



Sample Pages from The Gorgon Sisters

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THE GORGON SISTERS

A MYTHICAL DRAMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Laramie Dean



The Gorgon Sisters

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Casting

8M 10W + 1 Any Gender + Harpies and Creatures

Stheno: Female. Pronounced “THEE-no.” A Gorgon on a mission.

Medusa: Female. Stheno’s baby sister. Dead. Appears in flashbacks as a little girl.

Euryale: Female. Pronounced “Yuh-RY-uh-lay.” Stheno’s sister. Also a Gorgon.

Heracles: Male. A hero. Big and strong. Talks like a surfer dude.

Orpheus: Male. A washed up musician.

Eurydice: Female. Pronounced “Yuh-RID-uh-see.” Orpheus’ dead girlfriend.

The Harpies: Female. Women with the bodies of birds.

Athena: Female. The goddess of wisdom.

The Minotaur: Any Gender. A creature with the head of a bull.

Hades: Male. Lord of the Dead and the Underworld.

Apollo: Male. God of light.

Demeter: Female. Goddess of the harvest.

Artemis: Female. Goddess of the hunt. Carries a bow and arrows.

Ares: Male. God of war.

Poseidon: Male. God of the sea. He carries a trident.

Zeus: Male. Ruler of all the gods. Carries a lightning bolt.

Hera: Female. Queen of the gods.

Io: Female. A mortal. One of Zeus’s girlfriends whom Hera eventually transforms into a cow.

Perseus: Male. A hero. Handsome and dashing. He carries a sword and a shield.

Creatures of the Underworld: Various spirits, monsters, devils that inhabit the Underworld and do Hades’ bidding.

Casting can be as flexible as you’d like.

The original touring production of this play utilized three actors, one to play Stheno, and two to play everyone else. The Montana Thespian Convention production cast three actors to play the Harpies, spirits of the Underworld, and three aspects of Athena (with one of the three taking the majority of the parts, once Athena is good and mad). Please feel free to double (or triple) cast as you see

A Note on Design

The touring production used a unit set that opened and closed depending on the location. For the Montana Thespian Convention production we used three large blocks painted black, save for one red side on each. Props and costume pieces did the rest.

Original Cast and Crew

This play, as *Once Upon a Time in Ancient Greece*, was commissioned by the Montana Repertory Theatre at the University of Montana in Missoula and toured the state during the fall of 2014.

STHENO: Heidi Mudd

HERACLES, ORPHEUS,

MINOTAUR, HADES: Jamie Parnell

ATHENA, STAGE MANAGER: Paige O'Neill

SCENIC DESIGNER: Jadyn Velazquez

COSTUME DESIGNER: Nikki Nelson

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Russell Homan

SOUND DESIGNER: Robert Durkee

DIRECTOR: Cohen Ambrose

The play was revised and retitled *The Gorgon Sisters* for the cast and crew of Hellgate's Troupe 3961 to perform at the 2018 Montana State Thespian Convention.

STHENO: Marly Scolatti

MEDUSA: Natalie Millar

EURYALE: Alora Fradkin

HERACLES: Stephen Blotzke

ORPHEUS: Dillon Deschamps

EUYRDICE: Ostara Alrescha

THE HARPIES: Ostara Alrescha, Khasidy Hodge, Sophia Thompson

ATHENA: Sophia Thompson

THE MINOTAUR: Gabe Rayle

HADES: Brennen Pappas

PROP DESIGNER: Corinn Morgan

COSTUME DESIGNERS: Chloe Kearns, Sophia Thompson, Matthew Miller

WIG DESIGN: Rosie Ayers

STAGE MANAGERS: Chloe Kearns and Matthew Miller

DIRECTOR: Brigid Leonard

Dimly lit. Little MEDUSA and her older sister STHENO. STHENO is primping, preparing for her date. Their other sister, EURYALE, is nearby, trying to sculpt with clay she can't quite control. We don't see any of them clearly.

MEDUSA: Tell me the story again, Stheno! You're so good at it!

STHENO: I've told you that story a billion and a half times! You know it by heart!

MEDUSA: But it's better when you do it.

STHENO: Okay, kid. Sure. But then it's straight up bedtime. Yeah?

MEDUSA: Yeah. You got a date, Stheno?

STHENO: None'a'your business, kiddo. Maybe. Yeah, okay. I got a date.

MEDUSA: Euryale is going to be so jealous...

EURYALE: (*jealous*) Oh, I am not.

MEDUSA: She wants to hear the story too. Don'tcha, Euryale!

EURYALE: I have better things to do than listen to a bunch of myths.
(*drops her clay*) Darn it! (*MEDUSA giggles*) Fine. I'll work on my sculpture on the beach.

Huffily, EURYALE begins to exit.

MEDUSA: You don't have to go, Euryale! I was just teasing!

But EURYALE is gone. MEDUSA turns back to STHENO.

She really is just jealous, Stheno. She likes your stories. She just pretends that she doesn't.

STHENO: For now, I'll tell it just for you. Then you skedaddle.

STHENO stops her primping. She kneels down and begins to tell MEDUSA the story.

Once upon a time, when you and I were just dreams waiting to be dreamed, in ancient, ancient Greece...

Lights up on STHENO alone, transformed. With the lights actually revealing her now, we see she is sparkling, literally and figuratively, green-skinned, wings emerging from her back, wearing a dress of a dark bronze color, and, most importantly, the large

babushka on her head, covering her hair. She smiles impishly at the audience.

Hey, how are ya. I'm Stheno. I know, right? No one is named "Stheno" anymore. That's why I go by just "Sth." (*beat, waits for reaction*) Or "Sthen." (*beat, waits for reaction*) Or just "No." No? (*big sigh*) All righty, then. Plain old "Stheno." It means... well, we'll get to that. I'm a storyteller, see. I love telling stories, and the best part about them is... Wanna see the best part? Wicked. Once upon a time there were three sisters: me and Euryale, and our baby sister Medusa. The story doesn't exactly have an end yet. That's where I'm headed, and why I gotta tell it to you. So you can understand and help me finish it, and then, when I finish it... When I finish it... (*takes a deep breath*) First thing's first, and the first thing you gotta understand is what Ancient Greece was like. Hey, Euryale!

EURYALE appears, hesitant. She also wears a babushka, her skin is green, and she sports her own pair of wings. But she is nowhere near as brave as STHENO appears to be.

C'mere!

EURYALE: Stheno, I've been looking for you.

STHENO: I need you for a sec.

EURYALE: Me too. Stheno, we need to talk—

STHENO: Later, later. (*turning her out so she sees the audience*) Say "hi" to all the nice people!

EURYALE: (*super uncomfortable*) Um, hi.

STHENO: This is Euryale. She's trying to be a sculptor because she feels really bad when she turns people to stone with her eyes.

EURYALE: Hey—!

STHENO: I'm just kidding. You're always so sensitive.

EURYALE: You aren't really going to go through with this, are you?

STHENO: Don't start that again. (*brightly*) They want a good story, Euryale! So that's what we're gonna give 'em.

EURYALE: (*grumbling*) You never tell me your stories.

STHENO: Say what now?

EURYALE: I've been trying to tell you, you can't just run away from your problems, you have to stay here and—

STHENO: (*sharp*) I said don't start that again. (*collecting herself*) Come on. Do it for her.

EURYALE: (*torn*) Okay. Just for a second, though. Then we have to talk about—

STHENO: Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay, cool, awesome, let's do this!

EURYALE helps bring on the other characters, organizing and blocking them as STHENO narrates.

The best part about my stories— and this is where my sisters always used to help me— the best, the most wicked part is how they come to life as I tell 'em. Watch.

Master of Ceremonies style. As she narrates, various gods and goddesses enter, including ARES, DEMETER, ARTEMIS, and POSEIDON. Each god carries a prop that is somehow connected to their power. HERACLES appears, flexing and showing off. There are also MONSTERS and CREATURES, including THE HARPIES.

Once upon a time, in Ancient Greece, there were tons of gods and goddesses, heroes and bad guys. Monsters. Unpleasant. The gods were immortal, and they ate ambrosia and drank sweet nectar, and mostly they were cool, but sometimes they squabbled and used their particular talents against each other. There was Ares, god of war, and Demeter, goddess of the harvest, and Artemis, goddess of the hunt...

ARES summons up a firebolt.

ARES: Take that, Demeter!

DEMETER: Hey! No fair!

ARES: Try growing all your crops now that they're totally on fire!

POSEIDON: Grow up, Broseph. Here, sis. (*He waves his arms and blows air from his lips. Sound of rain and the hissing of the fire going out.*) Better?

STHENO: (*frowning*) ...Poseidon, the sea-god... (*in a rush*) but-more-about-him-later...

DEMETER: (*pointedly*) Thank you, Poseidon.

ARTEMIS: (*bored, practicing with her bow*) You guys are such idiots.
Watch this! (*shooting*) Pchow! Pchow! Way to go, Artemis!

*STHENO loses her steam a bit as APOLLO and
ATHENA enter. ATHENA smiles nastily in STHENO's
direction.*

STHENO: ...and there was Apollo, god of light, and Athena, goddess of wisdom, and... and... and, um, Hades, lord of the dead and the Underworld... (*We don't see HADES, but we hear his laughter, which reverberates. STHENO is shaken, but then she regathers.*) ... and Zeus's wife Hera, the goddess of not-always-being-so-nice. (*ZEUS and HERA enter*) Like many gods, Hera was super jealous, and frequently not especially rational when angered.

*HERA throws her head back and shrieks. All other
gods and monsters fall to the ground, including ZEUS.
STHENO and EURYALE have also fallen. HERA smiles
triumphantly.*

HERACLES: Not cool, Wicked Stepmonster.

*ZEUS rises and takes HERA's hand. She sniffs
haughtily at HERACLES, smiles at ZEUS, and then
they exit, taking the rest of the gods with them.
HERACLES rolls his eyes and exits.*

STHENO: She's not the only god with issues. Which has been kind of a problem for me and my sisters as of late. (*EURYALE begins to shoo the MONSTERS offstage. STHENO shoots her a look.*) What are you doing? Hey, come back! (*They don't. STHENO gestures at the audience.*) I have to tell them; they need to know. To understand the story. That's the important thing.

EURYALE: I know, I know.

STHENO: Do you? You never liked my stories. She did.

EURYALE: Stheno, I did like your stories. I mean, I do. But you need to take a minute to think about what you're about to do. Okay, fine, sure, whatever, you can tell the story if you want to, or however you want to, but you still need to deal with—

STHENO: You're absolutely right. The story is everything. (*back to the audience*) The gods had a bad habit of transforming mortals into different, mmmmm, creatures, shall we say? One time... (*ZEUS returns with IO in tow. She looks around fearfully. ZEUS moves in to kiss her.*) ...Zeus turned his girlfriend Io into a cow to save her from Hera...

HERA appears, looking for Zeus.

HERA: Oh Zeeeeuuuuuuuusy? Zeusy-bear, where are youuuuuuuu?

ZEUS, caught, frantically waves his arms. EURYALE drops the head of a cow over IO's head.

ZEUS: (as HERA approaches) Nothin'.

IO: (looking at her newly transformed self) Seriously?

STHENO: ...which didn't turn out so well for poor Io. Not the smartest problem-solving strategy anyone ever thought of.

IO: Like, moooooo, or some junk.

EURYALE quickly and forcefully pushes ZEUS, IO, and HERA offstage.

STHENO: And that wasn't all. The gods were always turning innocent people into— (Notices that they are alone. With a sudden, shocking burst of ferocity.) EURYALE, STOP IT! I HAVE TO DO THIS! (EURYALE slinks off. STHENO starts after her as if to apologize.) Euryale, come back, I didn't— (stops herself) Fine! I don't need you after all! Just keep on walking! (Turns back to the audience, regathers, and smiles, bitterly. Small beat.) So I'm sure you're all wondering about this thing on my head. (touches it, a combination of awkward and affectionate) I've been wearing it a lot lately, pretty much all the time. Even though I hate it. And now you all want to know what's under it. The world isn't fair, like I said, and sometimes... sometimes bad things happen. Sometimes the gods are jerks. (deep breath) We were human, once upon a time, me and my sisters. Until I caught the eye of Poseidon, the god of the sea.

POSEIDON appears.

POSEIDON: 'sup.

STHENO: (chilly) I believe I mentioned him. And Poseidon just would not take no for an answer. (POSEIDON tries to kiss her, but she shoves him away) Knock it off, jerk! I said no! Jeez!

POSEIDON: Whatever. (He starts to slink off, when suddenly he is confronted by ATHENA.) Hey, baby! How long have you been standing there?

STHENO: But, ha ha, joke's on me, he's already shackled up with Athena, who, in all her wisdom, realizes she can't punish him...

ATHENA smacks POSEIDON.

POSEIDON: Ouchies!

ATHENA points. POSEIDON slinks offstage.

STHENO:...but she can sure as Hades punish me! And my sisters. And she did. (*ATHENA raises her arms*) She changed us. All three of us. (*Flash of thunder, crash of lightning. Lights flicker. When they return, ATHENA is gone and STHENO is alone.*) Like this. (*Begins to remove her babushka. Now we see that STHENO's hair is mostly composed of snakes, which she delicately arranges.*) They do not make enough product in the world to control these little guys. This is Athena's curse. That we three sisters, Euryale and Medusa and me, would be doomed to walk the earth forever as horrible monsters. They called us "Gorgons," which comes from the word "gorgos," which means "dreadful" in Greek, and boy, is it true. There is nothing that is not dreadful about having snakes for hair. (*one of the snakes bites her finger*) Ow!

She sucks on her finger. EURYALE re-enters.

EURYALE: Stheno? You okay?

STHENO: (*grumbling*) I'm fine. It's just my stupid snakes again.

EURYALE: You can be such a baby sometimes. (*STHENO glares. EURYALE relents, softens.*) Here, let me see.

EURYALE rushes over, examines the bite, kisses it, then puts her arms around STHENO. STHENO allows this, then slowly, gently, pushes her away.

STHENO: Okay, okay. Get off. Enough of the mushy stuff.

EURYALE: I just wanted to help!

STHENO: You can help by helping me with the story.

EURYALE: (*hesitates, then stands firm*) No. This living in the past... it's no good. I don't want any part of it.

EURYALE exits.

STHENO: (*shaking her head*) Spoilsport. (*to the audience*) We lived here, on our beautiful island for years, just the three of us, until this hero Perseus comes along...

PERSEUS enters, gesturing with his sword and shield.

...on a quest...

STHENO approaches him, speaking directly to him.

...because heroes are always going on quests for something lame...

PERSEUS doesn't react. He merely smiles and holds his hero's pose.

...and he needed the head of a gorgon to accomplish it. I knew he couldn't take my head or Euryale's, because we were all immortal and stuff, but Medusa...

STHENO begins to deflate. She moves away from PERSEUS, who changes his pose to something similarly heroic.

...Medusa... was mortal.

MEDUSA appears, a child with her doll. She plays with it, laughing and enjoying herself.

Athena's particular sense of humor, to keep one of us rooted in the human world. When we became gorgons we found out that we suddenly had this awesome power where we could turn men to stone if they looked into our eyes, which Medusa tried on him right away...

MEDUSA drops the doll. It breaks. She is horrified. At the same time, PERSEUS holds up his shield as if fighting a terrifying menace.

PERSEUS: Back, you horrible monster!

STHENO: ...but Perseus carried a magical mirrored shield the goddess of stupid Athena gave him, and so he didn't have to look directly at Medusa. And then. He. Killed her.

PERSEUS laughs triumphantly. STHENO screams her fury and rushes for him, but MEDUSA steps between them, holding up her doll.

MEDUSA: Stheno?

STHENO: *(kneeling, speaking to MEDUSA)* Killed her and used her power to win the hand of his girlfriend, this absolutely forgettable chick named Andromeda.

MEDUSA: Stheno, can you fix my doll? She's broken. *(beginning to cry)* I broke her and I can't fix her now even though I've tried and tried and I'm sorry. Can you help me Stheno? Please?

STHENO reaches for MEDUSA, but MEDUSA fades and disappears. STHENO stands for a moment, alone. She won't allow herself to cry, won't allow herself, won't. At last she holds her head high and approaches the audience.

STHENO: In Greek, “Stheno” means forceful. And I am. I am the biggest, the baddest of the big bads, and I have a quest of my own to fulfil. I'm going to find Medusa, wherever she is. Wherever people go when they're not here anymore. And then this is what I'm going to do. I'm gonna bring my sister back. To life.

Begins to wrap her snake-hair back up in the babushka... then reconsiders. Big smile. Tosses it away. EURYALE picks it up and approaches her.

EURYALE: Stheno, come on. You have to wear this. You have to.

STHENO: *(shrugging her off)* I don't, as it turns out. I don't. And neither do you.

EURYALE: You'll hurt people!

STHENO: I can control it.

EURYALE: What if you can't?

STHENO: I can.

EURYALE: Stop and listen to me!

STHENO: Get out of my way.

EURYALE: Look, I miss her too!

A beat. STHENO turns and stares at her icily.

STHENO: Do you?

EURYALE: How can you even ask me that? Of course I do.

STHENO: You have a real funny way of showing it.

EURYALE: I deal with it how I deal with it. Just like you do. *(struggling)* Stheno, listen. This quest... it's crazy. Stay here. On the island. With me.

EURYALE reaches for her. STHENO shrugs her off, actually knocking her down.

STHENO: Get off, I said! *(They stare at each other. Stricken, EURYALE awkwardly clambers to her feet.)* Oh, hey, Euryale, I— *(But EURYALE*

runs off. STHENO watches her go silently.) I got this. Of course I got this. I'm Stheno and I know what I'm doing.

Light shift, signaling a change in time and place as STHENO begins striding off.

Lights up on HERACLES, who wears the skin of the Nemean Lion like a hat-cape-combo. He holds a giant bone roughly the size of him and is cajoling an unseen animal with it.

HERACLES: Here boy! Er, boys. Here boys! *(makes kissy sounds)* Come to Herc! *(enormous barking sounds)* Aw, c'mon, ya ungrateful mongrel. Er, mongrels...

STHENO enters quietly, unseen. She appraises HERACLES.

STHENO: You don't seem so big and tough.

HERACLES is startled, tries not to show it.

HERACLES: Who goes there? Er, I mean, what can I do for you? Er, I mean— Hey, what are you?

STHENO: *(uber-confident)* Your match.

HERACLES: My what now? *(Genuinely intrigued by her hair. Tries to touch it.)* Are those snakes? Jeez, that's so cool!

STHENO: *(slapping his hand away)* Hands off, Bad Touch! *(regrouping formality)* You are Hercules, great hero, mighty warrior, and you—

HERACLES: Um, actually, small correction, little thing, it's just... that isn't really how you say my name.

STHENO: *(thrown)* Hubbaduh what now?

HERACLES: Yeah, I don't know how it happened either, but it's HERAcles, not HERCules. *(shrugging, grinning)* Something got lost in translation, that's my guess. It means "Glory of Hera," which is a fun irony, 'cause she totally hates me.

Sudden clap of thunder.

HERA: *(appearing briefly)* I heard that!

HERACLES: Sheesh. She's so touchy. Anywho... Zeus is my pops and my mother is a mortal, which makes Hera my evil stepmother, I guess, and so... *(big sigh, another big grin, shake of the head)* It's this whole big thing which you probably don't even really care about.

STHENO: I care. No, I really do! I like stories.

HERACLES: Yeah? Um, okay. Okay, I can get behind that. So... what can I do ya for?

STHENO: You were assigned twelve labors in order to prove that you were a hero.

HERACLES: True.

STHENO: (*listing*) You killed the Nemean Lion, good lion hat thingie, by the way, I approve... (*off his look, resumes listing ceremonially*) ... um, the Lernean Hydra, the Wild Boar of Erymanthus...

HERACLES: I did? Oh yeah, I did! Gosh, it's so easy to lose track!

STHENO: ...the, um, the Stymphalian Birds, uh, the Cretan Bull, and you collected the, uh— is this right?— the Girdle of the Queen of the Amazons...?

HERACLES: That was a toughy, I'm telling you. You do not want to make an Amazon angry. Those ladies will mess you up.

STHENO: And finally... hey, what are you doing with that bone?

HERACLES: (*guilty*) Oh, this? Nothin'.

STHENO: Your face says "something." (*Big barking offstage. STHENO reacts.*) What in the name of all that's snakely is that?

HERACLES: That most certainly would not be Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards the Underworld, right.

STHENO: (*overlapping*) ...that guards the Underworld. Oh, Hercules. I mean, Heracles.

HERACLES: "Herc" is fine.

More barking.

STHENO: He sounds big.

HERACLES: He is big. Too big.

STHENO: Wait. You're not... you didn't steal him, did you?

HERACLES: "Steal" is such an ugly word. Look, let's just say I borrowed him, okay?

STHENO: Hades will not be pleased.

HERACLES: Nothing pleases that guy.

STHENO: Wait, I know this. This was your last labor, wasn't it? Kidnap Cerberus and bring him back from the Underworld?

HERACLES: Yeah. But eventually I had to bring him back down there. *(sudden burst of emotion)* And he's just so cute! We totally bonded. He has the biggest eyes; like pools of chocolate you can just fall into... all six of 'em... And giving him back...it... it broke my heart. I only wanted to play with him again for just a little bit. But turns out he's bigger than I remembered. And stronger. And he won't listen to me!

STHENO: And you'd like to get him back.

HERACLES: Very badly. Say, you don't have any super powers, do you, Miss...? *(thrusts out hand)* I didn't catch your name. I'm Heracles.

STHENO: *(brief hesitation)* Stheno. This... these... the snakes, the green skin, the wings... none of this freaks you out?

HERACLES: Are you kidding me? I'd kill for wings! Dude, I wouldn't ever walk again! Not if I could fly! And snake hair? Hey, can they talk?

STHENO: Not as far as I know...

HERACLES: I'd train 'em to talk. You could do, like, a ventriloquist's act or something. With just your hair.

STHENO: It isn't what you think. It's... a curse.

HERACLES: *(admiring)* One heckuva curse.

STHENO: Say, Herc. What if I helped you catch Cerberus?

HERACLES: Could you do that? Really? Ohmygosh, I'd be so grateful!

STHENO: Yeah?

HERACLES: Totally. So... do you? Have superpowers, I mean?

STHENO:...some.

She fixes him with her gaze. He freezes in place. She waves her hand, snaps her fingers in front of his face. He doesn't move, doesn't react. She fixes him with her eyes again, and he relaxes.

HERACLES: Whoa. Headrush.

STHENO: Sorry.

HERACLES: Nah, it's cool. It's just... did I turn to stone?

STHENO: Only for a second.

HERACLES: *(with respect and a little fear)* Wow. You're a gorgon, huh.

STHENO: Maybe. Yes.

HERACLES: *(beginning to grin)* That is so... cool!

STHENO: *(begins to echo his grin, then all business)* Look, I'll help you. But then you have to help me.

HERACLES: Sure! I'm a hero. That's what we do. We help people. So what's your plan?

STHENO: I have to have a plan? A plan. Okay, yeah, a plan. I can do a plan. Let's start with... um... why don't you try calling him?

HERACLES: Like this? *(hollering)* HEEEEEEY, CERBERUUUUUUUS!

Silence followed by loud barking. Three enormous sets of red eyes begin to blaze. NOTE: For the touring production, CERBERUS was created by a sound effect and a red glow. For the Hellgate production we used a sound effect.

STHENO and HERACLES look up... and up... and up.

STHENO: Meep. Nice doggy. Good doggy...

HERACLES: *(stern)* Cerberus! Cerberus, you be a good boy! *(one angry bark)* Sit! Sit! *(another angry woof; HERACLES turns to STHENO)* See? He just won't listen!

STHENO: All right, Super Strength, hoist me up. I gotta look him in the eye. At least one 'em. *(HERACLES obeys her, lifting her up on his shoulders. She speaks to CERBERUS.)* Listen up, you big lug! Just one of you has to... ooooo, right! Yes! Good boy! Good doggy! Look me right in the eye... *(the barking stops)* Got him.

HERACLES: You... you didn't hurt him, did you?

STHENO: You have to trust me. He'll be fine. I didn't give him the full blast. He'll recover. But you'll have to hurry. Get him back to Hades before he comes to.

HERACLES: You are awesome. Thank you thank you thank you! *(gives her a big hug, realizes he's perhaps hugging too hard, pulls back, chagrined)* Sorry. Everyone tells me I don't know my own strength.

STHENO: You're gonna need it to get him back where he belongs.

HERACLES: (*shivering*) The Underworld. Blech. Not exactly a vacation hotspot. (*begins to exit in the direction of CERBERUS; STHENO tries to grab him, but he stops, turns*) Hey! I owe you a favor, don't I.

STHENO: (*relieved*) Kinda.

HERACLES: Name it.

STHENO: (*unsure*) Well, now that I've met you... I mean, I feel like I just can't ask... (*He is watching her expectantly, kindly; she toughens up.*) The Golden Apples from the Tree of Life. You tricked great Atlas who must always keep the weight of the sky from falling on all our heads by offering to take over holding it up for a bit if he would get you the Apples.

HERACLES: (*uneasy*) But... but the Apples... Athena thought—

STHENO: (*bitterly*) Athena thought.

HERACLES: —that they weren't, you know, especially good for mortals.

STHENO: (*icy*) I'm not going to use them on a mortal.

HERACLES: (*unease grows*) Look, it's a non-issue, okay? They're gone. Athena took them back and once Athena makes a decision... well, you've probably heard all about her. What do you want with them, anyway?

STHENO: I'm going to bring my sister back.

HERACLES: From... where, exactly? (*off her look*) She's dead, isn't she.

STHENO: I can bring her back.

HERACLES: You can't though, is the thing.

STHENO: You don't know that.

HERACLES: Actually, I do know that. My wife. Megara. She...died. It was a long time ago.

STHENO: I'm. Listen, I'm sorry. But that doesn't—

HERACLES: It does, it does though. You can't just change the rules like that. Not even the gods can do that. Once someone is gone, they're gone.

STHENO: Herc— Heracles— listen, I can do this. I just need—

HERACLES: (*roaring, stomping, great thunder, everything shakes and breaks*) They're gone, okay? The Apples won't help you. Don't you think I would have used them if I could have? (*they look at each other for a beat*) Hey, I'm sorry. I don't like to lose my temper because, as you can see... (*sheepish grin*) I'm sorry about your sister. And I'm sorry that I can't help you bring her back.

STHENO: I'm not going to give up. Heroes don't give up. (*this stings him*) There has to be a way, Heracles. And I'm going to find it.

She begins to exit.

HERACLES: Hey, Stheno. I'm not saying this will work, or that you'll even be able to accomplish it at all, though you seem like a pretty persistent person, so I'm gonna give you the benefit of the doubt...

STHENO: I'm listening.

HERACLES: You're tough, that's all I'm saying. And you'll have to be. I know a guy. Had a... a problem, similar to yours. Lost his girl. And he went all the way down to the Underworld to bring her back. Maybe he can help you. His name is Orpheus.

STHENO: Thank you, Heracles.

HERACLES: You sure you don't want to just leave well enough alone? I know a great grief counselor, this goddess by the name of Persephone, but she's only available six months out of the year...

STHENO: I'll find Orpheus.

HERACLES: He's kind of a touchy guy.

STHENO: I'll deal.

HERACLES: (*turns to examine CERBERUS*) I'd better get this big lug back to the Underworld before he wakes up. It just takes one head, you know, then they've all gotta bark. (*begins to exit, turns to offer STHENO another big, friendly grin*) Good luck.

HERACLES exits. STHENO watches him go, then, determined begins to set off. Behind her, EURYALE appears. STHENO senses her.

STHENO: Go home, Euryale. I've got this.

EURYALE: You can't keep ignoring me.

STHENO: I'm not—

EURYALE: Yes you are! Stheno, you won't even turn to look at me!

STHENO: (*turns slowly*) There. I've looked. Now I've got to go.

EURYALE: We have to talk about Medusa; you can't just run off whenever I—

STHENO: That's what you've been saying all our lives. "Don't do this, don't do this." Heroes do things, Euryale. Now go home.

EURYALE stomps off, frustrated. STHENO continues on her quest.

The stage grows darker. Strange sounds are heard.

STHENO: I'm not freaked out, I'm not freaked out, I'm not freaked out...

More weird sounds; something big crashing off in the distance. Shapes flitting around here and there.

I can do this whole hero quest thing. I've got this. (*evil giggling is heard*) Euryale? No. Not Euryale. Euryale is gone. Because you told her to be gone. (*Big sound. STHENO cries out.*) What are those things? (*Black flitting creatures appear. They are HARPIES, birds with the heads of women.*) Ack! Harpies! (*She tries to fend them off, but they're relentless, shrieking and diving and clawing.*) Get off, get off, get off!

Beautiful, silvery lyre music begins to play. THE HARPIES pause, listening. A man's voice begins to sing. ORPHEUS enters. THE HARPIES make soft cooing sounds.

ORPHEUS: Ladies, ladies, please. You are being exceptionally naughty.

STHENO: Thanks, man, you saved my—

ORPHEUS: (*stern*) Shhhhh! (*to THE HARPIES*) And just what have you girls been up to, hmmm? (*THE HARPIES giggle*) Tormenting innocent passersby? (*more giggling*) You should be ashamed of yourselves! You'll give harpies all over the world a bad name. (*THE HARPIES make sounds of shame*) Oh, I can't stay mad at you! (*makes kissy sounds; THE HARPIES make kissy sounds back*) Fly, my pretties, fly!

THE HARPIES fly away. ORPHEUS turns to appraise STHENO. He is not pleased.

Who do you think you are? You big bully! Going around tormenting innocent harpies—

STHENO: Me? Tormenting them? Look, buddy, they attacked me—

ORPHEUS: Oh, sure! A green-skinned, snakes-for-hair, wings-out-of-her back gorgon like you, scared of poor widdle harpies?

STHENO: (*suspicious*) How did you know I'm a gorgon?

ORPHEUS: Because I got eyes in my eye sockets, that's how.

STHENO: Yeah, but we're kind of a rare commodity these days. And I've been living on an island. For years. Not exactly giving tours.

ORPHEUS: "Step right up, ladies and gents, see the rarest of all the wonders of the world: the Gorgon Sisters! They're ghastly, they're grim, they're gorgons!" Ha cha cha.

STHENO: Right. Awesome. Well, I'll just be—

ORPHEUS: (*blocking her*) Look, lady, you can't just go around like that with your snakes hanging out everywhere for the world to see. Birds love snakes. Bird-women love them more than regular birds. Don't you know anything?

STHENO: Those snakes are my hair.

ORPHEUS: (*intense eye roll*) Oh sure. Because snakes in the hair, that's so in these days. All the girls are wearing snakes in their hair.

STHENO: This isn't some fashion trend! It's a curse.

ORPHEUS: And curses are even more in than snakes in the hair. Mhmmm.

STHENO: Look, jerk, you said you knew what a gorgon is. Well, this is what— (*deep breath*) All right, sure, fine. I attacked your birds. I'm the bad guy. Whatever.

Begins to walk away.

ORPHEUS: Not exactly the most heroic thing anyone ever said to me.

STHENO stops dead, then whirls around.

STHENO: I am a hero.

ORPHEUS: Is that right.

STHENO: Who are you, anyway? Just some nothing, some weird dude hanging out with weirder bird-lady hybrids. I don't have time for this.

ORPHEUS: Ya know, you're awfully prickly for a girl on a quest.

STHENO: (*quietly, dangerously*) How do you know I'm on a quest?

ORPHEUS: I might have heard it from a nymph who knows a tree sprite married to a demigod. (*strumming his lyre*) Listen to this one, now. This was my number one hit. The ladies loved it.

STHENO: I've got better things to do than waste my time with a burnout washed up musician, thank you. So what if he knows I'm coming? Should making finding him easier, I'd guess.

ORPHEUS: If you're looking for Orpheus, I just might be able to lend you a hand.

STHENO: You know Orpheus?

ORPHEUS: And you don't? I'm shocked. No, really, that wasn't sarcasm this time. I thought everyone knew Orpheus. I know you won't take the word of a burnout washed up musician like yours truly, but man! This guy, he had talent. His music could charm the dead out of Hades.

STHENO: That's the guy!

ORPHEUS: He was famous, time was. Hit single every other week. Seemed like that, anyway.

STHENO: My sisters and I... we didn't spend much time socializing. After the curse, we pretty much kept to ourselves. Just the three of us, secure on our island. Until Perseus came looking for the head of a gorgon.

ORPHEUS: Who, Medusa? So you're... Stheno?

STHENO: (*drawing herself up proudly*) The one and only.

ORPHEUS: (*grumbling, to himself*) And I had to go and mouth off to the one woman in all of Greece whose evil eye really is an evil eye.

STHENO: Relax. It isn't that easy. I have to intentionally want to turn you to stone.

ORPHEUS: And you don't.

STHENO: Not at the moment.

ORPHEUS: You know... now that I think about it a little more, I mean... maybe I heard something about this Orpheus guy.

STHENO: His girlfriend died, right? And he brought her back from the Underworld?

ORPHEUS: Not just anyone can perform such a feat, you understand. (*strum of the lyre*) Orpheus was special. He used his music like magic.

STHENO: He was some kind of... god of rock, you mean.

ORPHEUS: More like a god of acoustic rock, really. No one could resist his charms, man, nobody. He was in love, see, with Eurydice, the most beautiful girl in all creation.

STHENO: Eurydice... wait...

ORPHEUS: They shared the kind of love the poets yammer on and on about, and then musicians set the poetry to music, and then you download it and listen to it on repeat five hundred times in a row on your iPhone.

STHENO: I know this...

STHENO concentrates, looks around... and there is EURYDICE.

EURYDICE: (*to ORPHEUS*) Promise that we'll be together for the rest of time. If we're going to be married, we have to make some kind of plan. (*she listens to an unseen ORPHEUS talking, then laughs*) I'll become a lawyer, you wait and see. And then maybe a judge too. After all, "Eurydice" means "justice," doesn't it? (*laughs*) Please, Orpheus. You'll be a famous singer and I'll keep on standing up for what's right and what's fair and together no one can stop us. No one. And we'll be together forever.

STHENO: The rest of time. Eternity.

ORPHEUS: Orpheus, he thought she was right, and they'd be together forever. But fate— or the gods— or whoever it is who makes terrible decisions that ruin the lives of us wee mortals— someone decided that Eurydice had to go.

EURYDICE is bitten by a snake...

EURYDICE: (*screaming*) ORPHEUS!

...and dies.

ORPHEUS: And so she died. And when she died she went straight to the Underworld, where everyone will go someday.

CREATURES OF THE UNDERWORLD lift EURYDICE, lifeless, staring, and guide her to the Underworld. HADES waits there, shadowed, barely seen. He gestures for her, and EURYDICE disappears.

STHENO: Not me. I'm immortal.

ORPHEUS: Aren't you the lucky duck. But Orpheus, man, he was a wreck. Couldn't eat, couldn't sleep. All he could think about was Eurydice, Eurydice, Eurydice and how unfair it was that she was gone. And after all that weepin and wailin, he made a decision. He was gonna bring her back.

STHENO: How'd he do it?

ORPHEUS: Pay attention or you'll miss the important parts! Because he was a god of acoustic rock, Orpheus used his musical talents to open up the gates of the Underworld.

ORPHEUS strums his lyre, attracting the attention of the CREATURES. STHENO is beginning to be freaked out. The CREATURES open the gates of the Underworld. STHENO and ORPHEUS pass through.

Such singing the ghosties and ghoulies there had never heard! And the gates creaked open and Orpheus went right through 'em. But he wasn't home free just yet. First he had to face off against Cerberus.

STHENO: Oh no. (*CERBERUS begins to bark*) I just did this!

ORPHEUS: Not the easiest of tasks, is it? But once again, his musical proclivities saved his hide. Just a few notes from his lyre—

He hands it to STHENO, who stares at it uncomprehendingly.

Just a few notes from his lyre...

STHENO gets it. Hesitantly plays the lyre.

...and Cerberus lay down and let him pass. And then, lo and behold, sitting on his throne of the blackest onyx, so black that it sucked up what little light there is down there, sat Hades, king of the Underworld. Orpheus made his plea, played his lyre, sang a song of such heartbreaking musical genius yadda yadda yadda,

that Hades was moved... just the teeniest, tiniest bit. Enough to make him a deal.

HADES comes forward, still mostly unseen. But enough of his presence exists to terrifying STHENO. Even the CREATURES are in awe.

STHENO: Is that... is that really... him?

HADES gestures and the CREATURES move apart to reveal EURYDICE.

ORPHEUS: Hades brought forth Eurydice from the shadows. In fact, she was a shadow now, gray and emotionless like the other shades down there.

EURYDICE: (*whispering*) Orpheusssssssss...

STHENO: Listen up dude, I'm not really digging this Masterpiece Theatre of the Damned, so I'm just gonna—

ORPHEUS's voice, as HADES, booms and echoes mysteriously, effectively shutting STHENO up.

ORPHEUS and HADES: You can take her back with you.

ORPHEUS: Hades said.

ORPHEUS and HADES: On one condition...

HADES: ...that you lay neither hand nor eye on her until you have both reached the land of the living.

ORPHEUS: Hades' instructions seemed easy enough to follow, don't they? But you have to remember that Orpheus, though consumed with the fiery passion of youth, was also prey to youth's doubts and insecurities.

EURYDICE takes his hand. He hesitates, then allows it. He begins to lead her out of the Underworld. STHENO trails behind them, stalked by the CREATURES.

They left together, Eurydice walking just behind him, always behind him so he couldn't see her, just hear her: the stir of a pebble moved by her dainty foot, the shivering of the grass in her wake. And Orpheus found himself stricken with doubts.

ORPHEUS lets go of EURYDICE's hand. He keeps moving, but she stops.

He couldn't help himself! Could Hades be trusted? Surely he could... but what if it were some kind of trick? Orpheus decided he would take one quick glance... no one would know... surely it wouldn't hurt anything...

STHENO: Ah no, man, don't do it—

ORPHEUS turns. EURYDICE reaches for him.

ORPHEUS: And as he turned, he saw her face for just that moment, her sweet familiar face, a shadow no longer, glowing back at him out of the darkness...

intense crack of thunder; wailing from THE CREATURES of the Underworld; HADES' evil laughter; STHENO tries to ignore it

...and then she was gone. Back to the Underworld. Forever.

EURYDICE is gone. HADES is gone. THE CREATURES and the Underworld itself are gone. A beat. STHENO takes ORPHEUS' hand.

STHENO: I don't know how you could stand it. Losing her like that. Again.

ORPHEUS: You can stand anything, I've found. Given enough time. When did you figure out it was me?

STHENO: Oh, once the story came to life, you know, in the literal sense. The music helped. But the way you spoke about her— it was like she was alive again, in your words, your music, the story you told.

ORPHEUS: Now that you know who I am, I hope you take my advice.

STHENO: I'll give you anything if you help me.

ORPHEUS: I only want one thing—

STHENO: Tell me and I'll do it!

ORPHEUS: Go home.

STHENO: *(majorly thrown)* What?

ORPHEUS: Go home. Give up. Leave this place and go back to your island and never look back.

STHENO: I... I can't believe that you'd... *(hardening)* I thought you'd understand. You know how I feel, you must—

ORPHEUS: I do. And that's why I'm refusing my help.

STHENO: You could take me there, you could open the gates again, I could meet Hades, make the same deal—

ORPHEUS: I could, and I could, and you could, and he would. But I won't.

STHENO: Why not? You owe me an explanation if nothing else.

ORPHEUS: Owe you? I don't owe you anything. But I'll give you something anyway: advice. Priceless, priceless advice. Forsake your quest. Go home. You stay on this path, you'll find nothing but misery.

STHENO: You don't know that.

ORPHEUS: I do. Don't you have another sister?

STHENO: (*thrown again*) Euryale. But what does she have to—

ORPHEUS: Go to her. She's still alive, isn't she? She needs you.

STHENO: She's fine.

ORPHEUS: Is she?

STHENO: Ditch the riddles, Orpheus. Euryale is fine, she isn't as strong as me, but she's fine. And she'll be even finer when I bring Medusa back home to her.

ORPHEUS: Impossible.

STHENO: The impossible just takes a little longer.

ORPHEUS: Your sister— the dead one, I mean— will need a body, won't she? Something for Hades to put her shadow into? And she doesn't.

STHENO: She—

ORPHEUS: I know the story, Stheno. I know that Perseus took your sister's head, and after he used it to petrify everyone he needed petrified, he married his beloved Andromeda and then gave the head back to Athena.

STHENO: Athena. Right...

ORPHEUS: She has your sister's head right now. You can't even begin to bring Medusa back to life until you're able to reunite her head with her body.

STHENO: Then that's what I'll do.

ORPHEUS: No, that's not what I... I mean, you don't, you shouldn't—
Athena will destroy you.

STHENO: She can't. In all her wisdom, she made me immortal. Like her.

ORPHEUS: Lots of ways to destroy a person, Stheno, without killing them.

STHENO: I'll risk it.

ORPHEUS: There's nothing I can say, is there. Nothing I can do to make you change your mind.

STHENO: I'm determined. It's in my nature.

ORPHEUS: Once someone is gone, they're gone. You gotta let 'em go. Trust me on this.

STHENO: This time will be different. I'll make it be different.

ORPHEUS: All right, then go to the Temple of Athena, if you're so determined! You'll learn. She'll teach you, if nothing else. And... and take this. (*hands her the lyre*)

STHENO: What? No! No, I can't... I mean, this is yours... you need it.

ORPHEUS: Nah. My days of rocking the kasbah are pretty much over. I'm moving on. Maybe I'll take up knitting. Oooh, with Arachne! You remember Arachne? That girl Athena turned into a spider? Man, someone should have a conversation with the gods. They all need anger management classes or somethin'.

STHENO: Thank you, Orpheus. I could possibly stand a chance after all.

ORPHEUS: Dead is dead, Stheno.

STHENO: Guess I'll find out. (*moves to exit, then pauses*) I was wrong, you know. You aren't a burnout, or washed up. You're still one heckuva musician, Orpheus.

STHENO exits. ORPHEUS watches her go. THE HARPIES return, cackling, squawking, making a general ruckus. He shushes them.

ORPHEUS: I know, I know. She's an idiot. But she's a brave idiot. Who knows? Maybe she really can change things. (*he smiles, shakes his head*) Good luck, kid.

ORPHEUS fades. STHENO reappears, approaching the Temple of Athena. The sound of the ocean. She looks around.

STHENO: Ocean waves? Not super possible, seeing as how I'm miles away from any body of water. (sniffs) Salt. The smell of the sea. (looks around, calling) Poseidon? You waterlogged creep of the deep, is that you? Show yourself! (squawking of seagulls) I know you're here somewhere. Just when I'm about to finally be successful, of course you have to show up again, ruining everything just like you did before...

POSEIDON appears. Lots of seaweed, a trident. STHENO evaluates him.

You've seen better days.

POSEIDON: Feeling's mutual. Wow. Snakes in the hair, huh? Athena always did have a weird sense of humor.

STHENO: This is all your fault, you know.

POSEIDON: I do know.

STHENO: There's no use denying it, you— Oh. You're not denying it. That's very big of you.

POSEIDON: I know it's my fault. You... Euryale... Medusa...

STHENO: No! You do not get to say her name! It's because of you that she was cursed! That we were all cursed!

POSEIDON: You're angry, I'm hearing you—

STHENO: You used me and then didn't have the guts to stand up to Athena—

POSEIDON: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Nobody's got the guts to stand up to Athena.

STHENO: I do.

POSEIDON: You really do, don't you. My therapist says that I have self-esteem problems. I need more self-confidence.

STHENO: Why are you here, Poseidon? Why now?

POSEIDON: Euryale summoned me.

STHENO: She what?

POSEIDON: She wants me to stop you.

STHENO: Why?

POSEIDON: You know, my therapist says that when you lose your temper, you should count to ten. Deep breaths. Come on, do it with me, like this. (*demonstrates, eyes closed, big breaths*) One... two... three...

STHENO: Euryale just wants to get in the way. She always—

POSEIDON: ...four... five... (*cracks open one eye*) She has your best interest at heart. Six... seven...

STHENO: That is so typical!

POSEIDON: ...eight... nine... Hey. You're not counting.

STHENO: I've got a job to do.

POSEIDON: Look, Stheno. I know you've heard this a trillion times, but honestly, have you thought about what you're trying to do? Really sat down and thought it through?

STHENO: Is that what your therapist tells you to do?

POSEIDON: And now with the mocking. Yes, incidentally. But that's not my point. I feel bad about what happened. I do! You think that I don't lie awake at night beating myself up because of my part in what happened to the three of you?

STHENO: No. I don't think that.

POSEIDON: Well, I do. My therapist says—

STHENO: I don't want to hear any more about your therapist. You're standing in my way, Poseidon. I'll go through you if I have to.

POSEIDON: You won't have to. I'm here to help you, Stheno.

STHENO: You haven't lifted a finger to help us. Not even a little bit. Why now?

POSEIDON: I have anger management issues, okay? They used to call me "Earthshaker," did you know that? Because of my famous temper. All the water in the world would rise up if I wanted it to, whenever I lost my temper. I'm trying to put all that behind me. Asklepios, that's the guy I see, you should think about looking him up, he does wonders— (*off her look*) Ahem. Asklepios told me that I have to right my wrongs if I want to have any peace. And I do. What happened between us was one of the worst things I've ever done, and... and I'm sorry.

STHENO: Sorry isn't good enough.

POSEIDON: I know, I know. That's why I'm going to help you.

STHENO: I don't need you, Poseidon. I never need you.

She begins to walk away.

POSEIDON: Don't walk away from me. Listen, Stheno, please don't walk away from me.

Suddenly huge, furious, howling of winds, crashing of water: the sounds of a storm at sea, the fiercest of squalls. POSEIDON becomes enormous and terrifying.

I SAID DON'T WALK AWAY FROM ME!

STHENO freezes, stops dead in her tracks. The squall subsides. She turns, slowly and carefully, back to him.

STHENO: You weren't kidding about that temper. How much therapy have you had, exactly?

POSEIDON: It's a work in progress. And as it stands, you do need me. Or haven't you noticed that Athena's temple is suddenly and conveniently right in the middle of a very big, and might I add, very deep ocean?

STHENO: That's new.

POSEIDON: She really doesn't want to see you.

STHENO: Of course she doesn't. The coward.

POSEIDON: That's neither here nor there. The point is I want to make up for what I did, as much as I can. Ruler of the seven seas here, remember? I'll part them for you. After that, it's up to you.

STHENO: It's always been up to me.

POSEIDON: You're tough. No one's denying that. So go then! I'll hold the waters back as long as I can. (*Sound of thunder. POSEIDON looks up.*) Uh oh. Looks like she knows you're on your way. Stheno. I really am sorry. If you bring her back— if you can give Medusa life again— will you tell her I said that?

STHENO: Sure. Absolutely.

POSEIDON: Do you think she'll forgive me?

STHENO: I suppose that depends on her. All you can do is try, I guess.

POSEIDON: That's what Asklepios says too. All right. Here we go.

POSEIDON raises his trident— the sound of waves crashing— blue and green lights— as the sea parts and STHENO, running, heads for the temple. POSEIDON disappears. Finally she stops, panting.

STHENO: He came through. Poseidon actually came through. *(She looks around the Temple of Athena, which is dark and foreboding.)* Athena? Athena, I... erm... I call upon you... I beseech that you hear... um... Darn it. Athena, listen to me! I know you're here and I know you can hear me! Remember me? Stheno the determined? One of the three gorgon sisters? The bravest of them all? *(low grumble of thunder)* Listen, I'm not here to placate you, to sing you songs and offer you offerings. That's for mortals, and I'm not exactly a mortal anymore, am I. I'm here because you cursed us and you owe me a favor or two. Or a thousand. *(the low, dark, amused sound of ATHENA's laughter)* Oh, you think this is funny? Yeah, real funny. You're a bully, you know that, Athena? Picking on people weaker than you because you're bored or your tender little feelings are hurt or because... because you have self-esteem issues, whatever, I don't know, but it's wrong! And no one has the guts to stand up to you and tell you to your face... wherever it is... that you're a bully. So... so yeah! That's what I'm doing! You are a bully. You hear me, Athena?

The silence returns. STHENO looks around slowly, carefully.

When ATHENA speaks, it is huge, booming. So powerful, in fact, that it knocks STHENO to the ground. We still don't see ATHENA yet, or at least not completely.

ATHENA: Are you quite through?

STHENO: *(startled)* Yes. I mean, no! I've come for something you have. Something that belongs to me.

ATHENA: Foolish girl. What makes you think that I will deign to waste another second listening to your disrespectful cries?

STHENO: Because you owe me!

ATHENA: I am a god. I owe you nothing.

STHENO: You owe my sister.

ATHENA: *(darkly amused)* Your sister. Which sister was that, Stheno?

STHENO: Medusa. Remember her? She's dead because of you!

ATHENA: She's dead because you dallied with the wrong god.

STHENO: (*knocked for a loop*) That isn't...

ATHENA: Of course it is. Isn't that what this is really all about, your little "quest?" You want me to absolve you of all your guilt and take full responsibility for all the bad things in your life? Take some responsibility for yourself, girl. Bad stuff happens.

STHENO: You dare to say that to me! It didn't just "happen." You made it happen.

ATHENA: Oh, maybe I did. I have a temper. We all do, we gods. It's our privilege.

STHENO: I don't accept that.

ATHENA: Accept it or not, I don't particularly care. You've grown boring, my dear, and boring small creatures who do nothing but bore me I simply cannot abide.

STHENO: You listen to me, Athena—

ATHENA finally appears in the flesh.

ATHENA: (*huge, roaring, knocking STHENO back to the ground*) NO, YOU LISTEN! YOU DARE TO COME HERE, TO MY TEMPLE, MY PLACE OF WORSHIP, AND SPEAK TO ME IN SUCH A MANNER? YOU IMPUDENT, INSIGNIFICANT NOTHING, YOU WORM. (*a beat before resuming, now more reasonable*) I would have you far from me now. Goodbye, dear Stheno. You might have presented a challenge.

STHENO: What does that mean? Athena— (*the sound of heavy, animalistic breathing*) If you're trying to scare me— (*heavy, heavy footsteps, approaching*) — it's working.

ATHENA: I'm afraid your audience is up. My friend is here to escort you out.

STHENO: Your friend? What is it?

Out of the darkness THE MINOTAUR appears. Half man with the head of a bull. Begins to circle STHENO menacingly.

ATHENA: You kept mentioning bullies so much, I thought I would oblige you. You've heard, perhaps, of the minotaur? He's beautiful in rather a horrible way, wouldn't you agree?

STHENO: Send him away!

ATHENA: No, I don't think I will. He was banished to the center of a labyrinth, you know, and it's been ages since he's had anyone over for dinner. (*giggling*) Oh Athena, you are such a wit.

THE MINOTAUR bellows menacingly.

STHENO: You won't get away with this!

ATHENA: Of course you'd say something cliché. Dear Stheno, I'm a god. We get away with things all the time. (*THE MINOTAUR swipes at STHENO, knocking her down*) Adieu, adieu, to you and you and you and you and—

STHENO rises, realizes she still holds the lyre ORPHEUS gave her, and gives it a strum. Loud, grating music plays. THE MINOTAUR roars and swipes at her again, knocking her down.

What in the name of me was that? Oh Stheno, you stupid girl, you're only making him angrier with... with whatever little toy you've got there.

STHENO: Focus, Stheno, focus—

THE MINOTAUR looms over her again. She closes her eyes, grits her teeth, and gives the lyre another, softer strum. Sweet, sweet music plays. THE MINOTAUR pauses mid-swipe. He freezes, entranced by the music. STHENO opens one eye.

I can't believe that actually worked!

ATHENA: What is that? What have you got there? Give it to me this instant!

STHENO: No, I don't think I will.

She fixes THE MINOTAUR in his more sedate state with her stony gaze. He freezes, hardening into stone. Triumphantly, STHENO turns to face ATHENA.

Nice try, Athena. You know why I'm here. Give me Medusa's head. NOW.

ATHENA: (*intensely petulant*) No, no, no! You can't just come into my temple and petrify my minotaur!

STHENO: Kinda just did.

ATHENA: NO FAIR NO FAIR NO FAIR!

STHENO: You have her head. Give it to me.

ATHENA: Well you can't have it, not ever, because when Perseus was done with it he gave it to me with a magic shield and I put her head on the shield and it can never be removed and so you lose, Stheno, you lose and you will never never never get your sister back, so there!

ATHENA's wicked laughter fills the temple.

STHENO: *(frozen in shock, small, a whisper)* What? *(ATHENA's laughter only grows)* You did what? Fix it. Fix it now.

ATHENA: Or what?

STHENO: Fix it now Athena, or I swear on my sister's name that I will burn your temple to the ground.

ATHENA: You wouldn't dare.

STHENO: Try me.

A furious beat.

ATHENA: Oh, fine! Here! Take it then! *(the shield bearing the image of MEDUSA clatters at STHENO's feet)* Spoil sport.

STHENO: *(picking up the shield reverently)* It's her. It's really her.

ATHENA: It's not her. It's a shield with her face on it. She's gone, Stheno. Dead is dead.

STHENO: I won't accept that either. I'm taking this to the Underworld— to Hades. I'll bring her back, wait and see.

ATHENA: You're a very foolish girl. *(big sigh)* But you're brave, I'll grant you that.

STHENO: I'm going to bring her back, Athena.

ATHENA: Mmmhmmm, I'm sure you will. You hero types always get what you're after.

STHENO: Hero type? You think I'm a hero?

ATHENA: Isn't this a hero's quest you're on?

STHENO: I just want my sister back.

ATHENA: And what about the one you left behind?

STHENO: Why does everyone keep asking me that? Euryale doesn't need my help. (ATHENA gestures. EURYALE appears.) Euryale! How did you—

ATHENA: I may have a bit of a temper, but they don't call me the goddess of wisdom for nothing. Don't you think your energies would be more, shall we say, wisely spent helping your living sister deal with her—

EURYALE: Stheno?

STHENO: Euryale doesn't need me. Medusa does.

EURYALE: Stheno, where are you? I can't see you anymore!

STHENO: I'm here, Euryale, I'm— (moves to EURYALE, who doesn't react) She can't hear me, can she.

ATHENA: Or is it that you can't hear her.

STHENO: Ha ha. Good one, Athena. Could this be why they don't call you the Goddess of Humor or Anything Funny at All? (ATHENA glowers) Leave us alone. For once, just leave us alone.

EURYALE: I'm scared, Stheno!

ATHENA: Whiny little thing, isn't she.

STHENO: (taking a menacing step forward) Don't you talk about my sister like that.

ATHENA: Whatever you say, dearest Stheno. I'm sure you know best. (Waves her hand again. EURYALE disappears.) On your way, then. Continue your quest. Never again darken the door of my temple, etc. etc., you know the deal.

STHENO: Don't you worry. (to the shield) I'm coming, Medusa. I'm on my way.

She runs out of the temple. THE MINOTAUR wakes up. ATHENA smacks him.

ATHENA: Stupid minotaur.

Darkness. The voice of a little girl, MEDUSA, long ago.

MEDUSA: Stheno? Look at the light on the ocean. It dances! I've never noticed it do that before. Isn't it pretty? (MEDUSA appears, holding her doll) Stheno? Are you there? Are you listening?

STHENO appears in dim light, frozen, hearing the voice, examining the shield.

STHENO: I'm listening. I see it.

MEDUSA: Will you take me swimming later? The water is warm and it's so pretty. You said you would.

STHENO: I know, I know...

MEDUSA: I never see you anymore...

STHENO: Medusa, please—

MEDUSA: You're always so busy—

STHENO: I'm sorry!

MEDUSA: Don't you care about me? Don't you love me anymore?

MEDUSA disappears.

STHENO: I'm sorry, okay? I'm here now! I'm— (*realizes that she is alone*) — talking to myself. Get a grip, girl. (*looking around*) You've got this. You have all these special Gorgon powers you don't even know what to do with; odds are good that at least one of them will be useful. (*She closes her eyes. Holds out her hands. Weaves them through the air, as if summoning mystical energy. A beat. Nothing. She opens her eyes.*) Well that's discouraging. (*Closes her eyes again. Again with the hand weaving.*) Um... powers that be... uh... I call on you to open the way ... er, the door... or the doorway, maybe... show me, erm, show me how— Darn it. (*Her eyes fly open. She is suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of certainty, great strength.*) All righty, then— mighty forces, this is Stheno talking. STHENO. The Gorgon? The worst of the worst? That's right! I know you can hear me, but it doesn't matter, see, because I don't need you. I can do this myself. I have power, I have strength aplenty, I need to get to the Underworld, so I am going to the Underworld... NOW!

She waits. At first, nothing happens. Then suddenly comes the sound of an immense cracking, like ice breaking apart, and then the enormous sound of multiple panes of glass shattering. Strange lights begin to blaze, and STHENO is thrown to the ground.

Absolute blackness. A distant sound, like the wind sighing.

Lights up on STHENO.

And HADES, the god of the Underworld, lord of the dead, is there. He is watching her, patient, calm, perhaps a little somber, perhaps a little amused. He is certainly not what she expected to find.

HADES: Hi there.

STHENO leaps to her feet.

STHENO: It's you, isn't it!

HADES: You'll have to be more specific. You who? *(he smiles)* Oh, I like that. "Yoo hoo!"

STHENO: You're him. You're the big man. Hades.

HADES: The man downstairs, yes. Nice to meetcha. *(He extends a hand. She hesitates, not sure what to expect, then takes it. Pulls back, shivering. He smiles sadly.)* Cold hands, warm heart.

STHENO: Then you must have the warmest heart of ever.

HADES: Some might argue with you.

STHENO: *(awed)* So this is the Underworld.

HADES: As it is, yes. I'm not much of a housekeeper, I'm afraid. And my darling Persephone is spending her annual six months above ground, and she's far better at dusting than I am.

STHENO: No, no! It's... um... nice. Maybe a little drafty.

HADES: I think the word you're looking for is "dank."

STHENO: No, no! Some flowers here, an accent wall there, and it could be... homey.

HADES: You don't have to be polite. It is fairly dank. That's my fault. I don't get out as much as I should. We're fairly closed off down here. So: you're the great and powerful Stheno, aren't you. I've heard about you.

STHENO: All good things, I hope.

HADES: *(shrugging)* Mostly that you have, a) fashioned yourself as a hero, and b) will never be making yourself a home down here.

STHENO: You heard I was a hero?

HADES: Or that you were on a hero's quest. Not necessarily the same thing, you know. Undertaking a heroic quest does not



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