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Cast of Characters

HERCULES, fifties. Greece's mightiest hero. Lately, a family man.
DEIANERA, late forties. Princess of Lydia. Second wife of Hercules.
DEMONSTRATE, 19. The oldest daughter. A rebel.
THAIS, 18. Second oldest. A priss.
METHODIUS (ODIE), 17. Third oldest. An intellectual.
PHOEBE, 16. Fourth oldest. A natural leader.
CHRYSANTHE (CHRYS), 16. Tied for fifth; twins with Chloe. A singer.
CHLOE, 16. Tied for fifth; twins with Chrys. A dancer.
AMBROSIA, 14. Sixth oldest. An optimist.
ZOE, 13. Seventh oldest. A pessimist.
EUNIKE, 12. Eighth oldest. A neurotic.
SOPHIE, 10. Ninth oldest. A warrior.
ISIDORA (IZZY), 9. Tenth oldest. A thinker.
TIMO, 5. The baby.
ACHELOUS, a jealous river-god, who once loved Deianera. Southern accent.
DEIMOS, a scheming centaur. Brother of the late scheming centaur Nessus. Brooklyn accent.
SHADOWY FIGURE/HECATE, the Goddess of witchcraft and dogs.
THESEUS, fifties. King of Athens, long-time friend of Hercules.
HIPPOLYTUS, 16. Son of Theseus. An aspiring hero.
ION, 18. Thais's boyfriend.
MINITAURO, a midget monster.
HOMER, 18. A wandering poet.
ZELUS, page of Olympus.
NIKE, page of Olympus.
CRATOS, page of Olympus.
BIA, page of Olympus.
HERA'S PRIESTESS
HERA'S ACOLYTES
CLOAKED FIGURES
CENTAURS

Place

Asia Minor, up and down the east coast of the Aegean Sea.

Time

Ancient Greece.

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THE TWELVE DAUGHTERS OF HERCULES

by Ben Kingsland

ACT I

Scene 1

(ZELUS, NIKE, CRATOS, and BIA—the Olympian Pages—square off to the audience.)

CRATOS and BIA carry lyres. They raise them in unison and strum the strings. A mighty rock power chord rings out.)

ALL. Hercules!

(Lights up on HERCULES, center stage. He is in a martial pose, with his hands behind his back.)

ZELUS. Mightiest of all heroes!

NIKE. Strongest man alive!

CRATOS. Fighter without equal!

BIA. Loved by all Greece!

ZELUS. The son of Queen Alcmena—

NIKE. And King Amphitryon!

CRATOS. Actually the son of Zeus!

BIA. Don't tell Amphitryon!

(CRATOS and BIA strike another chord.)

BIA. Slayer of lions!

CRATOS. Hunter of hydras!

NIKE. Master of monsters!

ZELUS. Janitor of stables!

(CRATOS and BIA begin a trill on the lyre. The anticipation is building.)

ZELUS. Protector!

NIKE. Warrior!

CRATOS. Crusader!

BIA. Champion!

GIRLISH VOICES. Dad?

(The Pages disappear.

CHRY'S and CHLOE have appeared next to HERCULES. He snaps into life.

The twins are gushing and enthusiastic.)

CHRY'S. Do you want to hear the song?

CHLOE. Watch, Dad, I'm gonna dance!

CHRY'S.

Chloe's come up with this great dance, you'll just love it, it's so amazing.

Are we ready? One, two, three!

CHLOE.

I mean, we haven't practiced much, but anyway,

Chrys sounds amazing.

Okay? Ready? One, two, three!

HERCULES. *(Distracted:)* Three...!

(HERCULES reveals a sheet of instructions in his hands. Near his feet is a pile of poles and planks. He is building something, but it's clearly not going well.)

(CHLOE dances a pretty lyrical dance as CHRY'S sings. HERCULES tries to make sense of the directions as he pretends to watch his daughters.)

CHRY'S.

THE WIND BLOWS OVER

THE WATER

THE WATER SMELLS LIKE

THE WIND

THE WIND IS THERE FOR

THE WATER

LIKE SISTERS ARE THERE FOR

THEIR KIN

HERCULES.

Mmm. Great...!

Sisters. Yeah.

You girls are great.

THE TREES ARE FULL FROM

THE SOIL

THE SOIL IS FULL OF

THE TREES

LIKE TREES THAT GROW

FROM THE SOIL

SISTERS ARE SPROUTING

NEW LEAVES

Oh, there's more. Great.

Yes.

Mmm-hmm?

True, true.

THE CATTLE—

(CHLOE stops dancing.)

CHLOE. Hold on, I forget. Chrys, is it *this*, or *this*?

(CHLOE demonstrates two dance moves.)

CHRYS. Oh! I forget.

CHLOE. Which one do you like, Daddy?

HERCULES. (Finally looking up:) Oh, are you done? Heeyyy!

(HERCULES claps awkwardly, instructions in hand.)

HERCULES. Great job! "Encore!" Give your mother an encore.

CHLOE. (Marking through the two moves.) But which did you like better?

HERCULES. (Distracted:) Oh, I love you both, I could never choose.

CHRYS. Do you think Ambrosia's gonna like our song?

HERCULES. Of course! The best birthday gift a sister can give is something from the heart. That way it doesn't cost daddy any money. Why don't you girls keep practicing?

CHLOE. Okay, dad!

(They start to scamper off.)

CHRYS. Your dancing is so good, Chloe!

CHLOE. Thanks, Chrys! Your voice is so much better than it used to be!

(PHOEBE enters just as CHRYS and CHLOE exit, dashing past her. HERCULES is holding two pieces of the pile.)

PHOEBE. Hey, Dad?

HERCULES. Who's that? Is that one of mine?

PHOEBE. It's Phoebe. Hi.

(He turns to look at her, briefly.)

HERCULES. Hi, Phoebe. What does your mother want?

PHOEBE. Just wants to see how things are coming outside.

HERCULES. Well, building this arbor is going a little slower than I thought.

PHOEBE. Oh. Where's the laborer? Taking a break?

HERCULES. Didn't hire a laborer. No, your poppa got a great deal from a merchant who sells the wood, the poles, the plans, everything you need. You provide the labor yourself.

PHOEBE. Huh!

HERCULES. Right! So I figure I'll save a few drachmas and do it myself. But look at this gibberish!

(He shows PHOEBE the directions.)

I mean, does that mean to stick these pieces together? But this one doesn't fit. And there's no writing, just these little pictures—a hammer? A hand? A little man? I mean, what is this, Egypt? Use some words.

This guy's got a lot to learn about business, I'll tell you that.

PHOEBE. Who is he?

HERCULES. *(Dismissive:)* Some Northerner named Ikea.

Can you make any sense of it, Phoebe?

PHOEBE. Well, I think...

HERCULES. Or, wait. Are you the smart daughter?

PHOEBE. I...well, not as smart as Methodius, but—

HERCULES. Okay, okay. Well, maybe you can hold the poles up while I fiddle with the pins. Are you the strong one?

PHOEBE. I mean, Chloe's probably stronger, but—

HERCULES. Right, you're just sort of in the middle, aren't you?

(PHOEBE is hurt. HERCULES is oblivious.)

PHOEBE. *(Smiling through it:)* I'd still be happy to help.

HERCULES. Atta girl. Why don't you run inside and send Methodius out here? Daddy needs a little brainpower. And—uh—if your mother asks, it's almost done, huh?

PHOEBE. Sure thing, Dad.

(HERCULES is back to scrutinizing the plans. PHOEBE watches him sadly for a moment, unnoticed.)

PHOEBE. Bye.

(She exits.

Blackout.)

Scene 2

(The Pages.)

CRATOS. Hercules was married to Deianera.

NIKE. The Princess of Lydia!

CRATOS. But they lived days away from her parents and their palace...

NIKE. In a mansion on the bank of the Meander River.

BIA. Hercules knew how to show a girl a good time.

ZELUS. He spent their first date wrestling a river-god.

BIA. He spent their honeymoon fighting off centaurs.

ZELUS. He spent their anniversary as a slave in a far-off kingdom...

BIA. Dressed like a woman.

ALL FOUR. What a catch!

(The Pages disappear.

Inside the Hercules House. There is a bustle of activity and muted conversation.

DEIANERA is at the center of the room, keeping an eye on everything. She is also tying up festive bouquets, with SOPHIE's help. IZZY and TIMO are sorting flowers at DEIANERA's feet.

CHRYS and CHLOE are in the corner, in urgent discussion about the song.

EUNIKE is carefully washing plates. ZOE is sullenly drying them.

THAIS is standing by a folding screen, impatiently. She wears a bathrobe and holds a towel. AMBROSIA is hidden behind the screen, taking a bath.

METHODIUS is reading from a notebook, and peeking into an earthenware oven from time to time.

PHOEBE enters.)

SOPHIE. I should be out hunting. Making bouquets is girl work.

DEIANERA. Sophie, darling love, I hate to break this to you—

Oh, Phoebe. How are things outside?

PHOEBE. It's great. Dad's almost done setting up the arbor.

DEIANERA. What do you mean, *he's* setting it up?

PHOEBE. I mean, the laborer. Dad's just helping with some of the heavy lifting. Because, you know. He's Hercules.

DEIANERA. I heard.

(TIMO sneezes.)

DEIANERA. Little Timo, what a sneeze! What do we say?

TIMO. (*Wiping her nose.*) 'No more flowers, please?'

IZZY. Mom, Timo sneezed on me!

DEIANERA. Timo, what do you say to Izzy?

TIMO. 'Look out?'

(*TIMO sneezes again. IZZY shrieks and stands.*)

DEIANERA. Phoebe, go blow your sister's nose. Timo, go with Phoebe.

PHOEBE. (*Taking TIMO's hand:*) Come on, Timo. Can you tell Izzy you're sorry?

TIMO. Sorry, Izzy.

IZZY. (*Retreating from TIMO's nose:*) Don't point that thing at me!

(*DEIANERA swats IZZY's behind with a bouquet.*)

DEIANERA. Go get the next flowers from outside. And remember your manners, will you?

IZZY. I'm the one who got snoze on...

(*IZZY exits. PHOEBE and TIMO walk towards THAIS and the folding screen.*)

THAIS. (*Knocking on the screen:*) Ambrosia! Are you almost done?

AMBROSIA. (*Pleasantly, from behind the screen:*) Not even close!

THAIS. You better not have used all the hot water!

(*PHOEBE pokes her head behind the screen.*)

PHOEBE. Hey, hey, birthday girl! You look comfy.

AMBROSIA. I feel *luxurious*.

THAIS. You should feel waterlogged. How long a bath can one girl take?

(*PHOEBE comes back with a scrap of cloth. She holds it up to TIMO, who blows her nose.*)

AMBROSIA. Not just a girl—a *birthday girl*. I could stay in here *forever*.

THAIS. She used all the hot water, didn't she, Phoebe? Was that kettle empty?

PHOEBE. It was empty.

AMBROSIA. (*A happy sing-song:*) It's empty!

THAIS. By the hounds of Artemis—!

DEIANERA. Language!

THAIS. Gosh darn it!

PHOEBE. I'll heat up some more water, Thais.

THAIS. No, Phoebe! If our naiad here loves water so much, *she* should refill the kettle.

AMBROSIA. Birthday girls don't have to do chores!

DEIANERA. Enough! Finish up, Ambrosia. And somebody fill that kettle.

(PHOEBE *snatches up the empty kettle from behind the screen.*)

PHOEBE. How're you doing, Timo?

TIMO. I can blow a bubble.

(TIMO *tries to blow a bubble out of her nose.*)

PHOEBE. All right, somebody else needs a bath.

(PHOEBE *leaves TIMO with THAIS. PHOEBE heads over to EUNIKE and ZOE with the kettle.*)

PHOEBE. (*Calling out:*) Methodius! Is that oven hot?

METHODIUS. (*Looking over:*) Hmm? Oh, yeah! Bring the kettle over.

(PHOEBE *dips the kettle into a tub of water next to EUNIKE and ZOE.*)

PHOEBE. 'Scuse me!

EUNIKE. (*Holding up a plate:*) Hey, Phoebe? Does this look clean?

PHOEBE. Yeah, Eunike, looks great.

ZOE. Doing dishes is meaningless. They'll just get dirty again.

EUNIKE. But I just cleaned them!

ZOE. Just like you'll be doing after dinner, and after the next meal, and the next meal, *for the rest of your life.*

EUNIKE. Oh no.

ZOE. You're just a pawn, Eunike. You've been set up.

EUNIKE. I've been set up. Mom! Can I have a less depressing job?

DEIANERA. Zoe? What did I say?

ZOE. "Don't break your sister's spirit."

DEIANERA. Keep scrubbing, Eunike.

(PHOEBE *has filled the kettle and is moving on.*)

AMBROSIA *comes out from behind the screen in a bathrobe, carrying a scrub-brush.*)

AMBROSIA. All yours, Thais! Thanks for being so patient.

(THAIS snarls, snatches the scrub-brush and goes behind the screen. AMBROSIA hums happily to herself and begins to comb out her hair. TIMO helps her.)

THAIS. *(Behind the screen:)* Cold!

PHOEBE. *(Calling out:)* Water's on its way!

METHODIUS. Go for it.

(PHOEBE sets the kettle over top of the stove. She makes a show of looking at everything METHODIUS is doing.)

PHOEBE. So, Odie, wow! You look busy.

METHODIUS. Not really...a little baking. What's up?

(PHOEBE makes sure her mother isn't listening.)

PHOEBE. Well, see, Dad needs a little help outside. A little extra brainpower. I said I'd come ask you, but I thought, since it looks like you're so busy with the baking, maybe I could go instead—

METHODIUS. Oh oh! Sorry. Check this out.

(METHODIUS points at the inside of the oven.)

METHODIUS. So you know how this oven takes forever? After a few tests, I worked up a mineral glaze along the inner wall to improve interior conductivity, and I think the pita's baking up, I dunno, ten percent faster now! Isn't that great?

PHOEBE. *(Intimidated:)* That's great.

METHODIUS. So what were you saying? Dad needs some brainpower?

PHOEBE. Yep. And we all know that means you.

METHODIUS. Can you watch the bread for me then? Of course you can. You do it all, don'tcha, Phoebe?

PHOEBE. What can I say, I'm helpful!

(METHODIUS gets ready to go.)

PHOEBE. *(To herself:)* Behind the scenes...

(IZZY comes dashing back inside, out of breath.)

DEIANERA. Isidora Hercules, no running indoors! And where are the flowers?

IZZY. I brought something else!

(THESEUS enters, a dashing figure with streaks of silver in his hair. On his heels is his son, HIPPOLYTUS.

DEIANERA stands. There is a flurry of excited chatter from all the girls.)

THESEUS. Anybody home?

DEIANERA. Theseus! King Theseus, what a happy surprise!

THESEUS. Please, I left my crown in Athens. You're the royalty on this coast, Princess Deianera.

(He bows over her hand. She grabs his hand warmly with both of hers.)

DEIANERA. Good to see you again.

THESEUS. Let me introduce my son, Hippolytus.

DEIANERA. (Extending her hand:) Yes, what a pleasure.

HIPPOLYTUS. (Taking her hand, bowing:) Princess.

DEIANERA. Let me introduce...my daughters...uh...

(The two men look around the room at all the ladies. HIPPOLYTUS is particularly intimidated.)

DEIANERA. Sophie Izzy Timo Ambrosia Zoe Eunike Phoebe Odie Chrysanthe and Chloe.

THAIS. (Behind the screen:) Thais!

DEIANERA. And Thais.

THESEUS. We're surrounded. Mom would feel right at home here, wouldn't she, son?

DEIANERA. How is Hippolyta?

THESEUS. Oh, you know what I always say about my Amazon—whatever she wants to hear! Ha!

So, how is the mighty hero we honor above all others?

DEIANERA. I don't know, but Hercules is fine.

Hercules! Honey!

HERCULES. (Offstage:) Almost done! Don't come back here!

DEIANERA. We have guests, dear! Will you come inside?

I'm sorry, who knows what he's doing.

THESEUS. Perfectly all right. Say, didn't you have twelve daughters?

DEIANERA. Oh, Demostrate is no longer with us.

THESEUS. (*Sympathetic:*) My condolences.

HIPPOLYTUS. I'm sorry.

DEIANERA. No, I mean she moved out. Demonstrate is a bit of a...

SOPHIE. Harpy?

(DEIANERA *thwacks* SOPHIE *without even looking.*)

DEIANERA. (*Continuing, unperturbed:*) ...free spirit. It works for us; one less person in line for the bath.

THESEUS. Still, you must be proud of all of them. Children are the greatest of blessings.

(TIMO *sneezes all over* AMBROSIA. *All eyes turn to them.*)

THESEUS. Bless you.

TIMO. Thank you.

THESEUS. Well, does one of you have a birthday nearby? With twelve of you, I figured—

AMBROSIA. Oh yes! It's my birthday, King Theseus. I mean, it's probably today; I bet you have much fancier calendars in Athens...

THESEUS. We're in Lydia, we'll use Lydia's calendar. Besides, I'd hate to have these gifts go to waste.

AMBROSIA. (*Delighted:*) Gifts?

DEIANERA. You're too kind.

THESEUS. Hippolytus, fetch the presents. If you'll excuse me, I'll go pay my respects out back. A pleasure to meet you all.

ALL DAUGHTERS. You too.

(HIPPOLYTUS *and* THESEUS *both jump back at the unison speech. The men exit.*)

DEIANERA. Well, everyone! We've got guests! Zoe, Eunike—keep washing. Phoebe and Sophie—go check the traps for more meat.

SOPHIE. Yes! Meat!

DEIANERA. Ambrosia—get changed, and get Timo cleaned up too. Izzy—pour our guests some wine. Chrys, Chloe—watch the bread. Okay, everyone—

THAIS. (*Behind the screen:*) Thais!

DEIANERA. And Thais— hurry up!

Get moving, everyone! We're going to have a real party!

(*Cheers. Everyone jumps into action.*)

Scene 3

(The Backyard of the Hercules house.

The company is gathered in front of the recently built Ikea arbor. Several of its beams are uneven, and at strange angles. It probably didn't look like that on the box.

Lively music is playing, supplied by the Pages. The family is circled up and clapping as CHLOE and AMBROSIA dance in the center.

AMBROSIA is wearing a beautiful bracelet made of golden charms. This was her gift from HIPPOLYTUS.

The music ends. Everyone cheers and applauds. CHRYS steps forward.)

CHRYS. *(Dignified.)* Ahem! Let it be known that Chloe and I have composed a song in honor of a certain lady.

AMBROSIA. *(Jumping in:)* Oh, I can't wait. Sing it ten times, right now!

DEIANERA. Whoa, girls, let your elders catch their breath first. Chrys and Chloe, go get ready. Let's have water and wine filled, huh, for our guests, and check on the food?

(At DEIANERA's direction, PHOEBE drags ZOE and THAIS inside to help check on food. Daughters break into knots of conversation.

HERCULES, THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, and DEIANERA are downstage. SOPHIE approaches them.)

SOPHIE. Papa?

HERCULES. Sophie.

SOPHIE. Do you think Uncle King Theseus will teach me how to swing a battle-axe since you won't do it?

HERCULES. What do you say, Uncle King Theseus? Axe lessons for my ten-year-old?

THESEUS. Unfortunately, Niece Lady Sophie, I can't stand axes. I met someone once who turned me off on them for good.

SOPHIE. Who was that?

THESEUS. The Minotaur.

DEIANERA. Well, hey, we've got the last laugh—we're having steak tonight. Come on, Sophie.

(SOPHIE and DEIANERA exit into the house.)

HERCULES. The Minotaur! They don't make monsters like that anymore. How was he with that axe?

THESEUS. (*Indicating his hands:*) Pretty good, considering, you know. Hooves.

I tell you, fighting him in the Labyrinth unarmed is not my happiest memory.

HERCULES. "Not your happiest memory." Come on!

THESEUS. I was terrified. It was totally reckless. And if I'd died—

HERCULES. Come on, that's king talk. I know you, Theseus. When the Minotaur first came out of the darkness, axe held high, and all you had to meet him with were two fists, it was the most beautiful moment of your life. Because when you won, it would be the kind of story that never, never dies.

I mean, you knew you were going to win.

THESEUS. (*'Of course':*) I'm Theseus.

HERCULES. (*Agreeing:*) I'm Hercules.

THESEUS. That was the life, wasn't it.

(*Pause.*)

THESEUS. Hippolytus is interested in hero-ing.

HERCULES. Oh yeah? Not king-ing?

HIPPOLYTUS. No sir.

THESEUS. He's got too much potential. You should see how fast he is! Fastest warrior in Greece.

HERCULES. (*Interested:*) Really?

THESEUS. An Athenian never lies!

Okay, that's a lie. But, anyway, getting another heir will be easy. I'll just have some more kids until I get a son. A fifty-fifty shot each time, right? How many tries can it take until...

(*HERCULES looks at him.*)

THESEUS. Right. Twelve.

HERCULES. And counting.

HIPPOLYTUS. Well, you know what they say, Mr. Hercules: thirteenth time's the charm!

HERCULES. Is it?

HIPPOLYTUS. No, that's another lie.

HERCULES. Look, guys, I shouldn't be complaining. I'm respected, I'm rich, I'm a demigod, I've got a great wife, a big family...

A big, girly family...

THESEUS. If you're happy, you're happy.

HERCULES. But am I happy? I haven't been on a quest in eighteen years. Can you imagine? I don't even know where to find decent monsters anymore.

THESEUS. I hear you get good monsters these days out to sea, out in the islands. Odysseus doesn't believe it, but...

HERCULES. Watch, he'll probably be the one gets to fight 'em all.

THESEUS. Just our luck, huh?

HIPPOLYTUS. Are you looking for a quest?

HERCULES. I don't know what I'm looking for, son.

I guess I always thought by this time—if I was still alive—I would have a son who was following in my footsteps. And so even as my career wound down, my name would live on.

(Unnoticed, TIMO and IZZY have drifted over to where they can hear the conversation.)

HERCULES. *(Continuing:)* My girls are great, smart, beautiful, all of that. But are they heroes? No. And they're not going to be. I don't blame them for that, but every day that goes by with no excitement makes me...shrink. And I wonder "Did I even do all those things the poets say I did?"

THESEUS. Of course you did.

HERCULES. I know, but it's all so far away, it doesn't seem real. Life now is so—

(EUNIKE enters from the house, carrying a dinner bell. She swings it over her head furiously.)

EUNIKE. Dinnertime! Come inside! Dinnertime! Come inside! Dinnertime! Come—

(The bell slips out of her hands and sails towards a cluster of girls. They duck. The bell crashes to the ground.)

Pause.)

EUNIKE. *(Calling back inside:)* Mom! I need a new bell!

HERCULES. ...different.

All right, everyone! You heard Eunike, I assume! Inside! Chow time!

(METHODIUS fetches the bell. Everyone moves towards the house, except for IZZY and TIMO, who are watching their dad. They're depressed by what they heard him say.)

HERCULES. (To THESEUS and HIPPOLYTUS:) Forget I said anything. This is a party, you're my guests. I can't tell you how happy I am to have you here.

HIPPOLYTUS. Who knows? Maybe some adventure will turn up in your life soon.

HERCULES. Maybe, maybe...

(HERCULES finally notices IZZY and TIMO.)

HERCULES. Hey, little girls! What are you looking at? Come on, let's get some dinner!

So, Hippolytus; your dad says you're pretty fast. How fast are we talking here?

(HERCULES puts his arm around HIPPOLYTUS' shoulders. The three men continue to talk as they go inside.)

(Slowly, TIMO and IZZY follow their father.

Lights change; a storm is brewing. A SHADOWY FIGURE comes out of hiding once the family is all inside. The FIGURE has seen everything.

Thunderclap. We catch a glimpse of her face before:
Blackout.)

Scene 4

(Sounds of a storm. BIA and NIKE address the audience. CRATOS and ZELUS are holding something.)

BIA. Theseus and his son left.

NIKE. And the storm came.

BIA. And when the storm left...

NIKE. Something else was gone.

(CRONUS and ZELUS reveal the skin of the Nemean Lion.)

BIA & NIKE. The skin of the Nemean Lion.

ALL PAGES. Yoink!

(The Pages exit, taking the skin with them.)

Lights up on the backyard. PHOEBE, EUNIKE, ZOE, and CHLOE are doing chores. They work in silence for a moment.)

EUNIKE. Do you think Dad's really leaving?

PHOEBE. Yeah, he is.

CHLOE. I don't get it. Dad keeps all his hero stuff locked up in the storeroom. And the best treasure is, like, hidden under the floor. And—

PHOEBE. The Nemean Lion was his first Labor...

CHLOE. Right, and the skin is magic, too, so it was probably the best hidden.

ZOE. What's your point?

CHLOE. My point is, how could this happen?

ZOE. Easy. Somebody broke into our house during the storm; got to the storeroom without any of us seeing or hearing them; pulled up the tiles in the perfect place; picked the lock on the trunk; took the skin of the Nemean Lion; and walked out under our noses.

(Pause.)

EUNIKE. Who could do something like that?

ZOE. Someone...really...dangerous.

PHOEBE. Zoe, whoever did this, if they wanted to hurt us, they would have. I think Dad's right. This is a challenge.

ZOE. And when he goes out to meet it, I can't wait to see what happens to us.

PHOEBE. Grandpa's going to send a whole squad of guards from the palace to stay with us while Dad's gone.

ZOE. *(Spitting disdain:)* And when the thief comes back wearing an invulnerable lion skin, a fat lot of good those guards will do.

EUNIKE. *(Distressed:)* Oh no.

PHOEBE. *(Simply:)* Are you scared, Zoe?

ZOE. Yeah I'm scared, you idiot! Of course I'm scared!

(Pause. ZOE's cynical armor drops away, and she is suddenly very vulnerable.)

ZOE. I'm really scared.

(PHOEBE goes over to ZOE.)

PHOEBE. I was too. Then I figured out why Dad's okay with leaving us here while he chases this guy. Because if the thief comes back... he'll have to deal with Mom.

(The tension breaks.)

PHOEBE. And Mom will eat him alive.

ZOE. *(Smiling, despite herself.)* She will.

PHOEBE. No question. One big bite, gone. Lion skin and all.

So I'm not going to worry. I've got other sisters who are better at that. Instead, I'm going to trust that when dad—Hercules—decides to go on a quest, he knows what he's doing.

(Her understated pep talk has done wonders for the other sisters. They are smiling, reassured and grateful.)

PHOEBE. Makes sense?

CHLOE. Yeah.

EUNIKE. Totally.

ZOE. *(Grinning:)* I suppose.

(HERCULES enters from the house. He is decked out in light armor and has a bow and quiver slung over his back. He also carries a bag of traveling supplies, which he sets down by his feet.)

HERCULES. Hey, girls. Look at you all, working hard.

(The girls set down their chores and rush over to him.)

HERCULES. You're gonna keep this place so clean, without me here to get it messy.

CHLOE. We'll try.

HERCULES. You will, I know you will. And hey, I won't be gone long, I'll be back before you know it.

EUNIKE. You promise?

HERCULES. I promise, Eunike. You'll be so safe with Grandpa's guards. They're good men. And you're my special girl, there's nobody like you. Maybe you can work on ringing that dinner bell while I'm gone; get that grip strength up a little bit. Can you do that?

EUNIKE. Okay.

HERCULES. Good girl. Chloe, you and your sister keep practicing. You're gonna be the best little artists around. Show me a new dance when I get back, okay?

CHLOE. Sure will, Daddy.

HERCULES. As for Zoe...my little skeptic...I have a special job for you. If any of your sisters get too girly while I'm gone, I want you to roll your eyes at them extra hard for me. Can you do that?

(ZOE rolls her eyes and heaves an exasperated sigh.)

HERCULES. I knew I could count on you. Somehow I just knew!

(He tousles ZOE's hair. The girls all giggle.)

HERCULES. Phoebe...

(PHOEBE looks at him expectantly.)

HERCULES. I just realized I didn't pack my campfire gear! Phoebe, could you go grab me a flint? I think there's one by the wood pile.

(He points towards the side of the house, absently. PHOEBE is crushed.)

PHOEBE. Sure thing, Dad.

Anything else?

HERCULES. *(Examining his travel bag:)* I sure hope not. I'm gonna go through this again, see what else I missed. Anyway...

(He trails off, looking through the bag. He turns back to the house.)

HERCULES. *(As he exits:)* Honey? Honey? Do we have any other bags?

(HERCULES is gone.)

The other daughters look at PHOEBE. She is holding it together after not getting her own goodbye.)

PHOEBE. Like I said...he knows what he's doing.

Scene 5

(The Pages. CRATOS and BIA carry lyres. They strike a chord, sending electric guitar ringing through the air.)

ZELUS. Hercules was gone!

NIKE. Bye-bye!

ZELUS. In hot pursuit of a mysterious thief.

NIKE. Who could it be?

CRATOS & BIA. Deianera knew!

(Lights up on DEIANERA and METHODIUS.)

DEIANERA. I know who stole it.

METHODIUS. You do? But I did a complete forensic analysis of the storeroom, and couldn't find—

DEIANERA. Odie. I know who did it.

METHODIUS. Who?

(CRATOS and BIA begin an ominous trill, which builds with each line.)

BIA. The ruthless opponent.

NIKE. The implacable foe.

CRATOS. The eternal adversary!

ZELUS. The ultimate monster!

METHODIUS. Who?

(The music cuts out—)

DEIANERA. My mother-in-law.

(One quick chord on the lyres.)

METHODIUS. Grandma Alcmena? But she's so sweet and senile!

DEIANERA. Not her. Hera.

ALL FOUR PAGES. Oh snap!

BIA. Hera!

ZELUS. Queen of the Gods!

NIKE. Zeus's jealous wife!

CRATOS. She hates Hercules!

ALL FOUR PAGES. I bet she did it!

(The Pages disappear.)

METHODIUS. Hera.

DEIANERA. It's got to be. No mortal thief could just sneak into a house this crowded and go to the perfect spot; unless he had a mental map of exactly where to look, and a magic storm to cover his tracks...

METHODIUS. But why would Hera steal the lion skin? Is she going to wear it?

DEIANERA. No, it's not her color. This is all just to get a rise out of Hercules. It's bait to lure him away.

METHODIUS. Did you tell Dad?

DEIANERA. Of course. He kept saying he knew Hera wasn't behind this. 'He could just feel it.'

METHODIUS. That's unconvincing.

DEIANERA. That's a polite version of what I said. We don't need hunches, we need evidence. So, Odie? I need you to get me a little information...straight from the source.

(Blackout.)

Scene 6

(Ominous, conspiratorial music.)

The Pages are back, alone onstage.)

NIKE. Information!

ZELUS. Important stuff.

BIA. And not just to Deianera.

CRATOS. At that very moment, someone else was getting some very important info.

(Lights up on ACHELOUS, a horned river-god, and DEIMOS, a centaur. They're in travel garb, outside, waiting for someone.)

The SHADOWY FIGURE enters and goes to them. The FIGURE moves next to the two monsters. All three just stand there, looking at each other.

The Pages watch. Pause.)

NIKE. We thought they'd be talking by now.

ZELUS. We don't actually know who they are.

BIA. But they seem important.

CRATOS. I mean, look at them.

ZELUS. He's got horns.

NIKE. He's got hooves.

BIA. She's just creepy.

(Pause.)

BIA. Bunch of monsters, near the Hercules homestead...

CRATOS. I mean, this has 'important' written all over it.

(The monsters are still just looking at each other.)

NIKE. This has 'boring' written all over it.

ZELUS. What's going on?

BIA. Are they talking with their minds or something?

NIKE. Well, that's not fair.

ZELUS. (*Shouting to the monsters:*) Speak up!

CRATOS. Speak up! Not fair!

NIKE. Stop using your minds!

(Pause.)

The monsters nod to each other in unison. The FIGURE exits the way she came. ACHELOUS and DEIMOS exit together.

As they exit:

ZELUS. Oh, come on!

BIA. (*Indicating herself:*) Telepaths. Who called it...?

NIKE. What a let-down.

CRATOS. See if we watch those guys again.

NIKE. (*Yelling after the monsters:*) Chumps!

ZELUS. Let's go check in with some people who are worth our time.

ALL FOUR PAGES. Southbound!

BIA. On the road from Lydia.

(The Pages disappear.)

Scene 7

(Lights up on METHODIUS, THAIS, and PHOEBE. They wear traveling cloaks. PHOEBE carries a sack of provisions.

They are slowly walking across the stage as they speak.)

THAIS. Are we there yet?

METHODIUS. Hera's temple should be around the next bend.

THAIS. Oh, praise Hermes! I totally stubbed my toe. These southerners can't even keep their roads clear.

MALE VOICE. Wait up!

(ION, Thais's boyfriend, runs on behind them. He carries a long walking stick he just found.)

THAIS. Oh, sweetie, a walking stick!

ION. Check it out! It's perfect, right?

THAIS. It's just right. Thank you, Ion!

(She pecks him on the cheek and holds her hand out for the stick. ION is confused.)

ION. No problem!

THAIS. Didn't you get that stick for me?

ION. *(Simply; not mean at all:)* Why would I have done that?

THAIS. Because I'm injured!

(She wiggles her stubbed toe at him.)

ION. Well, but see, I got this stick for *me*.

THAIS. That's a little selfish.

ION. Want me to get you another one?

THAIS. Why don't you get another one, and I'll take this one?

PHOEBE. *(Innocently:)* Why don't you two split it?

THAIS. 'Split it?'

ION. *(Delighted:)* Yeah, okay!

THAIS. Wait—!

(ION raises the stick high and tries to break it over his knee. He whacks himself in the knee full-strength, and the stick doesn't even crack. His face goes white.)

THAIS. Sweetie?

ION. Sorry, Thais, I think I need the stick now.

(ION starts hobbling along with the help of the walking stick.)

THAIS. *(Furious:)* 'My hero!' 'My brave protector!' Now we're totally helpless if any bandits come after us.

ION. No we're not! I've got this stick—!

(ION tries to demonstrate a cool quarterstaff move, and falls on his face.)

THAIS. Maybe they'll trip over you.

(THAIS stalks away from him.)

PHOEBE. *(As THAIS moves:)* Thais! Don't you want to help him up?

THAIS. No! We're having a fight!

(PHOEBE helps ION to his feet.)

THAIS gets to the edge of the stage and stops short.)

THAIS. Whoa. Odie—what’s that?

METHODIUS. You mean that big temple? That’s Hera’s big temple.

THAIS. Boy, you are the smart one, aren’t you?

METHODIUS. Her *big* temple, as opposed to the dozen lesser altars along the coast. You know, this temple structure actually used to be dedicated to Hecate, the ancient goddess of witchcraft; then a ship from Delos crash-landed—

THAIS. Fascinating, Odie. So how do we break in?

METHODIUS. Break in?

THAIS. How do we break into Hera’s temple? I could come up with something to distract the guards...

(THAIS *primps her hair.*)

ION. I’ll scale the walls!

(ION *gets off-balance.* PHOEBE *catches him.*)

METHODIUS. First, the guards are women. Second, Phoebe, hold him still. Third—and most relevantly—there’s no need to break in. Just like Mom said, we act like simple pilgrims, wandering in to ask the Goddess a question.

THAIS. You think Hera’s just going to *tell us* if she stole Dad’s lion skin?

METHODIUS. Yes.

THAIS. Well, that’s not nearly complicated enough. Come on, Ion! We’re going to look for a secret entrance.

(*She stalks over to PHOEBE and ION. PHOEBE is still supporting ION’s weight.*)

THAIS. (*Snarling, to PHOEBE:*) Get your hands off my man.

PHOEBE. (*Letting go:*) I thought you guys were fighting.

THAIS. Swooping in when our relationship is at its most vulnerable? Some sister you are.

(THAIS *drags ION away.*)

ION. See you guys!

THAIS. Don’t talk to them!

(THAIS *and ION exit.*)

METHODIUS. Ah, young love.

PHOEBE. Ready to go?

METHODIUS. Let's do it.

*(They pull up the hoods on their cloaks. Electric guitar chords.
They exit as the lights begin to change.)*

Scene 8

(Inside the Temple of Hera.

*Spooky chanting and music fills the air. HERA'S ACOLYTES—
all women—are preparing the space. Some are dancing, some are
praying.*

*There is a large brazier in the center of the stage. The ACOLYTES
form a circle around it and join hands. They bow their heads.*

*HERA'S PRIESTESS enters, wearing ornate robes and a diadem.
The PRIESTESS comes in front of the brazier.)*

PRIESTESS. Mother Hera...

Hera the protector, Hera the beautiful, Hera the cow-eyed.

We are ready for your voice.

ACOLYTES. Grant us your voice, oh Hera.

*(METHODIUS and PHOEBE enter from the side, tentatively.
The PRIESTESS is in a trance.)*

METHODIUS. *(Whispering:)* This is it, sis!

PHOEBE. *(Whispering:)* What now?

METHODIUS. *(Whispering:)* I'll talk to them. I did some research
on their—

PRIESTESS. *(Eyes still closed:)* Pilgrim women, find rest within these
walls!

ACOLYTES. Grant them rest, oh Hera.

(PHOEBE and METHODIUS are startled.)

METHODIUS. Hail to Mother Hera...the beautiful, the protector,
the...uh...the cow-faced...

PHOEBE. *(Quickly:)* Cow-eyed.

METHODIUS. *(Aside to PHOEBE:)* Like that's any better.

PRIESTESS. Hail, pilgrims! Present your offerings to the mother of
the world.

(One ACOLYTE stands and scuttles over to METHODIUS, hands outstretched.)

METHODIUS *gestures frantically to PHOEBE. PHOEBE opens the sack, pulls out two pomegranates, and hands them to her sister.)*

METHODIUS. For the honor of our great mother, the cow, we present an unworthy offering of two pomegranates.

ACOLYTES. Ooooo!

PRIESTESS. The fruit of fertility is a symbol of our eternal mother. Also, its vitamin-rich juice helps fuel her active lifestyle.

(The ACOLYTE snatches the fruits from METHODIUS.)

PRIESTESS. Your gift is accepted.

METHODIUS. *(To PHOEBE:)* Yessssss!

(The ACOLYTE puts the fruits in the brazier and stands back in her place.)

METHODIUS *takes a deep breath.*

METHODIUS. Now, I have a question of the Mother of Greece!

PRIESTESS. Speak, and hear.

ACOLYTES. Speak, and hear.

METHODIUS. We are the daughters of Hercules—!

(The ACOLYTES and all hiss and recoil. The PRIESTESS scowls.)

PRIESTESS & ACOLYTES. *Heracles?*

PRIESTESS. Your offering turns to ash! What trickery brings you here, hated children?

METHODIUS. *(Intimidated:)* We...we...

PHOEBE. Someone stole the skin of the Nemean Lion from our house! Was Hera behind it?

(The PRIESTESS' eyes open. They are blazing as she looks forward, seeing things far beyond the temple.)

PRIESTESS. Presumptuous fools! Daughters of the hated son! You have brought a question...and you will hear!

ACOLYTES. Grant us your voice, oh Hera!

PRIESTESS. An empty lion runs, and Heracles gives chase. An old fool follows a young hero, dreaming of the past. The Mother of Olympus has no part in this. His folly is his own.

(The PRIESTESS' face changes. She is seeing something new, and taking vicious delight in it.)

PRIESTESS. Oh hasty hero! An empty lion is not the only danger in the night! Far, far worse than that lurks outside your home right now!

(PHOEBE and METHODIUS are troubled. Something's at their home right now?)

PRIESTESS. A door in splinters! Shadows on the wall! Horns and hooves! The baying of dogs!

Women and girls, their eyes wide and wet with tears! They cry out, but Hera the protector turns her back on them; *just as their father did.*

METHODIUS. What are you saying?

PHOEBE. Someone's at our house?

(The PRIESTESS looks at the girls for the first time.)

PHOEBE. Please, Hera...no riddles! What's happening?

PRIESTESS. *(Cruel, smiling:)* The Goddess grows bored; the vision fades.

PHOEBE. What has she done to our family?

PRIESTESS. Child, your father has many enemies. Hera's hands are clean of this.

METHODIUS. Yeah? Then what was that about Hera turning her back on our sisters, when they cried for help?

PRIESTESS. She grew bored of them as well.

(PHOEBE steps forward, angrily.)

PHOEBE. Listen! You get back in your trance and tell Hera we want an answer!

PRIESTESS. You will make no demands! We are many, and you are only two.

(The ACOLYTES stand up, menacingly.)

An explosive sneeze rings out somewhere upstage. All eyes turn to look for it.

ION and THAIS come stumbling through a secret passage, upstage center.)

ION. Boy, was that dusty!

THAIS. I told you this would work!

Phoebe? Odie?

PHOEBE & METHODDIUS. Thais?

PRIESTESS & ACOLYTES. Intruders!

(The PRIESTESS pulls a dagger out of her robes. The ACOLYTES shriek out war cries. Some rush towards ION and THAIS, who fight them back; others rally behind their PRIESTESS.)

PHOEBE and METHODDIUS start to run out the way they came. Some ACOLYTES block their path.)

PRIESTESS. Die, daughters of Heracles!

THAIS. *(At the secret passage:)* Come out this way!

(As PHOEBE and METHODDIUS turn, the PRIESTESS rushes them with her dagger. ION hobbles forward with his quarterstaff.)

ION. Run! I'll cover you!

(He tries a fancy quarterstaff flourish and falls down. The PRIESTESS trips over him. Several ACOLYTES go to help her.)

PHOEBE and METHODDIUS run to ION.)

ION. Wow, it worked!

(A whole group of ACOLYTES rushes them. ION hands PHOEBE the walking stick.)

ION. *(To PHOEBE and METHODDIUS:)* Again!

(They roll him towards the ACOLYTES, who trip over him en masse and fall to the ground.)

PHOEBE clocks the PRIESTESS in the head with the walking stick, as METHODDIUS fights her way to ION and drags him to safety.)

THAIS has just booted the last of the ACOLYTES away from the secret passage.)

THAIS. Come on!

(ION and METHODDIUS and run for the secret passage.)

PRIESTESS. Do not let them escape!

(PHOEBE grabs the pomegranates out of the brazier.)

PHOEBE. *(Shaking them at the PRIESTESS:)* And we're taking our fruit back!

(PHOEBE plows their way to the secret passage, and exits with ION and her sisters. They are pursued by several howling, furious ACOLYTES.)

Blackout.)

Scene 9

(The Pages, alone on stage. CRATOS carries a lyre.)

ZELUS. So.

BIA. So...

NIKE. Hera may be a lot of things—

CRATOS. But she's not a liar.

(The others look at him.)

CRATOS puts the lyre behind his back.)

BIA. So when she said something bad went down at the Hercules House...

ZELUS. She was absolutely right.

(Pages disappear.)

PHOEBE, METHODIUS, THAIS, and ION run onstage. ION falters with his walking stick, and THAIS stops to tend to him.)

ION. Keep going. I'll catch up.

(PHOEBE and METHODIUS stop and look back, breathing heavily.)

PHOEBE. You okay, Ion?

ION. Don't stop for me, I can keep hobbling.

METHODIUS. We shouldn't split up, so close to the house. Let's rest a moment.

PHOEBE. Oh thank Zeus.

(PHOEBE flops down into a stretch. Everyone takes a moment to get their wind back.)

THAIS. What do you think is at our house?

PHOEBE. 'Horns.' 'Hooves.' 'Shadows.' 'Dogs.'

THAIS. That sounds really bad, you guys.

METHODIUS. Hey. Without any facts, there's nothing to worry about yet. Hera's whole prophecy might have been a lie. Or instead of being something that's already happened, it might be something coming in the future.

ION. Like, something we're running right into?

METHODIUS. That's entirely possible.

THAIS. Well, great.

PHOEBE. But maybe our being there will let us stop it.

THAIS. Or maybe the horned, hooved shadow-dogs will just eat us too.

ION. Uhh...do shadows eat people?

THAIS. I don't know! I've never met a shadow!

(A CLOAKED FIGURE comes out of hiding, shrouded in black. No one sees the FIGURE as it watches them.)

ION. Because I've got a shadow, and I'd hate to think it's been eating people all this time.

PHOEBE. I think you're okay, Ion.

THAIS. *(Grinning, shaking her head:)* I think you're stupid.

CLOAKED FIGURE. You're all stupid.

(The new voice freaks them out. They wheel on the FIGURE.)

CLOAKED FIGURE. Why are you going back to the house? They're all gone.

METHODIUS. What do you mean?

PHOEBE. Who's gone?

CLOAKED FIGURE. The girls. Deianera. The monsters. Everyone.

THAIS. What have you done to them?

CLOAKED FIGURE. Whoa! Slow down, babyface.

You really don't recognize me?

(Pause.)

The FIGURE sighs and pulls its hood down. DEMOSTRATE is the oldest of Hercules' daughters, with her hair pulled back like a warrior.)

DEMOSTRATE. We don't have time for this.

METHODIUS. Holy Moley.

PHOEBE. Demonstrate?

ION. Demonstrate? Isn't that the sister none of you liked?

DEMOSTRATE. Let me guess; you're the boyfriend nobody likes.

ION. *(Oblivious:)* Ion. Nice to meet you.

DEMOSTRATE. The monsters have Deianera and some of the girls. But they didn't get everyone.

(DEMOSTRATE whistles. EUNIKE and IZZY enter, timidly.)

PHOEBE. Girls!

THAIS. Thank goodness!

(On seeing their sisters, EUNIKE and IZZY start running towards them. The older sisters hug and tend to the girls.)

DEMONSTRATE. Six sisters unaccounted for. I don't know who else is captured, who else escaped, who else is dead. But if—

METHODIUS. *(Holding IZZY:)* Hey!

DEMONSTRATE. What? Odds are that some of our family got killed!

THAIS. *(To DEMONSTRATE:)* Shut up! What's wrong with you!

DEMONSTRATE. What's wrong with you idiots? The sooner you all get real about this, the better.

I've wasted enough time. There's a cave to the southeast. Stay there for a week before you even think about going back to the house. And if you hear dogs howling, block the entrance...and pray.

(She starts to exit.)

PHOEBE. Where are you going?

DEMONSTRATE. I've saved half of my stupid family; I might as well go save the rest.

METHODIUS. You're following Mom.

PHOEBE. We're going with you.

DEMONSTRATE. *(Stopping:)* What?

THAIS. Yeah. We can't just sit in a cave while they're all in trouble.

DEMONSTRATE. Don't be stupid. What do you girls know about tracking? Fighting? Living off the land?

EUNIKE. I miss mom.

METHODIUS. We're coming with you.

(Beat.)

DEMONSTRATE. I'll set the pace. Match it, or don't.

PHOEBE. Why'd you come back, Demonstrate?

You've been gone three years. Why now?

(Beat.)

DEMONSTRATE. Ambrosia's birthday.

(She pulls up her hood. She is gone.)

IZZY. Are we really gonna go rescue mom, Phoebe?

PHOEBE. We absolutely are, Izzy. I've got a good feeling about this.

(In the distance, we hear dogs howling. The sisters look at each other.)

The Pages pop out, carrying lyres.)

ALL PAGES. Oh, really?

(They hit a single chord.)

(Blackout.)

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene 1

*(Nighttime, in the woods. ACHELOUS is inspecting the ground.
The Pages are watching him.)*

BIA. Well, look who it is.

NIKE. Mr. Hornface!

ZELUS. Looking at the ground, huh? Well, that's riveting.

CRATOS. I don't know why we bother.

NIKE. Whoever this guy is—

BIA. He's wasting our time.

ACHELOUS. *(Calling offstage:)* Bring 'em!

(The Pages are stunned.)

BIA. He talked!

ZELUS. Oh my gosh!

NIKE. None of that brain stuff!

CRATOS. Is he important after all?

(DEIANERA is prodded onstage with CHRYS, CHLOE, AMBROSIA, ZOE, SOPHIE, and TIMO. DEIMOS follows them on, carrying a spear. Several CLOAKED FIGURES in black robes are also standing guard over the women.)

(The Pages gawk at this procession.)

NIKE. I think this is important, yeah.

ALL PAGES. Let's watch!

(They disappear.)

ACHELOUS. *(To DEIANERA:)* There's my beautiful. How does camping here sound, darlin'? Ground's nice and wet; water table's high. Yessir, a river-man could be right comfy here.

SOPHIE. You're not a man.

(DEIANERA puts her arms around SOPHIE protectively.)

ACHELOUS laughs.)

ACHELOUS. Well no, little girl, I rightly ain't. I'm a god. Can you spell 'god'?

SOPHIE. Can you?

ACHELOUS. Wouldn't you know it, Deimos? One of Hercules' kids has got herself a swelled head!

DEIMOS. Can't imagine who she got it from. Maybe Uncle Deimos oughta deflate that little head...

(DEIMOS raises his spear. SOPHIE is fearless.)

SOPHIE. And you're not our uncle!

DEIMOS. Ah! But I should have been! You want to tell them the story, Princess, or should I?

(DEIANERA just stares at him.)

DEIMOS. I had a brother—Nessus—even better looking than me. When he saw your mother, he swept her off her feet...and galloped for the hills. So what that she had just married Hercules? If the wedding's less than thirty minutes old, it doesn't count. Every centaur knows that. But your father shot him in the back, took back his bride, and left my brother in the river to die. How's that for a bedtime story?

ACHELOUS. I loved your mother too, girls. I remember I spent a whole summer courting Miss Deianera, genteel as you please, when one afternoon up comes this hairy little boy with a lion skin coat. He looks my woman up and down, and tells me he'll *wrestle* me for her. Imagine! Boy like that needs a thumping, so I say 'all right,' and we go to it. I'd have beat him, too, if he hadn't fought dirty...

(DEIANERA laughs. ACHELOUS clears his throat.)

ACHELOUS. He pulled my left horn off, Miss Deianera; do you call that fighting clean? Took me a dozen years to grow it back...

DEIANERA. Do you want something, Achelous?

ACHELOUS. I surely do. I want the wife that was stolen from me all those years ago.

DEIMOS. And I want Hercules to know what it's like to lose family.

ACHELOUS. And here we are! We've got what we want!

DEIMOS. That's why we're so cheerful.

(A CENTAUR enters with two feed bags. It hands one to DEIMOS.)

DEIANERA. Let my daughters go. You don't need them.

DEIMOS. Neither did Hercules, apparently.

(As ACHELOUS speaks, DEIMOS and the CENTAUR strap their feed bags on and begin munching away.)

ACHELOUS. That's right. Awful strange choice, to fill your house up with women, and leave them unprotected. You all must not matter too much to him.

DEIANERA. Are you going to let my daughters go?

ACHELOUS. Olympus, girl, we only caught half your daughters! You still got six running free as the wind, for now. I declare, some women are never satisfied.

(Lightning-fast, DEIANERA snatches the spear out of DEIMOS' hands. She thracks ACHELOUS in the shin with the butt of the spear, and he doubles over. She points the spear at DEIMOS' head. He raises his hands.)

DEIANERA. Girls! Run! Run!

(The girls are in a mass, confused about where to run.

The CENTAUR raises its spear.)

CENTAUR. Mmmf whmmmf mmmf mmm?

(DEIMOS pulls off his own feed bag.)

DEIMOS. What?

(CENTAUR pulls off its feed bag.)

CENTAUR. Should I kill her?

DEIANERA. Nobody moves.

(The CLOAKED FIGURES advance on the girls, slowly. DEIANERA moves the spear closer to DEIMOS' throat.)

DEIANERA. Nobody moves!

ACHELOUS. Oh, darlin', you don't know what you're doing.

*βγείτε!*¹

(Thunderclap. The stage is thrown into darkness.

When the lights snap back, HECATE has appeared, overlooking the action from a higher level. She wears ornate robes and a long necklace of fangs and bones.)

CHRYS. Look!

HECATE. Παρατήστε!²

(DEIANERA screams and drops the spear. She clutches her hands in agony.)

¹ B'yay-tay! (Come out!)

² Pah-rah-teh-stay! (Drop!)

AMBROSIA. Mom!

HECATE. *Άγρυπνος, τα παιδιά μου!*³

(HECATE raises her arms as she speaks.

The air is filled with the sound of howling dogs. The CLOAKED FIGURES shudder and contort, in the throes of a transformation. They are now WEREWOLVES.

The CLOAKED FIGURES throw back their heads and howl, along with the unseen dogs.)

DEIANERA. Girls! Get out of here!

(DEIANERA tries to hustle the group of daughters one way, but a CLOAKED FIGURE reaches out and grabs TIMO, pulling her away from the others roughly. TIMO shrieks.

DEIANERA and CHLOE dash forward, but DEIMOS picks up his spear and points it at them, stopping them in their tracks.

The FIGURE has thrown TIMO to the ground. It crouches over her, snarling and ready to bite.)

HECATE. *(A short sound of command:) Hep!*

(The FIGURE stops. The howling stops.

DEIMOS, the CENTAUR, and the FIGURES are flanking the girls on all sides.)

ACHELOUS. You see there, Princess? I told you you didn't know what you were doing.

DEIANERA. *(Breathing heavily:)* Who is that?

DEIMOS. Funny story!

ACHELOUS. See, we thought we'd be tangling with your man tonight, so a little back-up seemed in order. Hecate here came very highly recommended.

DEIANERA. Hecate? Goddess of witchcraft...?

ACHELOUS. Did you know she's probably older than Olympus?

DEIMOS. Sure doesn't look it, though.

(DEIMOS whistles at HECATE. She is completely impassive.)

ACHELOUS. Poor thing didn't even get a chance to fight, what with your husband deserting you and all.

DEIMOS. Where is he, by the way? Just curious.

³ Ah-group-nos, tah pie-dee-ah mon! (Awake, my children!)

DEIANERA. (*Defiant:*) Hot on our trail already.

ACHELOUS. Ha! Anyway, darlin', don't try anything again, or Hecate's going to make your little one there a lot littler.

(The air is filled with the sound of growling dogs. The FIGURE over TIMO leans in closer.)

ACHELOUS. Got it?

(The FIGURE drags TIMO to her feet and tosses her back with the others. DEIANERA and the sisters comfort her.)

DEIMOS. (*To HECATE:*) Thanks, doll.

HECATE. (*To ACHELOUS:*) River-God. When can I have them?

ACHELOUS. Miss Hecate, we barely left the Hercules House! Hold your horses at least until we hit Troy.

(HECATE stares at him. They are having a mental conversation.)

ACHELOUS. No, I haven't forgotten. But we agreed, not until we're further north.

(HECATE waves her hand. The CLOAKED FIGURES transform back into humans.

She turns and strides away.)

ACHELOUS. (*Clapping his hands:*) Well! Should we camp?

(DEIMOS and the CENTAUR start to exit. The CLOAKED FIGURES exit a different direction.)

DEIANERA. Achelous?

ACHELOUS. Yes, lovebug?

DEIANERA. What did Hecate mean, 'When can I have them?'

(ACHELOUS sighs. He crouches down next to DEIANERA.)

ACHELOUS. Well, Miz Deianera—be honest. Haven't you ever thought that twelve whole daughters is a little bit...excessive?

(He pats her on the knee and stands up. ACHELOUS walks away, whistling.

Blackout.)

Scene 2

(A forest, a few hours before daybreak.

CRATOS *and* NIKE.)

CRATOS. A rough night for Dee and the girls.

NIKE. But even though Hercules wasn't anywhere to be found—

CRATOS. Somebody was hot on their trail...

(ION stumbles onstage with his walking stick. He falls flat on his face, exhausted.

CRATOS *and* NIKE *look at him.*)

NIKE. ...sort of.

(CRATOS and NIKE disappear.

THAIS *enters, followed by EUNIKE and IZZY. They look worn out.*)

THAIS. *(Gently.)* Ion.

ION. *(Not moving.)* I'm up!

THAIS. We're stopping until daybreak. How's your knee?

(No answer.)

THAIS. Sweetie?

(ION snores loudly. He has passed out.)

THAIS. *(Stretching:)* Well, I sure don't blame you.

EUNIKE. *(Yawning:)* Yeah. Ion's smart!

THAIS. Oh, sweetie, you're so cute.

I'm going to go yell at Demostrate. Can you girls stay here? Ion'll protect you.

IZZY. Okay.

(THAIS gives her sisters a quick hug and leaves. EUNIKE sprints out on the ground, just like ION.

IZZY walks over to ION and gingerly takes his walking stick. He stirs, but stays asleep.)

EUNIKE. What's that for?

IZZY. *(Raising the walking stick:)* Protection. 'The sooner we get real about this, the better.'

EUNIKE. What does that mean?

IZZY. I don't know. I miss my bed.

EUNIKE. Me too. Well, I miss the bed. I don't miss sleeping with Zoe. She mutters all this depressing stuff in my ears while she's asleep.

IZZY. Sophie punches. I got this bruise.

EUNIKE. Sophie's really strong. She's gonna be a good fighter, when dad trains her.

IZZY. Dad's not gonna train her.

EUNIKE. Why wouldn't he? That's, like, all she talks about.

IZZY. Cause she's a girl, and girls can't be heroes. That's what dad said to Uncle King Theseus.

Dad's sad that he has all girls.

EUNIKE. No he's not.

IZZY. Yeah he is. Timo and I heard him. I think that's why he went away.

EUNIKE. He went away because someone stole his lion suit.

IZZY. I don't think so. I don't think he's coming back.

EUNIKE. Gosh, you're worse than Zoe!

(Suddenly, they hear the rattling of chains in the forest. A low, animal growling accompanies it. The noise is coming towards them.)

EUNIKE. *(Whispered:)* What's that?

IZZY. *(Whispered:)* The monsters!

EUNIKE. *(Whispered:)* Oh no! Oh Zeus! Oh Apollo! Oh cra—

MALE VOICE. *(Off-stage:)* Please! Please!

(IZZY and EUNIKE look frantically for a place to hide. They finally lie down and cover their faces on top of ION's still-sleeping body—like ostriches with their heads in the sand. Their bodies and legs are completely visible.)

A YOUNG MAN in chains stumbles onstage. He is very tall.)

YOUNG MAN. *(Over his shoulder:)* You're making a mistake.

GROWLING VOICE. *(Off-stage:)* No, you're making a mistake.

YOUNG MAN. I can help you.

GROWLING VOICE. *(Off-stage:)* I don't need help, buddy—

(The MINITAUROUR leaps onstage. It has a bull head, horns, a battle axe, hooves, the works. It is also tiny—about as big as TIMO—with a gruff, high-pitched voice.)

MINITAURO. (*Raising the axe menacingly:*) —I need lunch.

YOUNG MAN. I promise you; keep me alive, and you won't regret it.

MINITAURO. You're alive now, and I regret it! Now keep walking, or—

(*The MINITAURO notices the cluster of bodies on the ground.*)

MINITAURO. Sweet mesquite, what is that thing?

(*YOUNG MAN notices ION and the daughters.*)

YOUNG MAN. (*Smoothly:*) Only the most dangerous monster in all of Lydia: the Clapdopulus Maximus.

MINITAURO. The what?

YOUNG MAN. Easy! Don't...make...any...sudden...movements...

(*The MINITAURO freezes.*)

YOUNG MAN. We're lucky; it just ate. You can tell by its coloring. It can eat ten bears and two trees in a single meal.

MINITAURO. (*Terrified:*) So what do we do?

YOUNG MAN. Follow me. Of course, if I try to move in these chains, I'll probably wake it up...

MINITAURO. Shh shh shh! Stay still!

(*The MINITAURO sneaks over to the YOUNG MAN and starts to undo his chains.*)

MINITAURO. How come you know so much about this thing?

YOUNG MAN. Don't tell me you never heard of it. Where do you live, a cave?

MINITAURO. That's personal!

(*DEMONSTRATE's voice calls out.*)

DEMONSTRATE. (*Off-stage:*) Eunike! Izzy! Family meeting!

(*ION stirs, and sits up. EUNIKE and IZZY break away.*)

ION. Mmm?

EUNIKE. Eeep! Oh no!

(*The MINITAURO wheels on them. YOUNG MAN finishes pulling his own chains off.*)

MINITAURO. Wait a minute! This is just a couple of girls, and—

(*IZZY leaps up and swats the MINITAURO in the hand with the staff. It yelps and drops the axe.*)

IZZY. Eunike!

(IZZY uses the staff to shove the axe across the ground to EUNIKE. She grabs it and scrambles to her feet. EUNIKE holds the axe backwards, pointing the shaft at the MINITAUROUR like a sword.)

EUNIKE. Avast!

(The MINITAUROUR raises its hands, slowly.)

YOUNG MAN. Wow.

ION. *(Standing, still groggy:)* What's going on?

(He sees the MINITAUROUR, and looks at EUNIKE and IZZY.)

ION. When did you guys get a puppy?

MINITAUROUR. A puppy?! I oughta run you through! Slave! Tell them who I am!

YOUNG MAN. I'm not your slave.

MINITAUROUR. Listen up, humans! Tremble before the Minitaur!

IZZY. You mean the Minotaur.

(Pause.)

ION. Oh, I get it!

YOUNG MAN. It's a lot like a puppy, actually. Its bark is worse than its bite.

EUNIKE. *(Laughs:)* That's funny! I never heard that before.

YOUNG MAN. *(Shrugs:)* Just made it up.

IZZY. Who are you?

YOUNG MAN. Homer; my name is Homer. And who are you?

IZZY. I'm Izzy.

EUNIKE. I'm Eunike.

ION. Ion.

EUNIKE. We're the daughters of Hercules.

ION. Well, I'm not.

HOMER. *(Thrilled:)* The daughters of Hercules! Ha ha! Finally, real heroes!

IZZY. We're not heroes.

HOMER. You're looking pretty heroic to me. Let me come with you.

MINITAUROUR. Me too!

EUNIKE. You too?

DEMONSTRATE. (*Off-stage:*) Girls! Come on! The sooner we do this, the sooner we sleep!

IZZY. (*Calling back:*) We found a baby monster!

MINITAUUR. Who are you calling a baby? I'm a tween!

IZZY. Why would you want to come with us, Minitaur?

MINITAUUR. 'Cause where there's Hercules, there's Theseus. And I've got a message for that prettyboy.

(*IZZY bangs the staff back and forth between the MINITAUUR's horns.*)

MINITAUUR. Aggh!

IZZY. Who are you calling a prettyboy?

MINITAUUR. Theseus!

(*IZZY does it again.*)

MINITAUUR. Ahhhh! Quit it!

IZZY. (*Furious:*) You quit it! You're a dumb cow! I'm tired and I miss my bed! I don't even care if we bring you along! Just shut up about my uncle or I'll stuff this in your nose!

Come on.

(*IZZY gives ION his walking stick and exits.*)

(*The MINITAUUR turns to HOMER.*)

MINITAUUR. Slave? All that stuff you made up about the monster?

HOMER. Yeah?

MINITAUUR. Little girls are a hundred times scarier.

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 3

(*ZELUS and BIA.*)

BIA. At that Hercules family meeting—

ZELUS. Somebody wasn't happy!

BIA. You'll never guess who.

(*DEMONSTRATE enters, with PHOEBE hot on her heels.*)

DEMONSTRATE. It's absolutely ridiculous!

ZELUS. Ding ding ding ding!

(The Pages disappear.)

DEMONSTRATE. We're crawling along as it is. Everyone within ten stadions can hear us move. So what should we do? Add more dead weight to the group!

PHOEBE. First, we're going as fast as we can.

DEMONSTRATE. Yes, 'we' are. *I could go way faster.*

PHOEBE. Second, having a little more muscle along isn't a bad—

DEMONSTRATE. More muscle? A starving poet and a pint-size cow? Styx, Phoebe, no wonder no one ever called you the smart daughter.

(PHOEBE stops.)

PHOEBE. No wonder nobody missed you when you left.

(DEMONSTRATE stops. She turns to look at PHOEBE. PHOEBE can't meet her stare without flinching.)

DEMONSTRATE. *(Shaking her head:)* See, for a moment, I thought you might have some teeth after all. But look at you. You're about to explode, you want to apologize so bad. Gotta be the good sister, and smooth everything over.

Well, life isn't all that smooth, little Phoebe. In life, the strong get what they want, and the weak get what they deserve. You think Dad got where he did from apologizing to people?

PHOEBE. Dad's a hero.

DEMONSTRATE. Dad's a bully. And if you *were* the smart daughter, you'd understand that.

(DEMONSTRATE takes off her cloak. Her necklace is visible for the first time—a long string of bones and fangs.)

DEMONSTRATE. It's hot. If we pick up the pace, we can make it to cover before the sun gets too high.

PHOEBE. What's that necklace?

(DEMONSTRATE hurriedly stuffs the necklace out of sight again.)

PHOEBE. Are those bones?

DEMONSTRATE. Tell the rest of them to get moving.

(DEMONSTRATE stalks off.)

Scene 4

(PHOEBE is still onstage, looking after DEMOSTRATE.

ZELUS and BIA enter, far downstage.)

ZELUS. They got moving.

BIA. But they didn't make it to cover before the sun got high.

ZELUS. Whoops!

(Pages exit as HOMER, METHODDIUS, and the MINITAUUR enter. PHOEBE joins them; they have been walking together for some time. METHODDIUS is carrying the axe.)

MINITAUUR. How can you humans stand hot sun like this, every day? You should try living in caves.

METHODDIUS. If humans lived in caves, where would you live?

MINITAUUR. In a cave. I just wouldn't have to go as far for dinner.

METHODDIUS. (Raising the axe:) Ah-ah-ah! No monster stuff.

You work with us, we give you meat.

PHOEBE. You try to eat us, we tie you up...

METHODDIUS. ...and milk you.

MINITAUUR. You're barbarians. All of you.

PHOEBE. Do you think we're barbarians, Homer?

HOMER. I'll say anything you want, just don't milk me.

(The girls laugh. PHOEBE grins at HOMER.)

HOMER. Lady Phoebe, I have a question.

PHOEBE. Queen Phoebe, please.

HOMER. Oh! Pardon. Your august majesty, I humbly beg a question.

PHOEBE. (With a royal flourish and a yawn:) Ask away.

(METHODDIUS giggles.)

HOMER. Where, exactly, is your father?

(The girls get serious.)

PHOEBE. He's on a quest.

METHODDIUS. A few days before we got attacked, someone broke into our house and stole the skin of the Nemean Lion.

HOMER. The first of his twelve labors...

PHOEBE. Right. So dad went chasing after the thief, and—bad luck, I guess—the monsters came while he was away.

HOMER. That doesn't sound like bad luck. That sounds like a plan.

METHODIUS. Probabilistically, you're right. The odds of two independent incursions on our home within a single—

PHOEBE. (*Cutting METHODIUS off; to HOMER:*) You're right. But the main suspect was Hera, and she didn't do it.

HOMER. Hera?

METHODIUS. See, the thief came and went without disturbing anything else. So either they had a map, or magic, or, I don't know, they already knew our house perfectly. But who would—

HOMER. (*Excited:*) I bet your sister did it!

(*Pause. They blink at him.*)

HOMER. What's her name—you know, the violent one. Demonstrate?

METHODIUS. Demonstrate?

HOMER. Well, if I have this right, an expert thief who knew your house perfectly stole the one thing the father couldn't stand to lose. He left. Days later, your house was attacked, and your long-lost sister—a sneaky wilderness expert who hates you—happened to be there for the first time in...three years? And the monsters didn't see her?

PHOEBE. I guess not.

HOMER. And she didn't try to help?

PHOEBE. She rounded up Izzy and Eunike.

HOMER. Uh-huh; she's rounded you all up, in fact. Where exactly is she leading you?

METHODIUS. Towards the monsters.

HOMER. I wonder how that'll turn out.

(*Pause.*)

PHOEBE. You think our sister is working for the monsters?

HOMER. I have no idea. But that'd be a great plot twist, wouldn't it? I mean, *that's* dramatic.

(*METHODIUS is thoughtful. PHOEBE is furious; no trace of the flirtatious attitude she had earlier.*)

PHOEBE. This isn't a story. She's not a character. That's my sister you're talking about! Family doesn't betray family.

HOMER. (*'Yeah they do!'*) This is Greece!

PHOEBE. Not our family! If you're just here to spread lies, you can put your chains back on, take your monster and leave.

DEMONSTRATE. (*Off-stage:*) Hurry up! We're gaining on them!

(*PHOEBE turns and exits, heading for DEMONSTRATE's voice.*)

HOMER. Lady Phoebe...!

MINITAURO. Well, that's a strike-out.

HOMER. (*To METHODIUS:*) Methodius, I'm sorry if I went too far. Please, forget I said—

METHODIUS. Shh shh shh. Too far? No way.

I think things are just starting to add up.

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 5

(*Ominous music. HECATE is communing with two CLOAKED FIGURES. They kneel at her feet, and she rests her hands over their heads. ACHELOUS and DEIMOS are waiting a little ways away.*)

HECATE raises her arms. The FIGURES stand. In unison, they pull necklaces out of their cloaks—long strings of fangs and bones. They hold the necklaces up to her and bow their heads. Pause.

The FIGURES hide the necklaces in their cowls again. The FIGURES exit together.

HECATE goes to ACHELOUS and DEIMOS.)

ACHELOUS. Well, darlin', what can we do you for?

DEIMOS. (*Lascivious:*) What he said.

HECATE. *River-God. When can I have them?*

ACHELOUS. This again? Honey, you got six of these girls right here right now. When we get to your temple, take your pick.

HECATE. *The others.*

ACHELOUS. The others.

DEIMOS. What do you want with all twelve girls?

(*HECATE swoops forward and places a hand on each of their heads before they can object. The music gets harsher.*)

ACHELOUS and DEIMOS get a vision of what she has in mind. It's enough to make even them queasy.

After a long moment, she breaks the connection. The monsters exhale in relief and distress. Pause.)

ACHELOUS. (Clearing his throat:) So, uh—what say we find those girls?

DEIMOS. (Considerably less attracted to her:) Let's do that. I'll send some of my boys out, you let the dogs out, we catch ourselves some Herculettes. Sound good?

(HECATE turns and leaves.)

DEIMOS. Okay then.

(DEIMOS and ACHELOUS share an uncomfortable look. They exit.

The daughters enter; AMBROSIA, ZOE, CHRYS, CHLOE, SOPHIE, and TIMO. They are muddled and exhausted, and fall to the ground in a pile, trying to get some sleep. A CENTAUR enters and stands guard, at a distance away from them.

SOPHIE watches the monster. She pokes CHRYS.)

SOPHIE. We could take him.

CHRYS. Go to sleep, Sophie.

SOPHIE. I'll take his spear while you all grab Mom and run.

CHRYS. What good is running?

CHLOE. There are doggies in the woods all around us.

SOPHIE. What if I just throw a rock at him? Just one rock.

CHRYS. Go to sleep.

ZOE. Find me a rock, Sophie, I'll throw it with you.

(SOPHIE starts looking. CHRYS and CHLOE stare at ZOE.)

ZOE. What?

CHRYS. Miss End-of-the-World wants to fight back?

CHLOE. What about your image?

ZOE. Screw you guys. I like doom and gloom on my terms, okay? No one's gonna rain on my parade but me.

SOPHIE. (Searching:) Rock rock rock rock rock...

TIMO. You're not gonna really do it, are you? What if the dog men come after us?

(TIMO is clearly traumatized. SOPHIE stops looking.)

CHLOE. Hey, little Timo. No one's gonna throw anything.

TIMO. The dog men have bad breath.

CHLOE. Come here.

(TIMO cuddles up with CHLOE and CHRYS.)

CHLOE. (*Sadly:*) No one's gonna do anything.

SOPHIE. We've gotta do something!

(AMBROSIA is playing with her bracelet. CHRYS notices her.)

CHRYS. Ambrosia? You okay?

AMBROSIA. Happy birthday to me...!

CHRYS. Not the best vacation, huh? We'll get you something else next year.

CENTAUR. Shut up over there!

(Pause.)

TIMO. (*Much more quietly:*) Your bracelet shrank.

CHLOE. Hey, yeah! That's the present Uncle Theseus gave you, right?

AMBROSIA. (*Coyly:*) It's the present *Hippolytus* gave me.

ZOE. Shameless.

CHLOE. It's pretty. I thought it had more charms on it.

AMBROSIA. It did. I've been dropping one every dozen stadions or so.

CHRYS. What?

ZOE. Why?

SOPHIE. (*Immediately understanding:*) To help trackers pick up our trail.

AMBROSIA. Uh-huh.

CHLOE. Did you see someone, Ambrosia?

CHRYS. Who's tracking us? Dad? Hippolytus?

AMBROSIA. I don't know.

ZOE. If Odie and Phoebe and them have any sense, they went to Grandpa's palace.

AMBROSIA. I know.

CHLOE. Wait...so what makes you think someone's following us?

AMBROSIA. Hope.

(The girls mull this over.)

AMBROSIA. Just hope.

ZOE. That's kinda nice, Ambrosia.

Stupid, but nice.

(CHRYS begins to hum a sad, pretty melody. The girls huddle together.

Blackout.)

Scene 6

(The Pages. NIKE is playing the lyre, and finishes off the melody CHRYS was humming. The clean sound of electric guitar dies out.)

CRATOS. Three days travel...

ZELUS. Brought the prisoners closer to Troy...

BIA. And Hecate's temple...

CRATOS. Where, if nobody stopped them, the monsters were going to—

NIKE. *(Distraught:)* You know what I'd like?

(The other Pages look at NIKE.)

NIKE. *(Very emotional:)* I'd like a little good news for these poor girls, who are having a pretty rough time.

CRATOS. Shh, shh!

BIA. Hey, don't say stuff like that.

NIKE. *I just want a little good news!*

(EUNIKE, THAIS, and PHOEBE enter. EUNIKE notices something on the ground and picks it up.)

EUNIKE. *(Excited:)* Hey! Hey, guys! Look at this!

THAIS. Holy Hestia!

PHOEBE. That's a charm from Ambrosia's bracelet!

THAIS. So they've gotta be close!

EUNIKE. Oh, wow! What good news!

(The Pages look at NIKE. NIKE slams a quick, exultant chord on the lyre.)

NIKE. You see what happens when you just ask?

(A CENTAUR and a CLOAKED FIGURE enter from the other side of the stage. EUNIKE, PHOEBE, and THAIS gasp and drop prone, trying to hide. The monsters haven't seen them yet.)

(NIKE's face falls.)

BIA. You asked for it.

(The Pages disappear.)

EUNIKE. *(Panicking:)* Oh my gosh. That's them. That's the monsters who took Mom and—

THAIS. *(Hissing:)* Eunike! Shut up!

What do we do?

PHOEBE. Eunike. Go tell Demoststrate. You and Izzy stay back, all right?

(EUNIKE scurries offstage. The monsters' ears perk up, and THAIS and PHOEBE flinch.)

CENTAUR. Did you hear something?

(The CLOAKED FIGURE ignores the CENTAUR.)

The CENTAUR starts whistling "How Much is that Doggie in the Window?" The FIGURE wheels on it, insulted.)

CENTAUR. Oh, so you can hear. Just making sure.

(The FIGURE growls. The CENTAUR grins and keeps searching.)

DEMOSTRATE enters stealthily, sword drawn. EUNIKE follows her, terrified. They crouch with THAIS and PHOEBE.)

DEMOSTRATE. *(Sizing up the situation:)* Only two?

THAIS. Think so.

PHOEBE. *(Noticing EUNIKE; to DEMOSTRATE:)* I told Eunike and Izzy to stay away.

DEMOSTRATE. Too bad. We're doing my plan.

THAIS. What should we do?

DEMOSTRATE. Jump in if this gets ugly.

(DEMOSTRATE whistles.)

IZZY enters from the opposite side of the stage, screaming. The monsters wheel on her.)

IZZY. Aaah! Aaaah! Aaaah!

(IZZY falls down. The FIGURE crouches to pounce, and the CENTAUR raises its spear.

DEMONSTRATE rushes at the CENTAUR's back. It turns just in time for her to knock the spear away with her sword.

At the same time, METHODIUS, HOMER, and the MINITAUUR rush the FIGURE from behind.)

HOMER, METHODIUS, & MINITAUUR. Yaaaah!

(METHODIUS brandishes the axe, and HOMER and the MINITAUUR carry the slave chains.

HOMER and the MINITAUUR throw chains around the FIGURE from behind and pull them tight. The FIGURE is immobilized.

Both monsters have weapons held to their throats.

ION hobbles on with the walking stick.)

ION. Here I come! Can I fall down at anyone?

DEMONSTRATE. (Pleased with herself:) It's all under control. Thais, go bring me my pack, will you?

(THAIS exits.)

IZZY. (Standing:) Ow, my leg hurts.

PHOEBE. (To DEMONSTRATE:) You used our little sister as bait!

DEMONSTRATE. And look what I caught.

(She kicks the Centaur's spear over to PHOEBE, who picks it up.)

DEMONSTRATE. (To the CENTAUR:) All right, my little pony. How far away are your friends?

CENTAUR. (Sneering:) You might as well kill me now, because I'm not saying a single word.

(DEMONSTRATE hands the bracelet charm out to the CENTAUR.)

DEMONSTRATE. This charm is solid gold.

CENTAUR. (Taking it, not missing a beat:) Less than a day northwest. Go left at the white boulder and follow the stream, you can't miss 'em.

DEMONSTRATE. (Lowering the sword:) Thanks.

CENTAUR. Good luck!

(He gallops away, past THAIS as she enters. THAIS is carrying Demoststrate's bag.)

THAIS. (Startled:) Horse! Guy! Escape!

DEMONSTRATE. Let him go.

EUNIKE. You gave him Ambrosia's present!

THAIS. He's getting away!

DEMONSTRATE. Who cares?

(The FIGURE pulls against its chains. HOMER and the MINITAUR fight to keep it under control.)

HOMER. Whoa!

MINITAUR. Put your back into it, shrimp!

DEMONSTRATE. Thais. My pack.

(THAIS grudgingly brings DEMONSTRATE her pack. DEMONSTRATE takes it and locks eyes with the FIGURE.

The FIGURE stops struggling.)

FIGURE. *Αδελφή? Αδελφή?*⁴

(The FIGURE wriggles an arm free.)

HOMER. Watch it!

(The FIGURE pulls its necklace free. It shows the long string of bones and fangs to DEMONSTRATE. DEMONSTRATE is impassive; PHOEBE is horrified.)

FIGURE. *(Urgently:)* *Αδελφή!*

EUNIKE. What's it yelling?

MINITAUR. How should I know! Do I look like I speak monster?

METHODIUS. *(Suspicious:)* It's saying 'sister.'

THAIS. 'Sister?' What's that supposed to mean?

(DEMONSTRATE has passed her sword off to IZZY. She takes a glove out of the pack and puts it on. With her gloved hand, she takes a pair of tall, hooded purple flowers out of the pack.

The FIGURE stares at the flowers, terrified.)

ION. I'm lost. What are those flowers?

DEMONSTRATE. *(Grimly:)* Wolfsbane.

(DEMONSTRATE lunges forward and shoves the flowers into the FIGURE's mouth. It struggles desperately, gagging, but she—and a surprised HOMER and MINITAUR—hold it still enough for her to force the plant down.

⁴ Ah-dell-phay? ("Sister?")

DEMONSTRATE steps away, breathing heavily. The FIGURE shudders violently for a long time. IZZY and EUNIKE look away; everyone else but DEMONSTRATE goes a little green.

Finally, the FIGURE slumps over against the chains. HOMER and the MINITAUUR let it fall to the ground gently.

Pause. All eyes are on DEMONSTRATE.)

DEMONSTRATE. That was human once. There's a chance now it'll wake up cured.

METHODIUS. And if it doesn't?

(Pause. DEMONSTRATE shrugs.)

EUNIKE. *(Staring at the body:)* Oh my gosh.

(DEMONSTRATE takes her sword back from IZZY, and slings her pack over her shoulder.)

DEMONSTRATE. We're less than a day behind. Let's move! No more time to waste!

(She strides forward and exits. Everyone gives her a wide berth. They all look at the body.)

Scene 7

(ZELUS and CRATOS enter.)

ZELUS. How far is too far?

CRATOS. Demonstrate just found out.

(Characters come forward one at a time and shout their grievances out to the audience. We can imagine all these points were brought up in an angry group meeting.)

EUNIKE. She gave away the charm!

THAIS. *(Standing with ION:)* She let the Centaur go!

PHOEBE. *(Holding IZZY:)* She used Izzy as bait!

IZZY. My leg hurts!

METHODIUS. That monster knew her!

HOMER. She's working for them!

MINITAUUR. *(Pointing upstage at the FIGURE's body:)* I was gonna eat that guy, and now he's all poisoned!

ALL EXCEPT PAGES. She went too far!

(They all exit, except PHOEBE, who lingers upstage, and the Pages.

DEMONSTRATE enters, far downstage.)

CRATOS. What do you call it when you do the right thing the wrong way, and the people you tried to help turn against you?

ZELUS. Democracy!

CRATOS & ZELUS. Very Greek.

(The Pages disappear, leaving PHOEBE and DEMONSTRATE alone.)

DEMONSTRATE. *(Not looking at PHOEBE:)* So what's it gonna be?

How am I punished? Hmm? Half rations? Twenty lashes?

Or do you all want me to leave? 'Cause I'll go. I've got better things to do than risk my neck for people to stupid to see what needs to be done.

(PHOEBE is just looking at her.)

DEMONSTRATE. What do you want?

PHOEBE. Are you working for Hecate?

(Pause.)

DEMONSTRATE. Hecate?

PHOEBE. Odie recognized the monster's necklace. Same as yours. The monster called you sister.

She and Homer think you stole the lion skin, lured Dad away, and now you're leading us directly to Hecate. Because you're her servant.

DEMONSTRATE. *(Bitterly:)* Well, doesn't that add up nicely.

PHOEBE. *(Shaking her head:)* Uh-uh.

DEMONSTRATE. *(Surprised:)* Why not?

PHOEBE. Because my sister's never been anyone's servant.

My sister wouldn't even do her chores in the kitchen.

DEMONSTRATE. Kitchen stuff is girl work.

PHOEBE. *(Grinning:)* That's what Sophie says.

DEMONSTRATE. Yeah?

PHOEBE. "Making pie is girl work. Where's my battle-axe?"

(DEMONSTRATE actually laughs. So does PHOEBE.)

DEMONSTRATE. Little fightin' Sophie. I can hear her saying it.

(She softens. She suddenly seems very fragile.)

DEMONSTRATE. Gods, I miss her. I missed all of you idiots.

PHOEBE. *(Quietly:)* Where've you been, Demonstrate?

(Pause.)

DEMONSTRATE. You think being a middle kid is hard? Imagine being the first. The first daughter of Hercules. And then, nine months later, along comes Thais. And nine months after that, Methodius. And every nine months for years; until the twins came along and Mom made him switch to *her* schedule. And even then, six more. Why so many? Because none of us was what he wanted. A big, strong, heroic *son*.

I was awful to you girls, I know; but I never hated *you*. I hated that son. You know? That shadow in the room.

So I decided to beat him. I'd leave home. I'd become stronger than he could ever be; I'd make Dad forget he ever wanted a son. I'd do anything to be more powerful.

I came up to Troy to train...and in the dark woods outside the city, I found this temple.

(She pulls out her necklace.)

DEMONSTRATE. I found Hecate.

She molded me. She trained me. I did...horrible things for her. But I got stronger. And finally, I was ready to be turned.

The howling of the pack all around me; my powerful brothers and sisters, in black robes, waiting for me to join them; Hecate, with her arms raised...

And do you know what came into my head?

(PHOEBE shakes her head.)

DEMONSTRATE. "Ambrosia's birthday is coming up."

Just like that. A little memory from my old life, clear as a bell; a reminder of what I was giving up. And when I looked up at Hecate, I realized, she wasn't going to make me powerful...she was going to make me a weapon. Her weapon, to wield, or to drop.

I ran; I almost got killed; but I made it home, and guess what I found there? Hecate, taking my family away. I must have led her straight to you.

(DEMONSTRATE's eyes are full of tears.)

DEMONSTRATE. I didn't even get to say happy birthday.

(DEMONSTRATE *cries. She wipes her eyes furiously.*)

DEMONSTRATE. Styx, Phoebe, what did you do to me? I haven't cried in years...

PHOEBE. I'm a witch.

DEMONSTRATE. Don't tell anyone about this.

(*Pause. DEMONSTRATE gets herself under control.*)

PHOEBE. You didn't steal the Nemean Lion's skin.

DEMONSTRATE. No. No idea who did.

PHOEBE. And you don't work for the monsters.

DEMONSTRATE. Never again.

So, what? Do I pass?

PHOEBE. I don't think our house got attacked because of you.

DEMONSTRATE. What do you mean? Hecate's punishing me for running away. Why else would she do this?

PHOEBE. Does Hecate usually work with centaurs?

DEMONSTRATE. No.

PHOEBE. So this isn't her show. Hera mentioned "horns and hooves" among the monsters. Does that mean anything to you?

DEMONSTRATE. Hooves would be the centaurs. Horns could be anything; our stupid Minitaur, a satyr, a river-god—

PHOEBE. Hang on. That Centaur told us to follow the stream, right?

DEMONSTRATE. Yeah.

PHOEBE. What does that say?

DEMONSTRATE. That it's amateur hour over in monster town. We can track them blindfolded if they follow the stream. So either they don't care about being found...

PHOEBE. Or they've got somebody who needs water?

DEMONSTRATE. (*Figuring it out:*) A river-god. Centaurs, Hecate, and a river-god. What in Tartarus are they doing together?

PHOEBE. And what do they have against us?

DEMONSTRATE. I say we fight first and ask questions later. When we catch them, leave Hecate to me.

PHOEBE. No.

(*DEMONSTRATE is stunned by PHOEBE's calm directness.*)

DEMONSTRATE. No?

PHOEBE. No. We're all sick of doing everything your way or nothing at all. We're sick of being in the dark. Every one of us wants to rescue the family just as much as you do. Except the Minitaur, but we just fed it so it'll do whatever we want anyway.

What I'm saying is, we're not your servants. We're going to plan together, we're going to fight together, and we're going to save our family together.

DEMONSTRATE. Or else?

PHOEBE. Or else you sit out and we get all the glory.

DEMONSTRATE. Zeus no.

PHOEBE. Then come on. We've got a plan to hatch.

(Grinning at each other, PHOEBE and DEMONSTRATE cross the stage together.)

THAIS, METHODIUS, EUNIKE, IZZY, ION, HOMER, and the MINITAU enter and form a loose circle. They have been having their own discussion. Their muted conversation ends as PHOEBE and DEMONSTRATE get close. They look at DEMONSTRATE guardedly.

DEMONSTRATE clears her throat and takes a seat in the circle.)

DEMONSTRATE. Right. So what have you got so far?

(Fade to black.)

Scene 8

(A woodsy area near the stream. Logs and a cluster of rocks.)

NIKE and BIA.)

NIKE. Oh, they came up with such good plans! Everything was going to be so good!

BIA. *(Putting a hand over NIKE's mouth:)* Shhh! You just don't learn, do you?

(Pages disappear.)

Enter DEIANERA and DEIMOS. DEIANERA is dressed up in a beautiful gown, with beautiful new jewelry—compulsory gifts from ACHELOUS. DEIMOS is leering at her.)

DEIMOS. How do you like your new pretty-pretty, Dee? Achelous is such a gentleman.

DEIANERA. He's not a man.

DEIMOS. (*Flexing:*) Ha! No, there's only one real man around here, sad to say.

You know what they say about men with four legs?

DEIANERA. They make good pets?

DEIMOS. Styx, woman! What does a guy have to do to get the time of day out of you?

DEIANERA. Let me see my daughters.

DEIMOS. No way.

DEIANERA. You're not afraid of us, are you?

DEIMOS. Only thing I'm afraid of is Hecate. But you didn't hear that from—

(ACHELOUS *enters, troubled.*)

DEIMOS. A-man! What's new?

ACHELOUS. We need to talk.

DEIMOS. What does Hecky want now?

ACHELOUS. (*Indicating DEIANERA:*) Shh shh shh!

DEIMOS. Oh, whatever. (*To DEIANERA:*) Don't escape, all right?

(DEIMOS *and* ACHELOUS *exit.*)

MALE VOICE. Pssst!

(DEIANERA *looks around, startled.*)

MALE VOICE. Pssst! Mrs. Hercules! Over here!

DEIANERA. *Ion...?*

(ION *sits up from his hiding place in the rocks. He has been totally invisible up to this point.*)

DEIANERA *rushes over to him.*)

ION. Don't look at me!

(DEIANERA *turns her back to him.*)

DEIANERA. What are you doing here?

ION. Phoebe sent us all out to get information, and I—

DEIANERA. Phoebe? Us? Who's here?

ION. The rest of the girls, me, this poet guy, and this little puppy monster.

DEIANERA. Where's Hercules?

ION. Nobody knows.

So, look, are you all okay?

DEIANERA. Me, all six girls, yes; for now. If we get to Hecate's temple, something awful's going to happen.

ION. Right, yeah. So we should save you before that.

DEIANERA. That'd be nice, Ion, yes.

ION. So look, we think we can handle the Centaurs and the horny guy, but we don't know how to beat Hecate yet. Any ideas?

DEIANERA. She's the real deal. Without an older, stronger god on our side, I don't know how to handle her.

ION. Another god. Hmm. Well, at least we've got some time to figure something out.

(ACHELOUS and DEIMOS re-enter. ION drops back into hiding.)

ACHELOUS. C'mon, darlin'. Change of plans. We're moving out.

DEIANERA. We just stopped!

ACHELOUS. Well, too bad. We've got somewhere to be before midnight tonight.

DEIANERA. *(Putting it together:)* Midnight?

We're going to the Temple?

DEIMOS. *(Nodding:)* Somebody's impatient.

ACHELOUS. Will you shut up? If Hecate hears you talking like that...!

Come on, woman. Let's get this over with.

(ACHELOUS exits. DEIMOS grabs DEIANERA by the arm and leads her offstage.)

ION. They're going to the Temple tonight? I've gotta tell the others!

(He tries to stand and falls right down.)

ION. Oh, my leg is asleep.

(He struggles on the ground.)

ION. *(Hissing:)* Man down! Man down!

(Pause.)

ION. *(An awful bird-call:)* Ca-caw! Ca-caw!

(NIKE and BIA appear.)

NIKE. This goes on for a while.

BIA. He makes it back, okay?

NIKE. Just trust us.

NIKE & BIA. Skip!

(Quick blackout.)

Scene 9

(Ominous music, interspersed with chanting and howling.)

PHOEBE, DEMOSTRATE, METHODIUS, THAIS, EUNIKE, IZZY, HOMER, ION, and the MINITAURO are having an urgent, whispered meeting. They're all armed, as best as they can be.)

DEMOSTRATE. Fine! So just leave Hecate to me.

PHOEBE. That's suicide, and you know it.

DEMOSTRATE. If we don't deal with her, this whole thing is suicide!

ION. Mrs. Hercules said we should get an older, stronger god on our side.

THAIS. Yes, sweetie, having a god on our side would help.

IZZY. I'll ask Artemis. She's cool.

EUNIKE. I'll ask Hera!

ALL THE DAUGHTERS. No!

METHODIUS. There's no time for that. They never check their prayers after 10 PM at Olympus.

HOMER. Well, what about other gods? There's more to the world than Olympus. Some other nature god with a grudge against Hecate...

DEMOSTRATE. Again, how are we going to get a hold of a *god* in the next ten minutes?

PHOEBE. (Inspired:) Who says we need a real god?

Homer, how strong are you?

HOMER. I do okay.

PHOEBE. Minitaur, can you carry a tune?

MINITAURO. Sure, but I'm more of a dancer.

PHOEBE. Good enough.

(PHOEBE takes off her cloak, and gets ready to explain.)

PHOEBE. Everyone. What do you think about this...?

(Blackout.)

Scene 10

(Ominous music. The Temple of Hecate.

The Temple is not a building, but a clearing in the middle of a cluster of dark trees. The Temple is wild and chaotic, filled with gnarled branches and sinister vines. An altar on a dais dominates the scene; a huge tree stump made of petrified wood.

HECATE stands on the altar, surveying the scene. A large group of CLOAKED FIGURES lay around the foot of the dais, curled up like sleeping dogs.

Two FIGURES and a handful of uneasy CENTAURS lead the daughters on [CHRYS, CHLOE, AMBROSIA, ZOE, SOPHIE, TIMO].)

HECATE. Αδελφές...⁵

SHADOWY FIGURES. Αδελφές!

(The FIGURES growl and howl with anticipation.)

SOPHIE. Dumb dogs!

(CHRYS and CHLOE hold on to SOPHIE.

ACHELOUS and DEIMOS enter with DEIANERA in tow.)

TIMO. Mommy!

AMBROSIA. Mom!

DEIANERA. Girls!

ACHELOUS. Quiet, quiet! Mind your manners! We're in a church.

HECATE. River-God. Are we agreed?

ACHELOUS. We're agreed! Take your payment.

DEIMOS. *(Under his breath:)* And good riddance.

HECATE. *An innocent, pure in heart; newly a woman.*

(A CLOAKED FIGURE grabs AMBROSIA and leads her forward to the base of the altar.)

⁵ Ah-dell-face... (Sisters...)

CHRYS. Ambrosia!

CHLOE. Oh no...

HECATE. *An innocent, pure in heart; steeped in childhood.*

(Another FIGURE grabs TIMO and leads her forward to the other side of the altar.)

DEIANERA. No. Not Timo. Achelous, stop this. I'll do anything you want—

ACHELOUS. *(Sadly:)* Ain't nothing gonna stop this, Princess.

HECATE. *Ελάτε.*⁶

(HECATE raises her arms. AMBROSIA and TIMO go glassy-eyed. They slowly begin to walk up to the altar, one on either side of the dais.)

HECATE points at the altar with one arm. AMBROSIA kneels, facing TIMO.

HECATE looks down at TIMO.)

HECATE. *Child.*

(HECATE draws a fiendish knife from her robes. She hands it to TIMO, who accepts it.)

HECATE. *Bathe yourself in life, and be forever changed!*

SHADOWY FIGURES. *(Chanting:)* Αίμα... αίμα... αίμα... αίμα...⁷

(TIMO turns to AMBROSIA. AMBROSIA bares her throat to TIMO. TIMO raises the knife.)

DEMONSTRATE. *(Off-stage:)* SOPHIE!

(All eyes turn towards the voice. The Minitaur's battle-axe slides onstage towards the daughters and glides to a stop. SOPHIE's eyes bulge out.)

SOPHIE. No! Way!

(She breaks free from the daughters and snatches the battle-axe. With a wild war whoop, she barrels through the CENTAURS and rushes the altar. The SHADOWY FIGURES leap and dodge, terrified, as she swings the axe like a berserker.)

DEIMOS. What the—

⁶ Eh-lah-tay. (Come.)

⁷ Ai-mah... (Blood...)

(DEMONSTRATE, THAIS, and ION rush in on the daughters' side. DEMONSTRATE has her sword; THAIS swings Demonstrate's pack; ION has the walking stick. They charge the CENTAURS and are locked in combat.)

ZOE picks up a rock from the ground and throws it at AMBROSIA. It hits her in the head. She snaps out of her trance.)

AMBROSIA. Ow!

ZOE. Happy birthday! Look out!

(AMBROSIA sees TIMO and screams. The two of them become locked in a grapple.)

CHRYS. Sophie!

CHLOE. Look out!

(SOPHIE is being menaced on each side by two FIGURES.)

CHRYS sings a stratospherically high soprano note, and all of the CLOAKED FIGURES cower in pain. CHLOE cartwheels over to the closer FIGURE and takes it out with a string of high kicks. SOPHIE slams the other with the flat of the axe, knocking it down.

AMBROSIA shakes TIMO.)

AMBROSIA. Timo! Wake up! Help us!

(TIMO snaps out of her trance and laughs. She sees a nearby FIGURE.)

TIMO. (Raising the knife:) Stabbity!

(She stabs at the FIGURE, who barely evades her.)

TIMO. Stabbity! Stabbity! Stabbity!

(The girls are routing the FIGURES.)

The CENTAURS have been driven away by the daughters and ION.)

DEIMOS. (To ACHELOUS:) Time to go?

ACHELOUS. Time to go.

(They grab DEIANERA and turn to run. Rocks fly at them from offstage, and they let go of DEIANERA to shield themselves.)

ACHELOUS. What in Tartarus—!

(METHODIUS and PHOEBE enter, blocking their way. METHODIUS has a length of chain, and PHOEBE has a spear. EUNIKE and IZZY enter after them, with a rock in each hand.)

DEIMOS. Brats!

(DEIMOS lunges forward with his spear, almost skewering METHODIUS. PHOEBE and METHODIUS fight with him.)

EUNIKE and IZZY throw their rocks at ACHELOUS. He blocks them. The girls are empty-handed. ACHELOUS gets ready to charge, like a bull.)

DEIANERA. Hiiii-yaaaaa!

(DEIANERA leaps on ACHELOUS' back and grabs a horn with both hands. She pulls with all her strength.)

ACHELOUS. Aggh! No! No! No!

(He spins around, trying to dislodge her. EUNIKE and IZZY dash forward and grab their mother, helping her pull. ACHELOUS is in agony.)

With a final heave, they rip his horn off. He falls to the ground, wailing. They tumble to the ground in a line.)

ACHELOUS. Noooo! Not again!

(HECATE leaps down from the dais.)

When she hits the ground, the lights change. A wave of force hits all the girls. They stagger backwards, shielding their faces.

The CENTAURS are long gone. The remaining FIGURES slink behind HECATE for protection. DEIMOS and ACHELOUS, panting, are just as transfixed by HECATE as the Hercules family is.)

HECATE. Σεβασμός!⁸

(Everyone falls to their knees, against their will.)

HECATE. Respect! What you will not give, I will compel!

Learn what it means to defy a god!

MINITAU. *(Offstage:)* You're not the only god around here, Hecate!

(HECATE and the FIGURES look around sharply, searching for the voice.)

HECATE. Who speaks?

MINITAU. *(Offstage:)* It is I...

(A GIANT with horns, an animal head, skinny legs, and cloven hooves runs up from behind the dais and poses on the altar.)

GIANT. The God Pan!

⁸ Seb-ahs-mos! (Respect!)

(Of course, this is the MINITAU, riding on HOMER's shoulders. HOMER is hidden underneath a traveling cloak, and the costume 'hooves' at the bottom of HOMER's naked legs wouldn't pass any serious scrutiny. But maybe it's dark enough...)

The MINITAU waves a set of pan pipes in the air.)

MINITAU. Ha ha ha!

ACHELOUS. Pan?!

DEIMOS. We're all dead!

MINITAU. Now clear out of these woods!

HECATE. *This is my Temple, goat!*

MINITAU. But this is *my* forest! And my forest is for revelry, and music, and life! Not for little girls stabbing their sisters!

HECATE. *Death is a part of life!*

MINITAU. Yeah—a crappy part! So knock it off!

HECATE. *Make me.*

(PHOEBE and METHODIUS share a look, concerned.)

HOMER stumbles a little bit. The MINITAU keeps its balance, barely.)

MINITAU. *(Blustering:)* I am the God of Nature! In this forest, my word alone—

HECATE. *No words. Awe me with your music, Pan. Prove your power, and this forest is yours.*

(The MINITAU examines the pan pipes, hesitant.)

HECATE. *Why do you not play?*

MINITAU. I'm really more of a dancer.

(HECATE raises her hand. All the daughters, and DEIANERA, contort in silent pain.)

HECATE. *Prove yourself, or the women die.*

MINITAU. All right! All right!

(HECATE lowers her hand. The daughters and DEIANERA breathe heavily as the pain subsides.)

MINITAU. You asked for it...

(The MINITAU tentatively raises the pipes to its lips.)

The Pages enter, ZELUS and BIA on one side, CRATOS and NIKE on the other. They carry lyres.

In turn, they start to trill, building a four-note chord of anticipation.

Everyone onstage can hear this, for the first time. HECATE looks around, bewildered.

The MINITAURO takes a breath.

The MINITAURO jumps into a masterfully difficult riff on the pan pipes. The Pages are backing it up every step of the way with a mighty rock accompaniment. The music is fast, driving, distorted, with a chugging rhythm that sweeps everyone on stage along for the ride.

The lyres are wailing; the pipes are soaring; everyone is caught up in a moment of divine rock.

With a final powerful chord, the song stops cold.

The MINITAURO slowly lowers the pipes.

The Pages disappear.

HECATE bows stiffly to the MINITAURO. She waves a hand and the FIGURES all stand. They beat a hasty exit, with HECATE trying to look as dignified as possible.

Pause.

The MINITAURO throws up its arms in triumph.)

MINITAURO. *!! Rock! So! Hard!*

(Blackout.)

Scene 11

(The Pages.)

ZELUS. We weren't supposed to butt in like that...

CRATOS. Zeus told us:

ALL PAGES. "Just tell the story."

BIA. But who wants a story where everybody dies?

NIKE. Not me!

ZELUS. If that's what you like—

CRATOS. Go read Sophocles.

NIKE. Anyway!

**THIS PLAY IS
NOT OVER!**

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