



**Sample Pages from
Pandora's Fire**

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PANDORA'S FIRE

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Judith Walsh White



Pandora's Fire

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Cast of Characters

4W+3M+3 Either, Plus Chorus

PYRRHA (f): Pandora's daughter, married to Epimetheus, Prometheus's son.

CHORUS LEADER (m or f): Later revealed to be Hope.

CHORUS: As many as you wish. They can also double some of the roles below.

ZEUS (m or f): God of the sky, ruler of the Olympian gods.

PROMETHEUS (m): Titan who was given the task of making men out of clay. Man's greatest benefactor.

EPIMETHEUS (m): Prometheus's foolish younger brother. (Think **Prologue** and **Epilogue**.)

APHRODITE (f): Greek Goddess of Love and Beauty.

HERMES (m or f): Zeus' personal agent and messenger

HAEPHAESTOS (m): Greek God of blacksmiths, craftsmen, artisans, sculptors, metals, fire and volcanoes.

PANDORA (f): A gift from the Gods, custom-made by the Gods to punish Prometheus.

DEMONS/TORMENTORS: Figures who taunt Pandora.

GAIA (f): The original Earth Mother.

Author's Note

The myth of Pandora is ancient and appears in several distinct Greek translations. All the versions agree on one thing: Pandora opens a box, having been warned not to do so, and releases evil to the world. But there is more to the story.

Original Cast

Commissioned by Traveling Players Ensemble, *Pandora's Fire* was presented at the Madeira School, Great Falls Virginia, on August 10th, 2012 with the following cast:

PYRRHA	Mira Brodsky
CHORUS LEADER/ HOPE	Jonathan Malks
ZEUS	Evelina Kats
PROMETHEUS	Aaron Garay
EPIMETHEUS	James Clardy
APHRODITE	Amy Richards
HERMES	Talia Zitner
HAEPHAESTOS	Jack Stipe
PANDORA	Kaiti Bachman
DAEMONS/TORMENTORS	Ensemble
GAIA	Amy Richards
DIRECTOR	Judith W. White
ASSISTANT DIRECTORS	Patrick Smith & Ellie Robb
MUSICAL DIRECTION & COMPOSITION	Drama Mama & the Leprechaun
COSTUME DESIGNER	Rachael Erichsen
SET AND PROPERTIES DESIGNER	Emma Gebhard
COSTUME CONSTRUCTION ARTISTS	Adalia Tonneyck & Rachael Erichsen
SET & PROPS CONSTRUCTION ARTISTS	Emma Gebhard, Patrick Smith, Ellie Robb, Adalia Tonneyck, Rachael Erichsen

Scene I

PYRRHA enters holding the Bracelet of Time (a large golden hula-hoop). She speaks under guitar chords.

PYRRHA: Turn, turn the Bracelet of Time.
 Find what the future may yield.
 Turn and turn so you can see
 Secrets the ancient past may reveal.
 Yesterday tells what tomorrow will be,
 The future and past are one.
 Turn, turn, the Bracelet of Time,
 Turn the Bracelet of Time.

The CHORUS enters two by two and forms a circle.

CHORUS: Turn, turn the Bracelet of Time.
 Find what the future may yield.
 Turn and turn so you can see
 Secrets the ancient past may reveal.
 Yesterday tells what tomorrow will be,
 The future and past are one.
 Turn, turn, the Bracelet of Time,
 Turn the Bracelet of Time.

CHORUS LEADER: *(to the audience.)* We've come to settle a score—
 To tell, once and for all, what went *before*.
 Sometimes, in a story, there is more
 Than meets the eye. I know. I was a witness to Pandora's tale.
 Pandora? The first human woman?
 Surely you've heard about Pandora—

PYRRHA: But I'll bet you haven't heard of me.
 I am Pyrrha—Pandora's daughter.
 Did you even know Pandora had a daughter?
 I'll tell you how she saved my life—

CHORUS VOICE: And of her quest,

CHORUS VOICE: And of that famous chest—Pandora's Box,

CHORUS VOICE: —And how
 Despite a warning, she opened it?

ALL: Pandora, Pandora.
 Think of her reputation:
 Bad girl, right? Bringer of Evil, right?

CHORUS LEADER: Imagine someone gave *you* a
 Package, wrapped and ribboned,
 And full of mystery—with a warning—
 “*Do not open!*”
 What would *you* do?

ALL: Let the story begin!

Drums sound.

CHORUS LEADER:
 In the beginning, the earth was a wasteland.
 Zeus decreed—

ZEUS: It is time earth had some living creatures.

CHORUS: He gave the job of making them to the Titan, Prometheus,
 and to his twin brother, Epimetheus.

ZEUS: Boys, go down to the river bank, find yourselves some clay, and
 make me creatures. Take this bag of odds and ends in case you
 need them.

CHORUS: The twins obeyed.

EPIMETHEUS: Epimetheus, slapped together all kinds of animals—

PROMETHEUS: Prometheus, who was far more thoughtful, took his
 time.

CHORUS LEADER: He was modeling *men*.

PROMETHEUS: Would you please pass the fur?

EPIMETHEUS: Sorry, I used it for the bears.

PROMETHEUS: All of it? (*EPIMETHEUS nods*)
 Well, then, pass the feathers.
 Or the scales.
 Or the gills.
 Or some of those wings—Have you used all those too? Even the
 claws? (*shaking out the bag*) It’s empty!
 Man is my masterpiece! But he can’t breathe underwater. His skin
 is thin.
 He can’t run very fast.
 Now he is barefoot, naked, shivering in the dark and cold.
 If I don’t help him, he will freeze to death.

CHORUS: So, Prometheus begged Zeus—

PROMETHEUS: Please give me some fire!

ZEUS: Forget it! If your mortals get fire, they will become too powerful—Let them suffer!

CHORUS: So while the gods were sleeping,
Prometheus stole a glowing ember from the sacred fire,
Wrapped it in a hollow fennel stalk, and gave it to man.

PROMETHEUS acts this out. PYRRHA holds flame DR.

When Zeus discovered what Prometheus had done, he punished him in a terrible way.

A warning: This is not for the faint of heart—if you're squeamish, cover your ears.

Zeus ordered Prometheus to be chained to a rock.

He commanded an eagle to eat out his liver!

Each night, Prometheus's liver would magically grow again
And next morning the eagle would return for another feast!

Day after day, Prometheus suffered his awful punishment.

Down on earth, Prometheus's men were already using his gift of fire.

When Zeus saw this, his anger raged!

He called together Aphrodite,

Hermes, and Haephaestos.

ZEUS: (*peering down at Earth through a spyglass and speaking to the other gods*) Aphrodite, take a look! Do you believe what Prometheus has done?

APHRODITE: (*looks through spyglass*) Outrageous!

The odious creatures have lit fires everywhere!

We must teach them to respect our authority.

ZEUS: Teach them? Forget that.

They should be *punished* for their thievery and arrogance!

HERMES: I agree.

The next thing you know, they'll want to *fly*!

ZEUS: Listen well, my Olympians,

I have a plan and it will not fail.

Together, we will make a trap—to destroy the mortals.

We'll make them sorry they were ever created!

We will manufacture a machine—a source of evil—for that rebel Prometheus, his foolish brother, and any other who dares to challenge us! Haephaestos!

HAEPHAESTOS: Majesty.

ZEUS: Create for me a statue. Let it be your magnum opus!

HAEPHAESTOS: Out of bronze, majesty?

ZEUS: Don't be ridiculous, Haephaestos. Just use clay—earth and water.

Save the bronze for a statue of *me!*

APHRODITE: Zeus, 'You Who Thunder on High', design the machine to look like me, Aphrodite! Then, surely, no man will be able to resist it—

The actress playing PANDORA enters unadorned and stands DSC.

ZEUS: Ah, yes, Haephaestos, make her in the shape of a *woman*, a temptress, fair of face and form.

APHRODITE puts a half mask on PANDORA.

Use Athena's mantle to cover her—

APHRODITE: Won't Athena mind?

ZEUS: She'll never miss it. I think I know my own daughter. After all, she was born from my head.

APHRODITE: True.

(adds Athena's shawl)

I'll put a wreath of flowers on her head. *(adds wreath)* and shoes on her little feet... Hermes...?

HERMES: I'll implant deceitful words and crafty ways.

(blows a harmonica)

But her voice should be—? Sweet, persuasive, musical to hear. *(a triangle sounds)*

ZEUS: Add an itch to have what she cannot possess.

And—yes! Most important!

Add *curiosity*—a greedy meddlesome need

To know what is forbidden!

APHRODITE: *(looking at their creation, standing back to reveal her.)*

Who could resist this temptress?

None of the humans, for sure!

She's the perfect honey to tempt our bee!

ZEUS: And her name is...?

ALL: Pandora!

ZEUS: Pandora will bear our lasting gift (*ironically*) to destroy all mankind—

Come, let me tell you my plan... (*they turn upstage*)

A drum beats, a cymbal clashes!

Scene 2

PROMETHEUS: (*waving goodbye offstage*)

Thanks, Hercules, for chasing away that eagle and rescuing me from the rock—oh, and thanks for the ‘heads up.’

Epimetheus! Epi! Baby Bro!

EPIMETHEUS is engaged with his toy.

Put that ‘Game Boy’ (*substitute any current toy or game*) away and pay attention.

EPIMETHEUS: Wait... What? Oh, sorry, what did you say?

PROMETHEUS: Pay attention! This is important. For once in your life, listen to your big brother—

though I am only one minute older than you—

And GET THIS THROUGH YOUR HEAD!!!

Don't take any gifts from the gods—

EPIMETHEUS: (*still playing*) From who? Wait... what?

PROMETHEUS: Give me that ‘Game Boy’—and listen up!

EPIMETHEUS: But I was on my very last move—!

PROMETHEUS:

I just got a heads-up from Hercules.

All those gods,

All those goddesses up there on Mount Olympus,

They've been watching us. (*EPIMETHEUS looks heavenward*)

They're no friends of mine! Or yours.

EPIMETHEUS: They're not?

PROMETHEUS: No, Baby Bro!

Zeus is still mad at me for stealing his fire.

Being chained to that rock and tortured by an eagle wasn't enough.

So beware—he'll get even!

I know he will get even—He'll try to get even with me!

EPIMETHEUS: But why?

PROMETHEUS: I gave away something that he thought was only his.
 I stung his pride—and his pride is hurt!
 And Pride's especially bad if you're a god.
 He'll take revenge on me by hurting the mortals
 'cause I made them, and I love them.
 Say it!

EPIMETHEUS: He'll take revenge on you by hurting the mortals—
 'Cause you made them and you love them.

PROMETHEUS: So heed this warning:
 Don't take any gifts—C'mon. Say it!

EPIMETHEUS: I won't take no gifts—

PROMETHEUS: Don't take anything at all—

EPIMETHEUS: I won't take nothin' at all—

PROMETHEUS: No matter how much you want it or how awesome it
 looks—

EPIMETHEUS: No matter how I want it or how awesome it looks—
 (beat) What if it's somethin' really cool—like an 'X-Box'?

PROMETHEUS: (*smacking him*) Whatever you do—

PROMETHEUS and EPIMETHEUS: Don't take anything from the gods
 on Mt. Olympus— (beat) Especially Zeus.

PROMETHEUS exits.

CHORUS: So. Of course, Epimetheus obeyed his big brother as he
 always did.
 Wait, no, that's not quite what happened...

Scene 3: Epimetheus's abode

*HERMES makes a super-human entrance, dressed
 like a UPS delivery person, with wings on his hat.
 PANDORA also enters, covered up in a piece of cloth.
 Perhaps HERMES has wheeled her in on a little
 delivery dolly.*

HERMES: Special Delivery. UPS. FedEx. Just sign here—

EPIMETHEUS: What is it?

HERMES: (*elaborately uninterested*) Beats me.

EPIMETHEUS: Hmm, looks interesting, but maybe I shouldn't.
Maybe it's not even for me.

HERMES: It's addressed to (*reading it*) 'Epimetheus Titan.'
That you?

EPIMETHEUS: Uh, yeah.

HERMES: Sign here, buddy. I don't have all day.

EPIMETHEUS: (*scratching his head*)
I am thinking of something, but geez, it's funny,
I can't seem to remember what it was I was supposed to not
forget to remember.

HERMES: Here, use this. (*hands pen, EPIMETHEUS signs*)

EPIMETHEUS: Oh! I remember—!

*But just as the light goes on in his head, HERMES
reveals PANDORA.*

HERMES: Here's your package.

PANDORA: Tada!

*A bell rings, a cymbal crash, some percussive
acknowledgment of love at first sight.*

EPIMETHEUS: Wow! I Am In Love! True, this is a gift, and true, I don't
know who sent it—
But nothing that looks this *good* could be *bad*.
Dazzling Creature, I adore you. I can't resist you.
(*to HERMES*) What did you say her name was?

HERMES: Check the tag.

EPIMETHEUS: (*reading the gift tag around her neck*) 'Pandora.'
Pandora, Will you marry me?

PANDORA: Yes, Epimetheus! Darling! I adore you too! I've been
waiting for you all my life!

EPIMETHEUS: You are the only one for me. In fact, you were made for
me! (*HERMES enjoys this*)
Let's get married right away.

A bell rings. They kiss to signify their marriage.

HERMES: —and I'm outta here!
Wait! Hold everything! Just got a text.

“Pandora and Epimetheus Titan, due to the fact that you are the first and only customers ever to get married, you receive, at no additional cost: Today’s Special Newlywed Bonus Wedding Present.”

Bells and whistles sound.

PANDORA: A wedding present! How thrilling!

HERMES: You must be pretty special folks—‘cause it’s from... (*Reading label*) “The Boss.”

A box is revealed.

PANDORA: Oooh! What a stunning box!!

EPIMETHEUS: (*scratching his head again*)
Maybe we shouldn’t accept it. I can’t remember why—

HERMES: Hey, no problem. If you guys don’t want it, I’ll just return it to the sender. (*turns to go*)

PANDORA: No, don’t take it back, nice, handsome Mr. Delivery Person, I want it.
I’ve never gotten a wedding present before.
(*pouting, To EPIMETHEUS*) Oh, please. Please, pretty please, can’t we keep it, Epi, don’t say no to your little honeybee...

EPIMETHEUS: Well—

PANDORA: Ever since I saw it just now, I always wanted a box exactly like this one—

EPIMETHEUS: But—

PANDORA: (*starts to sob*) You never let me have what I want! You don’t love me!

EPIMETHEUS: I do love you. Honey, don’t cry. I am so sorry—
(*to HERMES*) What did you say her name was?

HERMES: Pandora.

EPIMETHEUS: Pandora, please don’t cry.

PANDORA: (*crying harder*) If I can’t have it, I will never forgive you.
I want that box.
I want that pretty, pretty box. (*crying harder*)

EPIMETHEUS: Pandora, please stop crying.

PANDORA: All right, I’m stopping.

EPIMETHEUS: Thank goodness.

PANDORA: See? I've stopped.

Instead, I'm going to hold my breath until you let me keep the box.

*PANDORA holds her breath for several counts.
HERMES rolls his eyes.*

EPIMETHEUS: Pandora, stop that. Pandora!

(she holds her breath harder, clenching her fists)

Okay, okay, you can keep the box.

PANDORA: *(big breath followed by a tiny response of pleasure)* Yay.

HERMES: *(watching the scene with delight)*

Just one little thing before I depart: The label says—

EVERYONE BUT PANDORA and EPIMETHEUS:

(with scary, doomed voices) Do Not Open.

Under Any Circumstances!!!

Extremely Interesting Content,

But Do Not Open!!!

PANDORA: *(sweetly)* Why, of course I won't open it. I won't even think of opening it.

I never, ever, ever do what I am told not to do. Isn't that true, darling?

EPIMETHEUS: Oh, yes. My beloved Pandora, I trust you completely.

EPIMETHEUS, CHORUS, PANDORA, and HERMES: And you/we will live Happily Ever After.

HERMES: So I'll say bye-bye—

ZEUS, APHRODITE, HERMES: Let the machine commence!

EPIMETHEUS: *(dancing a happy dance)* What a happy life I have.

What a happy man I am.

Somebody's given me a perfect wife.

And a nice box, too.

If only I could remember what it is that I am supposed to not forget to remember. *(goes off, scratching his head)*

'Bye, dear.

PANDORA: Goodbye, darling. Kiss, kiss. Have a nice day. *(to audience and CHORUS LEADER)* The box is nice, don't you think?

I can use it for a table or a chair.

I don't even care

What might be in it.
 I'll just put it over there—
 So I'm not tempted
 To stare.

CHORUS LEADER: Tell me, Pandora, how do you like marriage?

PANDORA: It's wonderful. It's delightful. I couldn't be happier.

I'm thrilled to be wed
 To such a rich man,
 I get so much attention—
 No more than I deserve—
 But I'd just like to mention
 That that box
 Is getting on my very last nerve!
 Not that I care,
 I've got much more to think of,
 Like pleasing Epimetheus,
 (He's such a little darling, never leaving me alone—)
 Or recovering my throne—
 Or polishing my toenails,
 Finding yet another tone
 Of pink—
 But I keep thinking of that box!
 O!!
 O!! I wonder
 What is in it—?
 What could possibly be in it?
 Don't you just love secrets?
 I do.
 I love secrets. They're exciting!
 It's inciting me to fury!
 What, what, what
 Do you think is in this silly old box!!!?
 Maybe money—
 Though I can't make it jingle—or
 Jewels, maybe rubies, maybe emeralds,
 Maybe diamonds—
 To add a little bling
 To everything I wear—
 Oh! I'm so bored, bored, bored—
 It's all so boring being married—
 But this box!
 The lock's a little loose,
 I could pry it with a pin,
 And peek right in—
 But No!

I should fight the desire
 To smash this box,
 To know, once and for all,
 What's inside!
 O! I can't stand a secret!
I hate this box!
 And I don't care if Zeus hears me!
 What right does he have anyway?
 That big, bad god,
 To tell me what to do—or how to be—?
 After all, it is addressed
 To me!
 Ohhhhhh! I'll go mad, I'll go insane,

The DEMONS OF CURIOSITY begin to slither in, watching PANDORA, circling around her.

I'll go completely round the bend—
 This torment must end!
 I've got to see, I've got to see—WHAT'S INSIDE!!!

The DEMONS move in on her. They taunt her, slowly getting louder and more insistent. She tries to resist, but they continue to torment her.

DEMONS OF CURIOSITY: Come on, open it,
 You know you want to open it,
 Open, open it,
 Take a peek, take a peek
 Come on, open it,
 You know you want to open it,
 Open it, open it,
 Take a peek, take a peek.

As PANDORA lifts the lid, the CHORUS becomes furious evil demons, swarming around. They shake noisemakers and hit her with black and magenta and chartreuse streamers. Inside the box are black forms on sticks, like shadow puppets. Actors manipulate these, speaking in spooky, scary witchy voices and dancing around PANDORA. As they dance, they strip her of her mask, her garland, Athena's shawl, her belt, her shoes.

DEMONS: Now you've done it!
 Let us out! Let us out to
 Curse the world (*takes off PANDORA's mask*)
 Now you've done it!

Evil's loose! (*take off mantle*)
 Greed and anger all unfurled, (*take off wig and crown of flowers*)
 Hate and sorrow, (*take off skirt*)
 Jealousy, jealousy, (*take off shoes*)
 War and murder! Strife and pain—
 Now you've done it—
 Pandora's done it—
 Set us free! Let terror reign!

The DEMONS speak to one another.

DEMON: I hate and loathe you!

DEMON: —want to kill you!

DEMON: You took my gold!
 You took my life!

DEMON: I hate your color!

DEMON: I hate your god!

DISEASE: I'll make you sick—

DEMON: I'll make you die!

GRIEF: Worry till your bones turn black—

DEMON: Grieve and cry, your heart will crack,

DEMON: Zeus taught us vengeance

GREED: He taught us greed,

DEMON: Take and take
 Though you don't need!
 I want more! More!
 And I'll kill to get it!

TWO DEMONS: We'll wage war! War!

PANDORA sits up. The DEMONS push her down. She struggles against them.

ALL DEMONS: And don't forget!
 It's *your fault*, Pandora!

JEALOUSY: Jealousy's my name,
 Green are my eyes,
 To steal what you have,
 I'll tell lies, lies.

FAMINE: You're dying of hunger.
 You're dying of thirst,
 I don't care if you suffer
 Or fare the worst.

SINGLE VOICES: I don't care if you're starving,
 I don't feel your pain—
 Take that! Take that again!
 Sting and sting and bite and bite,
 Lash out and kill (*pushes her down again*)
 And burn and fight
 Till the mortals are destroyed—
 And the light from earth is vanquished
 And Zeus reigns supreme
 Once More.

PANDORA finally succumbs, curled up in a heap.

ALL: (*whispering darkly*) And don't forget, Pandora,
 It's your fault! *You did it!*

ALL but CHORUS LEADER and PANDORA slither off.

Scene 4: The Aftermath

CHORUS LEADER:

(*to audience*) So I ask you, is it fair
 That Pandora gets the blame
 For releasing all the evils known to man?
 Does she deserve it?
 Yes, she *sprang* the trap—
 But who *designed* the trap?
 Who *planted it and baited it*?
 T'was sent by one god to punish another,
 Unleashing countless plagues on all mankind.
 For what purpose? Toward what end?
 And you (*to audience*) have been the witnesses,
 What do you think?
 You old and younger mortals—?
 You watched the gods conspire
 To torment with grief the soul of man,
 Your world runs forth on wheels
 Forged in Prometheus's fire!
 Would you punish her still?
 (*circling PANDORA*)
 See?
 Poor maid is shattered into bits,

Her garments rent, her charms all spent,
Her spirit broken.
She might be dead—

PANDORA groans then sits up with her head in her hands.

Yet—she stirs.
Pandora?

PANDORA: Yes?

CHORUS LEADER: You look worn out.

PANDORA: I am. I feel awful.
(looking around) Have they all gone?

CHORUS LEADER: The demons? Yes.
They've flown away.

PANDORA: *(remembering)* I opened the box.
I knew not to do it.
I did it anyway.
Now all of that disease and envy and greed and hurt and jealousy
and sorrow and war
is gone out into the world.
And it's my fault.
What's to become of us?

CHORUS LEADER: Let's talk about you. How are you?

PANDORA: I'm not sure.
I've been bitten and I've been stung
And flung about
And my body has been wrung dry.
Everything hurts.

CHORUS LEADER: Other than that, how are you feeling?

PANDORA: I feel sorry.
I feel scared—and sad.
I feel worried—and something else.
Empty.

She stands and walks over to the pieces of her that are strewn all around. She picks up the torn mask.

See my mantle—ripped in half.
And the crown Athena gave me—



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