a trilling melody from his pipes, one that recalled a brook babbling far away. The soothing sound filled the air, and after several minutes, many of Argus' lids began to droop. Almost all closed in slumber, but one—one in front—refused to sleep. Hermes played on.

(*pipe music*)

An hour later, his fingers cramping from their activity, the eye finally submitted to the spell of the music.

**ARGUS:** (*loud snoring*)

**HERMES:** Now that you're easy pickings...

**NARRATOR:** The mischievous god withdrew a shining sword from the pouch slung at his side.

**HERMES:** Sucker!

**NARRATOR:** With a quick slice he severed the monster's head from its body. The hundred eyes had enough time to open before they once again became dim with death. With its deformed head rolling helplessly into the grass, the body slumped forward.

**IO:** (*excited*) Moo!

**HERMES:** You're free! Run while you still can! It won't take my stereotypically evil step-mother long to figure out what's happened.

**NARRATOR:** The transformed maiden looked to the Messenger God questioningly. Was he not going to turn her back into her normal self?

**HERMES:** (*sadly*) Only Zeus can undo what he has done! Run! And when there is no harm of his wife finding him out, he will come to you and transform you once again!

**NARRATOR:** The animal turned and galloped away.

**HERMES:** (*loud yawn*) Wow. I almost put *myself* to sleep with that one.

**NARRATOR:** There was a blip, and Hermes dissolved.

Seconds later the fabric of the universe was again disturbed. Hera appeared.

**HERA:** What the—

**NARRATOR:** With suppressed rage, she flew to the carcass of her favorite sentry.

**HERA:** (*angrily*) Argus! What measly peon of Zeus has done this to you?

**NARRATOR:** She picked the severed head up into her arms and cradled it almost lovingly.

**HERA:** My faithful servant, let your hundred eyes never be forgotten. I will place them upon the feathers of my peacocks. There they will watch out over the world for eternity, and all will remember your greatness.

**NARRATOR:** With a sniff she wiped the sadness from her face and dropped the head to the ground.

**HERA:** (*seething*) So, the harlot has found a way to escape I see! Run, Cow! Run!

**NARRATOR:** The Queen of Heaven snapped her fingers and a faint buzzing grew closer. A tiny gadfly landed in her palm.

**HERA:** Pursue her. Never give her rest. Drive her on through country after country. Make her regret her lust. Let her seek for death.

**NARRATOR:** The fly pursued Io for many years, stinging her side and spurring her ever onward. At last, when she reached the far-away land of Egypt, Zeus appeared to her there and restored her to her rightful form.