

SIDE A (Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus, Athena)

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Scene 1: Greek Kings' Camp Outside of Troy

(THE CORAS enter DSR in front of the curtain.)

CORA #1: Tell me, muse! Tell me about a complicated man. Tell me how he wandered and was lost. Where he went. What he saw and who he met. The grief he suffered and the battles he fought... to save his own life and to bring his men back home.

CORA #2: But the man you speak of failed to bring his men home, didn't he?

CORA #1: Yes, because his men did many horrible things. They plundered and killed, fought and lied, forgot logic and sense. But the worst? They believed they had the right to take and eat the cattle of Helios, so *their* day of return was taken from *them*.

CORA #3: But does he share some of the blame, this complicated man?

CORA #1: Let us decide for ourselves. Tell us this old story for our modern times, so that we may learn from it.

CORA #2: Where would you like me to start?

CORA #3: The beginning?

CORA #1: The beginning.

CORA #2: We open our tale not at sea, but on the dusty battlefields of Troy, where our flawed and brave hero, the wily Odysseus, devises a plan to end the ten-year long war.

(The CORAS exit DSR. The curtain opens to AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, ODYSSEUS, EURYLOCHUS, and the TWO MEN in a battle tent. They stand around a table, examining maps and battle plans. Six cots / camping rolls surround the table.)

MENELAUS: This war has gone on for far too long. We need to find a way to end it. We can't go on with soldier after soldier, hero after hero, being killed on this cursed battlefield.

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AGAMEMNON: Menelaus, how can you think about giving up when you should be thinking about revenge! Don't you have pride, brother? Paris had no right to take Helen from your home and play that she was his wife, when she was already married to you! Ten years of Greeks being slaughtered at the hands of these Trojan dogs will have been for nothing if you don't bring your queen back with you to Sparta. It's why I led this army to begin with! (Slams hands on the table as he rages.)

MENELAUS: (Sighs.) If a decade-long siege hasn't forced the Trojans to admit defeat, Agamemnon, I don't know what will. Their city walls are too high and too well-guarded for our men to scale. Even Achilles's defeat of Hector didn't bring us any closer to overtaking the city. (Pauses to think.) Odysseus, King of Ithaca, known throughout the world for your strength of mind and body, what do you think we should do?

AGAMEMNON: (Sarcastically.) Yes, let's ask Odysseus how to succeed, the man who didn't even *want* to join the war, not even to save his own wife's cousin, and tried a dozen dirty tricks to get out of it.

ODYSSEUS: (Ignoring Agamemnon.) I think we need to change our strategy. All that we've demonstrated in the last ten years is that our soldiers are brave and talented, and so are the Trojans'. If we want to win, we have to get *inside* the city and use the element of surprise to launch a final attack.

AGAMEMNON: (Mocking Odysseus.) "We have to get inside the city." Isn't that what we've been trying to do this whole time? (To MENELAUS.) Menelaus, you said this guy is "known throughout the land for his strength of mind as well as body?" and this is what he suggests?! No wonder we haven't won yet! Next, he's going to tell us that instead of climbing over the walls, the Trojans should just let us in.

ODYSSEUS: Maybe they will, Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON: (Laughs.) I can't believe anyone would ever ask you for military advice.

ODYSSEUS: I'm trying to show a little ingenuity, okay? And what do *you* have to say for *yourself*? All that *your* ideas have done is lead to the death of thousands of our men!

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(ODYSSEUS and AGAMEMNON look like they're about to fight.)

MENELAUS: Stop! Stop. Fighting amongst ourselves will not solve our problems. We're exhausted, no doubt from this constant warfare. Let's retire for the evening, and perhaps the answer will come to us in our refreshed minds, if not in our dreams.

ODYSSEUS: Yes, may wisdom come to us in sleep.

(ACTORS go to their cots and fall asleep. LIGHTS fade to purple to signify night, but the audience is still able to see the scene. CORA #3 enters DSR in front of the sleeping actors with a SPOTLIGHT on her.)

CORA #3: And wisdom did come, in the form of the bright-eyed Athena.

(CORA #3 exits DSR. ATHENA enters USR in her full battle armor and walks around the room, stopping to comment on various characters.)

ATHENA: Who do we have here... ah yes, Agamemnon—a consummate jerk, to whom wisdom has never paid a long visit. *(Addresses the audience.)* Things will not work out well for him, but that's Clytemnestra's story... *(Continues to walk around the stage.)* And here is Menelaus—Oh Menelaus, if that idiot Paris had the wisdom to pick me *(Flips her hair.)* instead of Aphrodite as the fairest goddess, none of this would have happened to you... or any of these people. But love rarely thinks, does she? *(Continues to walk around the stage until she stops at ODYSSEUS.)* And here is my favored one, the wily Odysseus. Oh, Odysseus, I've become bored with this war, and there's now a different type of fun to be had. So, when the rosy-fingered dawn appears, a sign will come to you for how to take the city of Troy.

(ODYSSEUS shifts in his sleep.)

SIDE B (Odysseus, Eurylochus, Man #1, Man #2)

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ODYSSEUS: Let's go then, Eurylochus, and sail the wine-dark seas. I can't believe it will only be a short while before I see my beloved wife, the prudent Penelope, and our son, Telemachus, again!

(*ODYSSEUS, the TWO MEN, and EURYLOCHUS exit SR. ATHENA, looking satisfied, exits SL. The CURTAIN closes.*)

Scene 2: The Island of the Cyclopes

(*The CORAS enter DSR in front of the curtain.*)

CORA #3: Odysseus and his men sailed west. They raided a town called Ismaros, as men often did then, and took whatever food and supplies they wanted. And so Odysseus took on the title pirate, along with king, soldier, and favorite of Athena's.

CORA #1: He, this complicated man, told his men that they now had everything they needed—even though it was stolen and not earned—to get back to Ithaca, and they sailed toward their home.

CORA #2: But then, the winds blew the sails of Odysseus toward a new and mysterious island covered with a thick fog.

(FX: Fog rolls out onto the stage. CORAS exit DSR in front of the curtain. ODYSSEUS, the TWO MEN in yellow shirts, and EURYLOCHUS enter DSL in front of the curtain. All are carrying swords.)

EURYLOCHUS: Where are we?

ODYSSEUS: I'm not sure; this fog's made it impossible to know where we're going. We're just lucky that our boat didn't crash into some rocks.

MAN #1: What should we do, King Odysseus? We can't sail with these conditions. (*Gestures at the fog.*)

MAN #2: I agree. It wouldn't be safe.

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ODYSSEUS (Considers.) You're right. Eurylochus, go back to the ship and keep the men calm and entertained. The three of us will investigate the island. Perhaps we can find even more food.

(*EURYLOCHUS nods and exits DSL in front of the curtain, ODYSSEUS starts to exit DSR, but the TWO MEN don't move.*)

ODYSSEUS: (Cont'd.) What's wrong?

(*The TWO MEN look at each other.*)

MAN #2: We're scared.

ODYSSEUS: Scared? Of what?

MAN #2: We don't know where we are.

MAN #1: Or where we're going.

MAN #2: Or who lives here.

MAN #1: Or what lives here.

MAN #2: Plus, this fog is kind of creepy.

ODYSSEUS: (Taken aback.) You two survived ten years of the horrors of the Trojan War, the rage of Achilles, the burning of Troy, and you're afraid of... fog?

MAN #1: Yes!

MAN #2: Well, the fog and the fact that our characters don't have names in the playbill. (*To the audience.*) Go on, check!

ODYSSEUS: (To the audience.) I'm sure that's just an oversight. (*To the MEN.*) Let's explore the island... maybe the people here will be friendly... or maybe there will be nobody. Either way, don't let your fear get the best of you. Fortune favors the bold, and all that. Besides, what's the worst that can happen?

(*ODYSSEUS and the TWO MEN exit DSR in front of the curtain. The CURTAIN then opens, and the FOG is cut. The stage is set up as POLYPHEMUS' cave: props and set pieces include a sleeping mat on the floor, giant wheels of cheese, a human skeleton (out of sight), a goblet, sheep's wool, and a*

SIDE B (Odysseus, Eurylochus, Man #1, Man #2)

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fuzzy blanket or two. The TWO MEN and ODYSSEUS enter DSR.)

MAN #1: Who knew the fog would go away that quickly... Now I need a break from that sun!

MAN #2: And this cave seems like a perfect place to take a rest.

ODYSSEUS: Why don't we sit here and have a drink? We can continue west after we take a break.

(The TWO MEN and ODYSSEUS sit on some rocks the height of chairs and uncork their wineskins.)

MAN #1: This doesn't look like a random cave, does it? It looks like someone lives here.

(ODYSSEUS investigates the items in the cave, holding up the things he finds.)

ODYSSEUS: Whoever does live here must be really into sheep or something. There is so much wool and...

MAN #2: Cheese!

(MAN #1 and MAN #2 gather wheels of cheese. Man #2 eats some cheese. All actors should leave their wineskins on the pile of rocks in view of the audience for later in the scene.)

MAN #1: We should bring some of this back to the ship. We're running low on what we got from our raid on Ismaros.

ODYSSEUS: Let's wait! I want to meet whoever lives here. Perhaps he'll give us gifts, as we're weary travelers and guests in his home. It is the polite thing for him to do.

MAN #2: (Hesitantly.) Maybe...

MAN #1: Let's see what else he's got in here.

(MAN #1 goes behind the pile of rocks, investigating.)

MAN #1: Hey, do you think it's weird that he has sheep bones in here?

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ODYSSEUS: Yeah, it's a little unusual for someone to have...

(MAN #1 turns around holding up a skeleton.)

MAN #2: Those are not sheep bones!

ODYSSEUS: Maybe we should—

(SFX: Thundering footsteps interrupt ODYSSEUS.)

ODYSSEUS: (Cont'd.) Hide!

(ODYSSEUS and the TWO MEN hide behind the pile of rocks, but the audience can still see their heads as they watch the scene unfold. POLYPHEMUS enters carrying his giant boulder with TWO SHEEP. He places the boulder DSR blocking the "entrance" to the cave.)

MAN #1: Do you think he sees us?

POLYPHEMUS: (Stops and looks around, snoring.) I smell... dinner!

(LIGHTS cut to black. MAN #1 and MAN #2 scream and then exit SR. After a few seconds, LIGHTS come back up. POLYPHEMUS is wiping his face with one of the Two Men's t-shirts like a napkin. ODYSSEUS is lying in the center of the room. The SHEEP are hanging around in the corner. When there is a lull in the next set of dialogue, the Sheep occasionally bleat.)

ODYSSEUS: (Scrambles to his feet.) What happened?

POLYPHEMUS: You made too much of a mess while I made a meal of your men, so I knocked you out and then roasted them like sheep. I will eat you too in time, but now I am full. Speaking of sheep, what wool is this? It feels strange in my hands. (Holds up the yellow t-shirt he was using as a napkin.)

ODYSSEUS: It's a tri-blend. But please sir, respect the gods. We—or I guess—I am a guest, and Zeus is the protector of all visitors.

SIDE C (Odysseus, Polyphemus)

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ODYSSEUS: Yeah, it's a little unusual for someone to have...
(MAN #1 turns around holding up a skeleton.)
MAN #2: Those are *not* sheep bones!
ODYSSEUS: Maybe we *should*—
(SFX: Thundering footsteps interrupt ODYSSEUS.)
ODYSSEUS: (Cont'd.) Hide!

(ODYSSEUS and the TWO MEN hide behind the pile of rocks, but the audience can still see their heads as they watch the scene unfold. POLYPHEMUS enters carrying his giant boulder with TWO SHEEP. He places the boulder DSR blocking the "entrance" to the cave.)

MAN #1: Do you think he sees us?
POLYPHEMUS: (Stops and looks around, sniffing.) I smell... dinner!

(LIGHTS cut to black. MAN #1 and MAN #2 scream and then exit SR. After a few seconds, LIGHTS come back up. POLYPHEMUS is wiping his face with one of the Two Men's t-shirts like a napkin. ODYSSEUS is lying in the center of the room. The SHEEP are hanging around in the corner. When there is a lull in the next set of dialogue, the Sheep occasionally bleat.)

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POLYPHEMUS: My people think nothing of Zeus or many of your gods. Our strength is more than theirs. If I spare you, it will be out of the goodness of my heart, not from fear of Zeus. My father *is* Poseidon after all.
ODYSSEUS: (Aside.) My soldier's heart wants me to use my sword to find his liver, but I'd be stuck in here forever with that heavy boulder blocking the entrance. I should instead use my wily mind to free myself, rather than my soldier's heart. (To POLYPHEMUS.) Sir, you have kindly provided me with shelter, even though you've devoured my men. And your sheep are very cute.

SHEEP #1: (Bleats.)
ODYSSEUS: You're welcome, sheep. Cyclops, have some wine that we brought from our ship. I mean, how do you expect to have more guests when you forget your manners? You must always accept gifts given as thanks for your hospitality!
POLYPHEMUS: I do not want more guests! I want to shepherd my sheep in peace. But... (ODYSSEUS shakes the wineskin at him, and POLYPHEMUS has a change of heart.) I will try your wine.

(ODYSSEUS grabs a wineskin and fills the goblet and hands it to POLYPHEMUS. Polyphemus drinks the wine.)

POLYPHEMUS: (Cont'd.) Another!
(ODYSSEUS pours more wine into POLYPHEMUS' goblet. Polyphemus drinks the wine.)

POLYPHEMUS: (Cont'd.) Now tell me your name, so I can give you a present for being my guest.
(POLYPHEMUS gestures to ODYSSEUS with his empty wine goblet. Odysseus opens the second wineskin after realizing the first one is empty and pours more into the goblet.)

ODYSSEUS: My name is Noman. My friends and family all call me Noman.

Side C (Odysseus, Polyphemus)

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POLYPHEMUS: Hello, Noman. I am Polyphemus.

ODYSSEUS: Nice to meet you, Polyphemus. Should we shake hands to show that we are friends?

POLYPHEMUS: Of course not! We are not friends. In fact, my gift to you is that I will eat you *after* my nap, rather than before. I'm quite sleepy after all that ... (Looks into his goblet.) shepherding, and I will see you when I wake.

(*POLYPHEMUS grabs the wineskin from ODYSSEUS, drinks the contents, and then goes to sleep on his sleeping mat. He snores.*)

ODYSSEUS: I don't think it was the *shepherding* that made him sleepy. But now, I'll carry out my plan. Let him sleep for a while, until the sheep get anxious to go out again, and then I will strike. (Sits down.)

SHEEP #1 and SHEEP #2: (*Bleat loudly and continuously.*)

ODYSSEUS: Well, that was quick.

(*ODYSSEUS walks over to POLYPHEMUS and stabs him in the eye.*)

POLYPHEMUS: (*Screams.*) My eye! My eye! What did you do?

(*POLYPHEMUS gets up, holding his eye with one hand. Polyphemus will cover his eye with his hand for the rest of the scene.*)

POLYPHEMUS: (*Cont'd.*) You've blinded me!

ODYSSEUS: I appreciate your attempt at hospitality, but you probably should have eaten me before your nap.

POLYPHEMUS: Where are you? I'm gonna get you!

(*POLYPHEMUS rages and stomps throughout his cave. He throws various items around the stage, hoping to hit ODYSSEUS. The SHEEP occasionally bleat nervously. Odysseus plays along for a little while but gets tired. After a particularly loud stomp, Odysseus delivers his next line.*)

Side D (Odysseus, Athena)

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ATHENA: (*Whispers loudly, calling to him.*) Hey, Odysseus.

(*ODYSSEUS turns around to see ATHENA.*)

ODYSSEUS: The bright-eyed Athena!

ATHENA: Indeed.

(*ODYSSEUS looks back at his MEN, who do not react and keep rowing.*)

ATHENA: (*Cont'd.*) They can't see me. Here, Odysseus, I have come to you from Mt. Olympus to tell you that you've angered Poseidon by blinding his son. He's pledged to take his revenge on you by making sure you never make it home to Ithaca.

ODYSSEUS: But I must make it home to Penelope and Telemachus! My son doesn't even know me!

ATHENA: I know. And as my favorite among men, I will help you. Here, take a look at this. (*ATHENA shows ODYSSEUS the sack.*) These are the winds of Aeolus. I'll open up this sack just a little to let the Zephyr out which will blow you through this punishing current. Then I will bind the sack to the back of your swift ship to guide it back to Ithaca. But be careful, do *not* open the sack any more, or the other winds will blow you elsewhere. (*ATHENA ties the sack to the ship.*)

ODYSSEUS: Thank you, gray-eyed goddess.

ATHENA: Be well, Odysseus. And perchance you will see your prudent wife and thoughtful son before the next blooming rose of dawn.

(*ATHENA exits DSR. ODYSSEUS crouches down and resumes rowing. The CREW takes small steps forward. Throughout dialogue they should get halfway between DS and DSL.*)

Side E (Eurylochus, Poseidon)

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ODYSSEUS: It's working!
MAN #1: Look! We're coming up on Ithaca.

(ODYSSEUS moves to the bow and resumes looking at the horizon. A sign that says "Ithaca" is placed at the very edge of DSL.)

MAN #2: I can see campfires on the shore!

(POSEIDON enters from DSR wearing a red t-shirt over his costume. He walks onto the end of the boat.)

POSEIDON: *(Whispers loudly, calling to him.)* Hey,
Eurylochus.

(EURYLOCHUS turns around.)

EURYLOCHUS: Who are you?

POSEIDON: I'm... uh... Man #3! *(Hides his trident behind his back and then pulls on his red t-shirt as proof.)*

EURYLOCHUS: Oh, sweet. What's up, man?

POSEIDON: Oh, I'm just enjoying my proximity to the wily Odysseus and all that. Anyway, do you see this bag here? What do you think's in there?

EURYLOCHUS: I don't know. It doesn't look like something we took from Ismaros.

POSEIDON: *(Leans in.)* I heard that Athena gave this bag to Odysseus himself.

EURYLOCHUS: *(Shocked.)* Odysseus didn't tell me that Athena had visited him! And had given him gifts, no less!

POSEIDON: Why do you think he would do that?

EURYLOCHUS: I don't know.

POSEIDON: Maybe he's holding out on us. What if it's filled with gold and silver, and the king is going to keep all that money for himself!

EURYLOCHUS: Do you think Odysseus would do that?

POSEIDON: I mean, there's only one way to find out.

Side F

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TELEMACHUS: Has it really been twelve years to the day since Father left for the Trojan War?

PENELOPE: It has, Telemachus. The only consolation I have is that you look so much like him.

TELEMACHUS: Do you think he'll ever come back?

PENELOPE: I've heard news from my cousins, Helen and Menelaus, that he survived the war, so I have to believe he is trying his best to come back home.

TELEMACHUS: What about the men who've started showing up at our palace—the so-called "suitors"? Don't *they* believe he's coming home?

PENELOPE: They don't. More of them come by the day, waiting for me to decide to give up and choose a new husband among them. And they're getting impatient.

TELEMACHUS: Can't you tell them to leave?

PENELOPE: They all came with swords and men of their own. Anyone who was loyal to Odysseus left with him for the war. I have no one who will stand up to them with me. My only choice is to delay them until Odysseus comes home.

TELEMACHUS: How will you do that?

PENELOPE: I will tell them I am weaving a burial shroud for Odysseus' father, and when I'm done, I will choose my new husband and therefore the new king of Ithaca.

TELEMACHUS: You can't, Mother! They're awful, all of them. They've been eating our fattest cattle, drinking Father's best wine, and acting as if they are already kings! It's an insult to you, me, and my father!

PENELOPE: Oh, my thoughtful, Telemachus, I would never actually marry one of them. Can you keep a secret? (*TELEMACHUS nods.*) Each night, once the suitors have fallen asleep—with the aid of our best wine—I will undo what I have woven that day, so the shroud is never done.

TELEMACHUS: That's very clever, Mother. A scheme worthy of Athena! Are you worried they'll catch on to your plan?

PENELOPE: Let's hope they continue to drink all of our fine wine, our common wine, and the dregs of the casks and not to look too closely at the shroud.

Side G (Odysseus, Circe)

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ODYSSEUS: (Cont'd. Shakes himself off and psyches himself up.) Okay, Odysseus, You're about to face an all-knowing, powerful, dangerous being. You can do this. You can beat him!

(ODYSSEUS draws his sword. He turns around and sees CIRCE with her back still to the audience.)

ODYSSEUS: (Cont'd.) It cannot be. (Drops his sword to the ground.) Just like in my dream. The dress... The hair... Penelope? My sweet and prudent Penelope, what are you doing here, wife?

(CIRCE turns around.)

CIRCE: I am not someone men would call sweet, and I am certainly not your wife. Who are you? And why are you intruding on my island?

ODYSSEUS: I am Odysseus, King of Ithaca. My men and I sought safety and hospitality on this island after being attacked by the Laestrygonians... and a Cyclops. Have you seen two men by any chance? They were my scouting party.

CIRCE: Welcome to Aeaea, Odysseus. I am Circe. And I did see those two men. But they were behaving like swine, so I turned them into swine.

(CORA #1 and CORA #3 enter with the TWO MEN, who are now wearing pig snouts and tails.)

ODYSSEUS: You've turned my men into pigs! Two more men lost! (To CIRCE.) But wait, why pigs of all things?

CIRCE: You want me to explain to you why I turned these men—men who came into my house uninvited, flirted... clumsily I might add... with my companions and then ate all of my food—into pigs? Aren't you Odysseus, the man who thought of the Trojan horse, the king favored by the bright-eyed Athena, who is considered one of the smartest men of his age?

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ODYSSEUS: Well, yes!

CIRCE: (Exasperated.) It's a metaphor.

ODYSSEUS: A metaphor?! Why must you women be so hard to understand!

(CIRCE dips the goblet into her cauldron and hands it to HIM.)

CIRCE: Why don't you ponder the perplexing nature of women while drinking this. Consider it my... hospitality.

(ODYSSEUS drinks from the goblet. CIRCE smiles with malicious anticipation.)

ODYSSEUS: That's pretty good. Thank you!

CIRCE: (In shock.) Nothing happened! No other man has ever... How did you—

(ODYSSEUS picks up his sword and holds it to CIRCE's throat.)

ODYSSEUS: You said yourself that I am favored by the bright-eyed Athena! Now, you must swear an oath stating you will make no plans to harm me.

CIRCE: I swear, I swear!

ODYSSEUS: (Lets her go.) Good. Now, let's be friends.

CIRCE: Ugh—I don't want to be friends. (SHE crosses away from HIM.) What do you want, so you can be on your way?

ODYSSEUS: I want to know why we were blown away from Ithaca and how we can get home again.

CIRCE: Well, favorite of Athena, that should be pretty obvious. You have angered the sea-god Poseidon, after blinding his beloved son, the cyclops. And Poseidon won't stop until you've suffered greatly. But you can make it home again if you follow our advice and control your men.

ODYSSEUS: I can do that. Where do we start?

CIRCE: First you will sail away from here due west, to avoid Posiedon's wrath on the island of the Laestrygonians. But the west has dangers of its own: you will sail past the island of the sirens.

Side G (Odysseus, Circe)

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ODYSSEUS: The sirens?

CORA #1: Yes. They look like women, which you've already shown you underestimate, but they are more dangerous than you can imagine.

ODYSSEUS: What makes them dangerous?

CORA #3: They sit on their island and sing irresistible songs, luring men to their deaths on the rocks below. No man can hear their songs and ignore the temptation to sail toward them.

ODYSSEUS: Surely, I'm strong enough to resist them.

CIRCE: Surely you are not. Pour wax into the ears of your crew so they cannot hear the sirens' song and instead will sail your ship to safety. But... if you want to hear the song that no mortal has ever heard before and lived to tell the tale, have your men tie you to the mast so tightly that you cannot escape...

ODYSSEUS: I will. Where do we go after the sirens?

CIRCE: Then, you must sail through a strait that presents you with a choice. One option is to sail through a fog that never clears and where no light ever gets through. The fog disguises the home of my old rival Scylla, a monster with twelve legs and three rows of crowded yellow teeth. She is always hungry and hunts dolphins, seals, whales, and the occasional crew of an unlucky ship. She snatches men up, two at a time, to devour them.

ODYSSEUS: And this monster with three rows of yellowing teeth was a rival of yours?

CIRCE: Once upon a time... when she wasn't a monster.

ODYSSEUS: (*Gesturing to the TWO MEN in pig form.*) I'm guessing you had something to do with the way she looks now.

CIRCE: (*Cackles, while patting one of the MEN on the head.*) Perhaps. But instead of sailing past Scylla, you can choose to sail closer to an island of rocks covered with the thick leaves of a fig tree.

CORA #3: Beneath the tree lives Charybdis, a great whirlpool who sucks the black water of the strait down into her mouth and shoots it back out several times a day.

Side H (Poseidon, Athena)

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EURYLOCHUS: (Cont'd.) We can sail back to Ithaca, and everything will be fine. Here—take some steak.

ODYSSEUS: I'll get on the boat, but I won't eat the cattle.

(CURTAIN closes. **POSEIDON** and **ATHENA** enter in front of the curtain from opposite sides of the stage: **Athena** enters from DSR and **Poseidon** enters from DSL.)

POSEIDON: If it isn't the gray-eyed loser.

ATHENA: Yes, I'm the loser. That's why there's a city in Greece called Poseids rather than Athens.

POSEIDON: (Scoffs.)

ATHENA: What do you even want, fish-breath? Your stench would make it impossible for a mortal to think.

POSEIDON: Such strong words from someone who needs me to keep her *favorite* mortal alive.

ATHENA: What do you mean?

POSEIDON: You didn't hear? Odysseus's men sailed to the island of Helios and got trapped there—I wonder how that happened. They became so desperate for food that they slaughtered one of Helios's cattle. Helios is not pleased. Zeus is not pleased. Hera is not pleased, but mostly because of Zeus's behavior, not because of this—remind me to tell you about his dalliance with Thalia later. But the point is, they plan to kill Odysseus and all of his men.

ATHENA: But Odysseus wouldn't kill one of Helios's cattle. He's far too smart for that.

POSEIDON: Yeah, you're right; he wouldn't, and he didn't. But his men and his lieutenant with that unpronounceable name did.

ATHENA: Eurylochus?

POSEIDON: Yeah, that one.

ATHENA: So why does Odysseus have to die? He didn't do anything wrong.

POSEIDON: Didn't do anything wrong? Those men were under his command. He is responsible for them.

ATHENA: He commanded them to eat the cattle?

POSEIDON: No, but—

ATHENA: And were they warned not to harm Helios's cattle?

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POSEIDON: Well... yes.

ATHENA: Then you have no argument for why Odysseus must die.

POSEIDON: (Considers this and then gets angry.) Ugh, you're right! But wait... I don't have to listen to reason, do I? I'm just gonna go do whatever I want. Time to do some smiting. (Crosses to exit DSL.)

ATHENA: Wait, wait, wait. I am sure we can come to some sort of agreement to save Odysseus's life.

POSEIDON: You could tell everyone on Mount Olympus that I'm your favorite uncle.

ATHENA: (Recoils.) Ew. Hades is my favorite uncle.

POSEIDON: Hades?!

ATHENA: It's the logical answer. He's the only one of us who does his job without getting into other shenanigans, and he's actually nice to his wife.

POSEIDON: Wow, Athena, wow. You know what, I *will* keep Odysseus alive, but I'm going to make him beyond miserable to spite you even more!

ATHENA: Fine.

POSEIDON: Fine. (Stomps off DSL.)

ATHENA: (To the audience.) Just to recap, Odysseus gets to live, and I don't have to make an embarrassing statement about old fish-breath being my favorite uncle. This is why you never try to outwit the goddess of wisdom.

(ATHENA bows and then exits DSR.)

End of ACT I

Optional Intermission

Side I (Odysseus, Calypso)

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ACT II Scene 1: Ogygia—The Island of Calypso

(CORAS #2 and #3 enter DSL in front of the curtain.)

CORA #3: The Olympians took revenge on Odysseus, smashing his boat and taking his crew to the depths of the sea. Only Odysseus, thanks to the bright-eyed Athena, was spared.

CORA #2: He was carried across the endless ocean on a makeshift raft made from a piece of his ship to the island of Ogygia, where he would spend the next seven years.

CORA #3: But he wasn't alone.

(CORA #2 and #3 exit DSR. The CURTAIN opens. CALYPSO is tending to her garden USR with her back turned to the audience. There is a makeshift bed of pillows and blankets. She is wearing the same wig that Penelope and Circe wore. ODYSSEUS enters DSL, coughing and heaving, but appears grateful to be on solid land. Calypso sings to herself. Odysseus hears the singing and looks for the source. He looks at her in awe.)

ODYSSEUS: Could it be... Penelope? I don't remember Penelope singing, but it has been so long that maybe she's changed. (Shouts.) Penelope!

CALYPSO: (Turns around.) Who is Penelope?

ODYSSEUS: My wife.

(CALYPSO crosses to ODYSSEUS.)

CALYPSO: I am not who you think I am, but I think I know you. You are the wily Odysseus, King of Ithaca, owner of the great bow, and the mastermind behind the wooden horse which brought Troy to ruin, aren't you?

ODYSSEUS: That's me.

CALYPSO: And now you are here on Ogygia by yourself, with no kingdom, no great bow, no army, and apparently no wife. You must be very lonely.

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ODYSSEUS: I am more hungry and tired than anything. My ship was destroyed, and I've been on this raft by myself for ten days. I've had no food beyond a few raw fish I caught with my hands.

CALYPSO: That is quite a long time. I will prepare you a meal, and you can rest. There is really nothing to do here beyond that, besides garden and weave and play music while we sit by the sea,

ODYSSEUS: I don't think after the dangers I've seen I could ever truly rest again.

CALYPSO: There is no one here but us. No monsters, no creatures, just me. And now you. You are safe.

ODYSSEUS: How can I know that I can trust you? I don't even know your name.

CALYPSO: I am Calypso, daughter of Atlas. Have you heard of me? Been warned about me?

ODYSSEUS: No.

CALYPSO: Perhaps I cannot convince you that you will be safe here, but you can take solace in the fact there are no terrible tales told of me.

ODYSSEUS: I guess that's true.

CALYPSO: The only terrible tale one can tell about me is a tale of loneliness, because I am here by myself, alone... for all time.

ODYSSEUS: Forever?

CALYPSO: Yes.

ODYSSEUS: Why? What have you done?

CALYPSO: I supported my father against the Olympians, and the Olympians do not forgive easily.

ODYSSEUS: That I know very well.

CALYPSO: See, we understand each other. You do not need to fear me.

ODYSSEUS: I suppose. But for now, if you do have some food to spare, I would be very grateful for it, and then I think I could sleep for years.

CALYPSO: Of course.

(CALYPSO sings or hums as she exits USR to grab a plate of fruit and bread. While Calypso is singing and getting the food,

Side I (Odysseus, Calypso)

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ODYSSEUS falls asleep. Calypso leaves the food next to him then exits **USR** again. The **LIGHTS** change from current lighting to dark/evening and then to light/daytime again, signaling the change from day to night. When the lights signal a new day for the second time, Calypso reenters. Odysseus stirs.)

CALYPSO: How are you feeling?

ODYSSEUS: Better than I have in years. How long was I asleep?

CALYPSO: Nearly two full days.

ODYSSEUS: Wow. Well, I should have the energy now to make a strong raft and find my way to a port city.

CALYPSO: What do you mean?

ODYSSEUS: Okay, maybe I should eat something first. (Begins to eat the food.)

CALYPSO: You cannot leave.

ODYSSEUS: I'm sorry, Calypso, but I have to. I have been away from my people and my wife and son for 13 years. I'm sure you're lonely being on the island by yourself but...

CALYPSO: No, I'm not asking you not to leave. I am saying you *cannot* leave. You are trapped here. Ogygia isn't some island on the far side of a map; it's a ghost island meant to punish those who *really* anger the gods. What did you do to cause such an odyssey of pain for yourself?

ODYSSEUS: My men ate Helios's cattle.

CALYPSO: Oh, that is bad, but that wouldn't have earned you a life here. The gods would have smote you and moved on.

ODYSSEUS: And I blinded Poseidon's son.

CALYPSO: Ah. And so, the sea brought you here.

ODYSSEUS: And the sea will bring me home again.

CALYPSO: You can build a raft and try, but I promise you will get swept back in.

ODYSSEUS: We'll see.

(*ODYSSEUS* puts down the plate of food and grabs his raft. He then brings the raft down the **DSL** stairs and toward the middle of the audience. SFX: The sound of wind picks up and

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he is "pushed" back up the stairs. **Odysseus** collapses in front of **CALYPSO**.)

CALYPSO: See.

(The **LIGHTS** cut out on stage. **CALYPSO** and **ODYSSEUS** freeze. **CORA #2** and **CORA #3** enter **DSR** on the edge of the stage.)

CORA #2: Seven years passed, and each day, Calypso sang to Odysseus to try to get him to forget about his life on Ithaca.

CORA #3: But every night, Athena sent him dreams of the prudent Penelope, and he could never be satisfied on the island.

(**CORA #2** and **CORA #3** exit **DSR**.)

CALYPSO: Come on, Odysseus, you really should just forget about Pelican or Ping Pong or whatever her name is and enjoy your life here. I have ambrosia—you could stay here, forever young as my husband.

ODYSSEUS: Her name is Penelope! And I can never forget about her!

CALYPSO: Well, it's been 20 years since you left for the Trojan War; she has probably forgotten about you.

ODYSSEUS: No! I won't believe it! Penelope is waiting for me and taking care of my kingdom! (Begins to cry and walks to the edge of the stage **DSR**.)

CALYPSO: He's so annoying when he gets like this. He doesn't need to make this so complicated. I just feel like with three to twenty more years, he'll finally be happy here.

(**ATHENA** and **POSEIDON** enter **DSL**, unseen by **CALYPSO** and **ODYSSEUS**. Calypso tidies up around the island while Odysseus sobs.)

Side J (Calypso)

ODYSSEUS: (Cont'd.) Just to be clear—you didn't sabotage my raft with magic or whatever so I can't leave again, right?

CALYPSO: (*Lets out an angry scream.*) Of course not! I love you! How can you not see that? I have spent the last seven years trying to make you happy. I've given you hand-spun clothes fit for a king, sung songs to you that would make most men cry with joy, and made meals that no mortal on any Greek isle could ever imagine. Word has passed here that you whined at Polyphemus and Circe about hospitality, and even though I have given it to you wholeheartedly for seven years, you don't even thank me for taking care of you when I could have just let you starve! You say you care about Penelope, but I wonder if you even care about anything other than yourself.

ODYSSEUS: I...

CALYPSO: You are beyond self-centered. And as much as I have loved you, I hate you now. Well, Poseidon said you can go—so just go!

Side K (Cora #1, Cora #2, Cora #3)

Scene 1: Greek Kings' Camp Outside of Troy

(THE CORAS enter DSR in front of the curtain.)

CORA #1: Tell me, muse! Tell me about a complicated man. Tell me how he wandered and was lost. Where he went. What he saw and who he met. The grief he suffered and the battles he fought... to save his own life and to bring his men back home.

CORA #2: But the man you speak of failed to bring his men home, didn't he?

CORA #1: Yes, because his men did many horrible things. They plundered and killed, fought and lied, forgot logic and sense. But the worst? They believed they had the right to take and eat the cattle of Helios, so *their* day of return was taken from *them*.

CORA #3: But does he share some of the blame, this complicated man?

CORA #1: Let us decide for ourselves. Tell us this old story for our modern times, so that we may learn from it.

CORA #2: Where would you like me to start?

CORA #3: The beginning?

CORA #1: The beginning.

CORA #2: We open our tale not at sea, but on the dusty battlefields of Troy, where our flawed and brave hero, the wily Odysseus, devises a plan to end the ten-year long war.

CORA #1: And so begins the story we all know well. The Trojans celebrated the end of the decade-long war and the retreat of Agamemnon's armies. The celebrations lasted well into the night, until the soldiers and townspeople fell under the—what's the best way to say this while keeping it school appropriate— influence of their own revelry.

(FX: The image on the cyclorama changes to the horse inside the city walls. Lights are white/normal and the sounds of cheering/partying are played on the loudspeakers. After three seconds, the lights turn purple, and the sounds of fun fade to quiet.)

CORA #2: The greatest warriors of Greece waited for the silence of a city asleep and emerged under the cover of night from the belly of Odysseus's horse. Then, they sacked the city of Troy.

CORA #3: Odysseus and his men sailed west. They raided a town called Ismaros, as men often did then, and took whatever food and supplies they wanted. And so Odysseus took on the title pirate, along with king, soldier, and favorite of Athena's.

CORA #1: He, this complicated man, told his men that they now had everything they needed—even though it was stolen and not earned—to get back to Ithaca, and they sailed toward their home.

CORA #2: But then, the winds blew the sails of Odysseus toward a new and mysterious island covered with a thick fog.