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## **CHALLENGING ATHENA**

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# CHALLENGING ATHENA

Written by Genevieve Aichele

Developed in collaboration with Clare Callaghan, Christy Cloutier, Blair Hundertmark, Elizabeth Iserman,  
Dennis McLaughlin & Susan Poulin

## CAST OF CHARACTERS (5F)

Arachne

Goddess Athena

Calliope (Muse of Music)

Clio (Muse of History)

Terpsichore (Muse of Dance)

All other characters can be doubled as needed 24m 9f 11either (all may be played by either gender)

Phaeton

Epaphus

Cygnus

Apollo

Zeus

Sun Hawk

Zeus

Odysseus

Eurylochus

Warriors (3 or more)

Circe

Hermes

Midas Golden

Perky Everlasting

Marygold

The Voice

Hermes

Orpheus

Eurydice

Apollo

Hades

Charon

Cerberus

Persephone

Shades

Hunters (2)

Danae

Zeus

Perseus

Danae's Father

Soothsayer

Island People

Evil King

Hermes

Hades

Athena

Grey Sisters (3)

Medusa

Gorgons

## NOTES

- The Muses can function as the Chorus with all 3 speaking together, or there can be an additional Chorus with flexible numbers, especially in Perseus & Medusa.
- Shadows – Non-speaking players who create scenery through movement, masks, held set pieces or however director wants to stage.

## CHALLENGING ATHENA

### SCENE 1 – Athena & Arachne

*Overture. Lights up on ARACHNE weaving. The MUSES observe her. When they all speak together, they are the CHORUS.*

**CALLIOPE:** Arachne.

**CHORUS:** Behold Arachne! Creator of beauty! Weaver of great talent!

**CLIO:** Master weaver.

**TERPSICH:** Proud weaver.

**CALLIOPE:** Even perhaps...

**CHORUS:** Too proud.

*Music as ATHENA appears.*

**CALLIOPE:** Athena.

**CHORUS:** Behold Athena!

**CLIO:** Goddess of wisdom.

**TERPSICH:** Goddess of civilization.

**CHORUS:** She who protects and she who judges.

**CALLIOPE:** Goddess of the domestic arts.

**CLIO:** Inventor of the trumpet.

**TERPSICH:** The chariot.

**CALLIOPE:** And weaving.

*A beat. The MUSES look at each other.*

**CHORUS:** Poor, proud Arachne.

*ATHENA approaches ARACHNE.*

**ATHENA:** Arachne.

**ARACHNE:** Who calls me?

**ATHENA:** Do you not recognize me, mortal woman?

**ARACHNE:** Athena. (*She bows.*) I am honored by the presence of a goddess.

**ATHENA:** You do not kneel to me?

**ARACHNE:** Why certainly, certainly I will kneel if that makes you happy.

*She kneels. A beat. ARACHNE rises.*

**ATHENA:** You are too proud.

**ARACHNE:** And why should I not be proud? I am renowned throughout Greece for my exceptional weaving.

*You should be proud of me also, for bringing honor to this art that you supposedly invented.*

**ATHENA:** Supposedly?

**ARACHNE:** Ah, well there is no proof, is there? Who's to say a clever mortal did not invent the art of weaving and you've simply taken credit for it, like all the gods do? I myself have invented many new techniques for creating new textures, new combinations of color and pattern. Look!

*She holds up her cloth which ATHENA examines thoughtfully.*

**ATHENA:** It is indeed quite beautiful.

**ARACHNE:** Of course it is. I could teach you how to do this, if you like.

*ATHENA laughs very suddenly and startles ARACHNE.*

**ATHENA:** Oh, mortal, you are too presumptuous! But in spite of that, I do find you amusing. Perhaps I will bring you back to Olympus to weave for the gods.

**ARACHNE:** Oh no, I am quite happy right here, thank you very much.

**ATHENA:** (*deadly serious now*) Your happiness is of no import, mortal. Proud, stupid mortal, daring to defy a goddess.

**ARACHNE:** I do defy you! I am a free woman and the best weaver in the world. I challenge you to a contest, a contest of skill in weaving!

**ATHENA:** A contest!

**CHORUS:** A contest? She challenges the goddess to a contest!?

**ATHENA:** I accept your challenge, mortal.

**ARACHNE:** Good. If I win, you will grant me my freedom to weave as I wish forever.

**ATHENA:** (*smiling*) Agreed.

*ARACHNE is a bit nonplussed that ATHENA has agreed so easily.*

**ARACHNE:** OK then... Who will be the judge?

**ATHENA:** (*gesturing to the audience*) The race of mortals.

**ARACHNE:** Then... how shall we begin?

*ATHENA snaps her fingers. The MUSES bring her loom.*

**ATHENA:** I shall begin, mortal. I will weave a story of hubris.

**CHORUS:** (*echoing each other*) Hubris... Hubris... Hubris...

**ATHENA:** Do you know what hubris is, Arachne?

**ARACHNE:** Of course. Hubris is another word for pride.

**ATHENA:** Yes, pride. Excessive pride. The pride of mortals who think they can compete with the gods. I will weave the story of Phaeton, the half-mortal son of my brother Apollo. Proud Phaeton, who thought he could drive the great sun chariot...

*Music and lights down. ATHENA and ARACHNE exit. PHAETON, EPAPHUS and CYGNUS enter and freeze in footrace tableau. MUSES (and other CHORUS members if used) freeze as if watching the race. Lights up.*

## SCENE 2 – Phaeton & the Sun Chariot

**CALLIOPE:** Phaeton, son of Apollo.

*PHAETON unfreezes and bows.*

**CLIO:** Cygnus, his best friend.

*CYGNUS unfreezes and bows.*

**TERPSICH:** And Epaphus, son of Zeus, the challenger.

*EPAPHUS unfreezes and bows. All three take starting positions.*

**CALLIOPE:** The race is on!

**CHORUS:** May the best man win!

*Music. They race in slow motion. PHAETON wins.*

**CALLIOPE:** The champion!

**CHORUS:** Phaeton! Phaeton! Phaeton!

**CYGNUS:** Congratulations, Phaeton. You really are an amazing athlete.

**EPAPHUS:** You think you're pretty special, don't you, Phaeton?

**PHAETON:** No, not special, just...

**CYGNUS:** A champion!

**PHAETON:** (*laughing*) Yeah, a champion.

**EPAPHUS:** But you're a nobody really, so of course you try to excel in these petty ways. I, as you know, am the son of Zeus, Lord of the Sky.

**CHORUS:** Zeus, Lord of the Sky!

**EPAPHUS:** My father has a lightning bolt for a spear. He hurls it at people from a thousand miles away.

**CHORUS:** Zeus, Lord of the Sky!

**EPAPHUS:** Whereas you don't even know who your father is.

**PHAETON:** Yes, I do. My father is Apollo, Lord of the Sun.

**CHORUS:** Apollo, Lord of the Sun.

**EPAPHUS:** Lord of the Sun, what's that compared to Zeus!

**PHAETON:** Without my father Apollo, there would be no day.

**CYGNUS:** Phaeton, tell him about the sun chariot.

**EPAPHUS:** The sun chariot?

**PHAETON:** Every day, Apollo drives the great golden sun chariot across the sky.

**CYGNUS:** It's pulled by four enormous horses.

**CALLIOPE:** Four enormous horses.

**CLIO:** Tall as mountains.

**TERPSICH:** Breathing fire.

**EPAPHUS:** Wow, does he ever let you drive it?

**PHAETON:** Un... of course, all the time.

**CYGNUS:** (*aside to Phaeton*) Phaeton, what are you saying? You've never even met your father!

**PHAETON:** Shhh! (*to EPAPHUS*) In fact, he promised me I could drive it all alone.

**EPAPHUS:** Really? When?

**PHAETON:** Uh... (*looking at CYGNUS, who is shaking his head*)...tomorrow.

**CHORUS:** Tomorrow. Tomorrow. Tomorrow.

**EPAPHUS:** How will I know it's you driving the chariot?

**PHAETON:** I'll circle down close to your house and wave to you from the chariot.

**EPAPHUS:** Cool. See you tomorrow then.

*EPAPHUS exits.*

**CYGNUS:** Phaeton, you shouldn't have lied. What are you going to do?

**PHAETON:** Cygnus, it's time I met my father. He'll let me drive it. I know he will. You'll see me up in the sky  
– tomorrow.

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**CHORUS:** Tomorrow. Tomorrow. Tomorrow.

**CYGNUS:** Well, I'll believe it when I see it. Good luck.

*CYGNUS exits.*

**PHAETON:** I'll guide myself by the morning star and the evening star, always heading east toward the dawn.  
I'll find him.

*Music begins as PHAETON journeys. SHADOWS create the scenery through which he travels, ending with the wood. SUN HAWK enters and observes.*

**CALLIOPE:** Phaeton begins his journey. He travels over tall mountains...

**CLIO:** Dry deserts...

**TERPSICH:** And grassy plains.

**CHORUS:** He crosses wide rivers and mighty oceans.

**CALLIOPE:** Until, completely exhausted, he falls asleep at the edge of a wood...

**SUN HAWK:** Which is guarded by Apollo's spy bird, the Sun Hawk.

*Music as SUN HAWK flies to APOLLO and ATHENA, who enter.*

**CLIO:** The Sun Hawk flew to Apollo and his twin sister, Athena.

**SUN HAWK:** My lord Apollo, I have seen your son, Phaeton.

**CHORUS:** Phaeton... Phaeton... Phaeton...

**APOLLO:** My son?

**ATHENA:** Where is he?

**SUN HAWK:** He is coming to see you. But he has lost his way and lies exhausted in the wood.

**APOLLO:** Bring him to me.

*Music. SUN HAWK flies back to Phaeton, wakes him and brings him to Apollo. PHAETON kneels before his father.*

**PHAETON:** My father.

**APOLLO:** What is it you wish from me, my son?

**PHAETON:** I need your help, Father.

**APOLLO:** I will do anything in my power to help you.

**ATHENA:** Be careful what you promise, Apollo.

**PHAETON:** Anything, Father?

**APOLLO:** Anything, my son.

**PHAETON:** I want to drive the sun chariot across the sky. By myself.

**APOLLO:** Impossible!

**CHORUS:** Impossible! Impossible! Impossible!

**APOLLO:** Those horses are stronger than the wind. No one can drive them but me. They will race away with the chariot and the earth will burn up. What you ask me is impossible!

**CHORUS:** Impossible! Impossible! Impossible!

**PHAETON:** But, Father, you promised.

**ATHENA:** Yes, you promised, Apollo.

*Beat.*

**APOLLO:** Then I suppose I must keep my promise. Bring the sun chariot!

*Music as SHADOWS become the sun chariot and horses.*

**CALLIOPE:** The great sun chariot of Apollo!

**CHORUS:** The horses are enormous.... They have golden manes... And golden hooves...

**CLIO:** And hot...

**CHORUS:** Hot!

**TERPSICH:** Yellow...

**CHORUS:** Yellow!

**CALLIOPE:** Eyes.

**CHORUS:** Eyes.

**APOLLO:** The reins are too big for you to hold.

**PHAETON:** Just tie them around my waist.

**ATHENA:** Better give him clear instructions, Apollo.

**APOLLO:** Listen well, my son. Keep to the middle way. Too high and the earth will freeze. Too low and the earth will burn. Always, always... keep to the middle way.

**CHORUS:** Keep to the middle way!

**APOLLO:** Be very, very careful.

**PHAETON:** I will, Father. You can count on me. Here we...

*The horses start before he is ready.*

Gooo!!

*APOLLO, ATHENA and SUN HAWK exit. SHADOWS form tableaux of the journey.*

**CALLIOPE:** See Phaeton, son of Apollo, drive the sun chariot.

**CHORUS:** The great sun wheels turn. Morning comes to the earth.

**PHAETON:** This is easy. Yup, this is nothing. I got this.

*CYGNUS & EPAPHUS enter. He waves to them.*

Hey, there's Cygnus and Epaphus!

**CYGNUS:** Phaeton, is that you?

**EPAPHUS:** Come closer, we want to see if it's really you!

**PHAETON:** I'm coming.

*(He pulls on the reins)*

Down, down!

**CHORUS:** Down! Down! Down!

**CLIO:** The horses plunge toward the earth!

**EPAPHUS:** Hey, my house is burning!

**CYGNUS:** The trees are burning!

**EPAPHUS:** Yeeoww! My clothes are burning off!

**CHORUS:** Hot! Hot! Hot!

**TERPSICH:** Pull on the reins!

**PHAETON:** *(trying to pull)* Up! Up!

**CHORUS:** Up! Up! Up!

**CALLIOPE:** The horses gallop upward, pulling the chariot away from earth.

**CYGNUS:** Look, the sun is no larger than a star!

**EPAPHUS:** Earth is freezing. Everything is freezing!



**CHORUS:** Everywhere people died in the cold.

**CYGNUS:** Phaeton, where are you? Come back!

**PHAETON:** I can't! I'm up in the stars!

**CHORUS:** He's up in the stars!

**CLIO:** Leo the Lion roars at him!

**TERPSICH:** Taurus the Bull charges him!

**CALLIOPE:** And see, the monster Scorpius swings his enormous tail!

*Horses careen away from all these attacks and change direction.*

**CHORUS:** The horses dive to earth again!

**PHAETON:** (*pulling desperately on the reins*). Stop! Stop!

**CALLIOPE:** They do not stop.

**CHORUS:** They come too close.

**CLIO:** The ice melts!

**TERPSICH:** The earth floods!

**CHORUS:** Keep to the middle way!

**PHAETON:** The middle way, the middle way... Whoa! Slow down!

**CALLIOPE:** The mighty horses go too fast.

**CLIO:** They miss the hand of their master Apollo.

**TERPSICH:** They gallop around and around the earth.

**CHORUS:** (w/CYGNUS & EPAPHUS)

It's light!

It's dark!

It's day!

It's night!

We burn!

We freeze!

Zeus! Zeus!

Your people call!

Help us, help!

Your people call!

*All freeze. Silence. ZEUS enters.*

**ZEUS:** Who calls me?

**CHORUS:** We call! We call! Your people call!

We freeze! We burn! Your people call!

**ZEUS:** That is not Apollo driving the sun chariot. I will stop him!

*Music. ZEUS throws a thunderbolt. PHAETON is knocked out of the chariot, which transforms into the river Eridanus. PHAETON falls in slow motion.*

**CALLIOPE:** Zeus throws his mighty thunderbolt and Phaeton falls...

**CLIO:** His body flaming like a star...

**TERPSICH:** Into the river Eridanus.

*PHAETON falls into the river.*

**CYGNUS:** Phaeton! I'll save you!

**EPAPHUS:** It's too late, Cygnus. You can't save him.

*CYGNUS dives into the river, but comes up alone.*

**CYGNUS:** I will find him.

*He dives again, and keeps diving.*

**CALLIOPE:** Cygnus dives...

**CLIO:** Again and again...

**TERPSICH:** Like a sad swan.

**CHORUS:** A sad, sad swan.

**EPAPHUS:** Zeus, my father, please have pity on him!

**CALLIOPE:** And mighty Zeus turned Cygnus into a swan.

**CHORUS:** A sad, sad swan.

**CLIO:** And hung him in the sky.

*Cygnus is now among the stars.*

**TERPSICH:** He travels every summer...

**CHORUS:** Across the Milky Way.

**EPAPHUS:** Still searching for his best friend.

**CHORUS:** Still searching for his best friend.

*Music. Lights down. All exit except MUSES. ARACHNE & ATHENA enter.*

### SCENE 3 – Arachne & Athena

*Lights up on Athena showing her cloth to the audience. MUSES lead all in applause.*

**CALLIOPE:** Athena!

**CLIO:** Glorious goddess!

**TERPSICH:** Weaver of wonders!

**ARACHNE:** Very nice, very lovely. All that golden flame and blue water and silver icy stars. Good color choices.

**ATHENA:** Of course.

**ARACHNE:** But what a sad story. Poor Phaeton.

**ATHENA:** Poor Phaeton? He deserved his fate. He was too proud, thinking he could drive the mighty chariot of Apollo.

**ARACHNE:** Well, Apollo shouldn't have let him drive it then.

**ATHENA:** That's true – I tried to warn him. But sometimes we gods have to let mortals weave their own... fate.

**ARACHNE:** What about poor Cygnus? He was just trying to help his friend.

**ATHENA:** And he was rewarded. He lives forever in the summer sky.

**ARACHNE:** Oh, I'm sure that makes up for missing his life – growing up, growing wise, falling in love, making art. You gods think being immortal is what everyone wants.

**ATHENA:** Isn't it? You seek to be immortal through your weaving.

**ARACHNE:** (*reluctantly*) Yes, I suppose that's true, but...

**ATHENA:** Is it not your turn to weave? What story will you tell?

**CHORUS:** What story will you tell?

**ARACHNE:** I'll weave a story of the gods' capriciousness, their senseless whims and cruelty to mortals. The hero Odysseus, who spent so many long years tormented by the gods...

**CHORUS:** Tormented by the gods...

*Lights down. ATHENA & ARACHNE exit. ODYSSEUS, EURYLOCHUS & WARRIORS enter.*

#### SCENE 4 - Odysseus & Circe

*ODYSSEUS and his men are frozen in tableau. As MUSES describe his journey, each monster or event passes by and another warrior disappears.*

**CALLIOPE:** All hail brave Odysseus!

**CHORUS & WARRIORS:** Odysseus! Odysseus!

**CLIO:** Brave Odysseus won the war!

**CHORUS & WARRIORS:** Odysseus! Odysseus!

**TERPSICH:** After ten long years of battle...

**CHORUS:** Ten long years...

**CALLIOPE:** His ships are loaded with Trojan gold and wine.

**CLIO:** He and his men are going home!

**WARRIORS:** To Ithaca! To Ithaca!

**TERPSICH:** But not yet, Odysseus...

**CHORUS:** Not yet, Odysseus!

**CALLIOPE:** First, the storm blows...

**MUSES:** And men are lost!

**CHORUS:** And ships are lost!

**CLIO:** Then the lotus-eaters...

**MUSES:** His men are lost!

**CHORUS:** His ships are lost!

**TERPSICH:** Then Cyclops, fierce Polyphemus...

**MUSES:** More men are lost!

**CHORUS:** More ships are lost!

**CALLIOPE:** The City of Brass, the Bag of Winds, the Giants and the Cannibals!

**MUSES:** Fly, Odysseus, fly!

**CHORUS:** Fly, Odysseus, fly!

*Wind, water, storm all pass. ODYSSEUS and his men drag themselves to land.*

**WARRIOR 1:** Odysseus, what is this place? Where are we?

**ODYSSEUS:** I don't know.

**EURYLOCH:** It certainly isn't Ithaca.

**WARRIOR 2:** Will we ever find our way home?

**ODYSSEUS:** The gods will help us.

**EURYLOCH:** Will they send us a map? We have angered Poseidon and the gods have abandoned us forever.

**WARRIOR 3:** We're lost, we'll never get back to Ithaca!

**ODYSSEUS:** Enough! As long as there is hope, we are not lost. We will rest ourselves and explore this island.

**CALLIOPE:** And so they hunted...

**CLIO:** And rested...

**TERPSICH:** Until night passed away into the dawn.

**ODYSSEUS:** Let us see what there is to be seen. But be careful. I don't want to lose any more men. I will go east. Eurylochus, you take the men and go west.

**EURYLOCH:** Ay, ay, sir.

*Music. ODYSSEUS exits. SHADOWS become a house. CIRCE enters and the MUSES announcer her.*

**MUSES:** The house of Circe.

**EURYLOCH:** Look, what's that? A house!

**WARRIORS:** A woman!

**CHORUS:** A woman!

**CIRCE:** Hi, boys. Would you like to come in for some refreshment?

**WARRIORS:** Sure!

**EURYLOCH:** Wait, maybe we should wait for Odysseus.

**WARRIOR 1:** Are you kidding? Come on, men!

**CIRCE:** Welcome to the house of Circe.

*WARRIORS enter and the house closes around them.*

**CALLIOPE:** What's the matter, Eurylochus?

**CLIO:** What do you hear, Eurylochus?

*Sounds of laughter come from inside the house.*

**TERPSICH:** Why don't you join them, Eurylochus?

**CALLIOPE:** What are you afraid of, Eurylochus?

*Laughter to shouts and screams, then squealing.*

**EURYLOCH:** What is happening in there? (*shouting*) Odysseus!!

**ODYSSEUS:** (*entering at a run*) Why are you shouting, Eurylochus? Where are the men?

**EURYLOCH:** The woman! She's killed them! She's eaten them!

**ODYSSEUS:** What woman? What are you talking about?

**EURYLOCH:** They went into that house. I heard the laughing, and then... nothing but these horrible squeals.

**ODYSSEUS:** We must save them. Come on!

**EURYLOCH:** Are you crazy? I'm not going in there!

**CALLIOPE:** At that moment...

**CHORUS:** The door opened.

*House opens and WARRIORS, as pigs, run grunting around ODYSSEUS and EURYLOCHUS.*

*CIRCE emerges from the house and calls to the pigs, then sees ODYSSEUS.*

**CIRCE:** Here piggy, piggies... (*pigs go to her*). Why, hello there, handsome, come on in and have something to drink.

*CIRCE and pigs go back into the house. HERMES enters.*

**ODYSSEUS:** (*heading to the house*) Wait, what have you done to my men?

**HERMES:** Odysseus, wait!

**CHORUS:** Wait... wait... wait...

*EURYLOCHUS, MUSES and CHORUS all freeze.*

**ODYSSEUS:** (*warily*) Who are you?

**HERMES:** Have no fear of me, Odysseus. The gods have sent me to your aid.

**EURYLOCH:** (*unfreezes, aside to audience*) Of course, they get us into this mess and then send help.

*(He freezes again).*

**ODYSSEUS:** Hermes?

**HERMES:** The very same. Now where do you think you're going? Are you still wandering into places you know nothing about?

**ODYSSEUS:** My men are in that house! I'm not leaving without them.

**HERMES:** Do you know who lives there? Her name is Circe and she's a goddess as well as a witch. She likes to invite passing strangers to feast on her drugged food. Then she turns them into animals with her magic wand. I'm afraid she's turned your men into pigs.

*Grunting and squealing sounds come from the house.*

**ODYSSEUS:** Ha! Let her try any of her spells on me and she'll regret it!

**HERMES:** Ah, but Odysseus, the same thing will happen to you. Unless you eat this first.

*Hermes holds up a white flower.*

**ODYSSEUS:** What is that?

**HERMES:** It's called moly. It will protect you from her drugs and that magic wand. Here is what you must do...

*(whispering instructions to ODYSSEUS)*

Good luck!

**ODYSSEUS:** Thank you, Hermes.

*HERMES joins MUSES. ODYSSEUS turns to EURYLOCHUS.*

**ODYSSEUS:** Come on, Eurylochus!

*EURYLOCHUS stays frozen.*

**ODYSSEUS:** Eurylochus, wake up!

*ODYSSEUS snaps his finger and all unfreeze.*

**ODYSSEUS:** Let's go!

**EURYLOCH:** Let's go!

**CHORUS:** Let's go!

*As they start toward the house, the door opens and CIRCE enters.*

**CIRCE:** Welcome, gentlemen, wouldn't you like to have a little drink?

**EURYLOCH:** Uh, no. Thank you.

*ODYSSEUS takes a drink. CIRCE waits but nothing happens. ODYSSEUS advances.*

**ODYSSEUS:** What have you done to my men?

**CHORUS:** What have you done to his men?

**CIRCE:** Who are you? How can you resist my magic? No other man has done that.

**ODYSSEUS:** I am Odysseus.

**CHORUS & EURYLOCHUS:** Odysseus! Odysseus! Odysseus!

**CIRCE:** Odysseus!

**CHORUS: & EURYLOCHUS:** Odysseus! Odysseus! Odysseus!

**CIRCE:** On the day I was born, a prophecy was written that one day I would be overpowered by Odysseus,  
King of Ithaca.

**CHORUS: & EURYLOCHUS:** Odysseus! Odysseus! Odysseus!

**CIRCE:** *(to CHORUS)* Shut up!

**ODYSSEUS:** Give me back my men, Circe, or you will be sorry you were ever born.

**CIRCE:** Whatever you say, Odysseus! Your wish is my command. Here piggy, piggy, piggies! Come to mama!

*Music. The pigs are changed back to men. They crowd around ODYSSEUS.*

**WARRIORS:** Odysseus, you saved us! Thank you, thank you!

**CALLIOPE:** And Circe, the witch and goddess...

**CLIO:** Hard-hearted sorceress...

**TERPSICH:** Was touched by Osysseus' courage....

**CHORUS:** And the loyalty of his men.

**CIRCE:** Odysseus, you and your men have had a terrible journey. Why don't you rest here for awhile? My  
home is yours for as long as you wish.

**WARRIOR 1:** As long as we bring home the bacon!

**WARRIOR 2:** And don't make pigs of ourselves at dinner, right?

**WARRIOR 3:** Hey, don't be such a ham!

**EURYLOCH:** A rest would be good, Odysseus, but can we trust her?

**ODYSSEUS:** There comes a point, Eurylochus, when we can only trust to the gods.

**EURYLOCH:** Oh. Great.

**ODYSSEUS:** And our own wits, of course.

**EURYLOCH:** *(sighing)* Provided we still have them, of course.

**CIRCE:** Then you'll stay? For a little while?

**ODYSSEUS:** For a little while.

**CALLIOPE:** A little while...

**CLIO:** A little month...

**TERPSICH:** A little year...

**HERMES:** And then we send him on his next adventure...

**HERMES, MUSES & CHORUS:** To Hades!

*They all laugh.*

**CIRCE:** So, Odysseus, I hope you're not a vegetarian. I've got this incredible sausage recipe I want you to  
try....

*Music. All exit except the MUSES. ARACHNE and ATHENA enter.*

## SCENE 5 - Arachne & Athena

*ATHENA examines ARACHNE's cloth.*

**ATHENA:** Nice work with the pigs. They look just like every man I ever knew.

**MUSES:** Every man we ever knew!

**ARACHNE:** You don't feel sorry for poor Odysseus?

**ATHENA:** Sorry? Hermes and the gods helped him get out of that situation. Besides, he would have survived no matter what. Circe just likes to have her little fun.

**ARACHNE:** You see, that's what I mean! "*Her little fun!*" Odysseus was a hero, a good man, and all you gods and goddesses did was push him this way, pull him that way, punish him and help him, depending on whatever you felt like at the moment.

**ATHENA:** Ah, but that's the point.

**MUSES:** The point. The point.

**ATHENA:** Odysseus was a good man, and all his trials made him a better one. But I do admit we were all a little jealous of him. He had the greatest gift any man could ever have and we had nothing to do with it.

**ARACHNE:** And what was that?

**ATHENA:** The love of his wife, Penelope. She waited for all those years.

**MUSES:** All those lonely years.

**ARACHNE:** Shows you how smart she was!

**ATHENA:** Actually, she was very clever. Her plan with the suitors, for instance.

**ARACHNE:** Are we going to get on with this contest or have you run out of ideas?

**ATHENA:** Oh, I have an endless store of ideas. I think I'll weave you another story about hubris. Let's see... Midas, the man with the golden touch...

**MUSES:** The Man with the Golden Touch.

**ATHENA:** (*picking up a cloth*) But this classical style is growing tiresome. I think I want something a bit more... high tech...

*Lights down. All exit. PERKY and MIDAS enter to opposite sides of the stage.*

## SCENE 6 - Midas, the Man with the Golden Touch

**PERKY:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is Perky Everlasting, coming to you live from GNN, the Global News Network. We are now on line with our live interview of Mr. Midas Golden. Transmission commencing. Mr. Golden, are you there?

**MIDAS:** Yes, I'm here, Perky. Good to talk to you.

**PERKY:** Mr. Golden, our viewers would like to know a little something about you. You were born on the tiny island of Phrygia, is that correct?

**MIDAS:** Yes, Perky, that's correct. I was born in a tiny little town with only six houses, a post office, and an underground garage.

**PERKY:** A post office! That 21<sup>st</sup> century – how quaint. And what school did you attend, Mr. Golden?

**MIDAS:** The Northeast Ivy League Consortium. I studied Business Law at Harvard, Hotel Administration at Dartmouth, Theatre & Communication at Yale, Medicine at Princeton, Politics at NYU, and Animal Husbandry at the University of New Hampshire [or other local university].

**PERKY:** And you began your career at....?

**MIDAS:** MONNEY. That's Mutual of New New York. Two N's in that, Perky.

**PERKY:** Where you had a meteoric rise.

**MIDAS:** I don't know if I'd call it meteoric.

**PERKY:** Certainly it was, since you started in the email room and worked your way up to where you are right now: Western Hemispheric Regional Controller of Inter-Commercial Wire Transfers and Transcontinental Electronic Acquisitions.

*MARYGOLD enters.*

**MARYGOLD:** Daddy, Daddy, I lost a tooth!

**MIDAS:** Marygold! Sweetheart, Daddy's really busy right now.

**MARYGOLD:** But I lost my tooth.

**MIDAS:** Yes, yes, well, we'll have to put it under your thermarest hypo-allergenic cranial support unit.

**MARYGOLD:** Daddy, will the Tooth Fairy bring me some more stocks?

**MIDAS:** Of course, of course, but I can't talk to you right now...

**PERKY:** Transmission is continuing, Mr. Golden. Do we have an interview here?

**MIDAS:** Sorry, Perky, just talking to my daughter, Marygold.

**MARYGOLD:** Daddy, wiggle my tooth!

**MIDAS:** Isn't your mother taking care of you today?

**PERKY:** And what are your career plans for the future, Mr. Golden?

**MIDAS:** Well, Perky, in the future I'm looking at...

**MARYGOLD:** Daddy, I brought you your flowers today.

**PERKY:** Flowers, Mr. Golden?

**MIDAS:** Yes, yes, my daughter Marygold brings me flowers every day. Marygold, you've got to get out of here now. Where is your mother?

**PERKY:** Isn't that so sweet? That little girl brings her father flowers every day.

**MIDAS:** Now run along, Marygold. Put the flowers in some liquid and go play with your Barbie Transformers.

*(MARYGOLD exits sadly)* Now, Perky, what were you saying?



**PERKY:** Thank you, Mr. Golden. Transmission is ending. This is Perky Everlasting, saying “Sayonara” for GNN, Global News Network!

*PERKY exits. Music. Time passes. MIDAS puts on his cellphone apparatus.*

**MIDAS:** *(on phone)* Hello, Alfred, I’d like to continue our discussion about the possibilities of expansion under the atmospheric dome in the former Rainforest Region. No, not the ones in Alaska, they’ve only been there since global warming. The ones in South America. Yeah, that was before your time. Now I’m looking at franchising a whole unit of fast food restaurants there. Hundreds of golden arches, billions and billions of burgers...

*MARYGOLD enters.*

**MARYGOLD:** Daddy, I need your help in making some life decisions. I have to figure out what to do during my college field work term internship. There’s so much work to do, so many possibilities to help the world...

**MIDAS:** Marygold, I’m really busy right now, I’m in the middle of some important negotiations. Can’t this wait until later?

**MARYGOLD:** But I just can’t decide between field work for the International Endowment for the Protection of Artists and Other Endangered Species or the Ken & Barry’s Biospheric Rain Forest Project in the deserts of South America.

**MIDAS:** Yeah sorry, Alfred, my daughter was just mentioning South America. Hang on a minute, I’ve... uh... got another call.

**MARYGOLD:** So what should I do, Daddy? Which one is more important? Which one will enrich me as a person? Which one will make a difference in the world?

**MIDAS:** Marygold, your priorities are out of order. If you want to be enriched, you need to make money; you need to think about getting to the top, and staying there. Then, Marygold, you have the power to dictate what’s important. And if you happen to make a difference, too, well that’s really swell.

**MARYGOLD:** So where should I do my field work?

**MIDAS:** What do you mean, where? I thought we already discussed this. You’re doing your internship right here. I thought you always wanted to be just like me? *(back to phone)* Sorry to keep you waiting, Alfred. Where were we?

**MARYGOLD:** Yeah, Dad, just like you.

*MARYGOLD starts to exit as MIDAS continues talking on the phone.*

**MARYGOLD:** Oh, yeah, here are your flowers.

*She tosses flowers to him and exits. MIDAS catches them, then tosses them on the floor.*

*Music. Time passes. MIDAS continues to speak on the phone to various people.*

**VOICE:** Psst, Mr. Golden.

**MIDAS:** Who’s that?

**VOICE:** Mr. Midas Golden?

**MIDAS:** *(into cellphone)* Hello?

**VOICE:** This is your Orb #T6107. I have a communication for you from the gods.

**MIDAS:** What gods?

**VOICE:** S-Jobs, Microzoft and the great goddess Zeerocks. Data required to complete transmission. What is it you most desire?

**MIDAS:** (*laughing*) Ha! That's easy. I want wealth and power and success. I want to be on the pinnacle, the very top.

**VOICE:** Are you sure?

**MIDAS:** Of course I'm sure!

**VOICE:** Data received and formatted. Sending control data. Control data received. Please consult your Orb.

**MIDAS:** My Orb?

*(looks down at his phone screen and reads)*

"You will be the most successful businessman in the world. All your negotiations will be profitable. You will be known as The Man with the Golden Touch." The Man with the Golden Touch? Yes!!

**VOICE:** Think up, Mr. Golden. Think up, look up, be up, buy up. Good luck!

**MIDAS:** Up? There's nothing up there but air... Air!

*(back to phone)*

Hey, Bernice, about that offer I made on the air rights over Orlando. Yeah, I want you to... What? They accepted my terms. They loved the name Golden's Sky World? Great, I'll have all the data transmitted!

*Music. Time passes. MIDAS makes deals. PERKY enters.*

**PERKY:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is Perky Everlasting from GNN, Global News Network.

Tonight we have a live satellite transmission, direct from his offices in Golden's Sky World, the earth's largest upper atmospheric theme park, Mr. Midas Golden, Future Fortune Magazine's Man of the Year. Mr. Golden, it's been quite a few years since our first interview when your little daughter Marygold brought you flowers. And may I say, Mr. Golden, that cryogenics has done wonders? You don't look a day older.

**MIDAS:** And I'd like to compliment you too, Perky. I am so happy they cleared up that silicone thing because you look fantastic.

**PERKY:** Thank you, Mr. Golden, but I'm computer enhanced. So tell our audience, Mr. Golden, how does it feel to be on the very, very top?

**MIDAS:** Well, Perky, when you're this high up, it feels just like being a god!

**PERKY:** For years, you've been known as the Man with the Golden Touch. So tell me, what's the next step in your future?

**MIDAS:** Well, Perkster, when you're this high up, there's nowhere to go but down.

*MIDAS laughs. MARYGOOD enters with flowers, speaking into headphones*

**MIDAS:** Seriously though, I'm thinking of taking some time off to be with my family. My daughter, Marygold, is taking over some of the business – here she comes right now.

*As MARYGOLD speaks, she and MIDAS gradually switch places.*

**MARYGOLD:** Dan, will you get me Gloria on screen 1? Gloria? Those changes we talked about – let's push 'em right through. None of this theme park business – family entertainment is so passe'. I want higher stakes: live-action gambling, laser jai-lai, holographic hockey... Gloria, we've got the air rights; this will make us millions.

**MIDAS:** Marygold, what's all this about changes?

**MARYGOLD:** Not now, Dad, I'm really busy.

**PERKY:** Mr. Golden, Mr. Golden, we seem to be having transmission failure.

**MIDAS:** Oh, Perky, what is it you wanted to know?

**PERUSAL SCRIPT -- CHALLENGING ATHENA -- by Genevieve Aichele**

**PERKY:** I'm sorry, Mr. Golden, you're out of the picture and we're out of time. Good night, ladies and gentlemen, this is Perky Everlasting saying "Buenos Noches" from GNN, Global News Network.

*PERKY exits.*

**MARYGOLD:** *(laughing)* Not a problem, Gloria. We're golden!

**MIDAS:** Marygold, I thought maybe we could do lunch this afternoon?

**MARYGOLD:** Sorry, Dad, I'm just too busy right now. Talk to Dan on your way out; he'll schedule you. Oh Dad, could you take these and put them in some liquid?

*She tosses flowers to MIDAS. He misses and they fall on the floor. She continues talking on the phone. He slowly bends down and picks up the flowers.*

*Blackout. Music. MIDAS & MARYGOLD exit. ARACHNE, ATHENA & MUSES enter. As the lights come up, everyone is looking at ATHENA'S cloth.*

**Scenes 7-12 make up 14 additional pages**