

MYTH: HEROES AND HALFWITS

By Tristan Jackson-Pate

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Characters

The Chorus: The 9 Muses

- 1- Calliope; Muse of epic poetry. Leader of the chorus.
- 2- Cleo; Muse of history, proclaimer of great deeds.
- 3- Erato; Muse of lyric and love poetry.
- 4- Euterpe; Youthful muse of joyful music.
- 5- Melpomene; Muse of tragedy and theatre.
- 6- Polyhymnia; Pious muse of hymns and sacred music.
- 7- Terpsichore; Muse of dance.
- 8- Urania; Wise muse of astronomy and the fates.
- 9- Thalia; Charming muse of the comic arts and theatre.

Titans

Prometheus

Olympians

Zeus
Poseidon
Hera
Athena
Artemis
Apollo
Ares
Aphrodite
Hephaestus
Demeter
Hermes
Dionysus

Mortals

Midas
Marigold
Silenus
Arachne
Alexa
Citizens 1 and 2
Acrisius
Danae
Diyctis
Diyctis' Friend
Polydectes
Graeae 1, 2 and 3
Medusa
Guard
Musicians

Demi-Gods

Perseus

A note on the text

MYTH: Heroes and Halfwits was conceived as a touring community theatre production, developed with young people in collaboration with professional artists in 2021. We performed in parks, marketplaces, new build housing estates, even on the street in one location and the production was designed to be musical and eye catching to draw in the public.

We had a small band of musicians, and some of our actors also played instruments, though the play could easily be performed without music, or using recorded backing tracks.

Scores for the original compositions are included with this script, along with suggestions of anachronistic modern songs which we included in our production for comic effect. Some of the choices were obvious ones, others were current 'hits' selected by the young people involved. In some instances, we changed the lyrics to reflect the characters in situations, in others the recognisable song was funny enough. We even had interval music in the form of a rap which the 9 Muses wrote themselves and was enjoyed by all. I do hope your company enjoys finding their own spin on the production.

If it is useful for your model, the original production, four adult actors doubled the following roles, alongside our young cast:

1 (Calliope) played Zeus and Dictys

6 (Polyhymnia) played Hera, Danae and the 3rd Graeae

8 (Urania) Played Athena

The fourth actor played Prometheus, Midas and Polydectes

Act One

1: What makes a Hero?

HEROES AND HALFWITS IS SUNG BY THE COMPANY.

All- The heroes and the halfwits
The differences between 'em
The mighty and the flighty
We all of us have seen 'em
Those who reach for the sky
Those who fall on their face
There's a fine line between
Ignominy and grace

There's a fine line between
Ambition and greed
There's a fine line between
A want and a need
There's a fine line between
Infamy and fame
But no matter the difference
They'll remember your name!

Musician- Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome to the stage, the Nine Muses!

THE NINE MUSES TAKE UP THEIR POSITIONS.

All-What makes a hero?

Pause.

2-Strength!
7-Agility!
6-Valour!
3-Honesty
8-Modesty
5-A tragic end.

9-Cheerful.

1-A hero must be prepared to fight!
5-To die!
7-To challenge
4-To stand up for what is right

4-Right?

THE MUSES ALL MUTTER AGREEMENT/DISAGREEMENT

8-But how does a hero... *become* a hero?
7-What skills
6-What qualities
3-What *desires*

1-Must heroes own?

8-A want

7-A need

2-A unquenchable thirst for...

9-Violence?

9-(*Shrugs*) Just saying.

6-And what of those

7-Who can't

5-Who won't

6-Who don't...

4-Make the cut?

3-The helpless

8-The hopeless

9-The halfwits?

1-The chuckleheads!

7-The knuckleheads!

5-The clod poles!

4-The dingbats!

2-The berks!

3-The jerks!

4-The ninnies!

9-And the wazzocks?

A DRUMBEAT STARTS

All- Too many myths

Too many tales

Too many that triumph

Too many that fail

Too many heroes

Too many half wits

Too many to celebrate

Many to dismiss!

I HOLDS UP A HAND TO STOP THE DRUMMING

1-But why must we tell these stories still?

6-These ancient legends

4-Of heroes?

9-And of halfwits?

THE MUSES LOOK TO THE AUDIENCE.

1-How can these stories, told before books

4- Or films

9-Or telly

1-Speak to us *today*-

All-Here

All-In this park?

4- Stories curious and captivating
6-Elusive and enigmatic
7-Ageless and addictive
3-Stories passed down by word of mouth
8-In a vast unbroken line from generation to generation
1-Stories from which you may take away, whatever you bring to them

8-Perhaps they help us to feel... closer
6-To our ancestors
All-Closer
3-To our emotions
All-Closer
4-To each other...?

All-Perhaps.

1-But where to begin?

MUSIC.

2: The Gods of Olympus

Musician-(*Introducing 2*) Ladies and gentlemen, the Muse of History and Proclaimer of great deeds;
Noble Cleo!

THE MUSES AND AUDIENCE APPLAUD 2. MUSIC CONTINUES.

2-Long ago, before the current, tedious age of mortal women and men there were once great heroes!
All- HUH!
2-Descended from the indiscriminate coupling of Gods and mortals.

THE MUSES ENCOURAGE THE AUDIENCE TO 'OOOH AND AHHH'

2-And before these great heroes-
All- HUH!
2-Came the all-powerful Olympian Gods, ruled over by the almighty sky father and cloud gatherer...
Zeus!

MUSIC. THE SOUND OF A THUNDERBOLT. ZEUS APPEARS. THE COMPANY SING.

All- ZEUS OLYMPIAN, KING OF THE GODS
TEACH US YOUR WAYS, SO EVIL WILL FALL!
ZEUS OLYMPIAN, DISCIPLE OF NOONE
PASS ON YOUR WISDOM THE COURAGE TO GO ON
AAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH!

2 SILENCES THE MUSES. AS SHE INTRODUCES THE GODS, THEY APPEAR.

2-And Zeus ruled over the ancient world with the Olympian 12....

2-Athena!
All-Articulate, Alert, Allegiant
2-Artemis!

All-Adamant, Athletic, Absolute!
2-Apollo!
All-Astonishing, Abducting, Arrogant!
2-Ares!
All-Aggressive, Avenging, Afeared!
2-And the great Goddess of love herself, Aphrodite!

ALL SIGH ROMANTICALLY.

Aphrodite-Admired, Amazing, Alluring. Thank you very much.

THE MUSES APPLAUD THE GODDESS.

9-And that's just the "As".
All-Shh!

2-Poseidon!
All-Proud!
2-Hades!
All-Haughty
2-Hera!
All-Hallowed!
2-Hephaestus!
All-Honourable!
2-Hermes!
All-Heralded!
2-Demeter!
All-Distinguished!
2-Dionysus!
All-Ummm.....Drunk?

1 INITIATES A ROUND OF APPLAUSE. 2 HOLDS UP A HAND TO STOP IT.

1- *(TO THE AUDIENCE)* Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, now that we've established a few precedents, perhaps you would like to hear a story? You would? Then you must call upon us, the Nine Muses to begin. When we say:

All- 'Sing, O muses, tell us a tale.

1- Then you must reply

All- 'Of heroes and halfwits, who thrive and who fail"

1- Did you get that? Well, let's try:

All- 'Sing, O muses, tell us a tale.

All- "Of heroes and halfwits, who thrive and who fail"

1-Oh, I think we can do better than that, don't you?

All- 'Sing, O muses, tell us a tale.

All- "Of heroes and halfwits, who thrive and who fail"

1-Fantastic!

8-Our story begins when the world is still new

4-And mortals see it through fresh, unblinking eyes

6-They marvel at nature's everyday splendour

8-Her daily performed miracles!

7-Each morning Helios and his horses drive the sun chariot majestically across the Eastern sky

8- And every evening, his tired steeds graze in their western home, as Erebus, the night draws in.

5-In the Autumn, Persephone descends to the Underworld to her husband Hades
3-And in the Spring, she emerges with the first green shoots of life
6-Natures rhythms are established
3-Familiar
6-Timeless
8-But humanity remains in its infancy

5-Below the clouds, the mortals labour and toil
7-They smelt and forge
8-Tin, copper and bronze
4-Building towns
9-And cities
6-And great temples to the Gods
4-Such progress!
2-Such advancement!
4-And all thanks to Prometheus' gift

3: Prometheus and the Prophecy

PROMETHEUS APPEARS IN CHAINS. ZEUS AND HERA APPEAR ON MOUNT OLYMPUS, SURROUNDED BY THE OTHER OLYMPIANS.

Prometheus-The gift of fire!
8-That divine spark
7-Which has enabled mortals to flourish
5-Whilst the Titan remains locked in a deadly, daily punishment, administered by the mighty Zeus!
Zeus-Fly, my pretty!

ZEUS SENDS AN EAGLE, TO PECK OUT PROMETHEUS' LIVER.

Prometheus- That's it, my humans, be brave, be brilliant- AAAAAAARGHGHGHGH!

THE LIVER IS DELIVERED TO ZEUS. THE GODS LAUGH.

Prometheus-(TO A CHILD IN THE AUDIENCE) Don't worry, I'm immortal. Grows right back.
Zeus-FLY!

AGAIN, THE EAGLE SWOOPS DOWN AND PECKS OUT HIS LIVER, THROWING IT INTO THE CROWD.

Prometheus-AARRAAAGHAGHAGGHGAGH! (*PANTING*) One day, my friends, one day... it is prophesied, my chains will be loosed, by a mortal man.

2-A great hero!

All-HUH!

Prometheus- (*TO A MAN IN THE AUDIENCE*) Not you sir. For this mortal will be-

2-Son of Zeus and Alcmene!

Zeus-Pah!

Prometheus-And he will ascend the sacred Mount Olympus, taking his rightful place amongst the twelve.

Zeus- Nonsense! Me, father a son by a *mortal woman*? When I have such a wonderful and devoted wife?

ZEUS PUTS AN ARM AROUND HERA.

Hera-Don't touch me.
Zeus-IT'S PECKIN' TIME!

THE EAGLE FLIES DOWN ONCE MORE AND PECKS OUT PROMETHUES' LIVER. THE OTHER OLYMPIAN GODS CHEER AND LAUGH. THE EAGLE RETURNS TO ZEUS, WHO STROKES HER FEATHERS.

2-But Hera
All-Had *seen*.
Hera-Zeus.
2-For the Queen of the Gods was possessed of a second sight.
Hera- ZEUS!

THE GODS GRADUALLY STOP LAUGHING AND LISTEN TO HERA'S VISION. DRUMS.

Hera- A terrible war is coming... I see the children of Mother Gaia and Father Ouranos, the Gigantes, our vengeful brothers and sisters. They will climb the mountain, seeking to overthrow our rule. We Gods will be powerless to stop them. The great Olympian dynasty will be saved only by the titan Prometheus and a descendent of the mortal... Perseus.
Demeter-Perseus?! A *mortal*?!

THE GODS LAUGH

Ares-Never!
Hermes-Relax, Hera.
Hephaestus-Olympus is safe.
Athena-What with my defences
Hermes-And Dad's thunderbolts-
Ares-With my spear.
Artemis-And my/ Arrows.
Apollo-My arrows!
Dionysus-(*RAISING A GLASS*) There's no way they can touch us!
Poseidon-Olympians forever!
All-OLYMPIANS FOREVER!

THE GODS LAUGH AND CONGRATULATE EACH OTHER.

5-But Hera said nothing.
2-For Hera had *seen*.

DRUMS.

All- In each of our lives
Some rain must fall
We can choose to ignore
Or to heed the call
We can hope for the sunshine
But prepare for the rain
Denying the truth
Can be hard to sustain.

Zeus- Oh, lighten up Hera! Sure, it's worth keeping an eye on the little fellas down below- a divine intervention here and there when needed, or when the fancy takes us...
Aphrodite-As it often takes you.
Zeus-Cheeky. But we always put a stop to their antics when they get too big for their boots, don't we?

Apollo-Exactly!
Zeus-Come on then, who's done some good smiting recently?

THE GODS ALL PUT THEIR HANDS UP, FIGHTING FOR ATTENTION.

Zeus-Demeter.
Demeter-I punished the vile King Erysichthon with insatiable, unending hunger.
All- Nice, good one, that's got to be tough etc.
Demeter-He was chopping down my trees.
All-Sacred trees? What was he playing at? These mortals, eh? Etc.
Zeus-Artemis?
Artemis-I turned the huntsman Actaeon into a deer.
All-Well, could have been worse, that doesn't sound so bad etc.
Artemis-Then set his dogs on him.
All-Owwwww, that's rough, and they ate him? Gross, etc.
Zeus- Excellent work. Now, Dionysus! Glorious son of mine- what have you been up to?
Dionysus-Well, father, Olympians, ladies and gentlemen- if you'll sit and share a glass of nectar with me, then perhaps I'll have the Nine Muses tell us all a tale?

2-Praise to thee, O Dionysus
3-God of wine
7-Festivity
5-And theatre!
All-We humbly serve you!
Dionysus-Tell us the story... of King Midas!

MUSIC.

4: King Midas

6-Dear friends, it's time for another story.
4-A story within a story?
6-Well, that's the trouble with myth
All-Everything is connected
8-Every action has consequences
3-And each tale begets another
4-Stories within stories
7-Within stories
All-Within stories.

6-Now, you must call on us, the Nine Muses, to begin.
3-Do you remember? When we say:
2- Sing O muses, tell us a tale
3-Then *you* say:
All- Of heroes and halfwits, who thrive and who fail!
3-Here we go!
2- Sing O muses, tell us a tale
All- Of heroes and halfwits, who thrive and who fail!

7- Tell us a tale of a once great King
5- One of opulence and leisure
8-One of grandeur
4-And bling!

5-A King quite consumed by avarice and greed
All- Brought a curse on his house by a foolish deed.

9-Spoliers! Seriously.

KING MIDAS APPEARS. HE IS COUNTING HIS MONEY.

1-King Midas of Phrygia lived a luxurious life, in the most decadent palace.
8-He had a wonderful wife.
3-And a kind and lovely daughter.
1,8 and 3-Marigold.
5-Yet, he believed that all his earthly happiness came from one thing...

MIDAS SINGS, PERHAPS USING A GOLDEN GOBLET AS A MICROPHONE. IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION HE SANG 'GOLD' BY SPANAU BALLET.

AS HE SINGS, THE CHORUS ADORN HIS BODY WITH EXPENSIVE JEWELLERY.

THE MUSIC STOPS ABRUPTLY AS MARIGOLD HAS ENTERED AND CAUGHT HER FATHER SINGING TO HIMSELF.

Midas-Marigold! I've told you not to sneak up on me like that!
Marigold-Sorry father, there's someone at the door. A satyr.
Midas-A *satyr*?!
Marigold-Yes father, a companion of Dionysus.

SILENUS, A SATYR BURSTS IN.

Silenus-Wotcher. Yeah, I was at the door but I'm in 'ere now, how about that? Got lost during the old Dionysian revels, I did. Tell you what, it's muddy out, mind if I...

SILENUS TAKES MIDAS' CLOAK AND USES IT TO WIPE THE MUD FROM HER GOAT LEGS. MIDAS IS HORRIFIED.

Silenus-That's better. Mud gets right matted in me fur. *(TO SOMEONE IN THE AUDIENCE)* That is the problem with having hairy old goat legs, isn't it madam? Oh yeah- hang on, I brought you summing, hold on... it's in here somewhere...

SILENUS ROOTS AROUND IN HER POCKETS. SHE PUTS OUT SOME HALF EATEN BREAD.

Silenus- Aha! Oh yes that's right I did eat some of it on the way... and frankly the wrapping has.
Midas-It's perished.
Silenus-Well, it's perished. Yep. Hold out your hand then.

MIDAS BEGRUDGINGLY HOLDS HIS HAND OUT. SILENUS POURS SOME BREADCRUMBS INTO IT.

Midas-No really, that's not necessary, honestly-
Silenus- Nah nah nah nah nah nah, my pleasure mate, my pleasure, it's yours, it's yours, take it.

THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER. A STAND OFF.

Midas-It looks a bit... stale?
Silenus-Bound to be, bound to be.
Midas-Well look, I actually just ate so...

Marigold-Father!

MUSIC.

1-King Midas was forgetting the sacred law

All-Xenia

5-The great Greek tradition of hospitality

8-The welcoming of strangers

1-A tradition sacred to the almighty sky father himself.

All- (*Whispered*) The Gods can be petty, the Gods can be cruel
To cross an Olympian you'd be fool!

Midas-Yes, thank you Marigold. Thank you...

Silenus-Silenus.

5-King Midas must comply with Xenia and welcome the satyr into his home, lest he be-

9-Smited!

3-Smitten!

All-Smote!

KING MIDAS, SLOWLY, PAINFULLY EATS THE BREADCRUMBS FROM HIS HAND.

Silenus-Lovely. Got any rooms then?

MUSIC, MONTAGE.

1-For 10 days and 10 nights, Silenus proved herself the most *awful* house guest.

4-She left a mess, everywhere she went.

SILENUS CREATES VARIOUS MESSES.

3-She ignored the sandal policy...

SILENUS JUMPS AROUND IN HER SANDALS, WHILE MIDAS INDICATES SANDALS, NEATLY LEFT BY THE DOOR.

4-She spent hours in the bathroom each morning...

SILENUS SHAVES HER GOAT LEGS AND SINGS 'I'M YOUR VENUS' WHILST MARIGOLD WAITS PATIENTLY WITH A TOWEL.

9-She even did that thing dogs do on the carpet, where they kind of drag their bums across the...

SILENUS IS DOING THIS.

9-Yeah. That.

3-And what's more, she drank all day

SILENUS GLUGS FROM A BOTTLE.

4-And sang all night.

SILENUS SINGS INTO THE GOLDEN GOBLET, MOCKING MIDAS. IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION SHE SANG 'TRUE' BY SPANDAU BALLET, THEN VOMITED INTO A VASE.

Midas-That's it! I have had it!

Marigold-Calm down Father, just one more day and-

Midas-No! I can stand it no longer- she must return to-

All-DIONYSUS!

MIDAS AND MARIGOLD DROP TO THEIR KNEES AS DIONYSUS APPEARS.

Dionysus-King Midas, thank you for looking after my good friend.

Midas-Oh, it was no trouble your worship, let her stay an extra night!

Dionysus-No, we must be on our way. Gather your possessions old friend.

Silenus-Fair enough.

SILENUS POCKETS THE VASE AND OTHER POSSESSIONS OF MIDAS.

Silenus-Thanks for 'aving me mate. I, ugh, left a bit of a mess in one of your pot plants, I'm afraid.

Midas-Please, it's no trouble.

Silenus- And ugh... so, you know the thingy's stopped working, the ugh.... you know the thing... squirts up the old hind quarters... the ugh... bidet.

Marigold-But we don't have a bidet...

Midas-My fountain!

Dionysus-What?

Midas-Nothing, your excellence, do call again.

Dionysus-Thank you King, we appreciate your hospitality. In return, I shall satisfy one wish.

Midas-One wish?

All-One Wish.

Midas-Oohhhhh.... goody.

DRUMS.

All-If you had a wish

What would you choose?

Would you wish for more wishes?

Would you simply refuse?

Would you wish for world peace?

Or would you wish for yourself?

For the fortunes of others

Or your own stinking wealth?

1-Well Midas wished that everything he touched, would turn to....

HE TURNS TO THE AUDIENCE, ENCOURAGING THEM TO SAY 'GOLD!'

MUSIC. MONTAGE- MIDAS TURNING HIS ROSES, BRANCHES, ROCKS, EVEN SOIL TO GLITTERY GOLD. HE SWISHES HIS CLOAK AND IT BECOMES GOLD. HE WALKS THROUGH AN ARCHWAY (CREATED BY THE CHORUS) INTO HIS PALACE AND IT TOO BECOMES GOLD.

Marigold-Father, what a wonderful gift! Think of all we can do for the Kingdom- no citizen need ever go hungry when we have such wealth to share!

Midas-Well, I think that's a problem for *after* lunch, don't you? Pass the grapes, Marigold.

MARIGOLD PASSES MIDAS THE GRAPES. THEY TURN TO GOLD.

Midas-Ah, bother, that won't do. Still, can't keep me from my wine!

HE GLUGS SOME WINE AND RETCHES- IT HAS TURNED TO LIQUID GOLD.

1-King Midas was beginning to realise a gift from the Gods

5-Could just as soon become a curse!

THE MUSICIANS PLAY, A SLOW MINOR KEY PIECE. MIDAS MOPES AROUND THE PALACE, TOUCHING THINGS AND THEN SOBBING WHEN THEY TURN TO GOLD. HE OPENS A BOOK AND IT TURNS TO GOLD IN HIS HAND. HE GOES TO LIE IN HIS BED, AND HIS PILLOW TURNS TO GOLD. EVEN HIS FAVOURITE TEDDY BEAR IS TURNED TO GOLD.

Midas-Oh Marigold, these were meant to be our salad days!

MIDAS THROWS HIS ARMS AROUND HIS DAUGHTER, BUT AS SOON AS HE DOES SO, SHE HARDENS AND TURNS TO GOLD HERSELF.

Midas-Wait, no! Undo, undo! Control, alt delete!

THE GODS ARE LAUGHING AT MIDAS' PREDICAMENT.

MIDAS FALLS TO THE FLOOR AND PRAYS TO DIONYSUS.

Midas-Holy Dionysus- hear my prayer! Remove this terrible curse and bring my daughter back to life!

Zeus-Ho ho! Classic smiting there Dionysus, 10 out of 10!

Ares-It is always sweeter when the mortals secure their own doom.

Zeus-Er, sure Ares.

All-The Gods can be petty, the Gods can be cruel,

To cross an Olympian you'd be a-

ZEUS HOLDS UP A HAND AND STOPS THE CHORUS.

Zeus-What did you do next, my boy?

Dionysus-Well, on this occasion father, I was merciful.

Apollo-Never!

Hermes-You answered his prayer?

Dionysus-I did.

Artemis-You let him off the hook?

Zeus-Very wise. Mortals, after all, need their little bit of hope, don't they?

All-HOPE.

8-The last, and cruellest gift from Zeus to humanity

4-The hope we all cling to

5-In our darkest hours

All- Hope, forever trapped under the lid of Pandora's box.

Dionysus-Selfish King Midas, your greed has led you to this predicament.

Midas-O Dionysus, I know, I'm sorry, I've definitely learnt my lesson.

Dionysus-Have you?

Midas-Definitely.

Dionysus-If you wish to be cleansed of this... Golden Touch... you must wash your hands in the river Pactolus.

MUSIC. IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION THE MUSICIANS SANG 'GOLDEN TOUCH' BY RAZORLIGHT. MIDAS APPROACHES THE RIVER. AS HE WASHES HIS HANDS IT TOO TURNS TO GOLD.

THE MUSICIANS CONTINUE TO HUM AS THE STORY CONCLUDES.

6-As Midas washed his hands the waters of the great river themselves turned to gold.

7-It is said that they still run gold to this day.

4-And just as suddenly as his possessions had turned to gold

3-They were restored

6-The roses

7-The wine

3-His Marigold

6-All returned to their natural state.

Midas- Thank you, O thank you! Praise be to Dionysus- I shall never again be led by greed- never again see myself as equal to the great Olympian Gods!

Zeus-Well done my, lad.

Ares-But-

Zeus-Don't worry, we'll get him later. Now, who else has a story?

Gods-Yes, me, I do! Pick me Daddy, I have a story!

Zeus-(*SELECTING ATHENA*) Daughter.

All- Pallas Athena!

5-Goddess of War!

2-Patron of Athens!

9-The favourite child.

All-Shhhhhhhhh!

All-We humbly serve you

Apollo-Father, I too have administered many cruel and unnecessary punishments. I demand an audience-

ZEUS HOLDS UP A HAND.

Zeus-You are too hot, Sun God. Be cool.

APOLLO SCOWLS.

Zeus-Proceed, Athena.

Athena-In this bronze age, father, humanity has grown arrogant. Since our creation of women- Female Gods- Well, hard to disagree with that, absolutely, they'd be nowhere without mortal women etc.

Athena-The humans are beginning to stretch the boundaries of invention, of heroism, of mortal skill. One such woman, however, has overstretched herself. Muses!

All-Yes, Pallas Athena.

Athena-Tell us the tale... of ARACHNE!

All- Sing O muses, tell us a tale

Of heroes and halfwits, who thrive and who fail

Athena-(*TO THE AUDIENCE*) Now come on, is that the best you've got? Once more!

All- Sing O muses, tell us a tale

Of heroes and halfwits, who thrive and who fail!

5: Arachne, The Spider Woman

6-In the Kingdom of Lydia there lived a woman of unparalleled talents
All- Arachne.

ARACHNE APPEARS, WITH HER LOOM.

7-So skilled
3-So accomplished
4-So adept she was at spinning
6-That mortals called her
All-The Master Weaver.

ARACHNE WEAVES. PASSERS BY STOP TO WATCH HER AT WORK.

Citizen 2-Such command of cloth!
Citizen 1- Such wonderful warp and weft!
Citizen 2- Such proficiency with pattern!
Arachne-Yup.
Citizen 1-What are you working on today?
Arachne-I'm doing requests, actually.
Citizen 1-Requests?
Arachne-Yes, if you put your money where your mouth is, I'll weave anything you like, in under a minute.
Citizens-Anything?
Arachne-Anything.

The citizens huddle together to have a quick discussion.

Citizen 1-Arachne, we yearn for a plentiful harvest this year, and so we wish for a tapestry to honour holy Goddess Demeter.

ARACHNE YAWNS. PASSER BY 1 HANDS HER A BAG OF GOLD.

Arachne-Is that all? Done six of these this week, easy peasy. Alexa!

ALEXA, ARACHNE'S ASSISTANT STEPS FORWARD, WITH AN HOURGLASS TIMER.

Alexa-Yes?
Arachne-My Assistant. Set a timer for one minute.
Alexa-Your tapestry timer is set for one minute.
Arachne- (CLAPS HANDS) Music!

THE MUSICIANS BEGIN TO PLAY. ARACHNE BEGINS HER WORK. AS SHE WEAVES, THE CHORUS CREATE THE IMAGES BEHIND HER- DEMETER SOWING SEEDS, HER DAUGHTER PERSEPHONE BY HER SIDE, HADES LURKING BELOW, LOOKING UP FROM THE UNDERWORLD.

THE CITIZENS CLAP TO THE RHYTHM, ENCOURGING THE AUDIENCE TO JOIN IN. ALEXA STARTS A COUNT DOWN FROM 5, AND ARACHNE STEPS AWAY FROM THE LOOM.

Alexa: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!
Citizen 1- Praise be to holy Demeter, you have crafted her very image!

Citizen 2-She almost seems to breathe upon the very tapestry!
Arachne-Too easy.

ARACHNE APPEARS TO PULL THE TAPESTRY FROM THE LOOM AND DISCARD IT. THE PICTURE DISAPPEARS. THE CITIZENS ENCOURAGE THE AUDIENCE TO APPLAUD.

Arachne-My art is above these pedestrian requests, I need greater stimulation!

6-What makes a hero?
7-Matchless skill?
5-Ambition?
9-Unwavering confidence?
All-Arachne had it all
5-But beware Arachne!
6-For confidence can just as soon spill over into arrogance...
All-Mm hm!

Arachne-Let's have another request!
6-Anyone? Hands up, what would you like Arachne to weave?

I SELECTS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER, WHO REQUESTS AN IMAGE.

Arachne-Child's play! Music!

THE MUSIC BEGINS AGAIN. ALEXA STARTS THE TIMER AND LEADS THE COUNTDOWN. THE CITIZENS ENCOURAGE THE AUDIENCE TO CLAP IN TIME.

Alexa: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!

THE CITIZENS ENCOURAGE APPLAUSE FOR ARACHNE.

Arachne- Louder! Come on, let me hear it!

6--Such a commotion in Lydia could not go unrecognised by the Olympian Gods.

THE GODS WATCH INTENTLY, TALKING BETWEEN THEMSELVES.

6-Perhaps it was Athena herself who had breathed divine inspiration into Arachne?
2-Goddess Athena, who animated her nimble fingers
5-And stoked her hubris
All-Perhaps...
Athena-Who's to say?

Arachne-Citizens of Lydia. Visiting delegation from [local place]. Let it be known, Arachne, The Master Weaver is second to none. I surpass even... Pallas Athena in my skill!

Citizens-Did she just say that? This isn't going to end well! Athena herself? Risky! Etc.

AN OLD WOMAN STEPS FORWARD, IT IS ATHENA IN DISGUISE.

Old Woman (Athena)-Arachne, you proud and foolish child! Take back what you said, and perhaps the Goddess will spare your life?

2-There was
6-A

5-Tense
All-Silence
9-You could cut the tension with a kopis
4-What?
9-It's like a Greek knife
4-Oh
9-Yeah
4-Carry on

6-Would Arachne retract her boastful comments? Or would she do what so many of us do when we're cornered?
5-Stay resolute
All-And stand firm.

Arachne-Old woman- why would I listen to you? You're old, and stupid and wrinkly and OLD. I am LEGIT the greatest weaver and if Athena dares challenge me, then let her!

MUSIC. THE OLD WOMAN REVEALS HERSELF TO BE ATHENA. THE CITIZENS FALL TO THEIR KNEES.

Citizens-Goddess Athena!
Athena-Tis I. Do not you bow to your Goddess, mortal?

ARACHNE STARES AT ATHENA.

All- (*WHISPERED*) The Gods can be petty, to Gods can be cruel,
To cross an Olympian, you'd be a fool!

Arachne-Do you see me bowing? (*TO THE AUDIENCE*) Does this look like bowing to you?

EVERYONE BREATHES IN. ARACHNE HOLDS HER GROUND. THE CHORUS SPEAK WHILST HOLDING THEIR BREATH.

4-I've got a bad feeling about this
9-You think?

Athena-Very well.

EVERYONE EXHALES.

Athena-A contest!

EVERYONE BREATHES IN AGAIN.

Athena-Stop that.

EVERYONE EXHALES.

Athena-I challenge you, Arachne, to a weave off.
Arachne-A weave off.
Athena-A weave off.

PAUSE.

Arachne-I accept your challenge!

MUSIC, MONTAGE. ATHENA AND ARACHNE BEGIN TO PREPARE FOR THE CONTEST.

6- Word spread to all citizens of Lydia, who travelled from far and wide to attend the great contest.

Citizen 1-Programmes, get your programmes for the weave off!

Citizen 2-Place your bets ladies and gentlemen- Arachne to win, odds at a thousand to one!

Citizen 1-Thunderbolt lollies- get your thunderbolt lollies- endorsed by Zeus himself!

6-You couldn't get a ticket for love nor money. Friends, you are very lucky to witness this great event.