



[Based on the novel, Gods of Olympus, by Eva Pohler](#)

PART ONE: ENCHANTMENT

1

You lie down in a field of flowers beside a babbling brook on a clear autumn day—a welcome respite from the monotony that has become your life. You haven’t come for a nap, but, as your breathing becomes slower and deeper, and you are comforted by the warmth of the sun on your skin, you find yourself giving in to sleep.

The sound of nearby footsteps in the grass awakens you. You blink rapidly as your eyes adjust to the sunlight and you become aware of a formidable figure standing over you. He is wearing golden armor—a breast plate and knee guards, along with a sword sheathed at his hip. Beside the figure is a golden chariot and horses that seem plucked right out of a fairy tale. You blink again, but the formidable figure and his exotic chariot remain.

“Hello,” the figure says. “My name is

[Zeus.”](#)

[Poseidon.”](#)

[Hades.”](#)



2.1

You sit up, astonished by the realization that this is *the* Zeus, king of the Olympians and god of the sky. His brown hair and beard shine in shades of gold beneath the sun. His blue eyes, trained upon you, are exquisitely bright.

The god laughs. “I see the cat has got your tongue. No need to be afraid. You made a lovely picture here in the flowers. I wonder if you might like a ride in my chariot.”

[“Yes, please!”](#)

[“No, thank you, Lord Zeus.”](#)



2.2

You sit up, astonished by the realization that this is *the* Poseidon, god of the sea. His sun-bleached hair nearly reaches his shoulders, and his turquoise eyes, trained on you, remind you of an ocean. The god folds his arms across his chest. “You do realize who I am? Or do you think this is a dream? I assure you, it isn’t.”

You climb to your feet. “My apologies. I’ve never met a god before. I don’t know how to behave.” Delighted by your awkwardness, Poseidon laughs. “Then come with me. I’ll show you things few mortal eyes have seen.”

[“Oh, thank you!”](#)

[You shake your head in fear. “No, thank you, Lord Poseidon.”](#)



2.3

You sit up, astonished by the realization that this is *the* Hades, god of the Underworld. His black wavy hair accentuates the deep black of his eyes, which are trained on you with amusement.

You ask, “Am I dead?”

“I’m afraid you have me confused with Thanatos,” the god replies. “A common mistake among your kind—so common, in fact, that I grow weary of it.”

You fumble to your knees, not wanting to anger the god. “Please, accept my apologies, Lord Hades. I think I’m in shock. I’ve never seen a god before.”

The god folds his arms across his chest and picks at his black, curly beard. “But you have heard of me?”

“Of course,” you say. “Hasn’t everyone?”

“And what have you heard?” he asks. “That I am cruel? That I care only for enlarging my kingdom with more souls? Because, you see, souls have no power. Increasing their number does nothing more than increase my responsibilities. And there’s nothing I despise more than murder.”

You scramble to think of something you have heard about him that isn’t insulting, and then you remember an internet meme. “I’ve heard that you love your three-headed dog, and that his name, Cerberus, means ‘Spot.’”

Hades lifts his chin and roars with laughter. “How would you like to meet him? I’ll take you in my chariot.”

[“Wow! Thank you, Lord Hades!”](#)

[You back away in fear. “No, thank you, Lord Hades.”](#)



3.1

Zeus waves an open palm toward the golden chariot, indicating that you should climb aboard, so you do. You sit on a bench and study the horses for the first time. You see three black stallions, as dark as night, with manes that resemble flames.

Climbing in beside you, Zeus takes the reins, and, before you can blink, the chariot lifts into the air, and the horses now look like fire shooting across the sky.

With one hand, you clutch the side of the chariot, more frightened than you've felt on any rollercoaster. Your stomach seems to drop with each turn the chariot makes.

"We're nearly there," Zeus adds.

You dare to look over the edge of the chariot to see nothing but ocean below.

"Hold on tight," Zeus warns as the chariot flies even higher, shooting up into clouds that weren't visible from the ground.

Your ears pop from the pressure as you cling to the chariot with both hands and resist the urge to scream.

Abruptly, Zeus pulls on the reins and brings the chariot to a halt before a giant wall of clouds at the top of a great mountain.

Zeus says, "Spring, Summer, Winter, and Fall, open the gates of Mount Olympus so I, Zeus, may enter with my guest."

A loud roar carries through the air, and a tunnel of cold wind lifts in front of you, startling you. At its center is a single rain cloud. As the wind settles and the rain cloud empties its contents right before your eyes and then dissipates, the giant wall of clouds opens, and Zeus draws the chariot forward. The wall of clouds

closes behind you, and, in front of you, at the center of a golden-paved courtyard, is a round fountain spraying water into the blue sky from the spout of a golden whale. At the top of this fountain, where the water arches and falls into a pool bordered by golden bricks, is a rainbow. You look on with amazement.

Behind this fountain is a giant palace of white stone and ornate columns. To the right and left of the palace are separate buildings, as tall, but not as wide or deep. Zeus guides the chariot to the right of the fountain to one of these separate buildings. The golden doors open.

A beautiful young god with long thick eyelashes and golden curls steps forward to unbridle the horses. He gives you what seems to be a mischievous grin.

“Thank you, Cupid,” Zeus says before he exits the chariot, and you, on shaky legs, follow.

Zeus leads you across the gold-paved courtyard to another building—a barn and stable. Standing in one corner of the barn is a magnificent white horse with feathery wings.

“Pegasus?” you ask.

The horse looks at you and whinnies.

“Would you like to go for a ride?” Zeus offers.

“Seriously? I’d love to!”

“No, thanks. I’m too afraid.”



3.12

Zeus helps you mount the bare back of the beautiful creature, and before you can figure out how to hold on, Pegasus whirls from the building and into the clouds.

You would have fallen right off the back of him if he hadn't caught you with his wing and righted you again. You hug his flanks with your legs and grab fistfuls of his silky mane to keep your balance. The wind lifts your hair and caresses your face as you emerge from the clouds above to find the great blue sea and the Grecian coastline below. The sunlight makes everything glitter like jewels, and the air smells fresh like the sea, rejuvenating you. As Pegasus glides gracefully through the air, you feel like the luckiest person alive.

Too soon, Pegasus returns to the wall of clouds on the mountaintop and whinnies. The clouds part with a roar as the gates of Mount Olympus open, and you are returned to the barn, where Zeus is waiting.

You dismount onto shaky legs and turn to the lord of the sky.

"That was one of the best things I've ever experienced," you say. "Thank you."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it," Zeus says. "Are you ready to see my temple?"

["Yes! I can't wait!"](#)

["Um, okay," you say, worried that he might make you his prisoner.](#)



3.13

You tremble as you follow Zeus through the golden-paved courtyard to seven steps, each a different color of the rainbow, starting with red and ending with violet. Two giant columns flank the entryway, and, just inside, you enter a magnificent foyer with Grecian scenes in relief along the ceiling. Then you step into a large rectangular assembly hall open to the clear blue sky, from which nearly solid beams of sunshine shoot down to form a bright canopy above. Zeus continues across this great hall, so you follow, not failing to notice the other gods present and sitting on thrones around the perimeter of the room.

As you count the thrones, which aren't all occupied, you deduce that they belong to the twelve major Olympians and that you are standing at the center of their court.

“Allow me to introduce the others to you,” Zeus says to you. Then, to the others, he says, “I’ve brought a guest, whom I found sleeping beside a babbling brook.” He points across the room to a double throne where a beautiful goddess with vibrant red hair and sharp blue eyes looks down at you with suspicion. Her frown troubles you as Zeus says, “That’s Hera, my wife, and goddess of marriage and family.”

You wonder if you should kneel, but, instead, you bow, because Zeus has moved on to point out another.

“And that,” Zeus says, “is Ares, our son, and the god of war.”

He looks just like his mother, with the same red hair and blue eyes but with the robust build of his father. Again, you bow just as Zeus points his finger to your right.

Zeus says, “This is Apollo, another of my sons and the god of music, healing, truth, and prophecy.”

You see why others have said he’s the most beautiful of the gods, because the proportion of his forehead to his nose, to his chin and cheeks mark perfection. His hair is the same color brown as his father’s, but his eyes are the deep green of the forest. As you bow, Zeus turns to the left side of the room.

“And that,” he says, pointing to the only other god present, “Is Apollo’s twin sister, Artemis, the goddess of the wild animals and of the hunt.”

Artemis shares her brother’s hair and eye color, though her hair tumbles in a ponytail across one shoulder, nearly reaching her waist, and her eyes, unlike those of the others, hint at concern—alarm even.

“Father,” Artemis begins. “Why...”

Before she can ask her question, the others in the room, except for Zeus, gasp. You look around but notice nothing until a sharp pain fills your chest—only for a moment.

Zeus looks down at you. “It breaks my heart that this has happened to you, dear mortal.”

You gaze up at him, bewildered, wondering what he means but unable to ask.

“Whether he was called by the Fates or by his own whims, Cupid has directed one of his arrows into your heart, to make you love one of us. It’s unfortunate, for this means you will never love a mortal as much as the immortal object of your desire.”

“The mortal will never find happiness if we don’t intervene,” Apollo says.

“You can remedy that, Father,” Artemis points out.

“We can’t risk using an arrow of hate,” Zeus says. “It’s bad enough when people don’t believe in us; when they hate us, we lose even more of our power.”

Hera climbs to her feet. “And we can’t afford to turn just any mortal into one of us.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” Ares says.

Suddenly, another goddess appears among the others, to Hera’s right. She has long dark hair and stunning gray eyes and wears a full set of armor, even more elaborate than the breast plate and knee guards on Zeus.

“Athena!” Zeus cries. “Welcome back! I was just introducing everyone to our guest when...”

“I saw what happened,” Athena says with a frown. “And I propose that we design a set of challenges to determine whether the mortal is worthy to become one of us.”

“Hear, hear!” Artemis shouts.

“What do you have in mind?” Zeus asks the gray-eyed goddess.

“Three tasks,” Athena says. “I will even loan the mortal my sword and shield.”

Athena unbuckles her weapon and straps it to your waist. Then she unstraps her shield from her back and secures it onto yours.

You blink. “Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me yet,” she says. “Let’s wait and see if you survive.”

A lump rises to your throat.

“I’m beginning to like this idea,” Ares says.

“Let’s begin with one challenge,” Athena continues. “If we see it successfully completed, we can then declare the next challenge, and so on.”

“And what should this first challenge be?” Zeus asks.

Athena’s gray eyes sparkle as she says, “I propose this: the mortal must find a way into the Underworld, pluck a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit, and return to Mount Olympus without eating the fruit.”

“I don’t particularly like pomegranates,” you say. “But how can I get to the Underworld and back?”

“The pomegranates from the Seers’ Pit will give anyone who eats it the gift of prophecy,” Apollo points out. “Your challenge is as much a test of your willpower as it is anything else.”

Zeus adds, “The person to whom your heart has been bound will take you to the outskirts of the gates of the Underworld and wait for you there, but you must enter alone. If you’re successful, that person will deliver you back here. Do you understand?”

Because you can’t imagine living without the object of your desire, and because you’ve never felt such a deep love before, you nod eagerly, despite your fear.

“Then tell us, mortal,” Zeus says. “Which among us has Cupid compelled you to love?”

You look around the room until your eyes fall on the one you feel you could never live without.

[“Zeus.”](#)

[“Hera.”](#)

[“Ares.”](#)

[“Artemis.”](#)

[“Apollo.”](#)



3.2

Poseidon lifts a finger and curls it toward himself, beckoning you over.

As you enter the chariot you study the horses for the first time. They're the color of sea foam, and they sparkle with an iridescent sheen.

Noticing the admiration of his beloved horses, Poseidon, as he slides onto the bench beside you, says, "Aren't they beautiful? Allow me to present Seaquake, Crest, and Riptide, the loveliest mares that have ever been."

All three of them whinny, as if they understood their master and are offering their thanks.

"They're incredible," you say. "All of this..." you look around at the chariot until your gaze returns to the god of the sea, "is incredible."

"Shall I show you my castle at the bottom of the sea?" he asks.

["Yes, please! Do I need an oxygen tank?"](#)

["Will I be able to breathe?"](#)



3.21

Poseidon picks up the reins and grins. “Leave the details to me.”

Suddenly, the chariot lifts high into the sky, like a rocket launching into outer space. You close your eyes against the wind rushing into your face. Your ears pop from the change in pressure as your hands search for something to hold onto. One hand grasps Poseidon’s arm, and your other finds the side of the chariot. You hear Poseidon roaring with laughter as the chariot spins one-hundred-and-eighty degrees before it plunges down again.

You want to ask, “What’s happening?” but you’re unable to breathe much less speak.

Your ears pop a second time as the chariot continues to plunge. In another instant, water splashes your face and hair. You open your eyes to see the chariot slowing on the surface of an ocean that, though turbulent, begins to settle until it is as smooth as glass.

Poseidon’s trident appears in his hand. “Before we go below, I have a special treat for you.”

A pod of dolphins springs from the water and surrounds the chariot, their eyes on you, as they click their greetings.

“Hello,” you say. Then to Poseidon, you say, “What a wonderful treat. Thank you for giving me the chance to see the dolphins up close.”

Poseidon throws back his head and laughs. “I appreciate your gratitude and humility, but my gift is better still. Would you care to ride on a dolphin’s back across the Aegean Sea?”

“Would I!” you shout with glee. “Yes! Thank you very much! What? Do I dive in?”

“No, thanks,” you say. “I’d rather ride in the chariot.”



3.22

Poseidon laughs again, and you're struck by his beauty. "Yes, dear mortal. Dive into the water."

You dive into the cold water among the dolphins, more excited than you've been in ages. As you tread water, your teeth chattering from the cold, you ask, "Is th-there a p-p-articular d-d-dolphin I sh-should r-ride?"

"Arion there will take you. He's named for one of my sons."

The dolphin dips his head to you in greeting.

Excited, thrilled, and overjoyed, you place your hands on the dolphin's back. His skin is slick and rubbery and hard to grasp.

"Hold onto his dorsal fin," Poseidon says, moving closer. "I'll wrap a golden net around you and Arion's body. The net will keep you attached so you won't slip. It'll also allow you to stay underwater for long periods of time and protect you from the cold." He raises his trident, and a net, like a fisherman's net but golden, encircles you and Arion.

The warmth instantly soothes you, and a low moan escapes your lips. The relief from the chilling cold allows your muscles to relax, and you can take in larger breaths and enjoy the feeling of sitting on the dolphin's back. You embrace him, circling your legs around him, and kissing his wet rubbery skin, as you say to Arion, "Thank you in advance. This is one of the most amazing moments of my life."

Several other dolphins swim up to you and rub their bodies affectionately against your legs. You extend your fingers through the openings in the net and stroke them. They click sounds of affection, and in reply, you say, "This is heaven."

"Are you ready?" Poseidon asks.

You're scared and excited all at once. The golden net is surprisingly light and flexible as you lift your head from the dolphin's back to face Poseidon. "Yes, sir."

He raises his trident. "To my palace!"

With that, Arion and the company of dolphins spring into the air and dive down into the water with Poseidon in the lead. You see him swimming like a dolphin in front of you, his hair and beard flowing from his head and his green sarong flowing from his waist. His leather sandals extend from his feet like flippers.

Beside him, the three mares, Seaquake, Crest, and Riptide, seem to be racing against him as they pull the chariot just below the surface of the water.

Below you, the ocean world comes into view. Your eyesight, it seems, is improved by the golden net. Fingers of purple, blue, and gold wave to you from the bottom of the sea, and fish of many shapes, colors, and sizes dart this way and that, some in large schools, and others, like the huge groupers suspended near the bottom, alone. Occasionally, you see a barracuda or a shark, but most of the sea life is nonthreatening. Sea anemones and coral decorate the ocean floor where the sunbeams barely reach. You can just make out a cluster of starfish. Then you see jellyfish! And there, a manatee! The most curious are the tiny sea horses and their curly tails.

As Arion swims closer to the ocean floor, you see other forms of marine life burrowing in the sand and rocks. Sting rays there! Hermit crabs! A lobster! And over there, eels!

Arion dodges a rock formation full of shadows and glides over another city of coral. Then he turns sideways as you pass through a rocky tunnel in a matter of seconds. Past the tunnel is a deep drop in the ocean floor—so deep that you can see nothing beyond the darkness.

Into the darkness you plunge.

Although the golden net keeps you warm, you can feel a change in temperature as Arion swims deeper and deeper into the darkness. You cling to his dorsal fin, wondering for the first time if Poseidon plans to ever bring you back to land and the light of day. What if he plans to keep you, like a pet, forever?

A shudder works its way down your spine, and you press your cheek against Arion's back.

Then, as Arion slows, along with Poseidon, the chariot, and the rest of the dolphin pod, a new vision presents itself to you. Bright golden lights rise from the bottom of the ocean, illuminating an amazing transparent structure, reminding you of an aquarium. Its walls seem to be formed from clear crystals. This must be Poseidon's castle, you realize. As Arion takes you closer to it, you can see many figures inside—merfolk with tails and other, more human-like, people sitting among the furniture, eating at tables on golden chairs, and lounging on beds clustered in curtains of seaweed growing up from the ocean floor. At the back of the palace, the walls are no longer transparent, as they are made of something like shell—perhaps mother-of-pearl, you think.

“Are you ready to see my palace?” Poseidon asks you.

“Yes!” you say, climbing from Arion’s back. To the dolphin, you say, “Thank you so much. That was awesome!”

“Um, okay,” you say, worried about becoming his prisoner. You climb from Arion’s back and say, “Thank you, Arion. That was amazing.”



3.23

“Hold on, then,” Poseidon says. “I’ll wrap a golden net around you before we go under. It’ll also allow you to stay underwater for long periods of time and protect you from the cold.” He raises his trident, and a net, like a fisherman’s net but golden, encircles you.

The warmth instantly soothes you, and a low moan escapes your lips. The relief from the chilling cold allows your muscles to relax, and you can take in larger breaths.

“Are you ready?” Poseidon asks.

You’re scared and excited all at once. The golden net is surprisingly light and flexible. “Yes, sir.”

He raises his trident. “To my palace!”

With that, the chariot and the company of dolphins spring into the air and dive down into the water. You see Poseidon sitting beside you, his hair and beard flowing from his head like golden seaweed.

In front of you, Seaquake, Crest, and Riptide, seem to be racing against the dolphins as the mares pull the chariot just below the surface of the water.

Below you, the ocean world comes into view. Your eyesight, it seems, is improved by the golden net. Fingers of purple, blue, and gold wave to you from the bottom of the sea, and fish of many shapes, colors, and sizes dart this way and that, some in large schools, and others, like the huge groupers suspended near the bottom, alone. Occasionally, you see a barracuda or a shark, but most of the sea life is nonthreatening. Sea anemones and coral decorate the ocean floor where the sunbeams barely reach. You can just make out a cluster of starfish. Then you see jellyfish! And there, a manatee! The most curious are the tiny sea horses and their curly tails.

As the chariot descends deeper into the ocean, you see other forms of marine life burrowing in the sand and rocks. Sting rays there! Hermit crabs! A lobster! And over there, eels!

The chariot dodges a rock formation full of shadows and glides over another city of coral. Then it turns sideways as you pass through a rocky tunnel in a matter of seconds. Past the tunnel is a deep drop in the ocean floor—so deep that you can see nothing beyond the darkness.

Into the darkness you plunge.

Although the golden net keeps you warm, you can feel a change in temperature as you descend deeper and deeper into the darkness. You cling to the edge of the chariot, wondering for the first time if Poseidon plans to ever bring you back to land and the light of day. What if he plans to keep you, like a pet, forever?

A shudder works its way down your spine.

Then, as the chariot slows, along with the dolphin pod, a new vision presents itself to you. Bright golden lights rise from the bottom of the ocean, illuminating an amazing transparent structure, reminding you of an aquarium. Its walls seem to be formed from clear crystals. This must be Poseidon's castle, you realize. You can see many figures inside—merfolk with tails and other, more human-like, people sitting among the furniture, eating at tables on golden chairs, and lounging on beds clustered in curtains of seaweed growing up from the ocean floor. At the back of the palace, the walls are no longer transparent, as they are made of something like shell—perhaps mother-of-pearl, you think.

“Are you ready to go inside my palace?” Poseidon asks.

“Let's go!”

“Um, okay,” you say, still worried he may keep you as a prisoner.



3.24

You reach the castle as the doors open, and a trio of merfolk greet your party and unbridle the horses from the chariot.

One of the merfolk gives you a boulder the size of a watermelon to carry, so you don't float away. Then Poseidon curls his finger toward himself, beckoning you to follow him.

Half walking, half kicking, you make your way along the ocean floor through a series of corridors until you reach what appears to be a throne room. You are surprised to see other gods present.

Poseidon takes you by your arm—because you move at mere human speed and are rather slow with the boulder—and leads you to a double throne where a goddess is already seated.

The goddess wears a crown of shells that sets off the deep sea-green of her eyes. She smiles at you as Poseidon says, “This is my wife, Amphitrite.”

“It's a pleasure to meet you,” Amphitrite says, and before you can reply (which you aren't sure you are capable of doing underwater), she waves her hand to the three other gods sitting nearby, with boulders in their laps, and says, “Please say hello to my friends, Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty; Hephaestus, the god of the forge; and Hermes, the god of...” she turns to Hermes. “What are you the god of, besides serving as your father's messenger? I can never recall.”

Hermes laughs and shakes his head, as his dark brown curls sweep in the water around his face. “I serve as my father's messenger because I'm the fastest god alive.” Then Hermes adds, “But I'm the god of communication, travel, commerce, theft, and trickery. It's because I do so many things, my dear Amphitrite, that you forget, I do believe.”

“Yes, of course,” Amphitrite says.

At that moment, everyone gasps, and as you look around to find the source of their surprise, you feel a pain deep in your chest—for only a moment.

Then Poseidon looks down at you and says, “Oh, dear. That blasted Cupid!”

“He’s only doing his job,” Aphrodite insists. “That Fates control these things.”

“And he has no discretion whatsoever?” Poseidon asks. “Is that what you’re insinuating?”

“He has some,” she admits.

“I can’t imagine why the Fates would destine a mortal to fall in love with one of us,” Amphitrite says.

“It’s a shame,” Hermes adds, “to pine away for one you cannot have.”

“Unless we help the mortal,” Hephaestus suggests. “Perhaps an arrow of hate would neutralize...”

“It’s too risky,” Aphrodite says. “It’s bad enough when people don’t believe in us; their hate would weaken us exponentially.”

“Then perhaps there’s another way,” Hephaestus says.

Poseidon lifts his brows with surprise as he turns to the god of the forge. “You can’t mean apotheosis.”

Hermes laughs. “We can’t expect my father to change just any ol’ mortal into a deity.”

“Only those mortals we condemn to misery otherwise,” Hephaestus argues.

Aphrodite smiles at the god of the forge. “He makes a good point.”

Suddenly, another goddess appears among the others. She has long dark hair and stunning gray eyes and wears a full set of armor, even more elaborate than the breast plate and knee guards on Poseidon.

“Athena!” Poseidon cries. “What are you doing here, in my palace, uninvited. If you’ve been spying for Zeus...”

“I saw what happened,” Athena says with a frown. “And I propose that we design a set of challenges to determine whether the mortal is worthy to become one of us.”

“Hear, hear!” Aphrodite shouts.

“What do you have in mind?” Amphitrite asks the gray-eyed goddess.

“Now, hold on...” Poseidon says but his objections are ignored.

“Three tasks,” Athena says. “I will even loan the mortal my sword and shield.”

Athena unbuckles her weapon and straps it to your waist. Then she unstraps her shield from her back and secures it onto yours.

You blink. “Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me yet,” she says. “Let’s wait and see if you survive.”

Your throat tightens.

“I’m beginning to like this idea,” Poseidon says.

“Let’s begin with one challenge,” Athena continues. “If we see it successfully completed, we can then declare the next challenge, and so on.”

“And what should this first challenge be?” Hephaestus asks.

Even underwater, you can see Athena’s gray eyes sparkle as she says, “I propose this: the mortal must go to the Underworld, pluck a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit, and return to Mount Olympus without eating the fruit.”

“I don’t particularly like pomegranates,” you say. “But how can I get to the Underworld and back?”

“The pomegranates from the Seers’ Pit will give anyone who eats it the gift of prophecy,” Hermes points out. “Your challenge is as much a test of your willpower as it is anything else.”

Poseidon adds, “The person to whom your heart has been bound will take you to the outskirts of the gates of the Underworld and wait for you there, but you must enter alone. If you’re successful, that person will deliver you back here. Do you understand?”

Because you can’t imagine living without the object of your desire, and because you’ve never felt such a deep love before, you nod eagerly, despite your fear.

“Then tell us, mortal,” Aphrodite says. “Which among us has Cupid compelled you to love?”

You look around the room until your eyes fall on the one you feel you could never live without. Then you say

“Poseidon.”

“Amphitrite.”

“You, Aphrodite.”

“Hermes.”

“Hephaestus.”



3.3

Hades smiles as he picks at his beard. You're surprised by the twinkle in his eyes.

"Hop in," the Lord of the Underworld says, and, before he can change his mind, you quickly slide into the seat behind the horses.

For the first time, you study the two black animals, which are patiently waiting for their master to take the reins.

As soon as Hades takes them into his hands, the chariot springs forward and up, at what seems to you like something you've seen on *Star Wars*, when Han Solo shifts the *Falcon Millennium* into hyper-speed. It's so fast, in fact, that you feel yourself lift off the seat and into the air.

You shriek with both fear and delight.

Hades grabs you by the arm and pulls you down onto the seat. "Hold on!"

You lean forward and grip the front of the chariot with both hands. Now that you have your wits about you and can look around at the earth below, you realize that you aren't nearly as high in the air as you expected. The terrain below is rocky and uneven, and, at times, you fear the chariot will strike the earth and fling you into the air, like a stone from a slingshot.

As though he can read your mind, the god beside you shouts (so that you can hear him over the sound of the air as you pass through it), "Don't worry. Swift and Sure know exactly what they're doing. They've been doing it for centuries."

"Swift and Sure?" you ask.

"My fine black stallions."

In that moment, the chariot seems to turn on a dime with a hard right that throws you against the Lord of the Underworld.

“Steady!” the god shouts as he helps to right you again.

“I’m sorry,” you say.

Hades laughs. “You better hold on more tightly. It’s about to get worse.”

You white-knuckle the front lip of the chariot just as it plunges toward a crevice between large boulders, the size of diesel trucks. The crevice itself seems impossibly small. You remind yourself that Swift and Sure can turn on a dime, and, certainly, as they approach the crevice, the stallions will draw you up again.

But no.

Into the crevice you plunge.

It’s dark. You can’t even see your hands fiercely gripping the chariot. The experience reminds you of the Space Mountain rollercoaster at Magic Kingdom, only this is much worse, because you cannot tell how close you are to the rocky sides of the chasm, nor can you trust this god beside you to care whether you live or die. Perhaps he lied when he said he there was nothing he despised more than murder. Perhaps this would be your death.

Regretting your decision to climb into the chariot, you pray to any god who will listen to please get you out of this. You’ve barely begun the prayer in your mind when another figure appears beside you, glowing as bright as the North Star and illuminating the cavern through which you are sailing at what seems like lightspeed.

The ability to see your surroundings has mixed consequences. On the one hand, you feel relief each time the chariot does not crash against the rocky sides of the cavern. On the other hand, the fear building inside of you just before the chariot swings safely away from each protruding rock makes you more anxious than you can ever recall feeling before.

Blonde hair brushes across your face as the person beside you takes your hand. “You have nothing to fear.”

Her voice is gentle and her brown eyes comforting when she smiles over at you. She’s wearing a simple white dress and a silver tiara trimmed with rubies. Earrings dangle from her lobes—more rubies.

“We’re nearly there,” she says.

“I had this under control, darling,” Hades says to her.

“Did you not hear this mortal’s desperate prayers?” she asked. “You’d make a fine Fury with the level of torture you seem to be administering to this poor soul.”

Hades turns to study you, but you wish he’d keep his eyes on the road—er, cavern—ahead.

“I thought we were having fun,” he says to you. “Are you not enjoying yourself?”

Not wishing to offend the god, you smile and nod. “Loads.”

“That was a little scary,” you admit.



3.31

Hades tugs on the reins, and the chariot comes to a sudden stop, which causes you to fly forward. If the goddess beside you hadn't been holding your hand, you would have landed on one of the stallions. But, tethered to the comforting goddess, you find your seat beside her, with only minor pain from your legs bumping against the chariot.

"Thanks," you say to her.

She gives you a nod and vanishes.

You turn to Hades. "Who was that?"

"My wife. The Queen of the Underworld."

"Persephone, right?"

"*Lady Persephone* to you."

Your heart skips a beat, and you apologize.

Hades laughs and shakes his head, but you aren't sure why.

Then you notice that a thick fog has surrounded the chariot and, though the horses are no longer flying or walking, the vessel is moving through a black river toward a huge black iron gate at the entrance to a cavern, and beside the gate is an enormous black dog with three heads.

"Cerberus," you mutter.

"Indeed. I'll introduce you."

The dog is much different from what you imagined. He's about six feet tall, black as night, with a sweeping dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall batlike ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and plenty of loose skin and wrinkles around the three necks. The eyes on the heads look red and unfriendly. As the chariot approaches him, you feel a lump in your throat, making it difficult to swallow.

You watch the god of the Underworld steer Swift and Sure to the bank, where the dog looms over you. Hades conjures a burlap sack from out of thin air and reaches inside, pulling out a square lump of cake.

"Are you hungry, boy?" Hades asks.

The long dragon tail swooshes back and forth, stirring the air and your hair along with it. Three tongues hang from three heads. They drip with saliva, some of which falls on your arm.

You're delighted when Hades throws the cake in the air and it's caught by the center head.

Hades then reaches into the bag and pulls out a stick, the size of a baseball bat. "Would you like to play fetch with Cerberus?"

"Can I? That would be freakin' amazing!"

"I'd rather watch you play with him, Lord Hades."



3.32

“Go get it, Cerberus!” you shout as you throw the stick in the air.

Cerberus leaps over the chariot and into the water, making waves that nearly topple you over the edge. When you regain your balance, you see the giant dog emerge with the stick held by the teeth of the center head. Cerberus returns to his post and drops the stick on the bank at his feet while his dragon tail wags, creating a wind tunnel that knocks you back against your seat.

“Well, done, boy,” Hades says. “You’ve earned yourself another treat.”

Hades reaches inside the bag and gives you three apples. “Toss each one up to him, so all three of his heads get a sweet treat.”

You lob each apple, one at a time, toward the giant dog, and each is aptly caught by a different head. Then Hades does something you do not expect. He steps from the chariot, carefully approaches the beast, and wraps his arms around the center neck.

“You’re a good boy,” Hades says. “Can you say hello to our guest?”

Cerberus turns all three of his heads toward you and trains all six of his eyes on you. Although they no longer look unfriendly, you’re still shaking with trepidation when the beast leans toward you and sniffs you with all three snouts.

“Hello, Cerberus,” you manage to say through a tight throat.

Cerberus whines.

“Yes,” Hades says. “This is a living mortal. Don’t act like you’ve never seen one before. We’re going in, so stand down. The mortal’s with me, okay?”

Cerberus whimpers as he returns to an upright position at his post, and Hades climbs back into the chariot beside you.

“Ready to see my kingdom?” he asks you.

“I can’t wait!”

“If I go in, can I still come out?” you ask.



3.33

“Go get it, boy!” Hades shouts as he throws the stick high in the air.

Cerberus leaps over the chariot and into the water, making waves that nearly topple you over the edge. When you regain your balance, you see the giant dog emerge with the stick held by the teeth of the center head. Cerberus returns to his post and drops the stick on the bank at his feet while his dragon tail wags, creating a wind tunnel that knocks you back against your seat.

“Well, done, boy,” Hades says. “You’ve earned yourself another treat.”

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Cerberus whimpers as he returns to an upright position at his post, and Hades climbs back into the chariot beside you.

“Ready to see my kingdom?” he asks you.

“Yes, sir!”

“If I go in, can I come back out?”



3.34

The enormous gate groans as it opens wide enough for Hades to drive his chariot through. Then it closes abruptly behind you, sending a wave of water over the back of the chariot and drenching you. When you turn to Hades, you see that the water soon evaporates from his body, leaving him dry. You, however, remain soaked.

Hades says, “To the right is the River Styx. It leads to Tartarus, where we punish evildoers. To the left is the Lethe, and it leads to the Elysian Fields, where the good souls dwell. And that room up ahead is called the House of Judgment.”

A river of flames illuminates the interior of the House of Judgment, where three figures in white robes float above the water. They do not greet Hades, nor does Hades greet them.

The horses drag the chariot from the water and onto the bank, alongside the river of fire, until they enter a kind of barn filled with hay. A goddess appears—not Persephone—to unbridle the stallions. Her hair, falling past her shoulders, is black with streaks of white. Her dark eyes seem friendly and her face as beautiful as any you’ve seen.

“Thank you, Hecate,” Hades says.

“My pleasure, my lord,” the goddess replies.

Hades turns to you. “Hecate is the goddess of witchcraft and the crossroads. My kingdom would not be nearly as efficient or fortified without her.”

“Thank you, my lord,” Hecate says.

Hades climbs from the chariot and turns to you again. “If you want the full tour, it’s best to go by raft—or skiff, rather. My kingdom is vast, and Charon’s skiff can maneuver us through it quickly. Follow me.”

You climb from the chariot and wave goodbye to the goddess and the stallions before following Hades back toward the House of Judgment along the river of flames to where it meets another river.

No sooner do you arrive than an old man in a tattered red robe appears on a small boat. In his wrinkled old hands, he holds a long slender pole.

“I want to give this mortal a tour, Charon,” Hades says. “And I want you to help me.”

Charon gives a slight bow.

“Climb aboard,” Hades says to you.

“Thank you, Lord Hades! Thank you, Charon!”

“He’s not very talkative,” you say of Charon, as you climb aboard.



3.35

“That depends on you,” Hades says with a mischievous grin.

The enormous gate groans as it opens wide enough for Hades to drive his chariot through. Then it closes abruptly behind you, sending a wave of water over the back of the chariot and drenching you. When you turn to Hades, you see that the water soon evaporates from his body, leaving him dry. You, however, remain soaked.

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Charon gives a slight bow.

“Climb aboard,” Hades says to you.

“Thank you, Lord Hades! Thank you, Charon!”

“He’s not very talkative,” you say of Charon, as you climb aboard.



3.36

Charon gives you an unfriendly glare and says nothing.

With no place to sit, you stand, wondering how you'll maintain your balance as the boat quickly moves forward. Noticing your dilemma, Hades grabs you by the shoulder and steadies you. Better than a safety harness, the god's grip on you keeps you in place as the skiff turns this way and that before slowing near the edge of a deep canyon.

"Erebus," Hades says. "Victims of terrible crimes are sent here to lie in the waters of the Lethe—the river of forgetfulness—to forget the heinous crimes that tortured them in life. Mostly abused children and women, victims of suicide, and prisoners of war, once healed, they proceed to the Elysian Fields."

The skiff shoots forward, and you emit a soft cry of surprise. Almost instantly, the boat stops again.

"The Fields of Elysium," Hades says, pointing to your left.

The fields are vast and amazing, covered in beautiful flowers of white, pink, and purple. Trees and something like sunshine, but more of a purplish-pink veil of light, adds beauty to all it touches. The Lethe River meets its banks, and spreads in small streams marbling through the fields.

You see hundreds of souls all doing different things. Some read or slumber under trees, others dance or swam or dine at huge tables covered with massive amounts of food. Others play sports like golf and tennis. A few children fly kites.

"What you see are illusions for the dead," Hades says. "They now live in eternal comfort and ignorant bliss, having forgotten everything about their former life."

"Everything?" you ask.

“Indeed.” Hades points to your right. “We’ve passed my palace, but that building is where Thanatos lives. His brother, Hypnos, lives further down.”

The skiff plunges forward again, this time sailing at what seems close to lightning speed before stopping near an old wooden door.

“The Fates,” Hades says. “It’s best to never disturb them.”

Before you can ask why, the skiff makes a few quick turns before you’re surrounded by beautiful flowers. You yawn, feeling as though you could use a good nap.

“The Fields of Asphodel,” Hades says. “This is the entrance to the Dream World, and those are the gates of ivory and the gates of horn.”

The skiff plunges forward again, sailing left and right, before slowing once more along the river of flames.

“The Titan Pit,” Hades says. “The prison of our enemies. And up ahead, to your left, you will see Tartarus, in all its glory.”

The skiff sails forward and slows in time for you to hear the wails and moans of many unseen people. But you do see someone—though he’s not a solid form at all, and you can see right through him. He’s pushing a huge rock up a hill. Past that hill, you see tables with other transparent people strapped to them and crying out. Atop one of these is a woman with blood dripping from her eyes and golden snakes on her head. A falcon perches on her shoulder, and, just as you pass, you flinch when her falcon plucks the eye from the form strapped to the table.

“The evildoers are receiving their just desserts,” Hades explains as the skiff continues forward. “Oh, and we just passed the home of the Furies, my three beautiful daughters, who administer the just desserts I just mentioned.”

You shiver as the boat plunges forward.

“We’ll get off here, Charon,” Hades says just before the skiff comes to a stop.

You try to make eye contact with Charon, to give him a smile of thanks, but he does not return your gaze as you follow Hades from the boat. You’ve barely stepped off before it darts away, out of sight.

“Behind you is the Seers’ Pit,” Hades says. “It’s the only place in my kingdom where the Phlegethon—the river of fire—doesn’t flow.” He continues forward along the rocky embankment before stopping in front of a majestic castle. “And this is my palace. Won’t you come in?”

He leads you through the thick door into what appears to be a throne room, where you see Persephone already seated. Across from her are three other gods—one you recognize as the goddess who unbridled the horses.

“Shall I leave?” one of the gods—young-looking, dark-haired, with striking blue eyes, asks Hades.

“In a moment, Thanatos,” Hades replies. “I want to introduce you to the mortal first.”

Your mouth drops open as you realize you are looking at the god of death.

“You’ve met Persephone and Hecate,” Hades says to you. “These are my sons: Thanatos, the god of death, and his brother Hypnos, the god of sleep.”

You stifle a yawn, and your knees almost buckle beneath you.

“Steady,” Hades says.

At that moment, the other gods gasp. You look around, puzzled. Then you feel a sharp pain in your chest—only for a moment.

Then Hades says, “This is unfortunate.”

“Why would you do such a thing, Cupid?” Hecate asks, as a golden-haired god appears from around a corner.

Without comment, the young god vanishes.

“We can’t allow our guest to suffer a lifetime of pining away for one of us,” Persephone says. “Can we ask Eris to come with her arrows of hate? Wouldn’t that neutralize...”

“We’d risk making the mortal hate one of us,” Hecate says. “When a mortal hates a god, that god’s power is weakened. It’s slight, but if that mortal rallies others to feel the same...”

“Yes,” Hades says. “We can’t take a chance on Eris’s arrows.”

“We should grant immortality to the poor soul,” Persephone says. “At least then the mortal could remain close by and take some pleasure in daily interactions.”

“I doubt Zeus would be happy with an arbitrary mortal becoming one of us,” Hades says.

Now your knees do buckle, and you fall to the ground, gasping for air.

“I’ll go,” Thanatos says. He vanishes.

You yawn widely, uncontrollably.

“So will I,” Hypnos says. Then he disappears, too.

Another appears just as quickly in his place—a beautiful dark-haired goddess with stunning gray eyes. She wears a full set of armor, unlike Hades who wears only a breast plate and knee guards.

“Athena?” Hades asks. “What brings you here? And how did you get past my wards?”

“I was coming for another purpose,” she says, “but then I overheard what happened, and I’d like to propose a plan.”

“What is it?” Persephone asks, prompting the other goddess to continue.

“I propose that we design a set of challenges to determine whether the mortal is worthy to become one of us.”

“Good idea,” Hecate says. “I second her motion.”

“What do you have in mind?” Hades asks the gray-eyed goddess.

“Three tasks,” Athena says. “I will even loan the mortal my sword and shield.”

Athena unbuckles her weapon and straps it to your waist. Then she unstraps her shield from her back and secures it onto yours.

You blink. “Thank you.”

“Don’t thank me yet,” she says. “Let’s wait and see if you survive.”

Your heart seems to skip a beat.

“I’m not sure I like this idea,” Persephone says.

“Let’s begin with one challenge,” Athena continues. “If we see it successfully completed, we can then declare the next challenge, and so on.”

“And what should this first challenge consist of?” Hecate asks.

“I propose this,” Athena says. “The mortal must go to the Seers’ Pit, pluck a pomegranate, and deliver it, uneaten, to Mount Olympus.”

Persephone nods. “I see. We will test the mortal’s willpower.”

“I like it,” Hades says.

“I don’t particularly like pomegranates,” you say. “But how can I get to Mount Olympus from here?”

“The pomegranates from the Seers’ Pit will give anyone who eats it the gift of prophecy,” Hecate points out. “Your challenge is as much a test of your willpower as it is anything else.”

Hades adds, “The person to whom your heart has been bound will deliver you to Mount Olympus if you can avoid eating the fruit. Do you understand?”

You nod.

“Tell us, mortal,” Persephone says. “To whom has Cupid bound your heart?”

“Hades.”

“You, Lady Persephone.”

“Hecate.”

“Hypnos.”

“Thanatos.”



3.4

The smile on the god's face vanishes, and you quickly regret not accepting his invitation.

Before you can give a different answer, Zeus narrows his eyes at you. "How dare you?"

His face becomes red, and the veins in his neck protrude as he lifts his hand in the air. A streak of lightning flashes from his hand, and in the next instant, you writhe in pain for only a second before you fall to the ground, dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



3.5

Poseidon's face turns as white as the horses that are standing beside him. He lifts his hand in the air, and you realize you've offended him.

"I'm sorry!" you cry just as he raises his trident and points it at you.

"I don't have time for idiots!" he shouts.

Rays of light shoot from the three prongs of the trident and sting your chest. You fall to the ground, paralyzed and unable to breathe. You gasp and gasp, but no air comes.

Poseidon climbs into his chariot and rides away as you continue to gape, like a fish out of water. Then someone else is at your side—a dark-haired goddess with stunning gray eyes. She wears a full set of armor, and the light glints from it and into your face.

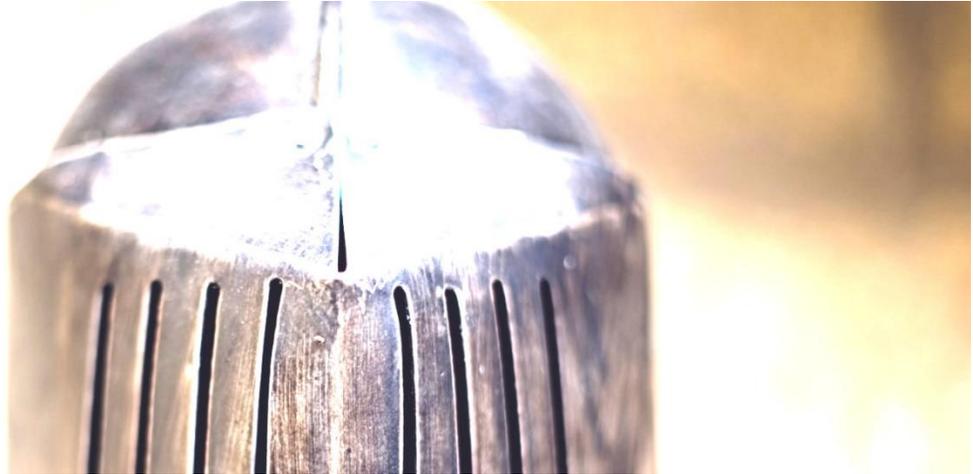
She scoops you into her arms just as you lose consciousness.

Later, you know not how long after, you awaken in a hospital. The doctor beside you smiles down at you and explains that you've suffered a stroke. You've lost the use of your left side, but, in time, with physical therapy, you may fully recover.

You lie there wondering if the stroke came before or after you saw the god. Had it all been a dream, the consequence of a traumatic physiological event?

You suppose you will never know. (Game Over.)





3.6

The Lord of the Underworld raises his brows. “I suppose you’re afraid—no doubt poisoned by lies about me, handed down from one generation to another over the centuries. Well, perhaps you’d prefer to accompany one whose reputation is less repulsive to you.”

Before you can say a word in reply, Hades lifts out of thin air an object resembling the ancient headpiece of an armored knight, and, beneath it appears another god.

Without smiling, Hades says, “Allow me to introduce my prisoner,

[Demeter.](#)”

[Dionysus.](#)”



3.61

Demeter smiles at you in a way that is worrisome, as though she means to use you for some end.

Hades grins. “I hereby release you, dear Mother-in-law. Do what you will with the mortal.”

“How many times have I told you not to call me that?” Demeter hisses. “I’m no mother to you.”

“And I never grow tired of your endless charm,” Hades says as he jumps into his chariot. “*Au revoir!*”

He and his chariot vanish, leaving you alone with the sullen goddess.

Her hair, braided and wrapped on her head like a crown, reminds you of the color of corn. Her eyes are as brown as soil, and her cheeks have the reddish hue of turnips.

“I know exactly what to do with you,” she says—though, if she intends to reassure you, she fails. “Come with me.” She takes ahold of your hand.

You close your eyes against the blinding light that comes from out of nowhere. You can barely breathe as something seems to wrap itself around you—an invisible pressure from all directions. It stops as suddenly as it started, leaving you panting beside the goddess, and when you open your eyes, you’re in a completely different location from where you were seconds ago.

Tall evergreens draped with snow surround you on a steep hillside, where the snow has melted to reveal mud and rock beneath your feet. The air is crisp and cool, but not too cold, and yet you find it difficult to breathe.

“You’ll soon adjust to the higher altitude,” Demeter says as she heads uphill on foot. “Come along. I want to show you my winter cabin.”

“Awesome.”

“Okay.”



3.612

Once you pass through the copse of trees, you come upon a clearing, and at its center is a quaint log cabin with smoke billowing from the chimney.

“Come inside,” Demeter says. “I have a proposition for you.”

You follow her into a cozy but sparsely decorated room. You expected something more elaborate in the home of a goddess, yet the simplicity is welcoming.

“Have a seat.” Demeter points to a wooden rocking chair near the hearth.

Without a word, you do as you’re asked.

The goddess sits on a stool across from you. “Tell me, mortal, have you heard of me?”

[“Not really.”](#)

[“I’ve heard a little about you.”](#)

[“Yes. I know a lot about you.”](#)



3.613

“Do you know why I keep a winter cabin here near the base of Mount Kronos?”

“Mount Kronos?” you ask. “Are we in Greece?”

“Yes. Now answer my question before you ask more of your own. Do you know why I keep a winter cabin here?”

“No.”

“Yes.”



3.614

“For six months out of the year, I live with my daughter and the rest of my family on Mount Olympus, where the sun always shines. It’s the most beautiful place on earth.”

You wait for the goddess to continue, wondering where she’s going with her story and what it has to do with you.

“For the rest of the year, I live here, all alone, battling the utter loneliness in my heart while my beloved daughter, Persephone, lives with her foul husband in the dark and lonely depths of the most repugnant place on Earth.”

You’re not sure what to say to that, so you say nothing.

“Not long after my daughter married my brother Hades, I asked my dear friend Hecate if she would accompany Persephone during her time in the Underworld—I would go myself, but Hades and I, we can’t tolerate one another’s company. And Hecate agreed. So, you see, I’m not only without my beloved daughter, but I’m also without the person I most cherish after her.”

“I’m so sorry,” you say.

“Thank you,” Demeter leans forward and studies your face before adding, “I like the look of you, and I don’t think it was chance that brought us together. How you would feel about becoming my new companion?”

You’re flabbergasted. Why would a goddess wish to keep company with you, of all people?

“Thank you,” you say. “I’m honored. But I wonder what that would mean. Would I live here with you? Would I get to see my friends and family?”

“For six months out of the year, while I’m on Mount Olympus, you can do as you please,” she says. “But for the other six months, you must devote yourself to me and live here with me in my cabin.”

“But how can I earn a living if I have to quit my job every six months?” you wonder out loud.

Demeter laughs. “If you agree to be my companion, you’ll never want for anything as long as you live. You won’t need to earn a living. I’ll lavish you with riches beyond your imaginings.”

Although you like the sound of that, you wonder what will be expected of you in return. “And when I’m here with you, what would you have me do? How do you envision our time together?”

Demeter stands up from her stool and paces between you and the fireplace as she says, “Just the presence of another person is comforting to me. My depression keeps me indoors; however, perhaps, in time, with your help, that would change. I suppose, until that happens, we could spend our time reading, lounging around the fireplace. We could play cards. Do you like cards?”

You nod, though you aren’t sure that you like the same kind of card games as the goddess.

Perhaps sensing your hesitance, she adds, “While you’re here with me, you would feast on any food you desire, any beverage you prefer. I would give you other gifts, as well—whatever you wish.”

[“Like new clothes? And shoes?”](#)

[“Like a new car? Or a new house?”](#)



3.615

“All of that and much more,” she assures you. “But during your time with me, you mustn’t leave, for any reason.”

“What if one of my friends or family members gets really sick?” you say. “What if someone dies while I’m here?”

Demeter frowns. “You must be devoted to me above all else, while you’re here. Those are my terms.”

You understand that you will be a kind of prisoner for six months out of every year, and you wonder if all the riches in the world are worth the freedom you will sacrifice for half your lifetime. The months away from the goddess might be worth the sacrifice. You could share your gifts with others and live a life of luxury. You could drive the car of your dreams, live in a magnificent house, and travel the world. You might even own multiple cars and multiple houses!

But what kind of relationships could you have at home if you must leave every six months? What kind of spouse and parent would you be?

Demeter returns to her stool across from you and leans forward. “I also imagine that the two of us might grow more and more fond of one another as the years go by.” She gently smooths a strand of your hair from your eyes. “A chemistry already exists between us. Can you feel it?”

You aren’t sure what you feel, but you know what you must do.

[“Yes, Demeter. I would like to become your companion.”](#)

[“I’m sorry, but I don’t think I can live like that.”](#)



3.621

Demeter gives you a bright smile. She's so pleased, in fact, that she opens a bottle of champagne and pours you each a glass.

Lifting her glass in the air, she says, "A toast! To our newfound companionship! May we both find happiness and joy together for as long as you live!"

Although you remain nervous and skeptical during that first fall and winter, during which you wonder if you can tolerate the loss of your liberty, over the years you come to be pleased with your choice. Demeter makes it possible for you to give your relatives and friends lives of wealth, luxury, and adventure. You become famous for your generosity and lavish lifestyle. And Demeter becomes an agreeable partner over time. She enjoys pleasing you and is willing to take any form you desire. Sometimes she will transform you both into your favorite characters, and you have a blast acting out scenes from your favorite books and movies. Later, she agrees to leave the cabin on Mount Kronos for short periods and travel with you *incognito*. You even convince her to interact while in disguise with your friends and family, especially at times when you need to be with them. You grow old in comfort and style and are happy all the days of your life. When you die, it is without regret. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



3.622

Demeter frowns. Your heart begins to hammer in your chest as you realize you may have just made a fatal mistake. When you attempt to back-track, she lifts her palm to silence you. It is too late.

Not a second goes by when you find yourself outside, bound to a table, in the clearing beside Demeter's winter cabin. You pull with your arms and kick with your legs, but you cannot escape the ropes that bind you.

“What are you going to do to me?” you ask.

“You will soon know my pain,” she says without kindness. “Then, perhaps, you will become more compassionate toward others.”

“What do you mean?” you cry. “What pain?”

She holds a vial in one hand and pours a thick substance from it into her other. She smears it on your face. It smells sweet, like honey.

“What are you doing?” you ask again, but she ignores you as she continues to rub the sticky sweet substance all over your skin, including the areas beneath your clothes.

You begin to fear that she will unleash a mound of ants on you. Or maybe she plans to leave you there for the bears to maul.

“Please!” you cry. “I've changed my mind. I want to stay with you forever!”

She laughs a cruel, wicked laugh and continues to anoint you.

“What is that? Is it honey?” you ask.

“Ambrosia,” she says. “The food of the gods.”

Your throat closes and you can barely breathe. Will the goddess eat you herself?

Once you are covered from head to toe with ambrosia, the goddess makes the vial disappear from her hand and, in its place, appears a torch. The flames lick at the air and throw heat onto your body. As you stare at the torch with wide eyes, you realize what Demeter intends to do.

She’s going to set you on fire.

You wonder how long it will take for you to pass out once your flesh begins to burn. You hope and pray you’ll go quickly.

[“I beg you to have mercy on me!”](#)

[“I’ll do anything you want! Just stop!”](#)



3.631

Demeter holds the torch near your feet. You feel nothing at first, and then the pain stings your skin. Your legs kick and pull, but they cannot escape the torturous stinging and burning as the flames creep up your legs.

You scream. You scream again and again as the flames consume you. You remain alive until they reach your face, when, finally, you lose consciousness.

You are shocked and confused when, moments later, you open your eyes. The ropes have burned away, along with your flesh, but you remain alive. You sit up, feeling better than you've ever felt. Bewildered you look around for Demeter. She's there with her cruel smile. You look down at your body to find it glowing. When you climb from the table, you don't fall immediately to the ground. You linger in the air and land gently.

"What's happened to me?" you ask the goddess.

"I've made you immortal, like me," she says. "You will never die. But along with this gift, I curse you." She hurls spittle at your face, and although you attempt to duck from its path, it lands on your forehead. "I curse you to an eternal life of loneliness. May all you attempt to befriend shun you as you have shunned me."

Before you can respond, Demeter vanishes.

You eventually find your way back to your family and friends, but, in spite of your godly beauty, they are frightened of you and avoid you at all costs. The gods see you as a strange anomaly and refuse to acknowledge you. You can find no one on earth or among the gods who will befriend you. Even now, you are miserable and alone.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



3.62

Dionysus looks at you with a twinkle in his eyes, which both delights and worries you.

Hades leaps into his chariot. “I hereby release you, Dionysus. Consider your debt to me paid. As a sign of goodwill, I give you this mortal to do with as you please.”

[“No! I beg you! Don’t do this, Lord Hades!”](#)

[“Sounds promising.”](#)



3.661

Your words barely pass through your lips when Hades and his chariot vanish.

You stare blankly at the remaining god, who wears nothing more than a loincloth, his chiseled body glowing in the autumn sunshine. His golden hair is parted in the middle and fashioned, in the French style, into two thick braids at the back of his head.

He takes a few long strides and closes the distance between you. Inches away, he gazes down at you with amusement.

“Do you know who I am?” he asks.

“Dionysus,” you say, repeating what you heard the Lord of the Underworld say moments ago.

“That’s my name,” he says. “But who *am* I.”

You learned about the gods and goddesses in school, but there were so many, and you’re not sure if you remember correctly. The last thing you want to do is anger this god.

You are about to make your guess when the god clamps a hand on your shoulder. “Let’s make this interesting. If you can correctly say who I am, I will invite you to my party tonight.”

“And if I’m wrong?” you ask.

“Then you won’t get an invitation,” he says simply.

Although you’re somewhat relieved that the consequences of your failure won’t be worse, a part of you suspects that there’s more he’s not telling you.

“So, mortal,” he sneers. “Who am I?”

“The god of wine.”

“The god of thieves, tricksters, and travel.”



3.621

Dionysus claps you on the back and laughs. “Welcome to the party, my friend.”

You sigh with relief but then close your eyes to the blinding light that shines down on you. The feeling of being wrapped in plastic, like a pressure on you from all directions, makes you gasp and falter, but it lasts for only a second.

“Follow me,” the god beside you says before removing his hand from your shoulder.

You open your eyes to find yourself on a steep hillside surrounded by tall evergreens draped with snow. The snow on the ground melts beneath the setting sun, revealing mud and rock.

“Where are we?” you call out from behind as you scramble to catch up with the god.

“Mount Kithairon,” Dionysus replies.

“Wait, huh?” you wonder out loud. “Are we in Greece?”

“That we are, my friend.”

Your mouth drops open at the realization that you’ve traveled thousands of miles with the god in a matter of seconds.

As you struggle to keep up with Dionysus, you find it difficult to breathe. It must be the altitude, you think to yourself, just as you hear music drifting through the trees.

“What’s that?” you ask the god. “Do I hear music?”

“Right again, my friend. The party has already begun without us. Better pick up the pace.”

Dusk begins to fall when you reach a clearing full of at least a dozen dancing figures. Flutes are being played by three satyrs skipping around a bonfire. The other members of the group are women scantily clothed in animal skins. Some of them dance with their breasts exposed. Others have only a thin strap between their buttocks. Their hair is long and matted, as though they never brush it. Their skin glistens with sweat, even though you feel chilly in the evening air. And their eyes are wild. A few of them notice you and seem to ravage you with their eyes.

“Welcome to my life,” the god beside you says, “where the party never dies.”

“Awesome!”

“Sounds a bit monotonous.”



3.666

“My step-mother doesn’t want me on Mount Olympus with the rest of my family,” he says. “If a god can’t rule alongside the other gods, what else is there?”

Along with the sound of flutes, a drumbeat now echoes over the mountainside. A golden goblet appears in the hand of your host.

After taking a drink, he hands the goblet to you.

You look at the red liquid with caution, hoping you aren’t expected to drink blood. “What is it?”

Dionysus rolls his eyes. “Must you ask?”

You sniff it. It’s wine. *Of course*, it’s wine. You put the goblet to your lips and drink.

No sooner does the wine travel down your throat than you feel overtaken by euphoria. A smile cracks your face in half as you lift your brows with surprise. Dionysus is clearly amused as he throws back his head and roars with laughter.

“Come along, my new friend!” he says. “Let’s dance!”

You follow him into the throng of wild bodies shaking and turning and twisting. You close your eyes and allow yourself to be bumped, caressed, kissed, licked. The next thing you know, *you* are kissing, caressing, pinching, and licking, just like the others in the crowd.

When you hear cracking bones and ripping flesh, you open your eyes. One of the women has broken the neck of a jackrabbit and another has pulled off a leg to eat it raw. You know you should be abhorred, but the look of the raw flesh and the smell of the blood are surprisingly appetizing, and you suddenly feel hungrier than you’ve ever felt in your life.

Along with the wild throng, you grab for your bit of fresh meat, but the others are stronger, and you come up empty-handed. Dionysus is there beside you with a hunk of meat that looks as though it came from a deer. You take it eagerly and bite into the warm flesh, not minding the bits of fur that brush your lips. It's the most delicious meat you've ever tasted, especially when you wash it down with a goblet of wine offered to you by your new favorite host.

The dancing and the caressing, the pinching and the ripping, the eating and the drinking continue throughout the night. It's dawn before you begin to grow weary, and, when you do, you lie on the ground along with the others, your flesh against their flesh, and fall soundly to sleep.

When you awake, you find yourself flanked by a satyr on your left and a woman on your right. You sit up and look around at the others, sleeping wherever they fell. The god, Dionysus, is nowhere to be seen, and, for the first time since you tasted his wine, you are afraid.

Your head aches, and there's a repugnant taste in your mouth. You'd give anything for another drink of wine. As you stand and look around the mountainside, you are surprised to find that dusk is already falling. You have slept through the day.

As you walk around, trying to piece together your actions of the night before, others begin to stir. A satyr picks up his flute and begins to play a tune, and, soon, another follows. More of the sleepers awaken and begin piling new wood on top of the ashes from the previous night's bonfire. Soon the drummers drum along with the flutes, and the fire leaps over the pile of wood. Dionysus appears with his goblet of wine and passes it to the members of the crowd. You can hardly wait for your turn. You can't wait for the ecstasy of the night before to consume you once again.

Not long after you've finally had your drink, you are dancing in the throng, swinging your hips, waving your arms, shaking your head to the drums. Soon someone kisses you. With your eyes closed, you return the kiss and pull your lips away only to drink more wine.

Sometime later, you awake again among the others, just as dusk begins to fall. Your only thought is of the wine you cannot wait to drink and of the raw flesh you cannot wait to eat. Just thinking of it stirs you to your feet, and you begin searching for wood to pile upon the ashes of the previous night's bonfire. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



3.622

Dionysus clicks his tongue with disappointment.

“That would be Hermes,” he says as he claps a hand on your shoulder.

A blinding light shoots down on you, forcing your eyes closed. Then a pressure from all directions presses upon you, almost as though you’re being wrapped in a sheet of plastic. It lasts only a moment, and, when it’s over, you open your eyes to find yourself on a hillside surrounded by evergreens draped in snow. It’s cold, but not freezing as the setting sun melts the snow at your feet.

“Where are we?” you ask.

Dionysus removes his hand from your shoulder. “Mount Kithairon. The most wonderful place on earth. I’m taking you to my party.”

“But I thought you said that I wouldn’t get an invitation if I was wrong about who you are,” you say.

He points a finger at you. “Right you are, my friend. You aren’t attending as a guest.”

Just then, you feel something crawl from the ground and wrap tightly around your ankles. You look down to see vines climbing up your body. You grunt and claw at them, but they climb higher still, twisting around your hips, your torso, and your shoulders, creating a cocoon of stems and leaves from your neck to your feet.

“What’s happening to me?” you ask as the god smiles at you with amusement.

He looks up into the darkening sky. “We’re late. Let’s go.”

The vines tug at your legs until you drop to the ground.

“Please, stop! I’ll do anything you say!”

“You cruel bastard! Let me out of here!”



3.677

The god ignores you as the wild vines drag you up the hill. Your head nods uncontrollably, sometimes hitting the rocky ground, but your screams and shouts do nothing to stop the terrifying ascent.

As you clear the copse of trees and reach a clearing, you hear music and the crackling of a fire. You squirm around on the ground in your vine prison, trying to get a better look at the scene around you. At least a dozen figures are there dancing.

Three satyrs play flutes as they skip around a bonfire. Women scantily clad in animal skins dance frenetically about. Their hair is long and matted, as if it has never been brushed. Their skin glistens with sweat, even though you are quite cold. In fact, as much as the women are exposed—some are bare-breasted, and others wear nothing but a thin strap of leather between their buttocks—you wonder why they aren't warming themselves near the fire.

A golden goblet appears in the hand of Dionysus just as a drumbeat begins to accompany the flutes. He takes a drink and then passes it around the crowd. You watch on with dismay as they become wild with lust, kissing and groping one another in a frenzied orgy. Then you see one of the women run in from the edge of the woods holding a jackrabbit by the ears. The rabbit writhes with terror as hands reach out and rip its limbs away from its body. You gasp as the women eat the raw flesh, dripping with blood. Once the rabbit is consumed the women look around the edge of the woods, skipping and swaying their arms to the music, their eyes wild with hunger and expectation. One of them notices you at the feet of Dionysus and scrambles toward you, falling to her knees. She rips at the vines, and you become hopeful that you will be saved. Another joins her, and another, and they tug and pull the leaves and stems away.

But an unearthly horror seizes you when they do not stop with the vines. They grab at your fingers, ripping them from your hands. You scream and struggle against them as another woman rips off your toe. Soon a satyr is there helping the women to ravage you, and he pulls off one of your arms. You see him take a bite of your flesh, and your own blood drips from his lips onto your face.

You open your mouth wide and emit one last throat-burning scream before your mind finally yields to the darkness. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



PART TWO: THE FIRST CHALLENGE

4.1

Zeus glances nervously at Hera before saying to you, “You do understand that I’m married, of course?”

You nod. “I can’t help how I feel.”

Hera narrows her eyes at you. “I’ll be watching you, mortal.”

“We’d better get started,” Zeus says.

You sense everyone watching as you follow Zeus from the temple.

Once you are alone in the gold-paved courtyard, Zeus takes your hand. “Don’t worry, darling one. I’m the king of the Olympians, and I do as I please.” He cups your cheek. “And you please me.”

You sigh with happiness as he leads you to his chariot, where he takes the reins and shouts, “To the Underworld!”

As the horses draw the chariot from the gates of Mount Olympus, you enjoy the beautiful views. The sea below shimmers like diamonds, and the snow-capped mountains in the distance add a majestic relief to the breathtaking blue of the sky.

“You’ll want to hold on tight for this part of our journey,” Zeus warns.

You dare to take hold of Zeus’s arm with one hand and the side of the chariot with the other as the chariot plummets toward the rocky land below. Then the chariot turns sideways, like an airplane, and your body is thrown against the god as the horses enter a narrow chasm.

You don't mean to scream, but you do, when you're suddenly in total darkness in what feels like a free fall.

"Don't be frightened," Zeus says. "We're nearly there."

The chariot turns and twists, but you can see nothing. You bury your face into the chest of the god and hold your breath until the chariot comes to a stop.

When you lift your head, you find yourself in a cavernous place surrounded by a veil of fog. A black river flows in front of you, but you can't see beyond it.

"Where are we?" you ask.

"Near the entrance to the Underworld," Zeus says. "I have a plan to help you succeed, but I need you to listen carefully."

["I'll try my best."](#)

["I'm already scared."](#)

["You can count on me."](#)



4.111

“The gates are guarded by a ferocious three-headed dog named Cerberus.”

You’ve heard of him, so you aren’t surprised.

Zeus continues. “I can distract Cerberus with a lightning show while you slip through the gates. You can try sneaking in along the riverbank. Or, you can wait in the river for Charon’s ferry, and when it stops to board the dead, you can grab hold of the back of the boat and get through that way.”

“Which do you think is more dangerous?” you ask.

“Both are risky. If you go on foot, Cerberus may spot you and swallow you before you have a chance to get away.”

Your heart seems to skip a beat. “And if I go by river?”

“If Charon catches you hanging onto his boat, he could drown you by holding you under.”

“Couldn’t you command one of them to let me in?” you ask. “You’re the king, after all.”

“But Hades rules this realm,” Zeus says. “I’d like to keep him as an ally.”

You’ve heard of Hades, the lord of darkness. As frightened as you are of death, the arrow in your heart makes you prefer it to a life without your one true love.

“So, which will it be, darling mortal?” Zeus asks. “On foot along the bank, or by river?”

[“On foot, along the bank.”](#)

"I'll wait in the river for the ferryman."



4.11

“Wait here with the chariot until you see the lightning show begin,” Zeus says. “Then follow the bank to the black iron gates. Whatever you do, keep right, to avoid The Lethe River.”

“Is there a particular reason why I should avoid it?”

“It’s the river of forgetfulness,” Zeus explains. “It will erase your memories, so you can feel the bliss of innocence again.”

“All of my memories?” you ask as your heart races.

“All.”

“Stay to the right,” you repeat to yourself.

“The Seers’ Pit is the first part of Tartarus. You can follow the River Styx until you come up to another iron gate. Then follow the descent into the darkest part of Hades.”

“How will I see, if it’s the darkest part?” you ask.

“That’s a good question.” Zeus opens his palm, where a bright rod the size of a wizard’s wand appears. “Here is a small piece of one of my lightning bolts. Keep it hidden in your clothes until you get past the second gate. At the bottom of the Seers’ Pit, you’ll find a single pomegranate tree. Pick the fruit, and then retrace your steps back here, to the chariot. Understand?”

You take the rod and stuff it under your shirt and beneath the belt holding Athena’s sword. “Got it.”

“One more thing, darling one,” Zeus says as he cups your face. “How about a kiss for good luck?”

It's the very thing you've been longing for. You close your eyes and enjoy the sensation of the god's lips brushing across yours. You moan with delight and feel more determined than ever to succeed.

"Thank you," you say. "I can't wait for more."

"Nor can I, darling one. Good luck."

Zeus flies away into the fog as you wait in the chariot. Within seconds, a shower of light, resembling fireworks, appears near the ceiling of the great cavern. As you run along the bank, you catch glimpses through the fog of the enormous black iron gate and the three-headed guardian beside it.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He's about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall batlike ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly.

Fortunately, he's standing on the bank opposite you, and all three heads are turned up to the ceiling.

At the gate, you push against the iron bars with all your strength. It groans as it gives in to your weight. Once it's open far enough for you to slip through, one of Cerberus's heads lunges at you and snaps its jaws, barely missing you as you run at your top speed toward what appears to be a river of fire.

You've barely made it far enough out of the creature's reach when a figure appears before you, halting you in your tracks.

"I am the unyielding Fury, Megaera," she says as her blonde hair becomes snakes that hiss. "Who are you?"

A falcon with red eyes sits on her shoulder looking about to strike.

[You dive into the River Styx and swim away.](#)

[You unsheathe Athena's sword with one hand and whip her shield around with the other.](#)

["Athena sent me," you explain, revealing Athena's scabbard and shield. "I'm to bring her back a pomegranate from the Seers' Pit without eating it."](#)



4.12

“Wait here with the chariot until you see the lightning show begin,” Zeus says. “Then jump into the river a few meters down and wait for the ferry to stop. Once the boat enters the gates, it will go to the House of Judgment. That’s when you’ll want to swim away. Whatever you do, keep right, to avoid The Lethe River.”

“Is there a particular reason why I should avoid it?”

“It’s the river of forgetfulness,” Zeus explains. “It will erase your memories, so you can feel the bliss of innocence again.”

“All of my memories?” you ask as your heart races.

“All.”

“Stay to the right,” you repeat to yourself.

“The Seers’ Pit is the first part of Tartarus. You can follow the River Styx until you come up to another iron gate. Then follow the descent into the darkest part of Hades.”

“How will I see, if it’s the darkest part?” you ask.

“That’s a good question.” Zeus opens his palm, where a bright rod the size of a wizard’s wand appears. “Here is a small piece of one of my lightning bolts. Keep it hidden in your clothes until you get past the second gate. At the bottom of the Seers’ Pit, you’ll find a single pomegranate tree. Pick the fruit, and then retrace your steps back here to the chariot. You can wait for the ferry to come back around, or you can make a swim for it.”

You take the rod and stuff it under your shirt and beneath the belt holding Athena’s sword. “Got it.”

“One more thing, darling one,” Zeus says as he cups your face. “How about a kiss for good luck?”

It’s the very thing you’ve been longing for. You close your eyes and enjoy the sensation of the god’s lips brushing across yours. You moan with delight and feel more determined than ever to succeed.

“Thank you,” you say. “I can’t wait for more.”

“Nor can I, darling one. Good luck.”

Zeus flies away into the fog as you wait in the chariot. Within seconds, a shower of light, resembling fireworks, appears near the ceiling of the great cavern. As you run along the bank, you catch glimpses through the fog of the enormous black iron gate and the three-headed guardian beside it.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He’s about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall batlike ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly.

Fortunately, he’s standing on the bank opposite you, and all three heads are turned up to the ceiling.

You climb into the cold river and tread water near the bank as you wait for the ferry. At least ten minutes pass before you hear the groan of the gates as they open. Seconds later, you see the boat driven by an old man holding a long, slender pole.

You hold your breath when the boat stops at the bank. Where no one was standing moments before, someone is. It’s a beautiful young god with dark wavy hair and bright blue eyes. Standing beside him is a trio of transparent people. You realize they are the souls of the dead.

Quietly, you swim to the back of the boat and grab onto the edge with both hands. The firework show has ended, probably so as to not arouse the curiosity of the ferryman and the beautiful god who now boards with the souls.

You are startled by how quickly the boat moves through the river, powered by some unseen force and not the slender pole of the ferryman.

In a matter of seconds, the boat stops at what you suspect is the House of Judgment--where Zeus said to take your leave. Before you let go of the boat, it jerks quickly to the left--the direction Zeus said to avoid.

You let go of the boat and swim as hard as you can in the opposite direction. It takes a moment to break the momentum caused by the ferry, but soon you are moving to the right. As soon as you see the bank, you swim to it and pull yourself out, panting and exhausted. As you stand, slumped over, on the edge of the river, trying to catch your breath, a figure appears beside you.

“I am the unyielding Fury, Megaera,” she says as her blonde hair becomes snakes that hiss. “Who are you?”

A falcon with red eyes sits on her shoulder looking about to strike.

You dive into the River Styx and swim away.

You unsheathe Athena’s sword with one hand and whip her shield out with the other.

“Athena sent me,” you explain, revealing Athena’s scabbard and shield. “I’m to bring her back a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit without eating it.”



4.13

In your mad race to get away from the snake-haired Fury, Megaera, you lose track of how far you've swam. You look around, trying to get your bearings, and realize you've passed the House of Judgment and the gates and have gone too far to the left.

But then, you wonder why that's a problem. The water seems less black and more inviting in this direction. You turn over on your back and allow the current to carry you wherever it will.

Sometime later, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes helps you from the river and flies you to the riverbank where you board a ferry driven by an old man. He pulls a long, slender pole through the water.

"Where are we going?" you ask the beautiful boy, though, you suppose it doesn't really matter.

"To the House of Judgment," he says.

"All right," you say with a smile. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.14

The unyielding Fury, Megaera, laughs at you. “Why should a mortal expect to have even the slightest chance against me? Do you *want* to die? Is that it?”

“No,” you say, as you fight to keep your hands from trembling. “I just want to be with the one I love. I’ll do whatever it takes, even if I have to die trying.”

“The one you love? Why would your love require you to draw your sword on *me*?”

You fill her in on what has happened since Zeus found you sleeping near the babbling brook.

“I see,” she says, when you’ve finished. “Then this wouldn’t be a proper challenge without a little bit of sparring.”

A sword appears in the Fury’s hand.

You brace yourself.

“Show me what you’ve got,” she says.

You have had very little experience with a sword. You swing it madly and desperately, and after a whirlwind of panic, you find the Fury’s blade at your neck and Athena’s sword at your feet.

“Please don’t kill me,” you say.

“Let’s just hope your willpower is better than your skills with a sword,” she says as she lets you go. “The Seers’ Pit is that way.”

You resheathe Athena’s sword and thank the Fury before continuing along the riverbank toward Tartarus.

The river of fire illuminates the path before you. When you hear the screams, moans, and pleas of the tortured, you know you're getting close. You feel a cold shudder in your bones as you try to ignore them. Then you come upon an iron gate.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

["Hello?" you call out, as you push open the gate. "Is anyone there?"](#)



4.15

“Ah,” the unyielding Fury, Megaera says. “That sounds like the Athena we all know and love. The Seers’ Pit is that way.

The river of fire illuminates the path before you. When you hear the screams, moans, and pleas of the tortured, you know you’re getting close. You feel a cold shudder in your bones as you try to ignore them. Then you come upon an iron gate.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

[“Hello?” you call out, as you push open the gate. “Is anyone there?”](#)



4.16

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and take out the piece of lightning bolt loaned to you by Zeus. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. Above, you see stalactites hanging like icicles. In the very center of these rock formations is a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. These branches have no leaves. In fact, if it weren't for the fruit, you would think the tree dead.

As you near the tree, you see them, and, at first, because they are sitting so still, you mistake them for rock formations. But, unlike the rocks, these figures are transparent, and, from the corner of your eye, you see one of them move.

[You run to the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figures along the perimeter of the pit.](#)



4.18

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, one of the transparent figures shuffles toward you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

“If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future,” he says in a raspy voice.

“Who's old Tiresias?” you ask.

“That's a question I often ask myself,” the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

[“No, thanks,” you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



4.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say yes to the crab and no to its mother. Beware of dancing men who smell of honey, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows along the perimeter of the room.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back tot he iron gate.](#)



4.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab, a merwoman whose tail is sometimes that of a snake and sometimes that of a fish. You see a Cyclops, the Minotaur, and a parade of dancing men with a cymbal in each hand. But then you see yourself back stumbling beside the babbling brook without Zeus and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

One of the souls sitting on a nearby rock says, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the lightning rod closer to your face, but even the light from it does little to help you to see. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.17

With the pomegranate in one hand and the lightning rod in the other, you run from the Seers' Pit along the River Styx toward Cerberus's gates. When you reach them, you stuff the rod beneath your shirt and look for signs of Zeus on the other side, hoping not to attract the attention of the three-headed guardian.

From the fog, the god of the sky emerges. He reaches his fingers through the gate. When your fingers touch his, you hear Cerberus growl as a bright light envelops you, along with a pressure from all directions. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them again, you are in the chariot beside your love flying through the darkness.

"You did it!" Zeus says with a gleam in his eyes.

You look at the pomegranate in your hand. "I did!"

The chariot plunges into the narrow chasm and turns on its side, throwing you against the god. You cling to him in the darkness as the god chuckles. You're relieved when the chariot bursts from the chasm and into the light of day.

"You'll return to Mount Olympus a victor," Zeus says. "Are you ready to discover your second challenge?"

"I suppose I'm as ready as I'll ever be."

"Hell, yes!"



5.1

Zeus frowns. “Perhaps the mortal is better off going back home. Such feelings for my wife are futile.”

“I can’t help how I feel,” you say. “Just give me the chance to be near her. I’ll serve you in any way you wish.”

Hera smiles at Zeus. “Everyone’s already agreed to give this mortal a chance.” The goddess turns to you. “Come with me.”

You’re filled with joy when your true love speaks to you and beckons you to join her. You follow her from the temple, anxious to be alone with her.

As you take the rainbow steps from the temple, she takes your hand. You are about to press her hand to your lips when a bright light envelops you, along with a pressure. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them again, you are standing in a dark cavern surrounded by fog. A black river flows in front of you, but you can’t see beyond it.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Near the gates to the Underworld,” Hera says.

“Oh, goddess,” you say, still holding her hand. “Thank you for helping me. I’ll prove to you and to the others that I’m worthy. I promise.”

Hera smiles at you. “It pleases me to hear you say that, dear one.”

“Do you have any advice for me before I go?”

“The gates are guarded by a ferocious three-headed dog named Cerberus,” she says.

You've heard of him, so you aren't surprised.

Hera continues, "If I were you, I'd wait for Charon, the ferryman, to board the dead. Show him Athena's sword and ask to be let on."

"Will he allow that?" you ask.

"He might. Or he might kill you first," she says.

"Is there another way? Could I follow the ferryman instead?"

"His boat is much too fast for you to follow," she says. "But I suppose you could hide in the river near the bank where he boards--about ten meters that way." She points through the fog. "Then hold on to the back of the boat."

"Which do you think is more dangerous?" you ask.

"Both are risky. If you get caught sneaking in by either Charon or Cerberus, it could be the end for you."

"Couldn't you ask Charon to let me board as a favor to you?"

Hera frowns. "You have a lot to learn about how gods deal with one another. To be in the debt of another is not a good place to be, especially for a goddess."

You nod. "I understand. May I kiss you before I go?"

You expect to be allowed to kiss her hand--or quite possibly her cheek. You're shocked and delighted when she brushes her lips against yours.

"Thank you, my queen," you say. "I won't let you down."

"So, which will it be, dear one?" she asks. "Will you ask Charon for a ride, or will you sneak in?"

"I think it's better to be upfront and ask."

"I'd rather avoid a confrontation by sneaking."



5.11

“Whatever you do, keep right, to avoid The Lethe River,” Hera warns.

“Is there a particular reason why I should avoid it?”

“It will erase your memories.”

“All of them?” you ask as your heart races.

“All.”

“Stay to the right,” you repeat to yourself.

“The Seers’ Pit is the first part of Tartarus. You can follow the River Styx until you come up to another iron gate. Then follow the descent into the darkest part of Hades.”

“How will I see, if it’s the darkest part?” you ask.

“With this.”

She presents you with a fan made of peacock feathers. You take it and study it with bewilderment, not sure how this object will help you in the darkness.

“When you hold the eyes of the feather in front of your own eyes, you will be able to see like gods,” she says. “Go ahead. Try it.”

You hold the fan up to your face and line the eyes of the peacock feathers with your own. You expect the fan to block your vision, but, instead, you can see through the veil of fog as if it isn’t there. You can see

the giant black iron gate to hell. And you can see the huge dog with its three heads standing beside it. It's as if you're looking through special binoculars.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He's about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall batlike ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly.

Fortunately, he's standing on the opposite bank.

"What about Cerberus?" you ask. "How can I avoid him?"

"I'm going to feed him this." She holds out her palm, where a lump of cake appears. "It's laced with poppy. He'll fall asleep for a quarter of an hour, at least. That's how much time you'll have to get in and out, dear one. Ready?"

You nod. Hera leaves your side to speak with Cerberus. You notice the ferryman approaching the bank about ten meters away. You run along the river and meet the boat just as a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright eyes boards with the transparent figures of two old women. You realize they're the souls of the dead, and you shudder.

"May I come aboard?" you ask both the old ferryman and the beautiful boy. "Athena has asked me to fetch her a pomegranate from the Seers' Pit."

You show them her scabbard and shield.

The old man says nothing as he begins to push off from the bank, but the beautiful boy beckons you aboard.

As soon as you step on the ferry, you feel the cold chill of death creep through your bones. You find it difficult to breathe. The boat moves swiftly through the gates, where Cerberus is slumped in one corner napping. The beautiful boy notices and arches a brow at you, but you say nothing, for you can barely breathe, much less speak.

When the ferry stops before three floating figures, you climb onto the bank and collapse.

The ferry leaves in the opposite direction, down the river that erases memories, and you can finally breathe.

You climb to your feet when suddenly a figure appears. Her skin is dark, her eyes green, and her hair in black ringlets that spring to life and hiss at you.

"Medusa?" you ask.

A white wolf growls at you from her side.

“I am the avenging Fury, Tisiphone,” she says. “Who are you?”

You dive into the River Styx and swim away.

You unsheathe Athena’s sword.

“Athena sent me,” you explain, revealing Athena’s scabbard and shield. “I’m to bring her back a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit without eating it.”



5.12

“Whatever you do, keep right, to avoid The Lethe River,” Hera warns. “It will erase your memories.”

“All of them?” you ask as your heart races.

“All.”

“Stay to the right,” you repeat to yourself.

“The Seers’ Pit is the first part of Tartarus. You can follow the River Styx until you come up to another iron gate. Then follow the descent into the darkest part of Hades.”

“How will I see, if it’s the darkest part?” you ask.

“With this.”

She presents you with a fan made of peacock feathers. You take it and study it with bewilderment, not sure how this object will help you in the darkness.

“When you hold the eyes of the feather in front of your own eyes, you will be able to see like gods,” she says. “Go ahead. Try it.”

You hold the fan up to your face and line the eyes of the peacock feathers with your own. You expect the fan to block your vision, but, instead, you can see through the veil of fog as if it isn’t there. You can see the giant black iron gate to hell. And you can see the huge dog with its three heads standing beside it. It’s as if you’re looking through special binoculars.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He’s about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall batlike ears, pug upturned

noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly.

Fortunately, he's standing on the opposite bank.

"What about Cerberus?" you ask. "How can I avoid him?"

"I'm going to feed him this." She holds out her palm, where a lump of cake appears. "It's laced with poppy. He'll fall asleep for a quarter of an hour, at least. That's how much time you'll have to get in and out, dear one. Ready?"

You nod. Hera leaves your side to speak with Cerberus. You notice the ferryman approaching the bank about ten meters away. You step into the cold black river and swim alongside the back of the skiff just as a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright eyes boards with the transparent figures of two old women. You realize they're the souls of the dead, and you shudder.

As soon as the boy steps onto the ferry, you feel the cold chill of death creep through your bones. You find it difficult to breathe. You cling to the boat as it moves swiftly through the gates, where Cerberus is slumped in one corner napping.

When the ferry stops before three floating figures, you swim away, half-drowning in the process. It isn't until you reach the bank that you can finally breathe again.

Once the ferry leaves in the opposite direction, down the Lethe River, you climb onto the bank, still clutching the peacock fan. The feathers are wet but not ruined. You put your face up to it and find that it works. However, a figure appears before you.

Her skin is dark, her eyes green, and her hair in black ringlets that spring to life and hiss at you. A white wolf growls at you from her side.

"Medusa?" you ask.

"I am the avenging Fury, Tisiphone," she says. "Who are you?"

[You dive into the River Styx and swim away.](#)

[You unsheathe Athena's sword.](#)

["Athena sent me," you explain, revealing Athena's scabbard and shield. "I'm to bring her back a pomegranate from the Seers' Pit without eating it."](#)



5.13

In your mad race to get away from the snake-haired Fury, Tisiphone, you lose track of how far you've swam. You look around, trying to get your bearings, and realize you've passed the House of Judgment and the gates and have gone too far to the left.

But then, you wonder why that's a problem. The water seems less black and more inviting in this direction. You turn over on your back and allow the current to carry you wherever it will.

Sometime later, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes helps you from the river and flies you to the riverbank where you board a ferry driven by an old man. He pulls a long, slender pole through the water.

"Where are we going?" you ask the beautiful boy, though, you suppose it doesn't really matter.

"To the House of Judgment," he says.

"All right," you say with a smile. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.14

The avenging Fury, Tisiphone, laughs at you. “Why should a mortal expect to have even the slightest chance against me? Do you *want* to die? Is that it?”

“No,” you say, as you fight to keep your hands from trembling. “I just want to be with the one I love. I’ll do whatever it takes, even if I have to die trying.”

“The one you love? Why would your love require you to draw your sword on *me*?”

You fill her in on what has happened since Zeus found you sleeping near the babbling brook.

“I see,” she says, when you’ve finished. “Then this wouldn’t be a proper challenge without a little bit of sparring.”

A sword appears in the Fury’s hand.

You brace yourself.

“Show me what you’ve got,” she says.

You have had very little experience with a sword. You swing it madly and desperately, and after a whirlwind of panic, you find the Fury’s blade at your neck and Athena’s sword at your feet.

“Please don’t kill me,” you say.

“Let’s just hope your willpower is better than your skills with a sword,” she says as she lets you go. “The Seers’ Pit is that way.”

You resheathe Athena’s sword and thank the Fury before continuing along the riverbank toward Tartarus.

The river of fire illuminates the path before you. When you hear the screams, moans, and pleas of the tortured, you know you're getting close. You feel a cold shudder in your bones as you try to ignore them. Then you come upon an iron gate.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

["Hello?" you call out, as you push open the gate. "Is anyone there?"](#)



5.15

“Ah,” the avenging Fury, Tisiphone says. “That sounds like the Athena we all know and love. The Seers’ Pit is that way.

The river of fire illuminates the path before you. When you hear the screams, moans, and pleas of the tortured, you know you’re getting close. You feel a cold shudder in your bones as you try to ignore them. Then you come upon an iron gate.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

[“Hello?” you call out, as you push open the gate. “Is anyone there?”](#)



5.16

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and use the peacock fan to see the way. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. Above, you see stalactites hanging like icicles. In the very center of these rock formations is a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. These branches have no leaves. In fact, if it weren't for the fruit, you would think the tree dead.

As you near the tree, you see them, and, at first, because they are sitting so still, you mistake them for rock formations. But, unlike the rocks, these figures are transparent, and, from the corner of your eye, you see one of them move.

1=5.17

[You run to the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figures along the perimeter of the pit.](#)



5.18

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, one of the transparent figures shuffles toward you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

“If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future,” he says in a raspy voice.

“Who's old Tiresias?” you ask.

“That's a question I often ask myself,” the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

[“No, thanks,” you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



5.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say yes to the crab and no to its mother. The one-hundred headed one can be trusted for a time, or the owl will condemn you to death.”
“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows along the perimeter of the room.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



5.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab, a merwoman whose tail is sometimes that of a snake and sometimes that of a fish. Suddenly you are riding a one-hundred-headed-snake and screaming in terror. Then you see a half-woman-half-cow and the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Hera and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

Three seers sitting on a nearby rock say, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the peacock fan closer to your face, but even it does little to help you to see. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.17

With the pomegranate in one hand and the peacock fan in the other, you run from the Seers' Pit along the River Styx toward Cerberus's gates. When you reach them, you look for signs of Hera on the other side, hoping not to attract the attention of the three-headed guardian, who has already awakened from his poppy-induced nap.

From the fog, the Hera emerges. She reaches her fingers through the gate. When your fingers touch, you hear Cerberus growl as a bright light envelops you, along with a pressure from all directions. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them again, you are standing on a mountaintop before a wall of clouds.

"You did it!" Hera says with a gleam in her eyes.

You look at the pomegranate in your hand. "I did!"

"Are you ready to discover your second challenge?"

["I suppose I'm as ready as I'll ever be."](#)

2=5.2

["Absolutely!"](#)



6.1

Ares winks at you from across the room, sending flutters of excitement throughout your chest and belly.

“Let’s get started, then,” he says as he crosses the room to your side. “Ready?”

“Ready,” you say.

He offers you his arm and flies you from the temple and through the Olympian gates, where he sets you on your feet on the rocks and snow.

“I don’t know why Cupid has done this to you, baby doll,” he says once you’re alone with him, “but I’m glad. I’m drawn to you and to your willingness to fight for me.”

You smile up at him, weak-kneed. “Tell me what I need to do to get the pomegranate.”

He grins. “I like your eagerness, too. Come on. I’ll show you.”

A bright light, along with a pressure from all directions, surrounds you. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them, you’re standing in a veil of fog. Although you can’t see very far, you notice you’re standing on a riverbank in what feels like an enormous cavern.

Still holding onto the god’s arm, you ask, “Where are we?”

“Near the gates to the Underworld. They’re guarded by Cerberus, a ferocious three-headed dog.”

“I’ve heard of him. Can you get him to let me in?”

“I’m afraid not. Hades doesn’t trust the other Olympians. His realm is heavily warded against us, and his guards distrust us.”

“Great,” you say, trying not to tremble. “Got any advice for me?”

He smooths your hair from your face, sending chills of pleasure across your scalp. “I wouldn’t send you into battle ill-prepared. Have you ever used a sword and shield before?”

“Not a real sword and shield,” you say.

Ares chuckles. “Well, then. It’s time you learned.”

He takes a few steps back from you and draws his sword and nods to you to do the same. He doesn’t like how you’ve done it, so he has you do it again, while he corrects your grip and elbow. Then he tells you to take the shield. He shows you how best to use the shield in conjunction with the sword before he engages you in some light sparring.

“Keep your sword elbow in,” he warns. “Bend your knees and widen your stance. Think arms close legs apart.”

After a while, he shows you how to build momentum by spinning with lunges and shifting of weight. He has you do the move again and again, to commit it to muscle memory.

As you continue to spar, he explains, “Cerberus is across the Acheron River. I can fly you over, but then it’s up to you to get through the gates. If you can cut off one of the beast’s legs using the moves I’ve taught you, that should give you enough time to run or swim to the other side.”

You strike your blade against his and ask, “And where do I go from there? Where’s the Seers’ Pit?” He pushes you back with his blade against yours. “Keep to the right. Follow the River Styx to Tartarus. The Seers’ Pit is just behind a smaller gate. It’s dark, so you won’t be able to see without a light.” He tosses you a pocket lighter.

You catch it and stuff it into your pocket.

“Don’t talk to anyone. They’ll just confuse and distract you. Grab the fruit and return to me. I’ll try to distract Cerberus as you are coming out.”

He sheathes his sword. “Ready?”

You feel like laughing hysterically, but, instead, you grin and say, “Ready.”

Ares takes your hand and flies you through the fog over the black Acheron River to the opposite bank, where you can now see the three-headed beast.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He’s about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall bat-like ears, pug

upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly.

Gripping Athena's sword in one hand and her shield in the other, you approach him as you size him up. He watches you and growls, baring his teeth.

[Then you charge, using the moves Ares has taught you.](#)

[You wait for the beast to lunge at you. Then you use the moves Ares has taught you.](#)



6.11

The three ferocious heads bear down on you. Keeping your wits about you, you take two steps back, swing around, and lung to the side as you swing Athena's elegant blade. You're shocked when it makes contact with a hind leg and draws blood.

The beast howls. You reverse your move and injure a second leg. Then you repeat the first move and do worse injury to the first hind leg. Although it's not a clean cut, it's bad enough that the dog is immobilized.

You sheathe the bloody sword and strap on the shield.

[Then you dive into the Acheron River and swim toward the gates.](#)

[Then you run along the riverbank toward the gates.](#)



6.12

The black river is cold and chills the marrow of your bones, but you swim onward at your top speed. When you come up for air, you're nearly hit by a small boat leaving the gates. It's operated by an old man moving a slender pole through the water.

The gates before you are wide open. You make a dash to get inside when something slimy grabs hold of your ankle. Floundering underwater, you draw Athena's sword and slice whatever it is away. You barely make it through the gates when the old man's boat nearly hits you again on its way back in.

[Then you swim to the right, along the River Styx, toward Tartarus.](#)

[Then you climb from the river and run along the bank toward Tartarus.](#)



6.13

Before you reach the gates, they open of their own accord, and a small boat operated by an old man draws out from it. He gives you a look of reproach but doesn't stray from his course. As soon as the gate is wide enough for you to run through, you do.

Then you realize that the only way you can go to the right toward Tartarus is by river, because the Acheron intersects with the River Styx and you're on the wrong side of that intersection.

Without wasting any more time, you dive in. When you come up for air, you're nearly hit by the boat on its way back in, but you keep swimming toward the bank on the other side.

[You climb from the river and run along the bank to Tartarus.](#)

[You catch your breath and then decide to keep swimming along the River Styx toward Tartarus.](#)



6.14

You look for the smaller gate Ares told you about, and when you finally see it, you go to it.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

[“Hello?” you call out, as you push open the gate. “Is anyone there?”](#)



6.15

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and use the pocket lighter to see the way. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. Above, you see stalactites hanging like icicles. In the very center of these rock formations is a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. These branches have no leaves. In fact, if it weren't for the fruit, you would think the tree dead.

As you near the tree, you see them, and, at first, because they are sitting so still, you mistake them for rock formations. But, unlike the rocks, these figures are transparent, and, from the corner of your eye, you see one of them move.

[You run to the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figures along the perimeter of the pit.](#)



6.17

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, one of the transparent figures shuffles toward you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

“If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future,” he says in a raspy voice.

“Who's old Tiresias?” you ask.

“That's a question I often ask myself,” the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

[“No, thanks,” you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



6.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say yes to the crab and no to its sister with the three heads. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows along the perimeter of the room.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



6.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab, along with a creature with the head of a lion, goat, and snake. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Ares and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

One of the souls sitting on a nearby rock says, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the lighter closer to your face, but even the light from it does little to help you to see.

As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.16

With the pomegranate in hand, you stuff the lighter back into your pocket, you run from the Seers' Pit along the River Styx toward Cerberus's gates. When you reach them, you look for signs of Ares on the other side, hoping not to attract the attention of the three-headed guardian, who has already healed from your wounds.

From the fog, the Ares emerges. He reaches his fingers through the gate. When your fingers touch, you hear Cerberus growl as a bright light envelops you, along with a pressure from all directions. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them again, you are standing on Mount Olympus before the gates.

"You did it!" Ares says with a gleam in his eyes.

You look at the pomegranate in your hand. "I did!"

Ares cups your face and rewards you with a kiss. You melt into his arms.

Then he grins at you and asks, "Are you ready to discover your second challenge?"

"I suppose I'm as ready as I'll ever be."

"Heck, yeah!"



7.1

Artemis grins at you from across the room, sending flutters of excitement throughout your chest and belly.

“Let’s get started, then,” she says as she crosses the room to your side. “Ready?”

“Ready,” you say.

She takes your hand and flies you from the temple and through the Olympian gates, where she sets you on your feet on the rocks and snow.

“I don’t know why Cupid has done this to you, sweet cheeks,” she says once you’re alone with her, “but I’m glad. I’m drawn to you and to your willingness to fight for me.”

You smile at her, weak-kneed. “Tell me what I need to do to get the pomegranate.”

She chuckles. “I like your eagerness, too. Come on. I’ll show you.”

A bright light, along with a pressure from all directions, surrounds you. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them, you’re standing on a hillside overlooking a city.

Still holding onto the god’s hand, you ask, “Where are we?”

“Ancient Lerna, near a secret entrance to the Underworld. It’s guarded by Hydra, but once you get past her, you’ll be in Tartarus, near the Seers’ Pit.”

“I’ve heard of the Hydra. Doesn’t she have something like nine heads?”

“She did, but only one was immortal. Now she has one head and eight cauterized necks that hang from her body and bounce like wings when she runs.”

“How do I get past her?”

“Whatever you do, don’t cut off her one immortal head, because two will grow back in its place.”

“So, what then?”

“I want you to shoot her with my bow and arrows.”

You lift your brows in surprise.

“Have you ever used a bow before?”

“Yes, but not against a monster.”

“I’ll teach you, then. Come on.”

Artemis leads you down the hill to a flat area.

“Let’s see which is your dominant eye,” she says.

She has you hold up your arms out in front of you and make a triangle by lining up your thumbs and forefingers.

“Look at me through the triangle with both eyes,” she says.

You do.

“You’re left-eye dominant. You’ll want to hold your bow this way: right arm out holding the bow, left arm drawing on the string.”

She demonstrates with her bow before handing it to you.

Then she shows you how to nock an arrow and how to hold it between your fingers before drawing the bow back. She has you hold the position, so she can correct the placement of your elbow. She tells you how to take aim by looking down the line of the arrow.

“When you release,” she adds, “be sure not to move. Some people jerk their bodies back. Allow your drawing hand to rest here once you release.”

She has you aim for a specific spot in the hillside, which she marks with a pink ribbon. As you take aim, she reminds you to keep your elbow back and to aim down the line of the arrow. Before you release, she

reminds you not to move. You release the arrow and are surprised and delighted when your arrow strikes within inches of the pink ribbon.

“Very good!” Artemis says. “If you do it exactly like that, you’re bound to hit the dragon. Hydra’s body is wider than the distance between the ribbon and your shot.”

“But where on the beast should I aim?” you ask.

“I’d aim for one of her eyes, but you’re more likely to miss such a target, especially since it will be moving. You should aim for her heart, which is just below the center neck.”

You nod, trying not to tremble.

“It will only incapacitate her for a while,” Artemis adds. “So as soon as you shoot, dive into the sinkhole...”

“Sinkhole?” you interrupt.

“The way in is by water. I’ll lead you to Hydra’s sinkhole, but then you’ll have to do the rest. Shoot her heart and swim into Tartarus. Once you’re among the tortured souls, run to your left. You’ll see a gate. It leads down into the Seers’ Pit. Don’t talk to anyone. Just grab a fruit from the tree and come back the way you came.”

“Won’t the Hydra be waiting for me?”

“She’ll likely not have recovered yet,” Artemis says. “And, as soon as I see you, I’ll travel you out of here and back to Mount Olympus.”

“This seems so impossible,” you say. “But I don’t have a choice. I’m willing to do anything to be with you.”

“Ready, then?” she asks.

You feel like laughing hysterically, but, instead, you grin and say, “Ready.”

Artemis takes your hand. A blinding light and a pressure bears down on you from all directions. When you open your eyes, you find yourself inside a dark, damp tunnel.

“This way,” Artemis says.

By the light shining in from various cracks above you, you see your way behind the goddess. You’re not sure how many turns you’ve made when you come upon a cavern with a pool of water in its center.

Artemis puts a finger to her lips and motions for you to ready your arrow.

You take your stance and nock the arrow. The clicking sound echoes throughout the cavern. As you draw the arrow back, you see the pool before you disturbed, as if caused by a powerful storm. You gasp as the monster bursts from the water and shrieks at you.

Hydra is much different from what you imagined. She's about twelve feet tall, with green and gray scales, a long tail, and one ferocious head with a snout full of sharp teeth. She wails and shrieks, causing you to quake in your shoes. But you take aim and let the arrow fly.

The arrow misses its mark and flies too far to the left. With trembling fingers, you nock a second arrow and take aim. By this time, the Hydra is coming toward you, her shrieks piercing your ears. When she's but five or six feet away, you let the arrow fly, and it hits her right in the heart, causing blood to spurt everywhere.

"Go!" Artemis cries.

You drop her weapons and dive into the water. There's not much light to see by, but you swim on, straight ahead, as Artemis instructed you to do. You fear you may soon run out of air, but there's nothing but rock above and below you. You're trapped in a long tunnel. Should you turn back for more air or keep going?]

[Turn back for more air.](#)

[Keep going.](#)



7.11

You flail back the way you came, looking for the first opportunity to grab a bite of air. When you finally reach the surface, you tread water for a moment, catching your breath. That's when you notice the Hydra still moving. She spots you at the same time you notice her, and before you can grab air and submerge, she lunges at you swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



7.12

The black river is cold and chills the marrow of your bones, but you swim onward at your top speed, about to run out of air. When you finally free the tunnel and surface, you gasp and gasp until you finally catch your breath.

As you climb from the water onto a rocky bank, you hear the moans and shrieks of what you realize must be the tortured souls of Tartarus. Before you turn to the left, as instructed by Artemis, you notice a transparent form shackled to a stone table where a tall fountain on one end drips water, a drop at a time, onto his forehead. His transparent lips appear cracked and parched, as he cries in a raspy voice, “Water.”

You run off to the left, until you come to a black iron gate.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

[“Hello?” you call out, as you push open the gate. “Is anyone there?”](#)



7.13

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and can barely see as you approach a winding path. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow--offering the only light. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. You can see very little else in the room by the orange glow of the flowers except for the silhouette of a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. Without much light, you cannot see if anything grows on the branches.

As you near the tree, something moves to your side. You shudder, unable to tell what it is.

[You run to the tree and search for the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figure creeping beside you.](#)



7.15

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, your eyes adjust to the darkness and you're able to make out the figure creeping beside you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

"If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future," he says in a raspy voice.

"Who's old Tiresias?" you ask.

"That's a question I often ask myself," the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

["No, thanks," you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



7.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say no to the crab and yes to the two-headed dragon, but don’t trust one--only two. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



7.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab and a serpent with two heads. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Artemis and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

Three seers sitting on a nearby rock say, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the lighter closer to your face, but even the light from it does little to help you to see. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)]

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



7.14

With the pomegranate in hand, you run from the Seers' Pit back through Tartarus to the pool of water near the tormented soul stretched on stone. You take a few deep breaths before you inhale as much air as you can hold and dive into the cold water. You swim at your top speed back through the tunnel of rock and emerge at the Hydra's sinkhole, where Artemis is waiting.

As the Hydra screeches from her pool of blood, Artemis takes your hand. At the moment your hands touch, the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surround you, and you open your eyes to find yourself at the gates of Mount Olympus standing beside Artemis on the rocks and snow.

"You did it!" Artemis says with a gleam in her eyes.

You look at the pomegranate in your hand. "I did!"

Artemis cups your face and rewards you with a kiss. You melt into her arms.

Then she grins at you and asks, "Are you ready to discover your second challenge?"

["I think so."](#)

["Do you have to ask?"](#)



8.1

Apollo swiftly moves to your side, puts an arm around your waist and says, “Shall we get started, then?”

Blushing deeply, you smile up at him and say, “Yes.”

He carries you in his arms and flies with you from the temple and through the Olympian gates, where he sets you on your feet on the rocks and snow.

“I don’t know why Cupid has done this to you, my love,” he says once you’re alone with him, “but I’m glad. I’m drawn to you and to your willingness to fight for me.”

You smile up at him, weak-kneed. “Tell me what I need to do to get the pomegranate.”

He grins. “How’s your singing voice?”

“Huh?” you ask.

“Hum a few chords for me,” he says.

For some reason you cannot fathom, you sing “Doe, a Deer,” from *The Sound of Music*.

“Not bad,” he says. “We can work with that.”

A bright light, along with a pressure from all directions, surrounds you. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them, you’re standing in a veil of fog. Although you can’t see very far, you notice you’re standing on a riverbank in what feels like an enormous cavern.

Still holding onto the god’s arm, you ask, “Where are we?”

“Near the gates to the Underworld. They’re guarded by Cerberus, a ferocious three-headed dog.”

“I’ve heard of him. Can you get him to let me in?”

“I’m afraid not. Hades doesn’t trust the other Olympians. His realm is heavily warded against us, and his guards distrust us.”

“Great,” you say, trying not to tremble. “Got any advice for me?”

He smooths your hair from your face, sending chills of pleasure across your scalp. “It just so happens that the gods with the most odious jobs work here, in this realm. They rarely have the chance to hear music. I’ll play the song you just sang on my lyre while you sing to the ferryman of the dead.”

“While I what?” you weren’t expecting this at all.

“Sing to the ferryman,” Apollo repeats. “If he doesn’t look at you or acknowledge you in any way, then hop onto his boat and ride through the gates. Cerberus won’t bother you if you’re on the boat.”

“Are you sure?”

Apollo nods. “If Charon, the ferryman, does look at you, mark his expression. If he smiles or nods at you—which I don’t think I’ve ever seen him to do anyone in all of my life--then you should definitely hop on for a ride. If he glares at you, then wait until he turns around to tow the dead. When his back is to you, slip into the river and grab hold of the ferry, and hitch a ride without the old ferryman knowing.”

“What if he catches me?”

“He’ll likely kill you. Are you willing to take that risk?”

You look up into his gorgeous evergreen eyes. You could get lost in those eyes. “Absolutely,” you say.

To your great surprise, Apollo presses his lips to yours and then says, “For luck.”

“Wait,” you say. “What do I do once I get through the gates?”

“Oh, yes. I’d nearly forgotten that there was more to it than that. You’ll want to swim to your right, down the River Styx, until you reach Tartarus. The Seers’ pit will be the first gate you get to. The pomegranate tree sits at the very bottom. Don’t talk to anyone. Just grab the fruit and swim back toward the gates and wait for Charon to tow you here to me, as either his passenger or his stowaway.”

Apollo then holds out a hand, where a stone appears. “This is a moonstone. Use it to help you see in the darkness.”

You take it and put it into your pocket.

“Ready, then, my love?”

You beam at his use of “my love,” and say, “Yes.”

Apollo walks with you along the riverbank toward the gates, which now come into view. They’re as tall as a three-story building. Beside them, on the opposite bank from you and Apollo, stands the three-headed guard dog.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He’s about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall bat-like ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly.

Apollo pulls his instrument out of thin air and sits on a nearby boulder, where he begins working out the melody to the song you sang for him. You’re amazed by how quickly he picks it up.

Then you hear the enormous gates open. You see a boat, driven by an old man holding a long, slender pole. Further down the bank, less than ten meters, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes appears. On either side of him are smaller figures that resemble children, yet you can see completely through their bodies. You shudder as you realize they are the souls of the dead.

When the ferry reaches the bank, Apollo nods to you to begin. You take a deep breath and sing.

You’re amazed by how beautiful your voice sounds when accompanied by Apollo’s lyre. The beautiful boy looks at you while he boards with his souls. The ferryman does not. You inch nearer the boat, and when he still doesn’t look at you, you jump on as he’s leaving the shore.

Finally, the old man looks at you and asks, “Why have you come?”

“Athena sent me for a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit,” you say, showing him her scabbard and shield..

“Cupid made me fall in love with Apollo,” you say. “I’m here to prove I’m worthy to be immortal, like you.”



8.11

As the ferry enters the gates, the three-headed dog growls at you. For the first time since boarding the boat, you feel as though you can't breathe. Your throat tightens and, as you're on the verge of collapse, the beautiful boy turns to you and says, "I'm Death. My presence is deadly to you. Jump from the boat and swim up the river Styx to Tartarus before you're too weak."

[You do as he says.](#)

[You wait for another few minutes for the ferry to reach the other bank, where you climb out and collapse, trying to catch your breath.](#)



8.12

The black river is cold and chills the marrow of your bones, but you swim away from the ferry. The further you get from Death, the better you feel.

[Then you swim to the right, along the River Styx, toward Tartarus.](#)

[Then you climb from the river and run along the bank toward Tartarus.](#)



8.13

After taking several breaths, you climb to your feet and look around. The ferry has already gone off in the opposite direction.

[You run along the riverbank to Tartarus.](#)

[You catch your breath and then decide to keep swimming along the River Styx toward Tartarus.](#)



8.14

You look for the gate Apollo told you about, and when you finally see it, you go to it.

[You push open the gate and sneak inside.](#)

2=8.15

[“Hello?” you call out, as you push open the gate.](#)



8.15

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and use the moonstone to see the way. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. Above, you see stalactites hanging like icicles. In the very center of these rock formations is a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. These branches have no leaves. In fact, if it weren't for the fruit, you would think the tree dead.

As you near the tree, you see them, and, at first, because they are sitting so still, you mistake them for rock formations. But, unlike the rocks, these figures are transparent, and, from the corner of your eye, you see one of them move.

[You run to the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figures along the perimeter of the pit.](#)



8.17

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, one of the transparent figures shuffles toward you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

“If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future,” he says in a raspy voice.

“Who's old Tiresias?” you ask.

“That's a question I often ask myself,” the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

[“No, thanks,” you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



8.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say no to the crab and yes to the two-headed serpent. Don’t trust one--but do trust two. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows along the perimeter of the room.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



8.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab and a serpent with two heads blowing fire in a cave. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Apollo and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

Three seers sitting on a nearby rock say, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the lighter closer to your face, but even the light from it does little to help you to see. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



8.16

With the pomegranate in hand, you stuff the moonstone back into your pocket and run from the Seers' Pit along the River Styx toward Cerberus's gates. When you reach them, you wait on the bank for the ferry.

When it comes around from Tartarus, it doesn't stop before sailing toward the gates, so you jump in and swim behind it. Although you aren't fast enough to catch up to it, you make it through the gates before the close again.

Just as the three-headed dog notices you and lunges toward you, Apollo appears and wraps his arms around you. You close your eyes to the blinding light and the pressure that surrounds you, and when you open them again, you are standing outside of the gates of Mount Olympus.

"You did it!" Apollo says with a gleam in his eyes.

You look at the pomegranate in your hand. "I did!"

Apollo cups your face and rewards you with a kiss. You melt into his arms.

Then he grins at you and asks, "Are you ready to discover your second challenge?"

"No, but let's do this thing."

"Crazy ready!"



9.1

Poseidon's turquoise eyes light up as he smiles down at you. "Well, then." He glances at his wife before escorting you from the throne room.

You expect Poseidon to take you to his chariot, but, instead, he leads you to an adjoining chamber filled with an enormous creature. It's a seahorse the color of sand and the size of a minivan.

"Allow me to introduce you to my favorite hippocamp, Phoebe," Poseidon says.

"Hello," you say to Phoebe through your golden net.

She winks at you.

"Shall we?" Poseidon asks you.

"What? Are we going to ride Phoebe?" you ask, hoping the answer is yes.

"Indeed," the god of the sea replies. "Let me help you up."

He takes the boulder from your hands and drops it to the side before boosting you up and onto the back of Phoebe, just between her iridescent wings. Then Poseidon climbs on behind you and holds you around your waist as he says, "To the Underworld!"

Phoebe bursts from the chamber and the palace doors through the bottom of the Aegean Sea. The colors of the fish and other marine life fly by you as the hippocamp swims gracefully through the deep blue sea before emerging at the surface into the light of day.

You laugh gleefully in Poseidon's arms as Phoebe swims across the Aegean beneath the bright sun. In the next instant, the golden net vanishes and there is nothing between you and your heart's true love.

He lifts you up and turns you to face him with your legs around his waist. Passion and excitement bubble deep in your belly as he says, “You and I could have a lot of fun together, if you succeed in this challenge.”

“What about your wife?” you ask.

“Amphitrite and I have an open marriage,” he says. “Just stay out of her sight, and you’ll have nothing to fear from her.”

Relief and joy sweep over you. “Do you have any advice for me, to help me to succeed?”

“As a matter of fact, I do,” he says. “The gates of Hades are guarded by a three-headed dog named Cerberus.”

“I’ve heard of him,” you say. “Will he let me pass?”

Poseidon shakes his head.

“What if you ask him to let me?”

“He won’t,” the god replies. “Hades doesn’t trust the other Olympians, so he’s heavily protected his realm against us.”

“Then how will I get in? Will I have to fight Cerberus?”

“That’s one way,” Poseidon says. “Another is to offer him this.”

Poseidon opens his hand to reveal a lump of cake.

“It can’t be that easy,” you say.

“This cake is laced with poppy,” Poseidon says. “It will lure Cerberus to sleep, but not for long. Ride Phoebe through the gates, where the Acheron splits into the Lethe and Styx Rivers. Whatever you do, avoid the Lethe. It’s the river to your left.”

“Why? Is it dangerous?”

“It’s called the river of forgetfulness because it will erase your memories.”

A chill moves down your spine. Although you wouldn’t mind losing some of your bad memories, you cherish the good ones.

“Keep to the right, to the River Styx,” Poseidon says. “The first part of Tartarus is the Seers’ Pit. You’ll see a gate. Dismount Phoebe and go inside.”

“Will Phoebe be safe?” you ask.

“She knows how to hide underwater.”

“Okay,” you say. “Will the pomegranate be easy to find, once I get to the pit?”

Poseidon hands you a conch shell. “The Seers’ Pit is the darkest part of Hades. Use this shell to help illuminate the way. You can’t miss the pomegranate tree. It’s smack dab in the middle of the pit. Just pick your fruit and get out of there, though. Don’t engage with the seers. They’ll confuse the hell out of you.”

You take the shell. “Where will you be while I’m inside the Underworld?”

“I’ll show you.”

He kisses you once more before turning you around on the hippocamp. Then the three of you lift into the sky, Phoebe glides gracefully in the air, before she soars sharply to the right and then plunges toward land.

You cling to Poseidon’s hands as Phoebe dives into a narrow chasm. You cry out when she turns this way and that in the darkness before emerging into what feels like an enormous cavern blanketed in a veil of fog.

“Where are we?” you ask, trying to catch your breath.

“Just outside the gates to the Underworld. This is where I’ll be waiting for you. As soon as I see you and Phoebe approach the gates from the other side, I’ll reach through and god travel us away from here.”

You suck in your lips, hoping you can pull this off. It comforts you that you’ll have Phoebe with you for part of the way.

“So, will you face Cerberus with Athena’s sword, or with the poppy cake?” Poseidon asks.

“Do you think I should go with the cake?” you ask.

“He might sniff out the poppy and refuse it,” Poseidon says. “He might even swallow you whole.”

“Maybe I should use the sword,” you say.

“If you do, spear him in the heart. He’ll recover quickly from any other kind of injury and could retaliate before you make it through the gates.”

You sigh. “This seems impossible.”

“You can do this,” Poseidon says. “But you don’t have to. If you remain a mortal, we can still see each other. I can visit you, and I can take you anywhere in the world.”

You want to make him promise, but you are afraid he won’t. And yet, you seriously consider the option.

“Anywhere in the world? Then let’s start now. Let’s go to Scotland.”

“I don’t want to risk losing you when I’m old and wrinkled,” you say. “I want to be with you forever.”



9.12

Poseidon laughs merrily before turning you around to face him again. He kisses you before saying, “Phoebe, take us to Scotland!”

Phoebe flies through the dark narrow chasm and into the blue sky. You shout with joy as you soar together toward Europe and land in on the North Sea. Poseidon points out the names of places as you sail into Donoch Firth.

“Why don’t you and I go find an empty castle to explore while Phoebe catches up with her friend Nessie?” Poseidon says.

“Nessie?” you ask.

“Surely you’ve heard of the Lochness Monster?” Poseidon says with a chuckle.

The two of you fly over Scotland and find a place to spend the day in each other’s arms. When you return to Phoebe at sunset, Poseidon promises to bring you back next week. He returns you to the babbling brook where he found you and lies with you once more before leaving you with a kiss and a promise to return. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.13

“I’m glad to hear it,” Poseidon says. “So, will you go with the sword or the cake?”

[“The sword.”](#)

2=9.15

[“The cake.”](#)



9.14

Poseidon dismounts Phoebe and waits for you in the fog outside the gates as you sail on the hippocamp toward Cerberus with Athena's sword drawn.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He's about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall bat-like ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly. He growls as you approach.

Phoebe stops and whimpers. You aren't close enough to pierce the beast's heart with your sword.

"Come on, Phoebe," you whisper in her ear. "Can you fly above him? Maybe you can fly over the gates!"

Phoebe ascends above the gates, but an invisible wall prevents her from entering. She flies back toward Cerberus, who's barking like mad and snapping his jaws at you. You can't see anyway to his heart without losing your arm.

In a desperate attempt to incapacitate him, you throw the sword at the center throat, but the weapon falls harmlessly onto the riverbank at Cerberus's feet.

[You leap from Phoebe onto the bank and reach for the sword.](#)

["Turn back," you say to Phoebe. "This isn't going to work."](#)



9.16

As you scoop up the sword, Cerberus lunges at you. You hold the weapon steady as the beast impales himself on the blade, but not before scratching your shoulder with his claws.

Cerberus whines as blood spurts from his chest. The weight of him falls on you, and you step back to avoid being pinned to the ground. Then you quickly sheathe the blade and leap onto Phoebe's back.

Together, you pull the gates apart and enter Hades.

Then, of their own accord, the gates open wide. You see a small boat approaching.

"Quick, Phoebe. Let's hide near that bank."

The hippocamp swims to the left, just opposite the gate of where Cerberus lies slumped and panting. You hope the boatman won't notice you as he passes, but he glares at you, though he says nothing.

Relieved, you say, "Okay, Phoebe. Let's head to Tartarus, down the River Styx."

Before Phoebe leaves the bank, a teal-speckled goddess arises from the river and asks, "What is a mortal doing here? And, oh, look! You're bleeding!"

["Phoebe! To Tartarus!"](#)

["Athena asked me to fetch her a pomegranate from the Seers' Pit," you say, showing the goddess Athena's scabbard and shield.](#)



9.17

Phoebe sails back to Poseidon.

“I’m sorry,” you say to the god. “Can I take you up on that offer to go anywhere in the world with you?”

He smooths your hair from your face and says, “Yes. We can go anywhere you like.”

“Let’s go to Scotland,” you say.

“Take me to your favorite place,” you say.



9.15

Poseidon dismounts Phoebe and waits for you in the fog outside the gates as you sail on the hippocamp toward Cerberus with the poppy cake.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He's about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall bat-like ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly. He growls as you approach.

Phoebe stops and whimpers.

"Come on, Phoebe," you whisper in her ear. "Just a little closer."

Slowly, the hippocamp approaches Cerberus.

"I've brought you a gift from Poseidon!" you shout as you throw the cake into the air.

Cerberus sniffs it and then aptly catches it in his center mouth and swallows it whole. He looks at you as though he expects another.

"I'm sorry, boy," you say, feeling bad about tricking him. "That's all I have."

Phoebe backs away from the three-headed dog when he begins to sway on his feet. Then he drops with a loud thud onto the rocky bank.

"Go!" you cry to Phoebe.

She sails toward the gates, and the two of you work together to pry them open. Then, of their own accord, the gates open wide. You see a small boat approaching.

“Quick, Phoebe. Let’s hide near that bank.”

The hippocamp swims to the left, just opposite the gate of where Cerberus lies slumped and panting. You hope the boatman won’t notice you as he passes, but he glares at you, though he says nothing.

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“Athena asked me to fetch her a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit,” you say, showing the goddess Athena’s scabbard and shield.



9.19

“Why didn’t she come and get it herself?” the goddess asks.

“She’s testing me,” you say, explaining about Cupid’s arrow and your love for Poseidon.

“Cupid’s arrow will make you long for Poseidon for the rest of your life,” the goddess says sympathetically. “Even as an immortal, you will never be satisfied, because Poseidon isn’t one to stay loyal to a lover for long.”

You lift your brows. “He says he wants to be with me.”

“For now,” the goddess says. “But he’ll grow tired of you before too long. Why do you think he has an open marriage with his wife? Do you think that was her idea?”

“I don’t know,” you say.

“I can ease your pain and suffering.”

“You can? Who are you?”

“My name is Lethe. Come with me, and you’ll never feel longing, desire, pain, or regret. You’ll feel nothing but happiness.”

“Phoebe, to Tartarus!” you say.

“Put me out of my misery,” you say to the goddess. “And take me with you.”



9.19

Phoebe whimpers as Lethe scoops you into her arms and swims away with you. The further she goes down the beautiful aquamarine-colored river, the more you forget about why you're even there in the first place. Who is this beautiful goddess and what fantastical place have you come to? Moreover, who are you? As you float down the river, alone now, you are soon approached by a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright eyes. He takes you to a boat, and you wonder at the beautiful place you're seeing for the first time. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.18

Phoebe races down the River Styx until you see a gate on the riverbank.

“Wait here,” you say as you dismount from the hippocamp and go to the gate.

[You slip inside.](#)

[“Hello?” you say as you push open the gate. “I mean you no harm.”](#)



9.181

You find yourself in a narrow passage that descends at a steep slope. A strange orange glow emitted by white flowers cascading down the walls is the only light preventing total darkness. There are also cobwebs on the stonewalls. You take the conch shell from your pocket, hoping to improve your view, but the shell emits no light of its own. You turn it around in your hands, wondering how it works. Then you put it up to one eye and look through the hole in the shell. You're amazed to find that it works like a scope, and you can now see everything before you as though it exists in daylight.

You continue down the winding, spiral descent until you reach a large cavern filled with stalagmites and stalactites and one old, large tree in the center. The tree branches are longer than the trunk is tall, making you think of an upside-down octopus.

Because they are still, like statues, you almost don't notice the transparent souls sitting on rocks around the perimeter of the cave until one of them shuffles toward you.

Recalling what Poseidon said about avoiding the seers, you grab a pomegranate from the tree and run.

When you exit the gate to the Seers' Pit, you don't see Phoebe on the River Styx where you left her.

"Phoebe?" you say softly as you return the conch shell to your pocket. "Phoebe? Where are you?"

The hippocamp emerges like a duck from the water and swims to the bank, where you climb onto her back.

"Let's get back to Poseidon as fast as possible," you say.

As you near the enormous black iron gates, you notice that Cerberus is no longer slumped but has resumed his position as guardian. He growls at you and Phoebe, but as soon as your fingers touch the gate, Poseidon is there. He touches your fingers with his, and you're suddenly surrounded by a pressure

and a blinding light. You close your eyes, and when you open them, you and Poseidon are sitting on Phoebe's back on a snow-covered mountain.

"You did it!" Poseidon says as he gently cups your cheek.

You look at the fruit in your hand. "I did it!"

"We're at the gates to Mount Olympus," he says. "Are you ready to go inside and discover your second challenge?"

"Am I? I guess I am."

"Oh my gosh, yes!"



10.1

Amphitrite's turquoise eyes light up as she smiles at you from her throne.

"Well, then." She swims to your side. "Shall we go?"

You expect her to take you to Poseidon's chariot, but, instead, she leads you to an adjoining chamber filled with an enormous creature. It's a seahorse the color of sand and the size of a minivan.

"Allow me to introduce you to my favorite hippocamp, Phoebe," Amphitrite says.

"Hello," you say to Phoebe through your golden net.

She winks at you.

"Shall we?" Amphitrite asks you.

"What? Are we going to ride Phoebe?" you ask, hoping the answer is yes.

"Indeed," the goddess of the sea replies. "Let me help you up."

She takes the boulder from your hands and drops it to the side before boosting you up and onto the back of Phoebe, just between her iridescent wings. Then Amphitrite climbs on behind you and holds you around your waist as she says, "To the Underworld!"

Phoebe bursts from the chamber and the palace doors through the bottom of the Aegean Sea. The colors of the fish and other marine life fly by you as the hippocamp swims gracefully through the deep blue sea before emerging at the surface into the light of day.

You laugh gleefully in Amphitrite's arms as Phoebe swims across the Aegean beneath the bright sun. In the next instant, the golden net vanishes and there is nothing between you and your heart's true love.

The goddess lifts you up and turns you to face her. She wraps her legs around your waist and her arms around your neck. Passion and excitement bubble deep in your belly as she says, "You and I could have a lot of fun together, if you succeed in this challenge."

"What about your husband?" you ask.

"Poseidon and I have an open marriage," she says. "Just stay out of his sight, and you'll have nothing to fear from him."

Relief and joy sweep over you. "Do you have any advice for me, to help me to succeed?"

"As a matter of fact, I do," she says. "The gates of Hades are guarded by a three-headed dog named Cerberus."

"I've heard of him," you say. "Will he let me pass?"

Amphitrite shakes her head.

"What if you ask him to let me?"

"He won't," the goddess replies. "Hades doesn't trust the other gods, so he's heavily protected his realm against us."

"Then how will I get in? Will I have to fight Cerberus?"

"That's one way," she says. "Another is to offer him this."

Amphitrite opens her hand to reveal a lump of cake.

"It can't be that easy," you say.

"This cake is laced with poppy," she says. "It will lure Cerberus to sleep, but not for long. Ride Phoebe through the gates, where the Acheron splits into the Lethe and Styx Rivers. Whatever you do, avoid the Lethe. It's the river to your left."

"Why? Is it dangerous?"

"It's called the river of forgetfulness because it will erase your memories."

A chill moves down your spine. Although you wouldn't mind losing some of your bad memories, you cherish the good ones.

“Keep to the right, to the River Styx,” Amphitrite says. “The first part of Tartarus is the Seers’ Pit. You’ll see a gate. Dismount Phoebe and go inside.”

“Will Phoebe be safe?” you ask.

“She knows how to hide underwater.”

“Okay,” you say. “Will the pomegranate be easy to find, once I get to the pit?”

Amphitrite hands you a conch shell. “The Seers’ Pit is the darkest part of Hades. Use this shell to help illuminate the way. You can’t miss the pomegranate tree. It’s in the very center of the pit. Just pick your fruit and get out of there, though. Don’t engage with the seers. They’ll only confuse you.”

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[“The sword.”](#)

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Phoebe stops and whimpers. You aren't close enough to pierce the beast's heart with your sword.

"Come on, Phoebe," you whisper in her ear. "Can you fly above him? Maybe you can fly over the gates!"

Phoebe flaps her wings and ascends above the gates, but an invisible wall prevents her from entering. She flies back toward Cerberus, who's barking like mad and snapping his jaws at you. You can't see any way to his heart without losing your arm.

In a desperate attempt to incapacitate him, you throw the sword at the center throat, but the weapon falls harmlessly onto the riverbank at Cerberus's feet.

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Together, you pull the gates apart and enter Hades.

Then, of their own accord, the gates open wide. You see a small boat approaching.

“Quick, Phoebe. Let's hide near that bank.”

The hippocamp swims to the left, just opposite the gate of where Cerberus lies slumped and panting. You hope the boatman won't notice you as he passes, but he glares at you, though he says nothing.

Relieved, you say, “Okay, Phoebe. Let's head to Tartarus, down the River Styx.”

Before Phoebe leaves the bank, a teal-speckled goddess arises from the river and asks, “What is a mortal doing here? And, oh, look! You're bleeding!”

[“Phoebe! To Tartarus!”](#)

[“Athena asked me to fetch her a pomegranate from the Seers' Pit,” you say, showing the goddess Athena's scabbard and shield.](#)



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Slowly, the hippocamp approaches Cerberus.

"I've brought you a gift from Amphitrite!" you shout as you throw the cake into the air.

Cerberus sniffs it and then aptly catches it in his center mouth and swallows it whole. He looks at you as though he expects another.

"I'm sorry, boy," you say, feeling bad about tricking him. "That's all I have."

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"Go!" you cry to Phoebe.

She sails toward the gates, and the two of you work together to pry them open. Then, of their own accord, the gates open wide. You see a small boat approaching.

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10.19

“Why didn’t she come and get it herself?” the goddess asks.

“She’s testing me,” you say, explaining about Cupid’s arrow and your love for Amphitrite.

“Cupid’s arrow will make you long for Amphitrite for the rest of your life,” the goddess says sympathetically. “Even as an immortal, you will never be satisfied, because the goddess of the sea isn’t one to stay loyal to a lover for long.”

You lift your brows. “She says she wants to be with me.”

“For now,” the goddess says. “But she’ll grow tired of you before too long. Why do you think she has an open marriage with her husband? Do you think that was his idea?”

“I don’t know,” you say.

“I can ease your pain and suffering.”

“You can? Who are you?”

“My name is Lethe. Come with me, and you’ll never feel longing, desire, pain, or regret. You’ll feel nothing but happiness.”

“Phoebe, to Tartarus!” you say.

“Put me out of my misery,” you say to the goddess. “And take me with you.”



10.19

Phoebe whimpers as Lethe scoops you into her arms and swims away with you. The further she goes down the beautiful aquamarine-colored river, the more you forget about why you're even there in the first place. Who is this beautiful goddess and what fantastical place have you come to? Moreover, who are you? As you float down the river, alone now, you are soon approached by a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright eyes. He takes you to a boat, and you wonder at the beautiful place you're seeing for the first time. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



10.18

Phoebe races down the River Styx until you see a gate on the riverbank.

“Wait here,” you say as you dismount from the hippocamp and go to the gate.

[You dart inside.](#)

[“Anyone here?” you say as you push open the gate.](#)



10.181

You find yourself in a narrow passage that descends at a steep slope. A strange orange glow emitted by white flowers cascading down the walls is the only light preventing total darkness. There are also cobwebs on the stonewalls. You take the conch shell from your pocket, hoping to improve your view, but the shell emits no light of its own. You turn it around in your hands, wondering how it works. Then you put it up to one eye and look through the hole in the shell. You're amazed to find that it works like a scope, and you can now see everything before you as though it exists in daylight.

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Because they are still, like statues, you almost don't notice the transparent souls sitting on rocks around the perimeter of the cave until one of them shuffles toward you.

Recalling what Amphitrite said about avoiding the seers, you grab a pomegranate from the tree and run.

When you exit the gate to the Seers' Pit, you don't see Phoebe on the River Styx where you left her.

"Phoebe?" you say softly as you return the conch shell to your pocket. "Phoebe? Where are you?"

The hippocamp emerges like a duck from the water and swims to the bank, where you climb onto her back.

"Let's get back to Amphitrite as quickly as possible," you say.

As you near the enormous black iron gates, you notice that Cerberus is no longer slumped but has resumed his position as guardian. He growls at you and Phoebe, but as soon as your fingers touch the gate, Amphitrite is there. She touches your fingers with hers, and you're suddenly surrounded by a

pressure and a blinding light. You close your eyes, and when you open them, you and Amphitrite are sitting on Phoebe's back on a snow-covered mountain.

"You did it!" Amphitrite says as she gently cups your cheek.

You look at the fruit in your hand. "I did it!"

"We're at the gates to Mount Olympus," she says. "Are you ready to go inside and discover your second challenge?"

"No, but let's go anyway."

"Hell, yes!"



11.1

Aphrodite swiftly swims to your side. She takes the boulder from you and drops it to the side, puts an arm around your waist, and says, “Shall we get started, then?”

Blushing deeply, you smile at her through the golden net and nod.

“I don’t know why Cupid has done this to you, my love,” she says once you’re alone with her swimming in the open sea, “but I’m glad. I’m drawn to you and to your willingness to fight for me.”

“Tell me what I need to do to get the pomegranate.”

She grins. “How’s your singing voice?”

“Huh?”

“Hum a few chords for me,” she says.

“Here? Underwater?”

“You’d be surprised how much better than sound carries down here.”

For some reason you cannot fathom, you sing “Doe, a Deer,” from *The Sound of Music*.

“Not bad,” she says. “We can work with that.”

As you swim toward the surface of the sea, you suddenly catch sight of a pod of Beluga whales swimming toward you. You are even more stunned when they begin to sing, “Doe, a Deer.”

“They heard your song,” Aphrodite says. “Apparently, they approve.”

When you finally reach the surface, Aphrodite makes your golden net vanish, leaving you trembling in the cold water. Then she takes your hand, and a bright light, along with a pressure from all directions, surrounds you. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them, you're standing in a veil of fog. Although you can't see very far, you notice you're standing on a riverbank in what feels like an enormous cavern.

Still holding onto the goddess's hand, you ask, "Where are we?"

"Near the gates to the Underworld. They're guarded by Cerberus, a ferocious three-headed dog."

"I've heard of him. Can you get him to let me in?"

"I'm afraid not. Hades doesn't trust the other Olympians. His realm is heavily protected against us, and his guards distrust us."

"Great," you say, trying not to tremble. "Got any advice for me?"

She smooths your hair from your face, sending chills of pleasure across your scalp. "It just so happens that the gods with the most odious jobs work here, in this realm. They rarely have the chance to hear music. I'll play the song you just sang on my piccolo while you sing to the ferryman of the dead."

"While I what?" you weren't expecting this at all.

"Sing to the ferryman," Aphrodite repeats. "If he doesn't look at you or acknowledge you in any way, then hop onto his boat and ride through the gates. Cerberus won't bother you if you're on the boat."

"Are you sure?"

She nods. "If Charon, the ferryman, does look at you, mark his expression. If he smiles or nods at you--which I don't think I've ever seen him to do anyone in my life--then hop on for a ride. If he glares at you, then wait until he turns around to tow the dead. When his back is turned, slip into the river and grab hold of the ferry, and hitch a ride without the old ferryman knowing."

"What if he catches me?"

"He'll likely kill you. Are you willing to take that risk?"

You look up into her gorgeous blue eyes. You could get lost in those eyes. "Absolutely," you say.

To your great surprise, Aphrodite presses her lips to yours and says, "For luck."

"Wait," you say. "What do I do once I get through the gates?"

“Oh, yes. I’d nearly forgotten that there was more to it than that. You’ll want to swim to your right, down the River Styx, until you reach Tartarus. The Seers’ pit will be the first gate you get to. The pomegranate tree sits at the very bottom. Don’t talk to anyone. Just grab the fruit and swim back toward the gates and wait for Charon to tow you here to me, as either his passenger or his stowaway.”

Aphrodite then holds out a hand, where a stone appears. “This is a moonstone. Use it to help you see in the darkness.”

You take it and put it into your pocket.

“Ready, then, my lovely?”

You beam at her use of “my lovely,” and say, “Yes.”

She walks with you along the riverbank toward the gates, which now come into view. They’re as tall as a three-story building. Beside them, on the opposite bank from you and Aphrodite, stands the three-headed guard dog.

Cerberus is much different from what you imagined. He’s about six feet tall, black as night, with a long dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall bat-like ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and folds of loose skin around the three necks. His six eyes appear red and unfriendly.

Aphrodite pulls her instrument out of thin air and sits on a nearby boulder, where she begins working out the melody to the song you sang for her. You’re amazed by how quickly she picks it up.

Then you hear the enormous gates open, and you see a boat, driven by an old man holding a long, slender pole. Further down the bank, less than ten meters, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes appears. On either side of him are two smaller figures that resemble children, yet you can see completely through their bodies. You shudder as you realize they are the souls of the dead.

When the ferry reaches the bank, Aphrodite nods to you to begin. You take a deep breath and sing.

You’re amazed by how beautiful your voice sounds when accompanied by Aphrodite’s piccolo. The beautiful boy looks at you while he boards with his souls. The ferryman does not. You inch nearer the boat, and when he still doesn’t look at you, you jump on as he’s leaving the shore.

Finally, the old man looks at you and asks, “Why have you come?”

“Athena sent me for a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit,” you say, showing him her scabbard and shield.

“Cupid made me fall in love with Aphrodite,” you say. “I’m here to prove I’m worthy to be immortal, like you.”



11.11

As the ferry enters the gates, the three-headed dog growls at you. For the first time since boarding the boat, you feel as though you can't breathe. Your throat tightens and, as you're on the verge of collapse, the beautiful boy turns to you and says, "I'm Death. My presence is deadly to you. Jump from the boat and swim up the River Styx to Tartarus before you're too weak."

[You do as he says.](#)

[You wait for another few minutes for the ferry to reach the other bank, where you climb out and collapse, trying to catch your breath.](#)



11.12

The black river is cold and chills the marrow of your bones, but you swim away from the ferry. The further you get from Death, the better you feel.

[Then you swim to the right, along the River Styx, toward Tartarus.](#)

[Then you climb from the river and run along the bank toward Tartarus.](#)



11.13

After taking several breaths, you climb to your feet and look around. The ferry has already gone off in the opposite direction.

[You run along the riverbank to Tartarus.](#)

[You catch your breath and then decide to keep swimming along the River Styx toward Tartarus.](#)



11.14

You look for the gate Aphrodite told you about, and when you finally see it, you go to it.

[You push open the gate and creep inside.](#)

[“Hello?” you call out, as you push open the gate. “Is anyone there?”](#)



11.15

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and use the moonstone to see the way. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. Above, you see stalactites hanging like icicles. In the very center of these rock formations is a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. These branches have no leaves. In fact, if it weren't for the fruit, you would think the tree dead.

As you near the tree, you see them, and, at first, because they are sitting so still, you mistake them for rock formations. But, unlike the rocks, these figures are transparent, and, from the corner of your eye, you see one of them move.

[You run to the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figures along the perimeter of the pit.](#)



11.17

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, one of the transparent figures shuffles toward you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

"If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future," he says in a raspy voice.

"Who's old Tiresias?" you ask.

"That's a question I often ask myself," the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

["No, thanks," you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



11.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say yes to the crab and no to the snake woman. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows along the perimeter of the room.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



11.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab and a serpent woman. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Aphrodite and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

Three seers sitting on a nearby rock say, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the lighter closer to your face, but even the light from it does little to help you to see. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.16

With the pomegranate in hand, you stuff the moonstone back into your pocket and run from the Seers' Pit along the River Styx toward Cerberus's gates. When you reach them, you wait on the bank for the ferry.

When it comes around from Tartarus, it doesn't stop before sailing toward the gates, so you jump in and swim behind it. Although you aren't fast enough to catch up to it, you make it through the gates before they close again.

Just as the three-headed dog notices you and lunges toward you, Aphrodite appears and wraps her arms around you. You close your eyes to the blinding light and the pressure that surrounds you, and when you open them again, you are standing on a snow-covered mountain.

"You did it!" Aphrodite says with a gleam in her eyes.

You look at the pomegranate in your hand. "I did!"

Aphrodite cups your face and rewards you with a kiss. You melt into her arms.

Then she grins at you and asks, "Are you ready to discover your second challenge?"

"I suppose I'm as ready as I'll ever be."

"Hell, yes!"



12.1

Hermes grins at you from across the room, sending flutters of excitement throughout your chest and belly.

“Let’s get started, then,” he says as he swims to your side. “Ready?”

“Ready,” you say through your golden net.

He takes the boulder from your arms and drops it to the side before leading you by the hand from the castle. He swims at lightning speed--so fast, that you feel a little sick when you finally reach the surface.

“Are you okay, beautiful?” Hermes asks you.

“I am now,” you say.

“I don’t know why Cupid has done this to you,” he says, “but I’m glad. I’m drawn to you and to your willingness to fight for me.”

You’re thrilled when he makes the net disappear before taking you into his arms and giving you a soft and luscious kiss.

Without the warmth of the golden net, you begin to tremble. Hermes pulls you even closer into him, to warm you with his body. You feel like you’ve died and gone to heaven.

“Tell me what I need to do to get the pomegranate,” you say.

He nods. “Come on. I’ll show you.”

A bright light, along with a pressure from all directions, surrounds you. You close your eyes against the light, and when you open them, you’re standing on a hillside overlooking a city.

Still holding onto the god's hand, you ask, "Where are we?"

"Ancient Lerna, near a secret entrance to the Underworld. It's guarded by Hydra, but once you get past her, you'll be in Tartarus, near the Seers' Pit."

"I've heard of the Hydra. Doesn't she have something like nine heads?"

"She did, but only one was immortal. Now she has one head and eight cauterized necks that hang from her body and bounce like wings when she runs."

"How do I get past her?"

"Whatever you do, don't cut off her one immortal head, because two will grow back in its place."

"So, what then?"

"She loves cake," Hermes says.

"Cake?"

"And I have a special one here, made with poppy." He opens his hands to reveal a lump of cake. "This will put her right to sleep, but I'm not sure for how long."

You nod, trying not to tremble.

"I'd venture to guess you'll have about ten to fifteen minutes," Hermes says. "So as soon as she eats it, dive into the sinkhole..."

"Sinkhole?" you interrupt.

"The way in is by water," Hermes says. "I'll lead you to Hydra's sinkhole, but then you'll have to do the rest. Toss her the cake and swim into Tartarus. Once you're among the tortured souls, run to your left. You'll see a gate. It leads down into the Seers' Pit. Don't talk to anyone. Just grab a fruit from the tree and come back the way you came."

"Won't the Hydra be waiting for me?"

"She'll likely not have recovered yet," he says. "If you're quick about it, that is. And, as soon as I see you, I'll travel you out of here and on to Mount Olympus."

"This seems so impossible," you say. "But I don't have a choice. I'm willing to do anything to be with you."

“You do realize we can be together without you having to endure this,” Hermes says. “I can visit you anytime and take you to visit any place you’d like.”

“Like London and Paris?” you ask. “Hong Kong and Seoul?”

“My favorite place is the Philippines,” he says. “We can see all of those places together.”

“But once I get old and wrinkly, you might not want me,” you mutter.

“Making yourself immortal won’t guarantee that we won’t grow apart,” he points out.

You consider this for a moment.

“Well?” he asks. “What’s it going to be, beautiful? Face the Hydra, or come with me to my favorite beach on the Philippine Islands?”

[“I’ll face the Hydra.”](#)

[“Take me to the Philippines.”](#)



12.11

“Ready, then?” he asks.

You feel like laughing hysterically, but, instead, you grin and say, “Ready.”

Hermes takes your hand. A blinding light and a pressure bears down on you from all directions. When you open your eyes, you find yourself inside a dark, damp tunnel.

“This way,” Hermes says.

By the light shining in from various cracks above you, you see your way along the winding tunnel behind Hermes. You’re not sure how many turns you’ve made when you come upon a cavern with a pool of water in its center.

Hermes puts a finger to his lips and gives you the lump of cake.

The pool of water begins to move, as if something is thrashing just below the surface. Then the monster springs from the water and onto the bank in front of you. She sniffs the cake and glares at you with her eyes/

Hydra is much different from what you imagined. She’s about twelve feet tall, with green and gray scales, a long tail, and one ferocious head with a snout full of sharp teeth. She wails and shrieks, causing you to quake in your shoes.

“Toss it!” Hermes cries.

You toss the cake to the Hydra. While she’s distracted, you dive into the water. There’s not much light to see by, but you swim on, straight ahead, as Hermes instructed you to do. You fear you may soon run out

of air, but there's nothing but rock above and below you. You're trapped in a long tunnel. Should you turn back for more air or keep going?

[Turn back for more air.](#)

[Keep going.](#)



12.13

You flail back the way you came, looking for the first opportunity to grab a bite of air. When you finally reach the surface, you tread water for a moment, catching your breath. That's when you notice the Hydra sleeping on the bank. Hermes is there, surprised to see you.

He takes your hand and god-travels you back to the hillside overlooking the city.

"What happened?" he asks.

"I couldn't do it," you say. "Can you just take me away from here?"

"I changed my mind. Take me to the Philippines."



12.12

Hermes smiles brightly at you before taking you in his arms and whisking you from the dark cavern, through the narrow chasm, and out into the dark blue sky. You shriek with delight as the two of you fly over the sea, and then over land, toward the east.

Then the bright light of god-travel envelops you, and when you open your eyes, you're sitting beside Hermes on a cruise ship.

"Where are we?" you ask, looking around at the pool, the bar, and the deck full of people.

"I thought we'd have some mai tais on the ship before hitting the beach," Hermes says as he signals for a waiter.

"I wish I had my bathing suit," you say, feeling overdressed.

Hermes snaps his fingers, and your clothes are replaced by a thong.

"Hermes!" you cry, covering your body with your arms. "Can I have something a little more modest?"

"I prefer you like that," he says, "but if you insist."

He snaps his fingers until you're pleased with your swimwear. Then your mai tai arrives and you lay together on a deck lounge chair enjoying the scenic views before heading to the beach. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



12.14

The black river is cold and chills the marrow of your bones, but you swim onward at your top speed, about to run out of air. When you finally free the tunnel and surface, you gasp and gasp until you finally catch your breath.

As you climb from the water onto a rocky bank, you hear the moans and shrieks of what you realize must be the tortured souls of Tartarus. Before you turn to the left, as instructed by Hermes, you notice a transparent form shackled to a stone table where a tall fountain on one end drips water, a drop at a time, onto his forehead. His transparent lips appear cracked and parched, as he cries in a raspy voice, “Water.”

You run off to the left, until you come to a black iron gate.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

[“Is anybody home?” you call out, as you push open the gate.](#)



12.15

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and can barely see as you approach a winding path. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow--offering the only light. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. You can see very little else in the room by the orange glow of the flowers except for the silhouette of a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. Without much light, you cannot see if anything grows on the branches.

As you near the tree, something moves to your side. You shudder, unable to tell what it is.

[You run to the tree and search for the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figure creeping beside you.](#)



12.17

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, your eyes adjust to the darkness and you're able to make out the figure creeping beside you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

"If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future," he says in a raspy voice.

"Who's old Tiresias?" you ask.

"That's a question I often ask myself," the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

["No, thanks," you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



12.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say no to the crab and yes to the goat head. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



12.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab and a creature with the head of a lion, a goat, and a snake. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Hermes and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

One of the souls sitting on a nearby rock says, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the lighter closer to your face, but even the light from it does little to help you to see. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



12.16

With the pomegranate in hand, you run from the Seers' Pit back through Tartarus to the pool of water near the tormented soul stretched on stone. You take a few deep breaths before you inhale as much air as you can hold and dive into the cold water. You swim at your top speed back through the tunnel of rock and emerge at the Hydra's sinkhole, where Hermes is waiting.

As the Hydra wakes from her sleep, Hermes takes your hand. At the moment your hands touch, the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surround you, and you open your eyes to find yourself on the top of a mountain standing with Hermes on the rocks and snow.

"You did it!" Hermes says with a gleam in his eyes.

You look at the pomegranate in your hand. "I did!"

Hermes cups your face and rewards you with a kiss. You melt into his arms.

Then he grins at you and asks, "Are you ready to discover your second challenge?"

["Not at all, but that doesn't matter."](#)

["Do dogs bark?"](#)



13.1

When Hephaestus frowns, a lump rises to your throat. Why isn't he pleased that you love him?

He swims to your side and takes the boulder from you, handing it over to one of the mer-attendants. Then he takes your hand and says, "Let's take my chariot." To Poseidon, he says, "I'll leave the golden net in the garage for you."

Hephaestus tows you from the room to his golden chariot, which, unlike the others, has no horses.

"Have a seat," he says, as he helps you in.

When he removes the golden net, you hold your breath and begin to float from the seat, but Hephaestus takes your hand and holds you down while he pushes a lever.

A cover, like one would find on a convertible, closes overhead. It's round, like a bubble, and completely transparent.

He pushes another lever, which drains the chariot of water.

"You can breathe air now," he says to you.

You gasp, happy to be able to breathe normally again. "Thanks."

"Ready?"

You give him a shy nod.

He pushes another lever, and the chariot whirls from the underwater castle and out into the open sea. You wonder if this is what it's like to ride in a tiny submarine as you shoot from the depths of the Aegean Sea, passing all manner of colorful life, toward the surface.

“Should we leave the cover closed, or would you like it open?” Hephaestus asks, once you've reached the surface.

[“Leave it closed. It's cozy.”](#)

[“Open it, so we can feel the wind on our faces.”](#)



13.12

“Are you sure you want to do this, love?” Hephaestus asks. “I’m married, you know. And I’m loyal to my wife.”

Your heart feels like it has broken into pieces. “Eternity is a long time,” you say. “Isn’t there a chance you might fall in love with me, in time?”

Hephaestus sighs. “Only the Fates know what the future holds.”

Although this comforts you, you say, “Maybe this wasn’t the best idea.”

This comforts you. “Then, yes. I’m sure I want to do this. Do you have any advice for me?”



13.13

Hephaestus opens the cover, allowing the fresh air to wash over you as you race across the surface.

“Are you sure you want to do this, love?” Hephaestus asks. “I’m married, you know. And I’m loyal to my wife.”

Your heart feels like it has broken into pieces. “Eternity is a long time,” you say. “Isn’t there a chance you might fall in love with me, in time?”

Hephaestus sighs. “Only the Fates know what the future holds.”

Although this comforts you, you say, “Maybe this wasn’t the best idea.”

This comforts you. “Then, yes. I’m sure I want to do this. Do you have any advice for me?”



13.14

“I have a better one,” Hephaestus says.

He drives you from the Aegean Sea to his forge on Mount Olympus and beckons you to sit at his table. He gives you some tea to drink while he gets to work. You notice, after several minutes, that what he’s building is not a machine. It’s a man in his likeness.

“Hephaestus?” you call out to him from where you stand at the table. “What are you doing?”

“I’m nearly finished with a gift for you, love,” he says. “I’ve created a man who looks and behaves as I do, so you might find some happiness in spite of the affliction Cupid has imposed on you.”

Although you are doubtful that Hephaestus’s plan can work, you are amazed by his handiwork when the job is complete. Hephaestus blows life into his creation, and the man sits up from the table where Hephaestus has been working and gazes at you from across the room.

“Hello, love,” he says to you.

Still somewhat skeptical, you cross the room to stand beside the man. “Is he really flesh and blood?”

“As much as you are,” the two Hephaestuses say simultaneously.

The god of the forge leads you to his chariot with his replica following. As you continue to study the man, you realize that the arrow in your chest compels you to love him, too.

The three of you ride from Mount Olympus across the sky to the babbling brook where your adventures first began. You and the man are left behind when the god takes his leave.

“Shall we go for a walk, love?” Hephaestus the man asks as he offers you his hand.

In spite of your doubts, you take it, and, together, you walk along the brook as the sun sets to the east. You ask him questions, and his memories seem to be those belonging to Hephaestus. It’s almost as if the god placed his own soul into the replica.

The man also asks you questions, and, as you walk hand in hand, the two of you begin to fall in love.

When nighttime descends, he says, “Perhaps we should head home.”

Once you arrive at your place, he takes you into his arms for a kiss. You feel swept away, convinced that this is not a replica, but *the* Hephaestus kissing you. You thank the god with your silent prayer, again and again over the years, never quite sure if it’s the Hephaestus on Mount Olympus or the one sharing your lifetime of happiness that receives it. (Game Over.)





13.15

“Getting into Hades is no easy task,” he says. “A three-headed dog named Cerberus guards the gates.”

“I’ve heard of him.”

“And because Hades doesn’t trust the rest of us, his realm is heavily protected against us. But I have an idea.”

You lift your brows. “I’d love to hear it.”

“I’m going to let you take my chariot.”

“Your chariot? But I don’t know how to work it.”

“That’s why I’m going to teach you, right now.”

“Really?” You glance over the dashboard at all the levers. “It looks complicated.”

He spends the next half hour showing you how to operate the vehicle. You learn what each lever is for. Then he gives you a chance to operate it while he rides alongside you.

“Now it’s time to submerge,” Hephaestus says. “You need to practice driving underwater.”

You do as he says, glad to have the transparent cover to keep the water out and the air in. Then you ask, “Is the Underworld under the sea?”

Hephaestus chuckles. “No, but you’ll have better luck sneaking in and out if you go by river. Your main challenge will be getting past Hydra.”

“Is that the monster with the nine heads?” you ask as you maneuver past a school of blue and yellow fish.

“Only one is immortal, and Hercules cut off and cauterized the other eight.”

“Oh. But I bet that one head is still pretty scary, huh?” you ask.

“Indeed. And vicious, just like Cerberus. The dog guards the upper end of the gate, and Hydra guards the lower end, at the bottom of the river.”

“So, how will I get in?”

“Hydra is fast, but not so fast at swimming in circles. If you can lure her away from the gate and get her to chase you in a circle, you can skirt past her and through the gates. Would you like to practice? Or are you ready to begin?”

“I want to practice.”

“I’m ready to go.”



13.16

You spend the next fifteen minutes or so practicing your maneuvers. You enjoy passing by the marine life--especially creatures you rarely see, like the manatee and the electric eel. Hephaestus has you move forward, toward the manatee, reverse back, spin around, and then make a circle. He has you practice the move again and again until you feel comfortable.

“Ready?” he asks.

“As ready as I’ll ever be.”

“Ready.”



13.17

Hephaestus says, “Then it’s time to take to the sky.”

He shows you how to switch from submarine to flying machine.

The cover opens and the fresh air meets your face as you fly over the sea. Hephaestus steers the chariot away from the sea toward land.

“See that narrow chasm there in the hills of ancient Delphi?”

“Barely,” you say, squinting.

“That’s where we’re headed, but I’ll drive, because you won’t be able to see in the dark.”

The chariot picks up speed as it plunges toward the chasm. Then, while in complete darkness, the chariot spins, twists, and turns, throwing you this way and that. Finally, you come to a stop in what appears to be an enormous cavern blanketed by a veil of fog.

Hephaestus puts the cover on. “The river leading through the gates is the Acheron. That’s it there in front of us.”

You can see it through the fog.

“Submerge as soon as you dock.”

“Where will you be?” you ask, wishing he could come with you.

“Right here on the bank,” he says. “The Acheron splits into two rivers once you get past Hydra and through the gates. Don’t go left. That’s the Lethe, and it will erase all your memories if even a drop of water touches you.”

You shiver and repeat, “Don’t go left.”

“Go right, along the River Styx. After you get about fifty meters, surface and look for an iron gate. It won’t be locked, but the path beyond it will be dark. Find your way down to the Seers’ Pit. The pomegranate tree grows in the middle of the cave. Grab the fruit and hurry back to the chariot. I’ll be waiting here.”

Hephaestus hands you something that looks like a pocket watch as he climbs from the chariot. “Take that with you to the pit. When you open it, it will illuminate the path.”

You stuff the light into your pocket and thank him.

Then you close the cover over the chariot, pull from the bank, and submerge into the depths of the black Acheron River.

It’s easier to see beneath the water than you expected. Up ahead, you can see the Hydra curled up on the riverbed with her eyes closed. Her scales are green and gray and shiny. Her tail is as long as the rest of her body, which looks somewhat vulnerable with the cauterized necks--four on each side of the one head. In fact, she looks strangely sweet with her cheek against her muddy pillow. That sweetness doesn’t last when she opens her eyes and screeches at you.

Now that the moment is upon you, you struggle to recall how to reverse and spin. You accidentally spring too far forward and barely escape getting hit by the Hydra’s long dragon tail. The current caused by her swing throws you off course, but you finally get the chariot in reverse and draw the beast away from the gates.

Your muscles take over and remember the levers to spin around and then drive in a circle. When you can, you crash through the gates to the other side.

You stay to the right to avoid the river of forgetfulness. When a mer-creature emerges from below, you scream, but she swims past you in the opposite direction. You sigh with relief and continue for what you think is about fifty meters before you surface and search for the gate to the pit.

You see it in the distance, just beyond the bank. You drive the chariot onto the bank and rush toward the gate.

[You push open the gate and slip inside.](#)

[“I come in peace,” you call out, as you push open the gate. “I was sent by the gods.”](#)



13.18

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and can barely see as you approach a winding path. Then you remember the compact light in your pocket. When you open it, it illuminates the path like a Harry Potter wand. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock, and stalactites hanging like icicles from the ceiling. In the center of the room stands a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. It bears no leaves but plenty of fruit.

As you near the tree, something moves in the shadows on the edge of the room. You shine the light and see transparent figures sitting on the rocks as though they've become a part of the formations. One of them is shuffling toward you.

[You run to the tree and search for the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figure creeping beside you.](#)



13.191

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, your eyes adjust to the darkness and you're able to make out the figure creeping beside you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

"If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future," he says in a raspy voice.

"Who's old Tiresias?" you ask.

"That's a question I often ask myself," the weary-looking figure says.

Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.

"No, thanks," you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.



13.192

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say no to the crab and yes to the goat head. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



13.1921

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab and a creature with the head of a lion, a goat, and a snake. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Hephaestus and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

Three of the seers sitting on a nearby rock say, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You hold the lighter closer to your face, but even the light from it does little to help you to see. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



13.19

With the pomegranate in hand, you run from the Seers' Pit back to the chariot. You back from the bank, submerge, and make your way back to the gate where the Hydra is waiting for you.

Trusting that Hephaestus will be there to help you, you crash the chariot through the gates. Just as Hydra bears down on you with her one ferocious head, Hephaestus appears beside you and saves you in the nick of time.

“Did you get the fruit?” Hephaestus asks.

You show him the pomegranate in your hand. “I did!”

“Wonderful, love. We’re off to Mount Olympus! Are you ready for your next challenge?”

“Of course, I am!”

“Not really, but let’s do this thing!”

“Yes!”



14.1

[Hades glances across the room at Persephone and sighs. Persephone gives you a sympathetic smile that angers you. You don't want her pity; you want her man.

Hades seems to be speaking to the air when he says, "I have two unmarried sons. Why couldn't it have been one of them?"

Blood rushes to your cheeks and tears prick your eyes. Hades couldn't be crueler.

He turns to you. "Are you sure you want to go along with this attempt to become immortal? I'm loyal to my wife."

Tears spill from your eyes as you say, "Eternity is a long time. If there's even a chance that one day..."

"Come with me then," he says.

He leads you from the throne room and past the Seers' Pit.

"Where are we going?" you ask.

"To pay a visit to the Fates."

"You said it was best not to disturb them."

"True," he says. "And this visit may prove me right."

He takes your hand, which fills you with surprise and joy. Then you close your eyes to the blinding light that envelops you, along with a pressure, and, when you open them again, you're standing beside Hades outside of the Fates' abode.

Hades releases your hand and knocks at the thick wooden door.

An old woman with half of her gray hair twisted in a bun on the crown of her head and the other half lying in straight lines along her back, opens the door. She's wearing a pink velvet pantsuit. "Is it already time?"

"Time for what?" you ask Hades.

He pushes through the door. "I suppose it is."

You follow him inside.

The chamber belonging to the Fates resembles a Las Vegas casino. It is alight with blinking colors from slot machines crammed together with archaic pinball machines. The machines are situated along the river of fire, which also illuminates the room as it flows in a circle around the perimeter of the cave through a haze of thick cigarette smoke. Two tables occupy the middle of the room. The bigger and more central is a roulette wheel that emanates a barely audible circus tune. To the right of the wheel is a much smaller table with three chairs and stacks of playing cards. Petite wrinkled old ladies, each holding a cigarette, sit opposite one another at the table.

"Are you sure you want another card, sister?" The one dealing is plumper than the others but as small in stature and throaty in voice. Her gray hair is short and curly, and she wears a bright blue shawl over a blue velvet dress.

"Of course not, but hit me anyway." She looks at the card. "Damn. I'm busted." She tosses the card on the table and takes a drag from her cigarette. She wears her white hair in a bob with bangs that curl under. As you follow Hades into the room, she looks at you through her black-rimmed spectacles.

"You won't like the answer to your question," she says to you.

"I think I'll hit the slots for a while," the one in the pink velvet pantsuit says.

"But what about our guests, Clotho?" the one wearing spectacles asks.

"You deal with them," Clotho replies. "I need to be amazed."

Clotho sits down before one of the blinking machines, her back to you and Hades.

The dealer turns to her sister. "What do you think about that, Atropos?"

"We knew it would happen, Lachesis. I don't know why you're complaining."

"If you know why I'm here," Hades says, "spare us the drama and say whether or not you can liberate this poor mortal from Cupid's arrow."

“We can,” Lachesis says.

Your brows fly up. “Then why did your sister say I wouldn’t like the answer?”

Atropos shakes a finger at you. “Because you won’t when you hear the terms.”

“For heaven’s sake,” Hades says. “What are they?”

Atropos rolls her eyes. “And I thought Clotho had no patience.”

Lachesis, the dealer, says, “If we pull the arrow out—and we’re the only beings capable of doing so—your heart will be scarred for the rest of your mortal life, and you will never be able to love another.”

Your mouth drops open. “That’s horrible!”

“See?” Atropos says. “I told you that you wouldn’t like it.”

“It’s your choice,” Hades says to you kindly. “Would you rather live pining away for a god whose heart belongs to his wife? Or would you rather live the rest of your life without feeling love and desire for another?”

You cross your arms and shake your head at this impossible decision forced upon you.]

[“Pull the arrow out.”](#)

[“Leave the arrow in.”](#)



14.12

“This is going to hurt,” Lachesis says.

You glance over at Hades, who frowns.

“You barely feel it going in,” Atropos adds, “but coming out’s a killer.” Then she adds, “Metaphorically speaking, of course.”

“You better do it on the roulette table,” Clotho calls out from her machine. “The other table isn’t large enough.”

“We’ve all seen this, Clotho,” Lachesis complains to her sister. To you, she whispers, “Clotho is the spinner. She thinks, since she’s the one that laid this all out for you, that she’s done her part.”

“I can hear you, Lachesis.”

“I know that,” Lachesis says.

“The measurer,” Lachesis says, jabbing a thumb toward her chest.

“I’m the cutter,” Atropos says as she draws a line across her neck.

“If you knew what I’d choose,” you ask, “why did you ask?”

“You still have free will,” Clotho calls from her slot machine. “We just know ahead of time what you’ll choose.”

“Not absolute free will,” Lachesis whispers. “Otherwise, Clotho wouldn’t have a job. She sets up parameters.”

“Like me getting stuck with this arrow,” you say.

“Well, maybe that’s not a good example,” Lachesis admits. “We all had a hand in that, on account of us needing to test the gods. We knew Hades would pass with flying colors.”

Hades doesn’t look amused.

“Let’s get on with it,” Atropos says. “Lie down there, mortal.”

They point to the roulette wheel. It doesn’t look like a very comfortable place to lie down, but you do as you’re told.”

The two sisters grip something invisible to your eyes.

“Can you see that?” you ask Hades.

He shakes his head. “Only the Fates can.”

“And Eros,” Clotho shouts from her machine. “Along with any of his descendants.”

You whisper, “Gods, that’s annoying.”

Clotho hops from her chair and points down at you. “And *that’s* exactly why I chose you to receive the arrow in the first place.”

You furrow your brows, confused. Your entire understanding of causation flies out the window.

“Ready?” Lachesis asks.

You nod.

Suddenly a burning, stinging sensation takes over your chest. It’s as if you can literally feel the tip of the arrow ripping through your heart muscle and then your flesh as the two sisters pull. You scream in agony and flail your arms before everything goes dark.

Sometime later, you awaken in the field of flowers near the babbling brook, where you always go to escape the monotony of your life. You sit up and look around, wondering if all that you can recall about the gods was nothing more than a dream. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



14.13

“Do you have any advice to give this mortal before we leave?” Hades asks the Fates. “Athena has presented a set of challenges meant to determine whether apotheosis might be granted.”

“Forever is a long time,” Lachesis warns.

“Some might call it a curse,” Atropos adds.

“Though it does have its perks,” Clotho cries from the machine as music blasts from it. “Jackpot!”

“What does she win?” you ask the others.

“A moment of satisfaction,” Lachesis says.

You glance at Hades, who arches a brow at you, as if to encourage you to stop what he no doubt thinks is nonsense.

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“Take me to the Seers’ Pit.”](#)



14.14

Hades takes your hand, and you close your eyes against the blinding light as a pressure surrounds you from all directions. When you open your eyes again, you're sitting beside Hades in his golden chariot.

By the time you reach the babbling brook and field of flowers where you began, your face is full of tears.

"Don't cry," Hades says as he helps you from the chariot. "I have a gift for you. I asked Hephaestus to make you something that I hope you will cherish."

You lift your brows with surprise. "Really? Thank you! I'll cherish anything from you, Lord Hades. What is it?"

"Lie down in the flowers, where I found you earlier today. I'll send it to you as soon as it's ready."

"May I kiss you goodbye?" you ask, trying not to blubber like an idiot.

He turns his cheek to you, where you plant your lips, wishing the moment could last forever.

"Thank you," you say. "I'll never forget you."

"I highly doubt I'll forget you," he says tenderly.

As he returns to his chariot, you lie down in the flowers and watch him fly away. Nearly twenty minutes pass, during which you begin to wonder if he's played a cruel trick on you. Then you see him appear across the field without his armor, and he's walking toward you with a smile on his face.

You climb to your feet. "Lord Hades?"

"Just Hades," he says as he takes you in his arms.

Your jaw drops open. “I don’t understand.”

“I’m a man made in the lord’s image by Hephaestus,” he says. “Your gift from the god of the Underworld. Are you pleased?”

As you feel the arrow in your heart fill you with desire for this man, who looks, speaks, and acts exactly as the god he was molded from, you nod your head and burst into tears of joy. Then he covers your lips with his. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



14.15

Hades takes your hand, and you close your eyes against the blinding light as pressure surrounds you from all directions. When you open your eyes, you're standing beside Hades before a black iron gate.

"This gate leads to the Seers' Pit," Hades says. "As I mentioned before, it's the only place in my kingdom where the Phlegethon--the river of flames--doesn't flow. I'm afraid you won't be able to see without this."

He opens his hand, where an iron helmet appears.

"What's that?"

"My helm of invisibility," he says. "It will give you the power to see like a god."

"Aren't you coming with me?" you ask.

"Not if we're to test your willpower. You may not be able to leave the pit without taking a bite from the forbidden fruit."

"You don't know me very well."

"It's not personal."

"I guess I'll just have to show you." You push open the gate and hold out your hand for the helm.

"One more thing," Hades says. "The helm renders its wearer invisible to both mortals and gods--including the souls of the dead. But it doesn't disguise your sound. If you're approached in the pit, ignore those who attempt to engage with you. Grab the pomegranate and return to me."

You nod as you take the helm and place it on your head. It's surprisingly light. As you stand there, you wonder if you've become invisible to Hades. You take the opportunity to study his features closely--his dark sexy eyes, his square jaw, and his moist lips.

"I can hear you breathing," he says with a grin.

Mortified, you hasten into the dark passage ahead of you. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend down the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock, and stalactites hanging like icicles from the ceiling. In the center of the room stands a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. It bears no leaves but plenty of fruit.

As you near the tree, something moves in the shadows on the edge of the room. You turn to see transparent figures sitting on the rocks as though they've become part of the formations. One of them is shuffling toward you.

[You run to the tree and search for the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figure creeping beside you.](#)



14.17

He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

“If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future,” he says in a raspy voice.

“Who’s old Tiresias?” you ask.

“That’s a question I often ask myself,” the weary-looking figure says.

Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena’s sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.

“No, thanks,” you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.



14.18

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say yes to the crab and no to the one-eyed cannibal. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



14.19

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab and a giant with a single eye. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Hades and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

Three seers sitting on a nearby rock says, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You remove the helm to find only darkness, but when you place it back on your head, the darkness remains. Then your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



14.16

With the pomegranate in hand, you run from the Seers' Pit to Hades. You hand over his helm and show him the fruit clutched in your hand.

“Well done,” he says. “Are you ready to go to Mount Olympus to discover your second challenge?”

[“You’re joking, right?”](#)

[“Hells, yeah!”](#)



15.1

Hades glances across the room at Persephone and sighs. Persephone gives you a sympathetic smile that hurts you. You don't want her pity; you want her love.

She flies across the room to your side. "Are you sure you want to go along with this attempt to become immortal? I'm loyal to my husband."

Tears spill from your eyes as you say, "Eternity is a long time. If there's even a chance that one day..."

"Come with me then," she says.

She leads you from the throne room and past the Seers' Pit.

"Where are we going?" you ask.

"To pay a visit to the Fates."

"But Lord Hades said it was best not to disturb them."

"This visit may prove him right."

She takes your hand, which fills you with surprise and joy. Then you close your eyes to the blinding light that envelops you, along with a pressure, and, when you open them again, you're standing beside Persephone outside of the Fates' abode.

She releases your hand and knocks at the thick wooden door.

An old woman with half of her gray hair twisted in a bun on the crown of her head and the other half lying in straight lines along her back, opens the door. She's wearing a pink velvet pantsuit. "Is it already time?"

“Time for what?” you ask.

Persephone pushes through the door. “I suppose it is.”

You follow her inside.

The chamber belonging to the Fates resembles a Las Vegas casino. It is alight with blinking colors from slot machines crammed together with archaic pinball machines. The machines are situated along the river of fire, which also illuminates the room as it flows in a circle around the perimeter of the cave through a haze of thick cigarette smoke. Two tables occupy the middle of the room. The bigger and more central is a roulette wheel that emanates a barely audible circus tune. To the right of the wheel is a much smaller table with three chairs and stacks of playing cards. Petite wrinkled old ladies, each holding a cigarette, sit opposite one another at the table.

“Are you sure you want another card?” The one dealing is plumper than the others but as small in stature and throaty in voice. Her gray hair is short and curly, and she wears a bright blue shawl over a blue velvet dress.

“Of course not, but hit me anyway.” She looks at the card. “Damn. I’m busted.” She tosses the card on the table and takes a drag from her cigarette. She wears her white hair in a bob with bangs that curl under. As you follow Persephone into the room, she looks at you through her black-rimmed spectacles.

“You won’t like the answer to your question,” she says to you.

“I think I’ll hit the slots for a while,” the one in the pink velvet pantsuit says.

“But what about our guests, Clotho?” the one wearing spectacles asks.

“You deal with them,” Clotho replies. “I need to be amazed.”

Clotho sits down before one of the blinking machines, her back to you.

The dealer turns to her sister. “What do you think about that, Atropos?”

“We knew it would happen, Lachesis. I don’t know why you’re complaining.”

“If you know why I’m here,” Persephone says, “spare us the drama and say whether or not you can liberate this poor mortal from Cupid’s arrow.”

“We can,” Lachesis says.

Your brows fly up. “Then why did your sister say I wouldn’t like the answer?”

Atropos shakes a finger at you. “Because you won’t when you hear the terms.”

“For heaven’s sake,” Persephone says. “What are they?”

Atropos rolls her eyes. “And I thought Clotho had no patience.”

Lachesis, the dealer, says, “If we pull the arrow out—and we’re the only beings capable of doing so—your heart will be scarred for the rest of your mortal life, and you will never be able to love another.”

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[“Pull the arrow out.”](#)

[“Leave the arrow in.”](#)



15.12

“This is going to hurt,” Lachesis says.

You glance over at Persephone, who frowns.

“You barely feel it going in,” Atropos adds, “but coming out’s a killer.” Then she adds, “Metaphorically speaking, of course.”

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Persephone doesn’t look amused.

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She shakes her head. “Only the Fates can.”

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You whisper, “Gods, that’s annoying.”

Clotho hops from her chair and points down at you. “And *that’s* exactly why I chose you to receive the arrow in the first place.”

You furrow your brows, confused. Your entire understanding of causation flies out the window.

“Ready?” Lachesis asks.

You nod.

Suddenly a burning, stinging sensation takes over your chest. It’s as if you can literally feel the tip of the arrow ripping through your heart muscle and then your flesh as the two sisters pull. You scream in agony and flail your arms before everything goes dark.

Sometime later, you awaken in the field of flowers near the babbling brook, where you always go to escape the monotony of your life. You sit up and look around, wondering if all that you can recall about the gods was nothing more than a dream. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



15.13

“I’d rather live a life loving someone I cannot have than one in which I never feel love and desire again,” you say.

“You will still have love for family and friends,” Lachesis clarifies. “Just not for a lover.”

You nod. “And I can’t imagine not having those feelings.”

“But isn’t it painful?” Persephone asks you. “This unrequited love?”

You fight back tears. “Not too much. I can accept my fate.”

Clotho hops up from her chair and points to you. “And *that’s* exactly why I chose you.”

Your furrow your brows in confusion, suddenly unsure about the relationship between causes and their effects. Did *you* cause *Clotho* to compel Cupid to shoot you? Or did *she* cause *you* to be accepting? Which came first?

“Should we tell her about her gift?” Lachesis asks Atropos.

“What gift?” you ask.

“A consolation prize,” Clotho says with a smile. “With the help of Hephaestus, of course.”

You blink and glance at Persephone for clues, but she only shrugs.

Lachesis puts a wrinkled old hand on your shoulder. “We asked the god of the forge to create a woman in Persephone’s image.”

Atropos puts her index fingers in her mouth and whistles. “Persephone! We’re ready for you, dear!”

The goddess Persephone looks as bewildered as you feel when a woman enters the room from a back corridor. She could be Persephone’s clone.

“We just need the goddess to breathe some of her life into the woman, to complete the process,” Lachesis explains.

Persephone approaches her likeness, puts her mouth to that of the other, and blows. Then she steps back and waits.

The woman walks over to you and says hello. You feel the arrow in your heart spreading desire for her throughout your body.

“Shall we go home?” the woman asks you. She offers you her hand.

As soon as you touch it, a blinding light encircles you, and, when you open your eyes, you’re standing beside Persephone in a field of flowers beside the babbling brook where you began.

“Persephone?” you ask.

“Yes?”

“Are you the goddess or the woman?”

“The woman,” she says. “Will you take me home?”

Full of excitement and anticipation of the wondrous life you are about to lead, you take her in your arms and say, “Yes.” (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



16.1

Hecate frowns, which alarms you. She doesn't seem happy to learn that she's the object of your affections.

She crosses the room and takes your hand.

Before you can say anything, you close your eyes against a blinding light that envelops you, along with a pressure from all directions. When you open them again, you're standing with Hecate near the gate to the Seers' Pit.

"Do you have any advice for me?" you ask her.

"Don't do it."

Blood rushes to your cheeks. "Am I really that abhorrent to you?"

"Quite the opposite, but I've sworn my heart to another."

"Can't you change your mind? Most marriages end in divorce nowadays, and eternity is a very long time to be promised to a single person."

Hecate sighs. Even so, she's so beautiful. Her face is the color of moonlight. Her hair is streaked with white and black, giving her an exotic look, even for a goddess. And her black eyes seem as deep as the earth.

Then you gaze at her lips and long to kiss them.

"I can't give you my heart," she says. "But I can be your friend."

Tears well in your eyes. You want so much more from her than friendship, but you suppose you'll take whatever you can get.

"I can also teach you a spell that will help you with this challenge," she offers.

"Would that be considered cheating?" you ask.

"Not if you do it yourself. Would you like to try? You'll have to believe in the magic for it to work."

"Yes. Please teach me the spell."

"I better go without the spell. I don't really believe in that sort of thing."



16.12

Hecate takes your hand and the familiar bright light, along with the pressure, surrounds you as you feel your feet lift from the ground. In the next moment, you find yourself in a room that reminds you of the Palace of Hades and Persephone.

“Where are we?” you ask as she leads you through a thick door into another room alight with the flames of the river of fire.

“In my chambers. It’ll be easier to teach you the spell in here.”

You look around the room. Its dome ceiling is at least ten feet high and covered with dancing shadows, cast by the light of the river of fire, which flows along one side of the room. A stream of water runs on the opposite side from an upper crevice down a series of rocks and pools into a six-foot-wide basin before thinning and disappearing behind another smooth boulder.

Beside the basin and curled on a pillow is a small animal, a cute brown fur ball.

“Who’s this?” you ask.

“Galín, my polecat. This is the time when she likes to sleep.”

“I won’t disturb her, then.”

“My dog is awake and around here somewhere.” Hecate glances about the room. “Cubie? Where are you?”

A black Doberman pinscher with tall ears and a long tail crawls out from beneath the one big bed.

“There she is.” Hecate reaches over and pats the dog on the head. “Were you spying on us?”

“Absolutely,” the dog answers.

You are taken aback by the animal’s ability to speak.

Hecate laughs. “Cubie, this mortal has been struck by Cupid and made to love me. The gods have promised apotheosis in exchange for the successful completion of three challenges. That’s why we’re here. I’m going to teach the mortal how to perform a spell.”

“I see,” the dog says.

Again, you stare in amazement at the dog’s perfect speech.

“Don’t be deceived by appearances,” Hecate says to you. “Cubie was once the Queen of Troy.”

“It’s a long story,” Cubie says in response to your quizzical look.

Hecate crosses the room and beckons you. “This way, to my lab.”

You follow her past the bed through another door filled with shelves and two tables made of petrified wood. The shelves contain numerous small jars filled with liquids and herbs of various colors.

“Wow,” you say as you look around.

“I used to have many more ingredients for my spells and potions,” she says, “but I traded most of them to Circe years ago to save another god from her trap.”

“Circe?” you ask.

“The daughter of the sun god,” Hecate explains. “Ignored by her family, she exiled herself on an island, where she practices black magic.”

“Is that what you practice?” you ask. “Black magic?”

“Oh, no, no, no,” Hecate says as she pulls an empty bowl from a shelf and begins to combine ingredients from different bottles and jars. “Black magic always comes with a price. It requires a sacrifice of life, which I can’t abide. Besides, when you sacrifice the life of another living being, you compromise your own sanity.”

“Does that mean Circe is crazy?” you ask.

Hecate vigorously mixes the contents in her bowl. “Very.”

You hope you won’t ever have dealings with such a person as you watch Hecate work. “What are you mixing together?”

“Saga, salt, and a drop of honey,” she says. “To which you’ll need to add a drop of your blood.”

You unsheathe Athena’s sword and touch your fingertip to the side of the blade. “Will this work?”

“Drop it in,” she says, so you do. Then she mixes it in and hands the bowl to you.

“What do I do with it?”

“Take it with you into the pit,” she says. “The drop of blood and the honey will attract the dead, but the sage and salt will keep them away. With the right words, you can create a temporary trap for the seers while you escape with the fruit.”

“Escape? Will they try to detain me?”

“Probably,” she says. “They’re attracted to human blood.”

You wipe the remaining blood from your fingertip and apply pressure. “What if it doesn’t work?”

“Grab the fruit and run,” she says. “But the spell will work, if you believe in it. Are you ready to learn the words?”

You nod.

“Don’t say them now,” she says. “Wait until you’re in the pit. Place the bowl in a far corner of the room-- as far away from the tree as possible. Then say the words. As soon as you’ve uttered them, run to the other side of the room. When you see the souls gather around the bowl, go to the tree, pick the pomegranate, and return to the gate, where I’ll be waiting. Got it?”

“What are the words?”

“I call the dead to this vessel to taste my blood.”

“That’s it?” you ask.

“That’s it. The ingredients will do the rest.”

“Okay, then,” you say, feeling optimistic. “Let’s go.”

“It’s dark in there,” she says. “So take this moonstone. It will illuminate the path for you.”

You tuck the stone into your pocket. “Thanks.”

Then she takes your hand and god-travels you from her lab and back to the gate to the Seers’ Pit.

“Good luck,” she says as you push open the gate.

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You pull the moonstone from your pocket, and it creates a soft glow of light that allows you to see about five feet in front of you. Cobwebs stick to the stone walls on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend down the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock, and stalactites hanging like icicles from the ceiling. In the center of the room stands a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the trunk is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. It bears no leaves but plenty of fruit.

You shine the moonstone toward the perimeter of the room, where you see transparent figures sitting on the rocks as though they've become part of the formations. One of them is shuffling toward you.

You hasten to the furthest corner, where two of them sit as still as statues. You place the bowl on the cavern floor. Then you say, “I call the dead to this vessel to taste my blood.”

Suddenly, every transparent body in the room is moving. They stand to their feet and shuffle in your direction. You hurry toward the tree in the center of the room and cower near the trunk as the dozen or so figures move to the bowl.

Then you pluck the nearest fruit and run. You hasten and up the winding path to the gate, where Hecate is waiting.

“Well done,” Hecate says. “Are you ready to go to Mount Olympus and discover your second challenge?”

[“I'm as ready as I'll ever be.”](#)

[“Of course, I am!”](#)



16.13

“I should take you to meet Circe some day,” Hecate says. “That would change your mind.”

“Circe?” you ask.

“The daughter of the sun god,” Hecate explains. “Ignored by her family, she exiled herself on an island, where she practices black magic.”

“Is that what you practice?” you ask. “Black magic?”

“Oh, no, no, no,” Hecate says. “Black magic always comes with a price. It requires a sacrifice of life, which I can’t abide. Besides, when you sacrifice the life of another living being, you compromise your own sanity.”

“Does that mean Circe is crazy?” you ask.

“Very.”

“I suppose I should quit stalling and get this over with,” you say.

“Take this.” Hecate hands you a white stone. “It’s a moonstone. It will illuminate the path.”

You shove it into your pocket. “Thanks. Any other advice?”

“Don’t engage with the dead. Just grab your fruit and run back here.”

“Okay,” you say. “Can I have a kiss for good luck?”

She gives you a quick peck on the cheek. “Good luck.”

You push open the gate and enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You pull the moonstone from your pocket, and it creates a soft glow of light that allows you to see about five feet in front of you. Cobwebs stick to the stone walls on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow. When you look up, you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend down the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock, and stalactites hanging like icicles from the ceiling. In the center of the room stands a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the trunk is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. It bears no leaves but plenty of fruit.

You shine the moonstone toward the perimeter of the room, where you see transparent figures sitting on the rocks as though they've become part of the formations. One of them is shuffling toward you.

[You run to the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figures along the perimeter of the pit.](#)



16.15

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, one of the transparent figures shuffles toward you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

“If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future,” he says in a raspy voice.

“Who's old Tiresias?” you ask.

“That's a question I often ask myself,” the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

[“No, thanks,” you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



16.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say no to the crab and yes to the witch. Steal from the Minotaur, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows along the perimeter of the room.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



16.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab and a woman with hair and eyes like the sun. You see the Minotaur and your fallen sword. But then you see yourself back stumbling beside the babbling brook without Hecate and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

One of the souls sitting on a nearby rock says, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. As darkness overcomes you, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



16.14

With the pomegranate in one hand and the moonstone in the other, you run from the Seers' Pit to meet Hecate at the gate.

“Well done!” Hecate says, as she pats you on the back, “Are you ready to go to Mount Olympus and learn your second challenge?”

“Not at all, but let’s go.”

“You bet!”



17.1

The god of sleep appears less than a foot away from you, wearing a cheeky smile. “Hello, gorgeous.”

You beam up at him, taking in his features. He doesn’t look a day older than nineteen. His wavy hair is golden brown, and his eyes are a stunning blue. As you try to greet him back, you stifle a yawn.

Hypnos turns to Hades with his arms raised in frustration. “This isn’t going to work.”

“I’ll take over his duties,” Hecate offers, “if it’s okay with my Lady Persephone.”

“Of course,” Persephone says. “That’s very kind of you, Hecate.”

“Thank you,” Hypnos says to Hecate as they fist bump.

Then Hecate flies away.

Hypnos smiles down at you again. “Where were we, gorgeous?”

You notice Athena roll her eyes and murmur, “Such a playboy.”

Your stomach tightens at the thought of him flirting with others as he’s flirting with you.

“Ready?” Hypnos asks, extending his hand to you.

“Good luck to you, mortal. You’re going to need it,” Athena says before she vanishes.

Hades sighs as he sits on his throne. “You better keep your wits about you, Hip.”

“Hip?” you ask him.

He winks. “My nickname. But you can call me Babe, or Stud.”

You laugh with glee as he offers you his arm and you take it.

“There’s something I want to show you before we leave for Mount Olympus,” he says.

“I’ll go anywhere with you,” you say.

“The sooner the better,” Hades complains. “I’d rather be tormented in Tartarus than listen to another minute of cheesy dialogue.”

“Oh, darling,” Persephone scolds her husband.

Hip laughs as he guides you from the room. You close your eyes when you’re enveloped by a blinding light and a squeezing sensation. The pressure stops, and the light fades, so you open your eyes to find yourself standing beside the god of sleep in a field of white and iridescent flowers.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“The Fields of Asphodel.”

You nod, recalling that you saw them during your tour with Hades. “Does that mean we’re in the Dreamworld?”

“Not yet,” he says. “You have to be asleep to enter my realm.”

“It’s beautiful,” you say, as you yawn widely.

“I brought you here to offer you an alternative to accepting Athena’s challenge.”

All you want to do is to wrap your arms around his neck and to press your body against his, but you smile up at him and say, “Okay. I’m listening.”

To your absolute joy, he encircles your waist with one hand and smooths your hair from your face with the other. “If you accept Athena’s challenge, there’s a good chance you’ll fail. A really good chance.”

You frown.

He pinches your chin and lifts it so that your eyes meet his once again. “You could also die, gorgeous. You need to think about that.”

“What would you have me do?” you ask. “I’d rather die than live without you.”

“I understand,” he says gently. “I know how Cupid’s arrow works.”

“It’s so overwhelming,” you admit. “This desire to kiss you, to hold you, to be with you forever.”

Hypnos makes you the happiest person in the world when he lowers his lips to yours and gently caresses your mouth with his.

You groan with pleasure.

“There’s an easier way,” he says. “I could visit you every night in your dreams.”

You furrow your brows. “My dreams? But that wouldn’t be real.”

“Who says the Dreamworld is any less real?” he says.

You shake your head. “But I want to feel you, to smell you, to hold you.”

“Why don’t you try it with me, just for a little while, and see what you think?” he suggests. “We’ll lie down together, here in the fields, and go to sleep. I’ll find you in the Dreamworld and show you just how nice it can be.”

“Okay,” you say with a sigh. “I’ll give it a try.”

He helps you to lie down in the flowers beside him. He holds you in his arms as you close your eyes and breathe deeply. You love the warmth of his skin against yours, the feel of his hard chest beneath your cheek, and the sound of his heartbeat lulling you to sleep.

After a while, you get up and look around. You’re standing near the babbling brook, where your adventures first began. Just as you’re wondering if you dreamt the whole thing, Hypnos appears before you.

“I thought I’d find you here,” he says.

“How did you know?” you ask.

“Because this is your happy place, where you always go to find peace, whether in your dreams or out there.”

“Out there, where?”

“The so-called ‘real’ world.”

You lift your brows with surprise. “This is a *dream*?”

Hypnos laughs. It’s such a delightful sound.

“But it feels so real.”

“Come here, gorgeous,” he says. “Let me show you just how real.”

As he takes you in his arms and pulls you close to him, you feel you could die with ecstasy. His lips caress your neck before he whispers in your ear, “How does this feel?”

“Incredible,” you murmur.

He sucks on your earlobe and asks, “And this?”

“Amazing,” you say breathlessly.

He touches his lips to each of your eyelids before covering your mouth with his. After sending ripples of pleasure throughout your body, he whispers against your lips, “And this?”

“Don’t stop,” you say.

He chuckles before he lies you down in the field of flowers and brings every part of your body to life.

Sometime later, when you feel happier than you’ve ever felt, you open your eyes to look at your heart’s true love lying beside you, only to see that you’re no longer near the babbling brook. You’ve somehow been transported back to the Underworld, to the Fields of Asphodel.

“Well, hello, gorgeous,” Hip says with a smile. “Sleep well?”

For a moment, you’re confused. “Sleep?” Then it dawns on you that what just took place between you and your heart’s true love happened in your dream.

“I guess I did,” you say. “How incredible. I’ve never had such a vivid dream. It felt so real.”

“It *was* real. And we can share that together every night for as long as you live.”

You run your fingers through his wavy hair, to compare the feeling to what you recall from the dream.

“I don’t know,” you say.

“So, what will it be, gorgeous?” Hypnos asks. “Will you accept Athena’s challenge and deliver the pomegranate to Mount Olympus? Or will you let me take you home with a promise to visit you every night in your dreams?”

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“Take me to the Seers’ Pit.”](#)



17.12

Hypnos takes you in his arms as the bright light envelops you, and the pressure comes down on you from all directions. Then you feel a change and open your eyes. You're standing beside the god of sleep in your very own bedroom.

"I'll come to you tonight," he says before he kisses you again.

"Promise?" you ask.

"Promise."

"I think I might sleep my life away," you say gleefully. "I wish I could sleep and never wake up."

"I can arrange for that, but it's dangerous," Hip says.

"What do you mean?"

"I can put you in the deep boon of sleep, something mortals call a coma, but then your physical body will be at the mercy of others."

You shake your head. "Better not risk it."

"Better not." He kisses you once more. "I'll see you in your dreams."

"Must you go so soon?" you ask, glancing at your bed.

He grins. "I suppose I can stay for a little while."

You spend a lovely night together in your room before the god of sleep returns to his duties with promises to visit you every night in your dreams. You spend your days working productively, making good progress in your career, so that you live quite comfortably. Occasionally, you receive extravagant gifts from your love, such as a gold Lamborghini that appears in your garage one day. You live a long and happy life, though you love your nights far better than your days. (



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!

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17.13

Hynos takes your hand, and you close your eyes against a blinding light that envelops you, along with a pressure, from all directions. When you open your eyes, you find yourself standing before a black iron gate.

“This leads to the Seers’ Pit,” Hynos says. “It’s really dark in there, but I think you can see well enough to pluck a piece of fruit from the tree and leave.”

“And if I can’t?”

“Pray to me, and I’ll send you a light.”

“Why not give me one now?”

“You’ll draw attention to yourself from the dead. Best to get in and out without being noticed.”

“What if the dead notice me anyway, even without a light?”

“Don’t talk to them. Ignore whatever they say.” Hynos strokes your hair. “Remember not to bite the pomegranate, no matter how tempting it is.”

You can’t imagine wanting to destroy your chances of being an immortal with Hip forever. As you enter the gate, you feel nervous but confident.

You enter a corridor that leads into total darkness. You close the gate behind you and can barely see as you approach a winding path. Cobwebs stick to the dry stone on either side of you, along with cascading white flowers that emit a strange orange glow--offering the only light. When you look up, you think you see a coven of bats. Without saying a word, you descend the winding path, wondering if you are headed into the bowels of hell.

You aren't sure how deep or how far you've gone when you enter a large cavernous room divided only by stalagmites, like little mountains of living rock. You can see very little else in the room by the orange glow of the flowers except for the silhouette of a very old-looking tree with branches that are longer than the tree is tall. It makes you think of an upside-down octopus, for the branches are like long tentacles twisting around the rock formations. Without much light, you cannot see if anything grows on the branches.

As you near the tree, something moves to your side. You shudder, unable to tell what it is.

[You run to the tree and search for the nearest hanging fruit, pluck it, and run from the cavern, up the winding path to the iron gate.](#)

[You slowly approach the tree, keeping your eye on the figure creeping beside you.](#)



17.15

As you get within arm's length of the lowest hanging fruit, your eyes adjust to the darkness and you're able to make out the figure creeping beside you. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

"If you give me a drink of your blood, old Tiresias will tell you what he sees of your future," he says in a raspy voice.

"Who's old Tiresias?" you ask.

"That's a question I often ask myself," the weary-looking figure says.

[Eager to know if you succeed in becoming immortal, you use Athena's sword to cut the inside of your palm before extending it to the figure.](#)

["No, thanks," you say, anxious to get out of there. You grab the fruit and run.](#)



17.181

The transparent old man shuffles closer to you, takes your outstretched hand, and holds it to his lips. He moans with delight as he laps up your blood like a dog drinking from a bowl.

Once your hand is licked clean, you pull it away and apply pressure to the wound. “What can you tell me about my future?”

The old man’s head begins to bob, like a bobblehead toy. “Say no to the crab and yes Sleep, but don’t trust the figments. Make the Minotaur your friend, or the owl will condemn you to death.”

“Huh?” you ask. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“If you taste the fruit of this tree, you will see for yourself,” the old man says before he shuffles away to shadows.

You pluck a pomegranate and consider it. There are dozens of other pomegranates hanging from the tree. Couldn’t you eat one of them, so you can see your future, and then take another one to Athena on Mount Olympus?

[You take a bite.](#)

[You run from the pit with the pomegranate in hand, all the way up the winding ramp and back to the iron gate.](#)



17.182

As soon as you've swallowed the bite of pomegranate, your mind is flooded with images. You see a monstrous crab with six long necks and twelve tentacle-like legs. Suddenly you are dropping your sword before the Minotaur. But then you see yourself stumbling beside the babbling brook without Hip and without immortality. But why? How can you fail when you're so determined?

Deciding that visions can be altered, you turn to the old tree and reach for another pomegranate. When you tug at it, it refuses to come loose. You draw Athena's sword and attempt to slice the fruit from the tree, but its stem proves impenetrable.

You try a different pomegranate, but it, too, will not be plucked.

"What's happening?" you cry out loud. "What's wrong with this fruit?"

Three seers sitting on a nearby rock say, "For each who comes the tree gives but one. You cannot have another. And once you eat the fruit's good meat, you'll lose your sight and gain another."

"Huh?" you ask the darkness.

Just then, your eyes begin to burn and everything around you becomes blurry. You pray to Hip for a light, but even when it appears in your hand, the lamp does little to deter the darkness. When you can no longer see, your mind is flooded with new images, and though they are strange, you see what they mean. You understand that you've lost your chances at immortality and will return to where you came, blind to the material world around you but a seer of what's to come. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



17.14

With the pomegranate in hand, you run from the Seers' Pit and meet Hip at the gate.

“You did it!” he says before giving you a kiss that sends your heart fluttering. “Are you ready to go to Mount Olympus and discover your next challenge?”

[“I’m ready for anything with you, Hip.”](#)

[“Hells, yeah!”](#)



18.1

The dark-haired boy with the stunning blue eyes appears on the other side of the room from you, near where Persephone sits on the double throne. He doesn't look older than nineteen. He wears a solemn expression on his face, and it breaks your heart that he seems saddened by the news that you love him.

"How can *I* help" he says, "when my presence threatens the mortal's life?"

Hades crosses the room to sit on the throne beside his wife. "Perhaps Hermes would be willing to cover your duties until the test is finished."

Hecate shakes her head. "He loathes to do it, Lord Hades. Allow me to, instead."

Persephone smiles at her friend. "Thank you, Hecate. How very kind of you."

"Then it's settled," Athena says, turning to Thanatos. "You'll accompany the mortal to Mount Olympus."

Your heart flares with excitement over the thought of sitting beside the stunning god. *I want to kiss you so badly, Thanatos*, you think to yourself.

The god of death gives you a startled look, as if he can read your mind. Suddenly you fear he can.

He leads you from the palace out into a winding path, where you leap over the river of fire toward a rusty gate. You can hear the wails of the tortured crying out as Thanatos releases your hand and pulls the gate open.

"This way," he says, as he enters a dark tunnel that spirals deeper into the ground.

"I can't see," you say, when the dim light of the Phlegethon no longer reaches you.

“Oh, I forgot,” Thanatos says. “Does this help?”

His body emits a glow, like a candle in a diffuser. The glow adds to the god’s beauty while allowing you to see several feet in front of you.

“Yes,” you say. “Thank you.”

You follow him down, down, down, in a spiral descent toward a deep pit.

“Tiresias?” Thanatos calls out.

“I am here,” a voice comes from a crack in the stone.

“He’s on the other side of this wall,” The god says. “Come on.”

He leads you through a narrow opening into a large hall where a dim orange light glimmers over the asphodel cascading down the walls. Many souls wander or sit idly on rocks. You can no longer hear the wails of the tortured.

“It’s quiet,” you whisper.

You take a shaky breath as Tiresias approaches. His soul looks old and weary. He wears a white sarong at his waist and no shirt, exposing the transparent appearance of withered flesh, sagging breasts, and hunched shoulders. With a staff in one hand, he walks without opening his phantom eyes.

“Be forewarned,” the old soothsayer declares. “I have rarely been believed by those who have sought my knowledge.”

“Why?” you blurt out.

“The truth hurts,” the old man replies. “And I don’t like to tell it.”

“We need your help,” Thanatos says. “This mortal has been struck by Cupid while gazing at me. Was it the Fates or Cupid’s mischief that sent the arrow?”

“I’m thirsty,” Tiresias says.

“Right.” Thanatos conjures a dagger and makes a cut along the palm of his hand. “Drink.”

Tiresias presses his lips to Thanatos’s palm and laps up the blood.

“What do you see?” Thanatos asks.

“The Fates are behind this,” Tiresias says.

“Why?” you ask.

“Every century or so, they test the gods and mortals, to remind them of their commitment to one another,” the old prophet says.

“This is a test for the gods, too?” Thanatos asks.

“Even more so for the gods,” Tiresias says. “In fact, I believe you have a visitor, Thanatos.”

The transparent soul shuffles away, and from the dark emerges another strange figure. Half of her face is smooth and black, and the other is white and misshapen. On the white side of her face is a black eye, and on the black side, a white. Her black arm is also smooth, like a slender eel, but the skin of the white arm hangs loose in places and is spotted with hairy moles. The hair on her head is parted down the middle, and each side of the part matches the side of the face it frames, so that whenever you look at her profile, depending on which way she is turned, she looks either all black or all white. She carries a whip and ropes in each hand. One of these ropes has bound two transparent souls.

“Melinoe!” Thanatos cries. “What are you doing here? How did you get in?”

You grab Thanatos’s arm, frightened by his terror.

“I played on Mother’s sympathy for a visit. Works every time.” Then she adds, “I see you’re without your power of disintegration.”

“Hypnos! Hecate! Father!” Thanatos cries, but the misshapen figure vanishes with her captives. The other gods from the Underworld appear seconds after she vanishes.

“Melinoe took two souls,” Thanatos explains. “Give me back my powers so I can hunt her down and bring them back.”

“What about the mortal?” Hecate asks as she touches Thanatos’s fingers and transfers his duties back to him.

“I don’t know. I’ve got to go.”

Your one true love disappears, followed by Hecate and Hades.

“Don’t worry,” Persephone says to you. “I have an idea. Come with me.”

“Where are we going?” you ask.

“To pay a visit to the Fates.”

“But Lord Hades said it was best not to disturb them.”

“This visit may prove him right.”

She takes your hand. You close your eyes to the blinding light that envelops you, along with a pressure, and, when you open them again, you’re standing beside Persephone outside of the Fates’ abode.

She releases your hand and knocks at the thick wooden door.

An old woman with half of her gray hair twisted in a bun on the crown of her head and the other half lying in straight lines along her back, opens the door. She’s wearing a pink velvet pantsuit. “Is it already time?”

“Time for what?” you ask.

Persephone pushes through the door. “I suppose it is.”

You follow her inside.

The chamber belonging to the Fates resembles a Las Vegas casino. It is alight with blinking colors from slot machines crammed together with archaic pinball machines. The machines are situated along the river of fire, which also illuminates the room as it flows in a circle around the perimeter of the cave through a haze of thick cigarette smoke. Two tables occupy the middle of the room. The bigger and more central is a roulette wheel that emanates a barely audible circus tune. To the right of the wheel is a much smaller table with three chairs and stacks of playing cards. Petite wrinkled old ladies, each holding a cigarette, sit opposite one another at the table.

“Are you sure you want another card?” The one dealing is plumper than the others but as small in stature and throaty in voice. Her gray hair is short and curly, and she wears a bright blue shawl over a blue velvet dress.

“Of course not, but hit me anyway.” She looks at the card. “Damn. I’m busted.” She tosses the card on the table and takes a drag from her cigarette. She wears her white hair in a bob with bangs that curl under. As you follow Persephone into the room, she looks at you through her black-rimmed spectacles.

“You won’t like the answer to your question,” she says to you.

“I think I’ll hit the slots for a while,” the one in the pink velvet pantsuit says.

“But what about our guests, Clotho?” the one wearing spectacles asks.

“You deal with them,” Clotho replies. “I need to be amazed.”

Clotho sits down before one of the blinking machines, her back to you.

The dealer turns to her sister. “What do you think about that, Atropos?”

“We knew it would happen, Lachesis. I don’t know why you’re complaining.”

“If you know why I’m here,” Persephone says, “spare us the drama and say whether or not you can liberate this poor mortal from Cupid’s arrow.”

“We can,” Lachesis says.

Your brows fly up. “Then why did your sister say I wouldn’t like the answer?”

Atropos shakes a finger at you. “Because you won’t when you hear the terms.”

“For heaven’s sake,” Persephone says. “What are they?”

Atropos rolls her eyes. “And I thought Clotho had no patience.”

Lachesis, the dealer, says, “If we pull the arrow out—and we’re the only beings capable of doing so—your heart will be scarred for the rest of your mortal life, and you will never be able to love another.”

Your mouth drops open. “That’s horrible!”

“See?” Atropos says. “I told you that you wouldn’t like it.”

“It’s your choice,” Persephone says to you kindly. “Would you rather live pining away for a god who may never love you and whose very presence endangers your life--assuming you fail the challenges? Or would you rather live the rest of your life without feeling love and desire for another?”

“Why are we assuming I’ll fail the challenges?” you ask, turning to the Fates. “What do you see?”

“Don’t ask,” Atropos says. “You won’t like the answer.”

You cross your arms and shake your head at this impossible decision forced upon you.]

[“Pull the arrow out.”](#)

[“Leave the arrow in.”](#)



18.12

“This is going to hurt,” Lachesis says.

You glance over at Persephone, who frowns.

“You barely feel it going in,” Atropos adds, “but coming out’s a killer.” Then she adds, “Metaphorically speaking, of course.”

“You better do it on the roulette table,” Clotho calls out from her machine. “The other table isn’t large enough.”

“We’ve all seen this, Clotho,” Lachesis complains to her sister. To you, she whispers, “Clotho is the spinner. She thinks, since she’s the one that laid this all out for you, that she’s done her part.”

“I can hear you, Lachesis.”

“I know that,” Lachesis says.

“The measurer,” Lachesis says, jabbing a thumb toward her chest.

“I’m the cutter,” Atropos says as she draws a line across her neck.

“If you knew what I’d choose,” you ask, “why did you ask?”

“You still have free will,” Clotho calls from her slot machine. “We just know ahead of time what you’ll choose.”

“Not absolute free will,” Lachesis whispers. “Otherwise, Clotho wouldn’t have a job. She sets up parameters.”

“Like me getting stuck with this arrow,” you say.

“Well, maybe that’s not a good example,” Lachesis admits. “We all had a hand in that, on account of us needing to test the gods. We knew the Underworld gods would pass with flying colors.”

Persephone doesn’t look amused.

“Let’s get on with it,” Atropos says. “Lie down there, mortal.”

They point to the roulette wheel. It doesn’t look like a very comfortable place to lie down, but you do as you’re told.”

The two sisters grip something invisible to your eyes.

“Can you see that?” you ask Persephone.

She shakes her head. “Only the Fates can.”

“And Eros,” Clotho shouts from her machine. “Along with any of his descendants.”

You whisper, “Gods, that’s annoying.”

Clotho hops from her chair and points down at you. “And *that’s* exactly why I chose you to receive the arrow in the first place.”

You furrow your brows, confused. Your entire understanding of causation flies out the window.

“Ready?” Lachesis asks.

You nod.

Suddenly a burning, stinging sensation takes over your chest. It’s as if you can literally feel the tip of the arrow ripping through your heart muscle and then your flesh as the two sisters pull. You scream in agony and flail your arms before everything goes dark.

Sometime later, you awaken in the field of flowers near the babbling brook, where you always go to escape the monotony of your life. You sit up and look around, wondering if all that you can recall about the gods was nothing more than a dream. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



18.13

“I’d rather live a life loving someone I cannot have than one in which I never feel love and desire again,” you say.

“You will still have love for family and friends,” Lachesis clarifies. “Just not for a lover.”

You nod. “And I can’t imagine not having those feelings.”

“But isn’t it painful?” Persephone asks you. “This unrequited love? Thanatos does not love you and may never.”

You fight back tears. “I can accept my fate.”

Clotho hops up from her chair and points to you. “And *that’s* exactly why I chose you.”

Your furrow your brows in confusion, suddenly unsure about the relationship between causes and their effects. Did *you* cause *Clotho* to compel Cupid to shoot you? Or did *she* cause *you* to be accepting? Which came first?

“Should we tell her about her gift?” Lachesis asks Atropos.

“What gift?” you ask.

“A consolation prize,” Clotho says with a smile. “With the help of Hephaestus, of course.”

You blink and glance at Persephone for clues, but she only shrugs.

Lachesis puts a wrinkled old hand on your shoulder. “We asked the god of the forge to create a man in Thanatos’s image.”

Atropos puts her index fingers in her mouth and whistles. “Than! We’re ready for you, dear!”

The goddess Persephone looks as bewildered as you feel when a man enters the room from a back corridor. He could be Thanatos’s clone.”

The man walks over to you and says hello. You feel the arrow in your heart spreading desire for him throughout your body.

“Shall we go home?” the man asks you. He offers you his hand.

As soon as you touch it, a blinding light encircles you, and, when you open your eyes, you’re standing beside Thanatos in a field of flowers beside the babbling brook where you began.

“Thanatos?” you ask.

“Yes?”

“Are you the god or the man?”

“The man,” he says. “Will you take me home?”

Full of excitement and anticipation of the wondrous life you are about to lead, you throw your arms around his neck and say, “Yes.” (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



PART THREE: THE SECOND CHALLENGE

4.2

You fly beside Zeus in his golden chariot across the bright blue sky, headed for Mount Olympus. When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” she says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

You notice that all twelve thrones are now occupied. Zeus quickly introduces you to the others and then asks them what your second challenge is to be.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon, god of the sea, says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal will survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

Artemis raises a hand. “I agree.”

“As do I,” Hera says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

Zeus sighs and turns to you. “Do you accept this challenge? Or would you like me to take you home?”

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“I accept.”](#)



4.27

You and Zeus return to his chariot, where you ask, “Will you come and visit me as often as you can?”

The god of the sky wraps his arms around you. “I will, darling one. Now give me a kiss.”

You relish the feel of his lips against yours and then enjoy the ride through the brilliant sky in his chariot. He returns you to the field of flowers and the babbling brook, where all this began. He lies with you for one glorious afternoon and then leaves with promises to return. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.28

Zeus turns to Poseidon. “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Zeus turns to you. “Where should we start? We can go to the Messina Strait, between the island of Sicily and the Italian mainland, or to the old castle at the bottom of the Ionian Sea. Knowing Scylla, the pearls could be at either place, and both locations are equally dangerous.”

[“The Messina Strait.”](#)

[“The old castle.”](#)



4.21

Zeus takes your hand and flies with you from the temple, across the gold-paved courtyard, over the whale fountain, and to the chariot waiting for you in the garage.

Once you are seated, side by side, Zeus takes the reins and shouts, “To Scylla’s cave at the Messina Strait!”

The chariot springs from Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky. The wind on your face feels refreshing, as does the smell of the sea air. The ocean sparkles below like diamonds.

“We need to talk strategy,” Zeus says beside you. “You could confront Scylla with a sword or a bribe, or you could wait until her lair appears empty and sneak inside to look for the pearls.”

[“I’d rather confront her, since I have no idea where she’s keeping the pearls.”](#)

[“I’d rather avoid the monster and sneak around her lair when she’s not there.”](#)



4.22

The chariot begins to descend toward the tip of the boot of Italy. Zeus brings it to a halt along a rocky crag between two big cities.

“How do you want to confront her?” Zeus asks. “Do you want to use Athena’s sword? Or would you rather offer her a bribe?”

“What kind of bribe?”

He opens his hand, where a golden necklace appears. “This was a wedding gift to Hera from Demeter. She refuses to wear it because Demeter agreed to bear a child for me, to increase our power during the war with the Titans.”

“It’s beautiful,” you say. “Do you think Scylla would trade it for the pearls?”

“I don’t know. She could refuse you. But if you don’t have much experience with a sword, it might be worth a try.”

[“I’d rather go in with my sword drawn.”](#)

[“I’d rather start with the bribe.”](#)



4.221

You follow Zeus from the chariot to the edge of the crag.

“Her cave is down below,” he says. “I’ll take you to the entrance, but if you’re to pass this test, you’ll have to go in without me.”

You nod as he takes your hand and flies with you to the mouth of the cave.

The waves from the sea crash against the rocks below and lightly spray your back as you peer into the dark opening. You draw your sword with a shaking hand and step inside.

At first, you don’t see her; the cavern seems empty except for a primitive bench with some bedding in one corner. Toward the very back, the cave forks into two tunnels, and from one of these, the monster appears.

You’ve never seen such a strange creature before. She stands ten feet tall with six long necks and six ugly heads--only four of which have eyes. She stands on twelve tentacle-like legs and has two enormous crab pincers for arms. The strangest part of her appearance are the six dog heads growing from her waist. They bark at you, as if they have minds of their own.

“Who are you and what do you want?” Scylla screeches.

You raise Athena’s sword. “I was sent by the Olympian gods to retrieve the wedding pearls you stole from Rhode. You might think I look like someone who can be easily defeated, but I warn you, Scylla, I have the power of the Olympians behind me, and this sword from Athena is enchanted.”

You hope she’ll believe your lies, but her laughter tells you she either doesn’t believe you, or she doesn’t care.

“Those pearls should have been mine!” she screams. “Circe the witch made a deal with me and turned me into a beautiful goddess. Helios was in love with me, until Circe’s spell faded, and I became this monster again!”

“I’m sorry that happened to you. Circe played a cruel trick on you. But Rhode shouldn’t be the one to pay. Hand over the pearls, or I’ll attack you with this enchanted sword.”

Scylla lifts one of her enormous pincers and swings it at you, knocking Athena’s sword from your grasp. As the monster lunges at you, you back up, in a panic, and suddenly recall the lightning rod tucked in your belt. Just as the beast falls with her whole weight onto you, You stick the rod through her chest, and blood spurts everywhere. The dogs whine as the long necks flail. For two whole minutes, you bear the weight of the twitching monster.

When you can, you slide out from under her and pull the rod from her heart. She’s still panting, so you pick up Athena’s sword and hold it to one of her center necks.

“Tell me where the pearls are, or I’ll slice of your neck and feed it to Cerberus.”

“Under my pillow,” she says.

You rush to the bench in the back of the cave and feel around the bedding. The string of pearls is there. You rush from the cave, where Zeus is waiting for you.

“I got them!” you shout, victorious.

He takes you in his arms and carried you to the top of the crag and his chariot, where he kisses you passionately.

“You surprise me, darling mortal,” he says tenderly. “Are you ready to learn about your final challenge?”

[“I can’t wait!”](#)

[“Ready!”](#)



4.23

You follow Zeus from the chariot to the edge of the crag.

“Her cave is down below,” he says. “I’ll take you to the entrance, but if you’re to pass this test, you’ll have to go in without me.”

You nod as he takes your hand and flies with you to the mouth of the cave.

The waves from the sea crash against the rocks below and lightly spray your back as you peer into the dark opening.

“It looks empty,” you say to Zeus.

“Then hurry,” he says. “She could return at any moment.”

You rush into the cavern, where you see a primitive bench covered with bedding at the back of the room. You feel around the bedding and look under the bench but find nothing.

You notice that the cave splits into two tunnels, and you decide to continue your search.

[You start with the tunnel on the right.](#)

[You start with the tunnel on the left.](#)



4.231

Cracks in the rock illuminate the tunnel enough for you to make out ledges in the stone wall. You see something shiny on one of them, and when you feel with your hand, you find a necklace made of diamonds. You find other jewels on the ledges, including a string of pearls. Leaving the others, you take the pearls and return to Zeus, who's waiting for you outside the cave.

"I got them!" you shout, victorious.

He takes you in his arms and carried you to the top of the crag and his chariot, where he kisses you passionately.

"You surprise me, darling mortal," he says tenderly. "Are you ready to learn about your final challenge?"

"I can't wait!"

"Ready!"



4.232

Cracks in the cavern above allow enough light to illuminate the path. As you make your way through the tunnel, you hear a strange shuffling sound. You freeze for a moment, to listen. It sounds like a snake.

As you slowly back away, the monster Scylla emerges. She has six long necks and six ugly heads--only four of which have eyes. She propels herself on twelve tentacle-like legs and two pincer arms. Six dogs heads pant at her waist. You draw your sword, but not in time. The monster lurches toward you and swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.24

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Zeus.

Zeus nods to the god of sea and then takes your hand and flies with you from the temple, across the gold-paved courtyard, over the whale fountain, and to the chariot waiting for you in the garage.

Once you are seated, side by side, Zeus takes the reins and shouts, “To the Ionian Sea, to the Old Man’s castle!”

The chariot springs from Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky. The wind on your face feels refreshing, as does the smell of the sea air. The ocean sparkles below like diamonds.

“We need to talk strategy,” Zeus says beside you. “You could confront Phorcys and Keto with a sword or a bribe, or you could try to sneak inside to look for the pearls.”

[“I’d rather confront them, since I have no idea where to look for the pearls.”](#)

[“I’d rather avoid a confrontation and search for the pearls on my own.”](#)



4.25

The chariot begins to descend toward the Ionian Sea, which is positioned between Greece and Italy. Zeus brings it to a halt on a small, deserted island.

“How do you want to confront the old man of the sea and his wife?” Zeus asks. “Do you want to use Athena’s sword? Or would you rather offer them a bribe?”

“What kind of bribe?”

He opens his hand, where a golden necklace appears. “This was a wedding gift to Hera from Demeter. She refuses to wear it because Demeter agreed to bear a child for me, to increase our power during the war with the Titans.”

“It’s beautiful,” you say. “Do you think they would trade it for the pearls?”

“I don’t know. They could refuse you. But if you don’t have much experience with a sword, it might be worth a try.”

“What are they like--the old man of the sea and his wife?” you ask.

“Phorcys has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. Altogether, he’s about ten feet or so in length. His wife is a shifter. Sometimes she’s a merwoman and sometimes she’s half woman and half snake. She’s smaller but very tricky.”

[“I better go in with my sword drawn.”](#)

[“Maybe I should go with the bribe.”](#)



4.251

The golden net appears around you just before Zeus orders the chariot to drive into the sea. You pass all manner of colorful sea life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor.

Soon a very old castle comes into view. The rock of the structure is uneven and covered with algae and barnacles. You notice that there's no other sign of marine life within miles.

Zeus brings the chariot to a halt on the ocean floor about twenty meters from the castle.

"I'll be waiting for you here," he says. "As soon as I see you exit the castle, I'll fly to you and take you to safety."

Zeus kisses you through the golden net. "Good luck, darling mortal."

You swim to the front door and pound on it with the hilt of Athena's sword. A merwoman opens it and glares at you.

"Who are you and what do you want?" she asks.

You raise Athena's sword. "I was sent by the Olympian gods to retrieve the wedding pearls Scylla stole from Rhode. You might think I look like someone who can be easily defeated, but I warn you, I have the power of the Olympians behind me, and this sword from Athena is enchanted."

"Won't you come inside?" the merwoman asks.

You weren't expecting an invitation. You enter, keeping your distance and the sword in front of you. But you've barely set foot inside when something bears down on you from behind. It's Phorcys, and he's tearing you to pieces.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.252

The golden net appears around you just before Zeus orders the chariot to drive into the sea. You pass all manner of colorful sea life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor.

Soon a very old castle comes into view. The rock of the structure is uneven and covered with algae and barnacles. You notice that there's no other sign of marine life within miles.

Zeus brings the chariot to a halt on the ocean floor about twenty meters from the castle.

"I'll be waiting for you here," he says as he hands you the necklace through the weave of the net. "As soon as I see you exit the castle, I'll fly to you and get you out of here."

Zeus kisses you through the golden net. "Good luck, darling mortal."

You swim to the front door and pound on it with your fist. A merwoman opens it and glares at you.

"Who are you and what do you want?" she asks.

"I was sent by the Olympian gods to make a trade for Rhode's wedding pearls, taken by Scylla. Do you know where they are?"

"I'm her mother," the merwoman says. "I know where everything is."

You hold onto to the door to keep from floating away. "Would you be willing to trade Hera's wedding necklace for Rhode's pearls."

"Hera's?" the merwoman says looking closely at the necklace dangling from your fingers inside the net.

“Yes. Bring me the pearls and it’s yours.”

“Won’t you come inside?” the merwoman asks.

You weren’t expecting an invitation. You enter, keeping your distance. But you’ve barely set foot inside when something bears down on you from behind. It’s Phorcys, and he’s tearing you to pieces. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.26

The golden net appears around you just before Zeus orders the chariot to drive into the sea. You pass all manner of colorful marine life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor.

Soon a very old castle comes into view. The rock of the structure is uneven and covered with algae and barnacles. You notice that there's no other sign of life within miles.

Zeus brings the chariot to a halt on the ocean floor about twenty meters from the castle.

"Let's case the castle," Zeus says. "Phorcys and Keto have no guards or servants anymore. If we're careful, we can figure out where they are, so you can avoid them as you swim to Scylla's room."

"And where's that?" you ask.

"In the northeast wing, or the back, right quadrant."

You swim behind Zeus, struggling to keep up, as you approach one of the castle windows. You see a merwoman lying in a huge clam shell. Her husband is sleeping in a bed of seaweed across from her.

Next, you swim to the back, toward Scylla's chambers. You pull on the door and are shocked when it opens.

"I'll wait for you here," Zeus says. "As soon as I see you exit, I'll take you to safety."

You nod, trying not to tremble.

"How about a kiss for good luck?" Zeus offers.

You kiss him through the golden net and then slip inside the castle.

Scylla doesn't have many places in her room where a string of pearls might be hidden. There's a chest, a bed, a dresser with drawers, and a door to either a closet or an adjoining room.

[You open the lid to the chest.](#)

[You look through the drawers.](#)

[You look under the bed.](#)



4.262

Snakes spring out and bite you multiple times through the golden net. You feel the venom burning you as it courses through your veins. Before you can cry out to Zeus for help, your throat closes, you can no longer breathe, and then you give into the darkness. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.2

You fly beside Hera in the golden chariot across the bright blue sky, headed for Mount Olympus. When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” she says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

You notice that all twelve thrones are now occupied. Hera quickly introduces you to the others and then asks them what your second challenge is to be.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon, god of the sea, says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal will survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

Artemis raises a hand. “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

Hera sighs and turns to you. “Do you accept this challenge? Or would you like me to take you home?”

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“I accept.”](#)



5.27

You and Hera return to the chariot, where you ask, “Will you come and visit me as often as you can?”

The queen of the Olympians wraps her arms around you. “I will, dear one. Now give me a kiss.”

You relish the feel of her lips against yours and then enjoy the ride through the brilliant sky in the chariot. She returns you to the field of flowers and the babbling brook, where all this began. She lies with you for one glorious afternoon and then leaves with promises to return. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.28

Hera turns to Poseidon. “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Hera turns to you. “Where should we start? We can go to the Messina Strait, between the island of Sicily and the Italian mainland, or to the old castle at the bottom of the Ionian Sea. Knowing Scylla, the pearls could be at either place, and both locations are equally dangerous.”

[“The Messina Strait.”](#)

[“The old castle.”](#)



5.21

Hera takes your hand and flies with you from the temple, across the gold-paved courtyard, over the whale fountain, and to the chariot waiting for you in the garage.

Once you are seated, side by side, Hera takes the reins and shouts, “To Scylla’s cave at the Messina Strait!”

The chariot springs from Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky. The wind on your face feels refreshing, as does the smell of the sea air. The ocean sparkles below like diamonds.

“We need to talk strategy,” Hera says beside you. “You could confront Scylla with a sword or a bribe, or you could wait until her lair appears empty and sneak inside to look for the pearls.”

[“I’d rather confront her, since I have no idea where she’s keeping the pearls.”](#)

[“I’d rather avoid the monster and sneak around her lair when she’s not there.”](#)



5.22

The chariot begins to descend toward the tip of the boot of Italy. Hera brings it to a halt along a rocky crag between two big cities.

“How do you want to confront her?” Hera asks. “Do you want to use Athena’s sword? Or would you rather offer her a bribe?”

“What kind of bribe?”

She opens her hand, where a golden necklace appears. “This was a wedding gift to me from Demeter. I never wear it, because Demeter agreed to bear a child for Zeus, to increase our power during the war with the Titans.”

“It’s beautiful,” you say. “Do you think Scylla would trade it for the pearls?”

“I don’t know. She could refuse you. But if you don’t have much experience with a sword, it might be worth a try.”

[“I’d rather go in with my sword drawn.”](#)

[“I’d rather start with the bribe.”](#)



5.221

You follow Hera from the chariot to the edge of the crag.

“Her cave is down below,” she says. “I’ll take you to the entrance, but if you’re to pass this test, you’ll have to go in without me.”

You nod as she takes your hand and flies with you to the mouth of the cave.

The waves from the sea crash against the rocks below and lightly spray your back as you peer into the dark opening. You draw your sword with a shaking hand and step inside.

At first, you don’t see her; the cavern seems empty except for a primitive bench with some bedding in one corner. Toward the very back, the cave forks into two tunnels, and from one of these, the monster appears.

You’ve never seen such a strange creature before. She stands ten feet tall with six long necks and six ugly heads--only four of which have eyes. She stands on twelve tentacle-like legs and has two enormous crab pincers for arms. The strangest part of her appearance are the six dog heads growing from her waist. They bark at you, as if they have minds of their own.

“Who are you and what do you want?” Scylla screeches.

You raise Athena’s sword. “I was sent by the Olympian gods to retrieve the wedding pearls you stole from Rhode. You might think I look like someone who can be easily defeated, but I warn you, Scylla, I have the power of the Olympians behind me, and this sword from Athena is enchanted.”

You hope she’ll believe your lies, but her laughter tells you she either doesn’t believe you, or she doesn’t care.

“Those pearls should have been mine!” she screams. “Circe the witch made a deal with me and turned me into a beautiful goddess. Helios was in love with me, until Circe’s spell faded, and I became this monster again!”

“I’m sorry that happened to you. Circe played a cruel trick on you. But Rhode shouldn’t be the one to pay. Hand over the pearls, or I’ll attack you with this enchanted sword.”

Scylla lifts one of her enormous pincers and swings it at you, knocking Athena’s sword from your grasp. As the monster lunges at you, you back up, in a panic, and suddenly think of Athena’s scabbard and grab it, feeling desperate. Just as the beast falls with her whole weight onto you, you jam the scabbard into one of her mouths and through the other side. Blood spurts everywhere. The dogs whine as the long necks flail. For two whole minutes, you bear the weight of the twitching monster.

When you can, you slide out from under her and pull the scabbard from her heart. She’s still panting, so you pick up Athena’s sword and hold it to one of her center necks.

“Tell me where the pearls are, or I’ll slice of your neck and feed it to Cerberus.”

“Under my pillow,” she says.

You rush to the bench in the back of the cave and feel around the bedding. The string of pearls is there. You grab them and rush from the cave, where Hera is waiting for you.

“I got them!” you shout, victorious.

She takes your hand and flies with you to the top of the crag and her chariot, where she kisses you passionately.

“You surprise me, dear one,” she says tenderly. “Are you ready to learn about your final challenge?”

[“I can’t wait!”](#)

[“Ready!”](#)



5.23

You follow Hera from the chariot to the edge of the crag.

“Her cave is down below,” she says. “I’ll take you to the entrance, but if you’re to pass this test, you’ll have to go in without me.”

You nod as she takes your hand and flies with you to the mouth of the cave.

The waves from the sea crash against the rocks below and lightly spray your back as you peer into the dark opening.

“It looks empty,” you say to Hera.

“Then hurry,” she says. “She could return at any moment.”

You rush into the cavern, where you see a primitive bench covered with bedding at the back of the room. You feel around the bedding and look under the bench but find nothing.

You notice that the cave splits into two tunnels, and you decide to continue your search.

[You start with the tunnel on the right.](#)

[You start with the tunnel on the left.](#)



5.231

Cracks in the rock illuminate the tunnel enough for you to make out ledges in the stone wall. You see something shiny on one of them, and when you feel with your hand, you find a necklace made of diamonds. You find other jewels on the ledges, including a string of pearls. Leaving the others, you take the pearls and return to Hera, who's waiting for you outside the cave.

"I got them!" you shout, victorious.

Hera takes your hand and flies with you to the top of the crag and her chariot, where she kisses you passionately.

"You surprise me, dear one," she says tenderly. "Are you ready to learn about your final challenge?"

"I can't wait!"

"It's about time!"



5.232

Cracks in the cavern above allow enough light to illuminate the path. As you make your way through the tunnel, you hear a strange shuffling sound. You freeze for a moment, to listen. It sounds like a snake.

As you slowly back away, the monster Scylla emerges. She has six long necks and six ugly heads--only four of which have eyes. She propels herself on twelve tentacle-like legs and two pincer arms. Six dog heads pant at her waist. You draw your sword, but not in time. The monster lurches toward you and swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.24

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Hera.

Hera nods to the god of sea and then takes your hand and flies with you from the temple, across the gold-paved courtyard, over the whale fountain, and to the chariot waiting for you in the garage.

Once you are seated, side by side, Hera takes the reins and shouts, “To the Ionian Sea, to the Old Man’s castle!”

The chariot springs from Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky. The wind on your face feels refreshing, as does the smell of the sea air. The ocean sparkles below like diamonds.

“We need to talk strategy,” Hera says beside you. “You could confront Phorcys and Keto with a sword or a bribe, or you could try to sneak inside to look for the pearls.”

[“I’d rather confront them, since I have no idea where to look for the pearls.”](#)

[“I’d rather avoid a confrontation and search for the pearls on my own.”](#)



5.25

The chariot begins to descend toward the Ionian Sea, which is positioned between Greece and Italy. Hera brings it to a halt on a small, deserted island.

“How do you want to confront the old man of the sea and his wife?” Hera asks. “Do you want to use Athena’s sword? Or would you rather offer them a bribe?”

“What kind of bribe?”

She opens his hand, where a golden necklace appears. “This was a wedding gift to me from Demeter. I never wear it, because Demeter agreed to bear a child for Zeus, after we were married, to increase our power during the war with the Titans.”

“It’s beautiful,” you say. “Do you think they would trade it for the pearls?”

“I don’t know. They could refuse you. But if you don’t have much experience with a sword, it might be worth a try.”

“What are they like--the old man of the sea and his wife?” you ask.

“Phorcys has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. Altogether, he’s about ten feet or so in length. His wife is a shifter. Sometimes she’s a merwoman and sometimes she’s half woman and half snake. She’s smaller but very tricky.”]

[“I better go in with my sword drawn.”](#)

[“Maybe I should go with the bribe.”](#)



5.251

The golden net appears around you just before Hera orders the chariot to drive into the sea. You pass all manner of colorful sea life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor.

Soon a very old castle comes into view. The rock of the structure is uneven and covered with algae and barnacles. You notice that there's no other sign of marine life within miles of the castle.

Hera brings the chariot to a halt on the ocean floor about twenty meters from the castle.

"I'll be waiting for you here," she says. "As soon as I see you exit the castle, I'll fly to you and get you out of here."

Hera kisses you through the golden net. "Good luck, dear one."

You swim to the front door and pound on it with the hilt of Athena's sword. A merwoman opens it and glares at you.

"Who are you and what do you want?" she asks.

You raise Athena's sword. "I was sent by the Olympian gods to retrieve the wedding pearls Scylla stole from Rhode. You might think I look like someone who can be easily defeated, but I warn you, I have the power of the Olympians behind me, and this sword from Athena is enchanted."

"Won't you come inside?" the merwoman asks.

You weren't expecting an invitation. You enter, keeping your distance and the sword in front of you. But you've barely set foot inside when something bears down on you from behind. It's Phorcys, and he's tearing you to pieces.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.252

The golden net appears around you just before Hera orders the chariot to drive into the sea. You pass all manner of colorful sea life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor.

Soon a very old castle comes into view. The rock of the structure is uneven and covered with algae and barnacles. You notice that there's no other sign of marine life within miles of the castle.

Hera brings the chariot to a halt on the ocean floor about twenty meters from the castle.

"I'll be waiting for you here," she says as she hands you the necklace through the weave of the net. "As soon as I see you exit the castle, I'll fly to you and get you out of here."

Hera kisses you through the golden net. "Good luck, dear one."

You swim to the front door and pound on it with your fist. A merwoman opens it and glares at you.

"Who are you and what do you want?" she asks.

"I was sent by the Olympian gods to make a trade for Rhode's wedding pearls, taken by Scylla. Do you know where they are?"

"I'm her mother," the merwoman says. "I know where everything is."

You hold onto to the door to keep from floating away. "Would you be willing to trade Hera's wedding necklace for Rhode's pearls?"

"Hera's?" the merwoman says looking closely at the necklace dangling from your fingers inside the net.

"Yes. Bring me the pearls and it's yours."

“Won’t you come inside?” the merwoman asks.

You weren’t expecting an invitation. You enter, keeping your distance. But you’ve barely set foot inside when something bears down on you from behind. It’s Phorcys, and he’s tearing you to pieces. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.26

The golden net appears around you just before Hera orders the chariot to drive into the sea. You pass all manner of colorful marine life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor.

Soon a very old castle comes into view. The rock of the structure is uneven and covered with algae and barnacles. You notice that there's no other sign of life within miles of the castle.

Hera brings the chariot to a halt on the ocean floor about twenty meters from the castle.

"Let's case the castle," Hera says. "Phorcys and Keto have no guards or servants anymore. If we're careful, we can figure out where they are in the castle, so you can avoid them as you swim to Scylla's room."

"And where's that?" you ask.

"In the northeast wing, or the back, right quadrant."

You swim behind Hera, struggling to keep up, as you approach one of the castle windows. You see a merwoman lying in a huge clam shell. Her husband is sleeping in a bed of seaweed across from her.

Next, you swim to the back, toward Scylla's chambers. You pull on the door and are shocked when it opens.

"I'll wait for you here," Hera says. "As soon as I see you exit, I'll get you out of here."

You nod, trying not to tremble.

"How about a kiss for good luck?" Hera offers.

You kiss her through the golden net and then slip inside the castle.

Scylla doesn't have many places in her room where a string of pearls might be hidden. There's a chest, a bed, a dresser with drawers, and a door to either a closet or an adjoining room.

[You open the lid to the chest.](#)

[You look through the drawers.](#)

[You look under the bed.](#)



5.262

Snakes spring out at you and bite you multiple times through the golden net. You feel the venom burning you as it courses through your veins. Before you can cry out to Hera for help, your throat closes, you can no longer breathe, and then you give into the darkness. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.2

Ares takes you via god-travel back to Mount Olympus. When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” she says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

You notice that all twelve thrones are now occupied. Ares quickly introduces you to the others and then asks them what your second challenge is to be.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon, god of the sea, says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal will survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues as he gives you a reassuring wink.
“If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

Artemis raises a hand. “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Ares.

Ares nods to the god of sea and asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Ares turns to you. “Where should we start? We can go to the Messina Strait, between the island of Sicily and the Italian mainland, or to the old castle at the bottom of the Ionian Sea. Knowing Scylla, the pearls could be at either place, and both locations are equally dangerous.”

[“The Messina Strait.”](#)

[“The old castle.”](#)



6.21

Ares takes you in his arms as a bright light and strong pressure wrap around you. You close your eyes, and when you open them again, you are standing on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside of the city, Silla, named for the beast who dwells in the cave below this cliff.”

“What’s the beast like?” you ask.

“Strange and terrifying. You’ve never seen a creature like her before. She has six long necks and six grisly heads--only four of which have eyes. Her teeth are jagged in three rows per mouth. She walks on twelve tentacles and has crab pincers for arms.”

You shudder. “She sounds horrendous.”

“The strangest part about her are the six dog heads that grow from her waist and bark of their own accord.”

“Ares, how in the world can I possibly succeed against such a creature?”

“You have two options. Attack or sneak around.”

“I doubt I have much of a chance if I attack her,” you say.

“I can teach you how to throw an axe. It’s a lot easier than you might think. And if you aim for her anything other than her necks or limbs--if you hit the trunk of her body--you’ll injure her badly enough to incapacitate her for at least fifteen minutes.”

“You really think I can do it?”

“With me as your teacher? Do you really have to ask?”

His cocky attitude is so sexy, that you wish you could make out before you risk your life. You remind yourself that, if you pass all three tests, you can be with him forever.

“So, which will it be?” he asks. “You want to learn how to throw an axe? Or would you rather wait when she’s not in her cave, so you can sneak around for the pearls?”

“Teach me how to throw an axe.”

“I’d rather avoid a confrontation and search for the pearls when she’s not in the cave.”



6.22

An axe with a wooden handle and a sharp blade appears in Ares's hand. He leads you away from the sea toward a copse of trees.

“You'll want to be five or six steps away from your target to ensure you hit your mark,” he says. “And when you hold it, be sure you keep your wrist locked. The power from the throw doesn't come from your hand, okay? It comes from your momentum forward. Let me show you.”

Ares stands about six paces from one of the trees. He lines up the axe with his target. “You'll want the butt lined up with your target. Scylla's heart is about five feet from the ground. I like to take a step when I throw. It's important to follow through. The axe will make a single revolution before it strikes.”

Ares throws the axe in one fluid motion, and the blade penetrated the trunk of the tree and sticks.

“Your turn,” he says, as he swiftly flies to retrieve the axe.

When you imitate him, the axe falls to the ground.

“Maybe you should do a two-handed throw,” he says.

He demonstrates taking the axe over his head. When he releases, he nearly chops down the tree.

“Let's have you try this tree over here,” he says.

You grip the axe in both hands.

“Lock those wrists,” he reminds you. “Be sure to release when your arms extend about forty-five degrees from the ground. Last time, you released too late. And don't forget to follow through. Bring both arms down to your sides, just as you saw me do.”

You let out a deep breath. “That’s a lot to remember.”

“Believe in yourself,” Ares says. “If you don’t believe you can do it, you can’t. I know you can. You need to know it, too.”

“I can do this,” you say.

You lift the axe in both hands over your head. You take a step and swing forward, releasing the axe high and following through. You’re shocked when the blade sticks into the trunk of the tree.

“Perfect!” Ares says. “Now do it again.”

Ares has you practice ten more times before he believes you’re ready. He takes your hand and flies you down the cliff edge to the mouth of a cave.

“How about a kiss for good luck?” you ask him.

“It would be my pleasure, baby doll.”

When he presses his mouth against yours, you feel weak in the knees. You pull away, gasping.

He chuckles while you recover, psyching yourself up for the attack.

“What should I do if I miss?” you ask.

“You won’t miss,” he says. “Believe it, and you won’t.”

Although you don’t like not having a contingent plan, you step into the cave. At first, you see only a primitive bench with bedding on it in the back. But then, the monster emerges.

“Who are you and what do you want?” she screeches as she crosses the cave toward you.

When she’s about five steps away, you lift the hatchet overhead, take a step, and release. You shout with glee when the blade strikes her directly in the heart and blood spurts everywhere. Quickly, you take your sword and hold it to one of her necks.

“Tell me where you’ve hidden Rhode’s wedding pearls, or I’ll cut off your neck and feed it to Cerberus.”

“They’re not here. They’re at the old castle, where I grew up. I still have a room there. The pearls are in my room.”

[You cut through one of her necks anyway and throw it through the mouth of the cave to Ares, who laughs with glee before throwing it into the sea.](#)

You run from the cave and tell Ares the pearls are at the old castle.



6.23

He takes your hand and flies you down the cliff edge to the mouth of a cave.

“How about a kiss for good luck?” you ask him.

“It would be my pleasure, baby doll.”

When he presses his mouth against yours, you feel weak in the knees. You pull away, gasping.

He chuckles while you recover, psyching yourself up for the mission.

As you peer into the cave, the only thing you see is a primitive bench covered in bedding pushed against the far wall.

“It doesn’t look like she’s here,” you say.

“Then hurry,” he says. “She could return at any moment.”

You go to the bed and feel around but finding nothing in the bedding. You look below it--also nothing. At the back of the cave, two tunnels veer off in opposite directions.

[You start with the right tunnel.](#)

[You start with the left tunnel.](#)



6.231

Cracks in the cavern above you allow enough light to illuminate your path. You notice a series of ledges in the wall of the tunnel with what appear to be jewels stashed on them. You reach up to pull a strand of diamonds from the upper ledge when a viper leaps out and bites you in the neck.

You feel its venom burning you as it courses through your veins. Before you can cry out to Ares for help, you fall to the ground and give in to the darkness.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.232

Cracks in the cavern above you allow enough light to illuminate the path. As the tunnel winds to the left, something shuffles in the dark ahead of you. You freeze, so you can listen. It sounds like a snake slithering across the floor.

As you slowly back away, Scylla leaps at you from the darkness and swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.24

Ares takes you in his arms as a bright light and strong pressure wrap around you. You close your eyes, and when you open them again, you are standing on a small deserted island in the middle of the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“The Ionian Sea, between Greece and Italy. The castle where Phorcys and Keto live is at the bottom.”

“And what are they like?”

“Strange and terrifying. Phorcys has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. His wife, Keto, is sometimes a merwoman and sometimes a half-woman-half-snake, like her daughter, Echidna--who could be there, too.”

You shudder. “They sound horrendous.”

“Phorcys and Keto are the parents of most of the monsters: Cerberus and Hydra, Echidna, Chimera, Scylla--the list goes on.”

“What if they’re all at home?” you ask as your teeth begin to chatter.

“Then you’re doomed,” he says. “We should case the castle to determine how many are at home before you go inside”

The golden net appears around you.

“Ares, how much of a chance to have against such monsters?”

“You must believe you can do this. You’re skilled with the sword and shield. If you have one, maybe two, monsters to contend with, you’ll be fine. They don’t have weapons or any knowledge of how to use them.”

“You really think I can do it?”

“With me as your teacher? Do you really have to ask?”

His cocky attitude is so sexy, that you wish you could make out before you risk your life. You remind yourself that, if you pass all three tests, you can be with him forever.

“Are you ready to swim with me to the old castle?” he asks.

“Yes,” you say, trying to sound braver than you feel.

“I’m ready!” you shout, eager to kick some monster ass.



6.25

Ares climbs beneath the golden net with you, so you can ride on his back as he swims through the water at lightning speed toward the bottom of the ocean. He stops before the old castle, which looks primitive and uneven and is covered with algae and barnacles.

Together, you approach one of the windows, through which water freely flows. Inside, you see a merwoman sitting at a wooden table eating what looks like an eel--Ketos. Her husband, Phorcys, has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. He sits across from her with a bowl full of dead fish.

Ares swims with you to the very back of the stone building and says close to your ear, "Sound travels very easily in water, so be as silent as air. Scylla's chambers are here, in the back, through this window."

You peer through to find a room with a bed lined with a mat of seaweed, a chest on the floor at the foot of the bed, a set of drawers against one wall, and two doors.

The god of war gives you a kiss before he climbs from the net and helps you through the window.

[You swim to the chest and open it.](#)

[You swim to the set of drawers and open them.](#)

[You swim to the bed and check under the pillow.](#)



6.261

Snakes spring at you, biting you through the golden net in multiple places. You feel their venom burning you, coursing through your veins. Before you can cry to Ares for help, your throat closes up completely, and you can no longer breathe, even with the golden net secure around you. Within a matter of seconds, you close your eyes and give in to the darkness. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.262

You aren't sure what led you to the pillow--perhaps the fact that you've sometimes hidden your favorite prizes beneath your own. However, you are shocked when you find the string of pearls. Quickly, you grab them and swim to the window, where Ares is waiting for you.

The pressure of god travel wraps around you, and when you open your eyes, you find yourself outside the gates of Mount Olympus.

Ares removes the golden net and gives you a triumphant kiss. He pulls you close to him and you wrap your arms around his neck.

"I knew you could do it," he says. "Are you ready to discover what your final test will be?"

["Never reader!"](#)

["Do you have to ask?"](#)



7.2

Artemis flies with you back to Mount Olympus. When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

You notice that all twelve thrones are now occupied. Artemis quickly introduces you to the others and then asks them what your second challenge is to be.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon, god of the sea, says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal will survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

From his throne, Hades says, “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Artemis.

Artemis nods to the god of sea and asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Artemis turns to you. “Where should we start? We can go to the Messina Strait, between the island of Sicily and the Italian mainland, or to the old castle at the bottom of the Ionian Sea. Knowing Scylla, the pearls could be at either place, and both locations are equally dangerous.”

[“The Messina Strait.”](#)

[“The old castle.”](#)



7.21

Artemis takes your hand and flies with you from Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky. The sea below sparkles like diamonds, and the fresh air feels good against your face.

“Does this ever get old?” you ask the goddess.

She gives you a smile. “Never.”

Soon, she sets you on your feet on a cliff edge overlooking the shimmering sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside of the city, Silla, named for the beast who dwells in the cave below this cliff.”

“What’s the beast like?” you ask.

“Strange and terrifying. You’ve never seen a creature like her before. She has six long necks and six grisly heads--only four of which have eyes. Her teeth are jagged in three rows per mouth. She walks on twelve tentacles and has crab pincers for arms.”

You shudder. “She sounds horrendous.”

“The strangest part about her are the six dog heads that grow from her waist and bark of their own accord.”

“Artemis, how in the world can I possibly succeed against such a creature?”

“You have two options. Attack or sneak around.”

“I doubt I have much of a chance if I attack her,” you say.

“Why would you offend your teacher by saying such a thing?”

“I meant no offense to you,” you say.

“You have good skills with the bow and arrow, and we can practice some more before you attack.”

“You really think I can do it?”

“With me as your teacher? Do you really have to ask?”

Her cocky attitude is sexy, and you wish you could make out before you risk your life. You remind yourself that, if you pass all three tests, you can be with her forever.

“So, which will it be?” she asks. “You want to attack Scylla and force her to tell you the location of the pearls? Or would you rather wait when she’s not in her cave, so you can search for them without a confrontation?”

“Let’s practice shooting. I don’t want to risk not finding the pearls.”

“I’d rather avoid a confrontation and search for the pearls when she’s not in the cave.”



7.22

Artemis takes your hand and leads you away from the sea toward a copse of trees.

“You’ll want to be no more than ten feet away from your target to ensure you hit your mark,” she says. “Do you remember which is your dominant eye?”

You point to it.

“Good, so show me how you hold the bow.” She hands you her weapon.

You hold your legs apart, with that leg in front and pull back the bow.

“Good.” Artemis straps her quiver to your back. “Now show me how you nock an arrow.”

You pull an arrow from the quiver and fit it to the bow.

“Remember, drawing hand comes by the ear.” She helps you to adjust. “Look down the arrow at your target. When you’re ready, release the arrow.”

You release the arrow, but it glides to the left of the tree.

“You moved the bow when you released,” Artemis says. “You have to keep it steady when you release the arrow.”

You let out a deep breath. “It’s a lot to remember.”

“Believe in yourself,” Artemis says. “If you don’t believe you can do it, you can’t. I know you can. You need to know it, too. You’ve done it before.”

“I can do this,” you say. “I have done this.”

You resume your stance, nock the arrow, position the bow, and, holding as still as you can, you release the arrow.

“Perfect!” Artemis says. “Now do it again.”

Artemis has you practice ten more times before she believes you’re ready. She takes your hand and flies you down the cliff edge to the mouth of a cave.

“How about a kiss for good luck?” you ask her.

“It would be my pleasure, sweet cheeks.”

When she presses her mouth against yours, you pull her close and give it all you’ve got--like it’s the last time.

She pushes you back. “This isn’t goodbye. Believe.”

“What should I do if I miss?” you ask.

“You won’t miss,” she says. “Believe it, and you won’t.”

Although you don’t like not having a contingent plan, you step into the cave. At first, you see only a primitive bench with bedding on it in the back. But then, the monster emerges.

“Who are you and what do you want?” she screeches as she crosses the cave toward you.

When she’s about ten steps away, you fit the arrow, position your bow, and release--all while she’s flailing toward you. You shout with glee when the arrow strikes her directly in the heart and blood spurts everywhere as she falls to the ground. Quickly, you take your sword and hold it to one of her necks.

“Tell me where you’ve hidden Rhode’s wedding pearls, or I’ll cut off your neck and feed it to Cerberus.”

“They’re not here. They’re at the old castle, where I grew up. I still have a room there. The pearls are in my room.”

[You cut through one of her necks anyway and throw it through the mouth of the cave to Artemis, who laughs with glee before throwing it into the sea.](#)

[You run from the cave and tell Artemis the pearls are at the old castle.](#)



7.23

Artemis takes your hand and flies you down the cliff edge to the mouth of a cave.

“How about a kiss for good luck?” you ask her.

“It would be my pleasure, sweet cheeks.”

When she presses her mouth against yours, you take her in your arms and pull her close, kissing her like it’s the last time.

She pulls away. “This isn’t goodbye. Okay? Believe in yourself.”

You nod and whisper, “I believe.”

As you peer into the cave, the only thing you see is a primitive bench covered in bedding pushed against the far wall.

“It doesn’t look like she’s here,” you say.

“Then hurry,” she says. “She could return at any moment.”

You go to the bed and feel around but finding nothing in the bedding. You look below it--also nothing. At the back of the cave, two tunnels veer off in opposite directions.

[You start with the right tunnel.](#)

[You start with the left tunnel.](#)



7.231

Cracks in the cavern above you allow enough light to illuminate your path. You notice a series of ledges in the wall of the tunnel with what appear to be jewels stashed on them. You reach up to pull a strand of diamonds from the upper ledge when a viper leaps out and bites you in the neck.

You feel its venom burning you as it courses through your veins. Before you can cry out to Artemis for help, you fall to the ground and give in to the darkness. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



7.232

Cracks in the cavern above you allow enough light to illuminate the path. As the tunnel winds to the left, something shuffles in the dark ahead of you. You freeze, so you can listen. It sounds like a snake slithering across the floor.

As you slowly back away, you fit an arrow to the bow and then stand your ground. Suddenly, the monster appears from the darkness and barrels toward you. When she's about ten paces away, you release the arrow, causing you to fall to the ground at your feet. You unsheathe Athena's sword and hold the weapon to one of the six necks.

"Tell me where you've hidden Rhode's wedding pearls, or I'll cut off your head and feed it to Cerberus."

She gasps. "I'm wearing them around my waist."

You look in horror at the six whining dog heads at her waist and, sure enough, dangling beneath them is the string of pearls.

Not wanting to break them, you search for a clasp and find one at the back. Then you take the pearls and return to the mouth of the cave, where Artemis is waiting.

"I've got them!" you shout.

She takes you in her arms and flies with you to the gates of Mount Olympus. You don't see much along the way, because the two of you make out for most of the flight. But when she sets you down on your feet outside the gates, she asks, "Are you ready to discover your final challenge?"

"I've never been readier!"

"I can't wait!"



7.24

Artemis takes your hand and flies with you from Mount Olympus and out into the clear blue sky. The sea sparkles like diamonds below you, and the air feels refreshing on your face.

“Does this ever get old?” you ask her.

“Never,” she says with a smile.

A few more minutes pass before she descends toward the sea and sets you on your feet beside her on a small deserted island.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“The Ionian Sea, between Greece and Italy. The castle where Phorcys and Keto live is at the bottom.”

“And what are Phorcys and Keto like?”

“Strange and terrifying. Phorcys has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. His wife, Keto, is sometimes a merwoman and sometimes a half-woman-half-snake, like her daughter, Echidna--who could be there, too.”

You shudder. “They sound horrendous.”

“Phorcys and Keto are the parents of most of the monsters: Cerberus and Hydra, Echidna, Chimera, Scylla--the list goes on.”

“What if they’re all at home?” you ask as your teeth begin to chatter.

“You shoot them all,” she says. “But we’ll case the joint before you enter, so you know what you’re up against.”

“Artemis, how much of a chance do I have against such monsters?”

“Would you like to practice before we go to the bottom of the sea?”

“Please,” you say.

“Remind me which is your dominant eye?” she asks.

You point to it.

“Show me how to hold the bow,” she says as she hands you her weapon.

You spread your legs apart, with that leg in front. Then you pull the bow back.

“Remember to bring your hand just past your ear,” she says as she adjusts your position.

She straps her quiver to your back. “Nock an arrow and do it again.”

You fit the arrow and pull back the bow.

“Do you see that seagull flying in the distance?” Artemis asks you.

“You want me to shoot it?”

“Wait till it comes this way, within twenty or thirty feet.”

Artemis makes a call like a gull, and the bird flies toward you.

When you release the arrow, it misses the bird entirely.

“Damn,” you say.

“You moved the bow when you released the arrow. You have to hold it steady. Besides, the monsters are quite a bit larger than that bird, so you’re sure to hit them.”

“You really think I can do it?”

“With me as your teacher? Do you really have to ask?”

Her cocky attitude is so sexy, that you wish you could make out before you risk your life. You remind yourself that, if you pass all three tests, you can be with her forever.

She makes you practice on another bird. Although you miss a second time, the third's a charm.

"I got it!" you cry.

"Are you ready to swim with me to the old castle?" she asks.

"Yes," you say, trying to sound braver than you feel.

"I'm ready!" you shout, eager to kick some monster ass.



7.25

The golden net appears on you. Then Artemis takes your hand and leads you through the deep blue sea toward the ocean floor. You pass all manner of colorful life on the way down, but once the old castle comes into view, you see no life around for miles.

The castle looks old and decrepit--all but a ruin. The stone walls are uneven and covered with algae and barnacles.

Together, you approach one of the windows, through which water freely flows. Inside, you see a merwoman, who must be Ketos, sitting at a wooden table eating what looks like a crab. Her husband, Phorcys, has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. He sits across from her with a partially eaten fish in one hand.

Artemis swims with you to the very back of the stone building and says close to your ear, "Sound travels very easily in water, so be as silent as air. Scylla's chambers are here, in the back, through this window."

"Why is it so easy to invade this castle?" you whisper.

"The old man of the sea and his wife fell out of power centuries ago, when the Olympians won the war with the Titans. They can no longer keep guards or servants. They leave a meager existence. But don't be fooled. They are still vicious and strong and can easily kill you. Use the bow and arrow if anyone discovers you. Shoot first and talk later."

You peer through the window to find a room with a bed lined with a mat of seaweed, a chest on the floor at the foot of the bed, a set of drawers against one wall, and two doors.

The goddess of the hunt gives you a kiss before she helps you through the window.

You swim to the chest and open it.

You swim to the set of drawers and open them.

You swim to the bed and check beneath it.



7.261

Snakes spring at you, biting you through the golden net in multiple places. You feel their venom burning you, coursing through your veins.

Then the merwoman appears in the doorway and screams at you. Her monstrous husband is behind her. As your throat closes up and you can barely breathe, you fit an arrow to the bow and shoot.

It floats harmlessly to the other side of the room.

“I told you food would come to us, didn't I?” the merwoman says to her husband as you close your eyes.

As you feel your limbs being ripped from your body, you give in to the darkness. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



8.2

Apollo flies with you back to Mount Olympus. When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

You notice that all twelve thrones are now occupied. Apollo quickly introduces you to the others and then asks them what your second challenge is to be.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon, god of the sea, says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal can survive.”

Your heart feels like it’s broken in two.

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

From his throne, Hades says, “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Apollo.

Apollo nods to the god of sea and asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Apollo turns to you. “Where should we start? We can go to the Messina Strait, between the island of Sicily and the Italian mainland, or to the old castle at the bottom of the Ionian Sea. Knowing Scylla, the pearls could be at either place, and both locations are equally dangerous.”

[“The Messina Strait.”](#)

[“The old castle.”](#)



8.21

Apollo takes your hand and flies with you from Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky. The sea below sparkles like diamonds, and the fresh air feels good against your face.

“Does this ever get old?” you ask.

He gives you a smile. “Never.”

Soon, he sets you on your feet on a cliff edge overlooking the shimmering sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside of the city Silla, named for the beast who dwells in the cave below this cliff.”

“What’s the beast like?” you ask.

“Strange and terrifying. You’ve never seen a creature like her before. She has six long necks and six grisly heads--only four of which have eyes. Her teeth are jagged in three rows per mouth. She walks on twelve tentacles and has crab pincers for arms.”

You shudder. “She sounds horrendous.”

“The strangest part about her are the six dog heads that grow from her waist and bark of their own accord.”

“How in the world will I succeed at this challenge? You said yourself that it’s unlikely that I’ll survive.”

“You have two options. Attack or sneak around.”

“I doubt I have much of a chance if I attack her,” you say.

“Why would you offend your teacher by saying such a thing?”

“I meant no offense to you,” you say.

“I can teach you how to shoot,” Apollo says. “But it’s up to you. Do you want to attack Scylla and force her to tell you the location of the pearls? Or would you rather wait when she’s not in her cave, so you can search for them without a confrontation?”

“Teach me to shoot. I don’t want to risk not finding the pearls.”

“I’d rather avoid a confrontation and search for the pearls when she’s not in the cave.”



8.22

Apollo takes your hand and leads you away from the sea toward a copse of trees. “You’ll want to be no more than ten feet away from your target to ensure you hit your mark.”

You follow him to the trees and stop beside him.

“Make a ring with your fingers and look at me through the ring,” he says.

You do as he says.

He points a finger at you. “That eye is dominant, which means you’ll want to hold the bow with the same hand and pull with the opposite one.”

He hands you his bow and shows you how to stand, with that leg in front. Then he straps his quiver to your back and shows you how to fit an arrow.

“Bring your drawing hand back along and past your ear,” he says. “Be sure not to move the bow when you release the arrow.”

When you release the arrow, it misses the tree entirely.

“Damn,” you say.

“You moved the bow when you released the arrow. You have to hold it steady. Besides, Scylla is quite a bit larger than the bird, so you’re sure to hit her.”

“You really think I can do it?”

“With me as your teacher? Do you really have to ask?”

His cocky attitude is so sexy, that you wish you could make out before you risk your life. You remind yourself that, if you pass all three tests, you can be with him forever.

Although you miss the tree a second time, the third's a charm.

"I got it!" you cry.

You pull an arrow from the quiver and fit it to the bow.

"Remember, drawing hand comes by the ear." He helps you to adjust. "Look down the arrow at your target. When you're ready, release the arrow."

You let out a deep breath. "It's a lot to remember."

"Believe in yourself," Apollo says. "If you don't believe you can do it, you can't. I know you can. You need to know it, too."

"I can do this," you say.

You resume your stance, fit the arrow, position the bow, and, holding as still as you can, you release the arrow. It hits its mark again.

"Perfect!" Apollo says. "Now do it again."

Apollo has you practice ten more times before he believes you're ready. He takes your hand and flings you down the cliff edge to the mouth of a cave.

"How about a kiss for good luck?" you ask.

"It would be my pleasure, my love."

When he presses his mouth against yours, you pull him close and give it all you've got--like it's the last time.

He pushes you back. "This isn't goodbye. Believe."

"What should I do if I miss?" you ask.

"You won't miss," he says. "Believe it, and you won't."

Although you don't like not having a contingent plan, you step into the cave. At first, you see only a primitive bench with bedding on it in the back. But then, the monster emerges.

“Who are you and what do you want?” she screeches as she crosses the cave toward you.

When she’s about ten steps away, you fit the arrow, position your bow, and release--all while she’s flailing toward you. You shout with glee when the arrow strikes her directly in the heart and blood spurts everywhere as she falls to the ground. Quickly, you take your sword and hold it to one of her necks.

“Tell me where you’ve hidden Rhode’s wedding pearls, or I’ll cut off your neck and feed it to Cerberus.”

“They’re not here. They’re at the old castle, where I grew up. I still have a room there. The pearls are in my room.”

You check throughout the cave, to make sure she isn’t lying, and, finding no pearls, you run to Apollo’s arms and tell him the news.

You run from the cave and tell Apollo the pearls are at the old castle.



8.23

Apollo takes your hand and flies you down the cliff edge to the mouth of a cave.

“How about a kiss for good luck?” you ask.

“It would be my pleasure, my love.”

When he presses his mouth against yours, you take him in your arms and pull him close, kissing him like it’s the last time.

He pulls away. “This isn’t goodbye. Okay? Believe in yourself.”

You nod and whisper, “I believe.”

As you peer into the cave, the only thing you see is a primitive bench covered in bedding pushed against the far wall.

“It doesn’t look like she’s here,” you say.

“Then hurry,” he says. “She could return at any moment.”

You go to the bed and feel around but finding nothing in the bedding. You look below it--also nothing. At the back of the cave, two tunnels veer off in opposite directions.

[You start with the right tunnel.](#)

[You start with the left tunnel.](#)



8.231

Cracks in the cavern above you allow enough light to illuminate your path. You notice a series of ledges in the wall of the tunnel with what appear to be jewels stashed on them. You reach up to pull a strand of diamonds from the upper ledge when a viper leaps out and bites you in the neck.

You feel its venom burning you as it courses through your veins. Before you can cry out to Apollo for help, you fall to the ground and give in to the darkness. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



8.232

Cracks in the cavern above you allow enough light to illuminate the path. As the tunnel winds to the left, something shuffles in the dark ahead of you. You freeze, so you can listen. It sounds like a snake slithering across the floor.

You run at your top speed. As you reach the mouth of the cave, you see the strand of pearls hanging from a ledge near the opening. They're so near the mouth, that you missed them completely when you first came in. You take the pearls and run to Apollo's arms as Scylla closes in on you.

"I've got them!" you shout. "Let's go!"

Scylla lunges from her cave at you as Apollo swiftly takes you into the sky. Then he flies with you in his arms to the gates of Mount Olympus. You don't see much along the way, because the two of you make out for most of the flight. But when he sets you down on your feet outside the gates, he asks, "Are you ready to discover your final challenge?"

["I've never been readier!"](#)

["I can't wait!"](#)



8.24

Apollo takes your hand and flies with you from Mount Olympus and out into the clear blue sky. The sea sparkles like diamonds below you, and the air feels refreshing on your face.

“Does this ever get old?” you ask.

“Never,” he says with a smile.

A few more minutes pass before he descends toward the sea and sets you on your feet beside him on a small deserted island.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“The Ionian Sea, between Greece and Italy. The castle where Phorcys and Keto live is at the bottom.”

“And what are Phorcys and Keto like?”

“Strange and terrifying. Phorcys has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. His wife, Keto, is sometimes a merwoman and sometimes a half-woman-half-snake, like her daughter, Echidna--who could be there, too.”

You shudder. “They sound horrendous.”

“Phorcys and Keto are the parents of most of the monsters: Cerberus and Hydra, Echidna, Chimera, Scylla--the list goes on.”

“What if they’re all at home?” you ask as your teeth begin to chatter.

“You shoot them all,” he says. “But we’ll case the joint before you enter, so you know what you’re up against.”

“Apollo, how much of a chance do I have against such monsters?”

“You’ll have a very good chance, after I teach you how to shoot. Are you ready to learn?”

“Yes,” you say.

“Make a ring with your fingers and look at me through the ring,” he says.

You do as he says.

He points a finger at you. “That eye is dominant, which means you’ll want to hold the bow with the same hand and pull with the opposite one.”

He hands you his bow and shows you how to stand, with that leg in front. Then he straps his quiver to your back and shows you how to fit an arrow.

“Look down the arrow to aim at your target,” he says.

“What should I aim at?”

“A cloud, for now.”

You look down the arrow at one of the clouds in the sky--there are only three small ones to choose from.

“Bring your drawing hand back along and past your ear,” he says. “Be sure not to move the bow when you release the arrow.”

You do as he says.

“Do you see that seagull flying in the distance?” Apollo asks you.

“You want me to shoot it?”

“Wait till it comes this way, within twenty or thirty feet.”

“I don’t like to take life needlessly.”

“It won’t go to waste,” he assures you. “It’ll provide a meal to a hungry sea creature who might otherwise starve.”

Apollo makes a call like a gull, and the bird flies toward you.

When you release the arrow, it misses the bird entirely.

“You moved the bow when you released the arrow. You have to hold it steady. Besides, the monsters are quite a bit larger than the bird, so you’re sure to hit them.”

“You really think I can do it?”

“With me as your teacher? Do you really have to ask?”

His cocky attitude is so sexy, that you wish you could make out before you risk your life. You remind yourself that, if you pass all three tests, you can be with him forever.

He makes you practice on another bird. Although you miss a second time, the third’s a charm.

“I got it!” you say, with mixed feelings.

“Are you ready to swim with me to the old castle?” he asks.

“Yes,” you say, trying to sound braver than you feel.

“I’m ready!” you shout, eager to kick some monster booty.



8.25

The golden net appears on you. Then Apollo takes your hand and leads you through the deep blue sea toward the ocean floor. You pass all manner of colorful life on the way down, but once the old castle comes into view, you see no life around for miles.

The castle looks old and decrepit--all but a ruin. The stone walls are uneven and covered with algae and barnacles.

Together, you approach one of the windows, through which water freely flows. Inside, you see a merwoman, who must be Keto, sitting at a wooden table eating what looks like a crab. Her husband, Phorcys, has the upper body of a man and the lower of a sea creature. He has a tail and fins but also crab-like appendages. He sits across from her with a partially eaten fish in one hand.

Apollo swims with you to the very back of the stone building and says close to your ear, "Sound travels very easily in water, so be as silent as air. Scylla's chambers are here, in the back, through this window."

"Why is it so easy to invade this castle?" you whisper.

"The old man of the sea and his wife fell out of power centuries ago, when the Olympians won the war with the Titans. They can no longer keep guards or servants. They leave a meager existence. But don't be fooled. They are still vicious and strong and can easily kill you. Use the bow and arrow if anyone discovers you. Shoot first and talk later."

You peer through the window to find a room with a bed lined with a mat of seaweed, a chest on the floor at the foot of the bed, a set of drawers against one wall, and two doors.

The god of music and truth gives you a kiss before he helps you through the window.

You swim to the chest and open it.

You swim to the set of drawers and open them.

You swim to the bed and check beneath it.



8.261

Snakes spring at you, biting you through the golden net in multiple places. You feel their venom burning you, coursing through your veins.

Then the merwoman appears in the doorway and screams at you. Her monstrous husband is behind her. As your throat closes up and you can barely breathe, you fit an arrow to the bow and shoot.

It floats harmlessly to the other side of the room.

“I told you food would come to us, didn't I?” the merwoman says to her husband as you close your eyes.

As you feel your limbs being ripped from your body, you give in to the darkness. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.2

You and Poseidon enjoy a victorious ride on the hippocamp Phoebe back to his underwater palace, where he escorts you to his chariot before taking off for Mount Olympus.

Still holding tightly to the pomegranate in your hand, you enjoy the feel of the fresh air on your face as you gaze down at the shimmering sea below.

“If I succeed in the other challenges,” you begin.

“*When* you succeed in the other challenges,” Poseidon corrects you.

You laugh. “*When* I succeed, I’ll go for a ride in a chariot at least once a day!”

Poseidon chuckles gayly as he draws the chariot higher and comes to a halt on the highest snow-covered peak, which is surrounded by a wall of clouds.

He shouts, “Spring, Summer, Winter, and Fall, open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Poseidon, and my guest may enter.”

You hear a loud roar, almost like a train, as the clouds part. A brief shower powers before a rainbow brightens the path. Then Poseidon draws the chariot forward into a gold-paved courtyard with a fountain in the shape of a golden whale. Water shoots from its spout, and a rainbow hovers above it.

Behind the fountain is an enormous building made of white stone. It has several columns in front and steps--one of each color of the rainbow--leading to the main entrance.

But first, Poseidon drives the chariot to a smaller building, which you soon realize is a garage. A young god with golden curls greets Poseidon and unbridles the mares.

“Thank you, Cupid, you little devil,” Poseidon says with a wink.

Cupid blushes when you look at him in surprise.

Then Poseidon takes your hand and flies you through the courtyard and into the temple of the gods.

When you present the fruit to Athena, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

You notice that all twelve thrones are now occupied. Poseidon quickly introduces you to the others and then asks them what your second challenge is to be.

“I have an idea,” Amphitrite, Poseidon’s wife, says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal will survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

From his throne, Hades says, “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

Hermes asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

“Perhaps Amphisbaena can help,” Athena suggests. “She’s a seer of lost objects.”

“Where is she?” Poseidon asks.

“In a cave beneath the acropolis in Athens, guarding my temple,” Athena replies.

Poseidon turns to you. “Shall we visit the seer Amphisbaena? Or would you rather get right to it, by starting at either the cave in the Messina Strait or the old castle beneath the Ionian Sea? The pearls could be at either location, and they’re equally dangerous.”

[“Take me to Amphisbaena.”](#)

[“Let’s start at the Messina Strait.”](#)

[“Let’s start at the old castle.”](#)



9.27

You return with Poseidon to his chariot, where Cupid brings the horses he has fed and watered before bridling them again.

Poseidon thanks the other god and then takes the reins. “To Athens!”

The chariot springs from the mountaintop and then plunges toward land. You cling to the sides, a bit terrified. It’s like riding a treacherous rollercoaster.

As you approach land, you recognize Athens and the Parthenon, which is swarming with tourists.

“Won’t they see us?” you ask of the tourists.

“Not to worry. We’re invisible to mortal eyes,” he says.

“Even *me*?” you ask.

“Only because I willed it so,” Poseidon explains.

He brings the chariot to a stop at the base of the acropolis, amid a crowd of tourists. Then he takes your hand and leads you to the mouth of a cave beneath the Parthenon.

The cool chill of autumn lingers in the air and wraps its long fingers around you, as though wanting to deter you from entering the cave, but you follow Poseidon inside, where it smells acrid and dank.

“Does the seer live here?” you ask.

Poseidon nods as he steals silently over the rocky cavern floor. A thin ribbon of water, stagnant and foul, divides the ground in half. Poseidon steps over the water, and you follow.

The first chamber opens into a second, larger one, the size of an auditorium. Poseidon unsheathes his sword as he glances around the cliff edges above him. You do the same. Then a billow of fire shoots across the top of the cavern, and the residue of smoke lingering behind spells, "I see you, Poseidon."

"Amphisbaena? I just want to talk," he says into the darkness.

Another flash of fire illuminates the cavern ceiling, and this time the smoke remaining spells out, "Drop your sword."

Poseidon laughs. "Can I trust you?"

The fire shoots in a blaze above him, and the smoke reads, "One says yes. Two says no."

"What is that supposed to mean?" you whisper.

"The two heads don't always agree," he whispers back as he lays down his sword.

Fire blows across the ceiling, and the smoke remaining says, "The mortal, too."

"Lay down your sword," Poseidon whispers to you.

Trembling now, you do as he says.

"Amphisbaena," he says. "Scylla stole my daughter Rhode's wedding pearls. Can you tell us where they are?"

Another flame spills across the ceiling of the cavern, and the smoke left behind spells, "One says yes. Two says yes."

"That's great news," Poseidon says. "Please, tell us where they are."

You feel something slither across your back, and before you can turn around, the slimy serpent's body, made of bright blue scales and lined with red spikes, has coiled around you, pinning your arms to your side.

"Amphisbaena!" Poseidon scolds. "Let the mortal go, or I will take you to the bottom of the sea and unleash the monsters at my command!"

The serpent's body goes slack and slithers back into the darkness.

"Are you okay?" Poseidon asks.

Still in shock, you dumbly nod.

“Now tell us, Amphisbaena,” Poseidon commands. “Where are Rhode’s wedding pearls?”

Fire shoots across the top of the cave, and, when the smoke clears, the remaining letters floating in the air spell, “One says Phorcys’s castle. Two says Messina Strait.”

Poseidon retrieves his sword from the ground and sheathes it, and you follow suit.

“Thank you,” Poseidon says to the serpent in the darkness before he whisks you away in his arms.

Once you are riding beside Poseidon in the chariot, you say, “That was a colossal waste of time. We’re no better off than we were before.”

“Not true,” the god says as he steers the chariot toward Italy. “Think about it and tell me where you think we should go.”

[“The Messina Strait.”](#)

[“The old castle.”](#)



9.21

“Now that we know where,” Poseidon says as the chariot descends toward land, “you need to decide how.”

“What do you mean?”

“Will you confront Scylla in her cave? Or will you wait to search the cave when she’s not there?”

[“I’ll confront her.”](#)

[“Search when she’s not there.”](#)



9.22

“Now you need to decide whether you’ll confront her with your sword or with a bribe,” Poseidon says.

“What kind of bribe?”

He shows you a beautiful large pearl, the size of a golf ball.

“I’ve never seen a pearl that big.”

“It’s quite rare,” he says. “I hate to part with it, but I want you to succeed, dear mortal.”

Poseidon kisses you gently on the cheek.

Although you’re not entirely confident in your skills with the sword, you’d hate to see Poseidon part with such a lovely pearl. You weigh the pros and cons and finally make your choice.

[“I’ll go in with the sword.”](#)

[“I’ll go in with the pearl.”](#)



9.221

Poseidon lands the chariot on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside the city of Silla, named for the monster. Her cave is below us.”

“Do you have any advice for me, before I go?”

“As a matter of fact, I do. It occurred to me, as we were driving over here, that a sword might not serve you well against Scylla. She has six long necks and six grisly heads and three rows of sharp teeth in each mouth. She walks on twelve tentacle and has long crab pincers for arms. I don’t believe you’ll get close enough for the sword to do much good.”

“Then what do you suggest?”

A weapon appears in his hand. “My speargun. Can I teach you how to use it?”

“Yes, please!”

“Very well. Let’s go to that copse of trees, so you can practice on a target.”

Together you walk away from the cliff edge to a small forest.

Poseidon shows you the parts of the gun and demonstrates how to cock the rubber strap back onto the spear before taking aim and shooting the gun.

“Wow!” you shout, when the spear hits a tree about ten feet away.

“For the size of this gun, you’ll want to be no more than fifteen meters away above water and ten meters away below. Pull the rubber back to the first notch for land and back to this further notch when under water. Ready to try it?”

“Absolutely!”

Poseidon flies to the tree to retrieve the spear and reloads it into the gun before handing it over to you.

“Can you pull the rubber back?”

By holding the end of the gun against your chest, you can pull the rubber back to the first notch. Then you take aim.

“You might want to hold the gun steady with your second hand,” Poseidon suggests.

Wishing he couldn’t see how much you’re trembling, you support the gun with your second hand and take aim. You’re amazed by how quickly the spear flies from the gun and are embarrassed when it completely misses the tree.

“You moved when you pulled the trigger,” he says. “Try again.”

Poseidon pulls another spear from thin air. You load it into the gun, cock back the rubber, and take aim. Although you miss a second time, the third’s the charm. Poseidon has you practice a dozen more times before he says you’re ready.

Then he takes you in his arms and flies with you over the cliff edge to the mouth of the cave below. Water crashes against the rocks below, lightly spraying your back as you peer into the opening.

At first, you see nothing more than a primitive bench in the back of the room. It’s covered with bedding. But then the monster emerges from the darkness and, noticing the gun in your hand, she barrels toward you.

Full of panic, you take aim and shoot, but because you forgot to cock the rubber strap back, the spear doesn’t fly. Before you can correct the problem, Scylla opens one of her six mouths and bites off your head. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.23

Poseidon lands the chariot on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside the city of Silla, named for the monster. Her cave is below us.”

“Do you have any advice for me, before I go?”

“If she doesn’t seem agreeable to the trade, run,” he says. “Or be ready to draw your weapon. She may decide to take the pearl from you by force.”

You take a deep breath. You had hoped for a pep talk, not a story of doom and gloom.

“I’ll be right outside the cave,” he says. “If things go south, run from the cave, and I’ll take you to safety.”

You give him a weak smile.

He laughs and kisses you. “You can do this.”

“I can do this.”

He takes you in his arms and flies you to the mouth of the cave, where he hands over the giant pearl.

“Good luck, dear mortal.”

When you peer inside the cave, you see nothing but a primitive bench covered with blankets against one of the back stone walls. As you slowly enter, you notice two tunnels that fork in opposite directions. From one of these, the monster emerges.

Her six long necks and six heads tower over you. The six dog heads yapping at her waist look ferocious and uncomfortable. The twelve tentacles and pincer arms appear as though they'd be impossible to escape, if she were to grab hold of you.

"Who are you and what do you want?" she screeches.

"I've come to make a trade." You show her the giant pearl. "A gift from Poseidon in exchange for Rhode's wedding pearls."

"It's beautiful," the monster rasps as she holds out one of her pincers.

"Give me Rhode's necklace first," you say, withholding the pearl.

"So that you can deceive me?"

"Show me the pearls."

She shuffles backward toward one of the tunnels. You can barely see her until she emerges again with the necklace dangling from her pincer.

"Let's toss them to one another on the count of three," you suggest.

"You count," she says.

"One, two, three!" You toss the pearl high in the air.

When she doesn't toss the pearls, you draw your sword while she's looking up, waiting to catch the pearl, and you drive it through her heart.

Blood spurts everywhere as she falls to the ground, shrieking in pain and flailing her heads and tentacles. You pull out the sword and use it to slice through the pincer holding the wedding pearls. When you finally get them free, you drop the bloody claw as you search for the giant pearl, dodging the beast's flailing limbs. You find beneath the bench, grab it, and run to Poseidon's arms.

"I got them both!" you cry, lifting both hands.

He takes you in his arms and flies with you back to the chariot, where he kisses you and kisses you and kisses you. "You impress me, dear mortal," he says. "Are you ready for your final challenge?"

"Yes, but kiss me first!"

"No, but let's go."

"Absolutely!"



9.23

Poseidon descends upon a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“On the outskirts of the city of Silla, named for the monster. Her cave is just below us.”

You take a deep breath. “Do you have any advice for me?”

“If you see her, run. I’ll be waiting right outside of the cave to bring you back to safety.”

You smile up at him. “I will.”

He takes you in his arms and kisses you. Then he whisks you from the cliff to the rocks below, just outside a cave.

The water hits against the rocks and little sprays reach your back, giving you a chill in the autumn breeze. As you peer into the cave, you see only a primitive bench covered in bedding at the back of the room.

“She’s not in there,” you say to Poseidon.

“Then hurry. She could return at any moment.”

You enter the cave and search the bedding. You also look beneath the bed and find nothing. As you move further back, you notice two tunnels that veer in opposite directions.

[You choose the tunnel to the right.](#)

[You choose the tunnel to the left.](#)



9.231

Light from cracks in the cavern illuminate the narrow tunnel. It goes on much further than you imagined. You hold your breath as you consider the possibility of running into the monster beyond the bend. Then you notice something sparkling on a ledge in the wall above your head.

You reach up and feel a pile of jewels. Among them is a string of pearls. You leave the other jewels in place and run from the cave with the pearls in your fist.

Poseidon takes you into his arms. “Did you get them?”

You open your fist and reveal the pearls.

“Fantastic!” He whisks you up into the air and returns you to the chariot. “Are you ready to discover your final challenge?”

[“Yes, but first I want another kiss.”](#)

[“Absolutely!”](#)

[“No, but let’s get it over with.”](#)



9.232

Light from the cracks in the cavern illuminate the narrow path. You hold your breath, wondering if the monster could be just beyond the bend. Then you hear shuffling, like a snake slithering across rock, and you freeze, listening.

Before you can draw Athena's sword, the beast emerges from the darkness. She shrieks once, and then bites off your head. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.24

Poseidon drives the chariot to the sea between Greece and Italy and lands on a small, deserted island.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“In the middle of the Ionian Sea. Phorcys’s old castle is on the ocean floor.”

“Okay. Then why did we stop here?”

“Because you need a strategy,” Poseidon says. “You can’t just go there and demand the pearls. Are you going to threaten Phorcys and Keto? Attempt to kill them? Or wait until no one is home and sneak around the place?”

“What do you think I should do?”

“You may be outnumbered, so I wouldn’t advise an attack. A covert operation is your best chance, in my opinion.”

You nod. “I think you’re right.”

The golden net appears around you as Poseidon takes the reins and shouts, “To the old man in the sea!”

You pass all manner of colorful marine life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor. Poseidon brings the chariot to a halt about twenty meters from the castle.

It’s not what you were expecting, with its uneven walls covered in algae and barnacles.

Poseidon takes your hand and swims with you from the chariot to a window at the side of the castle. Inside, a merwoman and part-man-part-sea-creature are sitting at a table eating a pile of crabs. You flinch, because they aren't sucking out the meat but eating the creatures whole--shells, pincers, and all.

Poseidon pulls you to the back of the castle to another window, where he whispers in your ear. "Sound travels far underwater, so be very quiet."

You nod and peer through the window.

"This is Scylla's room," Poseidon whispers. "If the pearls are here, this is where they'd be. Be quick."

You're surprised when you realize the window has no pane. Water flows freely in and out.

To Poseidon, you whisper, "Why isn't this place better protected? Anyone can swim inside."

Poseidon whispers, "These are powerful monsters capable of protecting themselves. And they haven't had guards or servants since they lost against the Olympians in the Titan war."

You give Poseidon a quick kiss on the cheek. "Here I go."

Once inside, you see a wooden chest on the floor at the foot of a bed, padded with a mat of seaweed. Across from the bed is a set of drawers and two closed doors.

[You open the chest.](#)

[You look through the drawers.](#)

[You check under the bed.](#)



9.241

One of the doors behind you swings open, and a shriek carries through the room as the part-man-part-sea-creature descends upon you.

You swim at your top speed toward the window, where Poseidon is waiting for you. Just as you reach him, the monster grabs your foot. You kick and scream with all your might. Then you remember Athena's sword. You draw it and slice the claw holding your leg. Poseidon pulls you from the window and to the chariot.

"Are you okay?" he asks as he takes the reins and speeds towards the ocean's surface.

You nod, still in shock.

The chariot bursts from the sea into the clear blue sky before coming to a halt on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

"Why are you stopping here?" you ask.

"You have a choice to make," he says kindly. "I can take you home, with promises to visit as often as I can, or we can visit Scylla's cave, which is just below this crag."

["Take me home."](#)

["I'll visit Scylla's cave."](#)



9.28

“And will you go to Scylla with a weapon or a bribe?”

Poseidon holds a speargun in one hand and a massive pearl the size of a golf ball in the other.

[“Speargun.”](#)

[“Pearl.”](#)



9.223

“Very well. Let’s go to that copse of trees, so you can practice on a target.”

Together you walk away from the cliff edge to a small forest.

Poseidon shows you the parts of the gun and demonstrates how to cock the rubber strap back onto the spear before taking aim and shooting the gun.

“Wow!” you shout, when the spear hits a tree about ten feet away.

“For the size of this gun, you’ll want to be no more than fifteen meters away above water and ten meters away below. Pull the rubber back to the first notch for land and back to this further notch when under water. Ready to try it?”

“Absolutely!”

Poseidon flies to the tree to retrieve the spear and reloads it into the gun before handing it over to you. “Can you pull the rubber back?”

By holding the end of the gun against your chest, you can pull the rubber back to the first notch. Then you take aim.

“You might want to hold the gun steady with your second hand,” Poseidon suggests.

Wishing he couldn’t see how much you’re trembling, you support the gun with your second hand and take aim. You’re amazed by how quickly the spear flies from the gun and are embarrassed when it completely misses the tree.

“You moved when you pulled the trigger,” he says. “Try again.”

Poseidon pulls another spear from thin air. You load it into the gun, cock back the rubber, and take aim. Although you miss a second time, the third's the charm. Poseidon has you practice a dozen more times before he says you're ready.

Then he takes you in his arms and flies with you over the cliff edge to the mouth of the cave below. Water crashes against the rocks below, lightly spraying your back as you peer into the opening.

At first, you see nothing more than a primitive bench in the back of the room. It's covered with bedding. But then the monster emerges from the darkness and, noticing the gun in your hand, she barrels toward you.

Full of panic, you take aim and shoot, but because you forgot to cock the rubber strap back, the spear doesn't fly. Before you can correct the problem, Scylla opens one of her six mouths and bites off your head. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.224

“Do you have any advice for me, before I go?”

“If she doesn’t seem agreeable to the trade, run,” he says. “Or be ready to draw your weapon. She may decide to take the pearl from you by force.”

You take a deep breath. You had hoped for a pep talk, not a story of doom and gloom.

“I’ll be right outside the cave,” he says, handing over the pearl. “If things go south, run from the cave, and I’ll take you to safety.”

You give him a weak smile.

He laughs and kisses you. “You can do this.”

“I can do this.”

He takes you in his arms and flies you to the mouth of the cave. “Good luck, dear mortal.”

When you peer inside the cave, you see nothing but a primitive bench covered with blankets against one of the back stone walls. As you slowly enter, you notice two tunnels that fork in opposite directions. From one of these, the monster emerges.

Her six long necks and six heads tower over you. The six dog heads yapping at her waist look ferocious and uncomfortable. The twelve tentacles and pincer arms appear as though they’d be impossible to escape, if she were to grab hold of you.

“Who are you and what do you want?” she screeches.

“I’ve come to make a trade.” You show her the giant pearl. “A gift from Poseidon in exchange for Rhode’s wedding pearls.”

“It’s beautiful,” the monster rasps as she holds out one of her pincers.

“Give me Rhode’s necklace first,” you say, withholding the pearl.

“So that you can deceive me?”

“Show me the pearls.”

She shuffles backward toward one of the tunnels. You can barely see her until she emerges again with the necklace dangling from her pincer.

“Let’s toss them to one another on the count of three,” you suggest.

“You count,” she says.

“One, two, three!” You toss the pearl high in the air.

When she doesn’t toss the pearls, you draw your sword while she’s looking up, waiting to catch the pearl, and you drive it through her heart.

Blood spurts everywhere as she falls to the ground, shrieking in pain and flailing her heads and tentacles. You pull out the sword and use it to slice through the pincer holding the wedding pearls. When you finally get them free, you drop the bloody claw as you search for the giant pearl, dodging the beast’s flailing limbs. You find beneath the bench, grab it, and run to Poseidon’s arms.

“I got them both!” you cry, lifting both hands.

He takes you in his arms and flies with you back to the chariot, where he kisses you and kisses you and kisses you. “You impress me, dear mortal,” he says. “Are you ready for your final challenge?”

“Yes, but kiss me first!”

“No, but let’s go.”

“Absolutely!”



9.29

Poseidon commands the horses to pull the chariot back into the sky. Knowing how much you enjoy the ride, Poseidon takes you all the way around the world, passing both the sun god, Helios, and the moon goddess, Selene, before returning you back to the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures began. Poseidon lies with you for the rest of the day and leaves after sunset, with promises to return. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



10.2

You and Amphitrite enjoy a victorious ride on the hippocamp Phoebe back to the underwater palace, where she escorts you to her chariot before taking off for Mount Olympus.

Still holding tightly to the pomegranate in your hand, you enjoy the feel of the fresh air on your face as you gaze down at the shimmering sea below.

“If I succeed in the other challenges,” you begin.

“*When* you succeed in the other challenges,” Amphitrite corrects you.

You laugh. “*When* I succeed, I’ll go for a ride in a chariot at least once a day!”

Amphitrite laughs gayly as she draws the chariot higher and comes to a halt on the highest snow-covered peak, which is surrounded by a wall of clouds.

She shouts, “Spring, Summer, Winter, and Fall, open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Amphitrite, and my guest may enter.”

You hear a loud roar, almost like a train, as the clouds part. A brief shower powers before a rainbow brightens the path. Then Amphitrite draws the chariot forward into a gold-paved courtyard with a fountain in the shape of a golden whale. Water shoots from its spout, and a rainbow glimmers above it.

Behind the fountain is an enormous building made of white stone. It has several columns in front and steps--one of each color of the rainbow--leading to the main entrance.

But first, Amphitrite drives the chariot to a smaller building, which you soon realize is a garage. A young god with golden curls greets the goddess and unbridles the mares.

“Thank you, Cupid, you little devil,” Amphitrite says with a wink.

Cupid blushes when you look at him in surprise.

Then Amphitrite takes your hand and flies you through the courtyard and into the temple of the gods.

When you present the fruit to Athena, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

You notice that all twelve thrones are now occupied. Amphitrite quickly introduces you to the others and then asks them what your second challenge is to be.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Amphitrite says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal will survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

From his throne, Hades says, “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

Hermes asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

“Perhaps Amphisbaena can help,” Athena suggests. “She’s a seer of lost objects.”

“Where is she?” Amphitrite asks.

“In a cave beneath the acropolis in Athens, guarding my temple,” Athena replies.

Amphitrite turns to you. “Shall we visit the seer Amphisbaena? Or would you rather get right to it, by starting at either the cave in the Messina Strait or the old castle beneath the Ionian Sea? The pearls could be at either location, and they’re equally dangerous.”

[“Take me to Amphisbaena.”](#)

[“Let’s start at the Messina Strait.”](#)

[“Let’s start at the old castle.”](#)



10.27

You return with Amphitrite to the chariot, where Cupid brings the horses he has fed and watered before bridling them again.

Amphitrite thanks the other god and then takes the reins. “To Athens!”

The chariot springs from the mountaintop and then plunges toward land. You cling to the sides, a bit terrified. It’s like riding a treacherous rollercoaster.

As you approach land, you recognize Athens and the Parthenon, which is swarming with tourists.

“Won’t they see us?” you ask of the tourists.

“Not to worry. We’re invisible to mortal eyes,” she says.

“Even *me*?” you ask.

“Only because I willed it so,” she explains.

She brings the chariot to a stop at the base of the acropolis, amid a crowd of tourists. Then she takes your hand and leads you to the mouth of a cave beneath the Parthenon.

The cool chill of autumn lingers in the air and wraps its long fingers around you, as though wanting to deter you from entering the cave, but you follow Amphitrite inside, where it smells acrid and dank.

“Does the seer live here?” you ask.

The goddess nods as she steals silently over the rocky cavern floor. A thin ribbon of water, stagnant and foul, divides the ground in half. She steps over the water, and you follow.

The first chamber opens into a second, larger one, the size of an auditorium. Amphitrite unsheathes her sword as she glances around the cliff edges above. You do the same. Then a billow of fire shoots across the top of the cavern, and the residue of smoke lingering behind spells, "I see you, Amphitrite."

"Amphisbaena? I just want to talk," she says into the darkness.

Another flash of fire illuminates the cavern ceiling, and this time the smoke remaining spells out, "Drop your sword."

Amphitrite laughs. "Can I trust you?"

The fire shoots in a blaze above her, and the smoke reads, "One says yes. Two says no."

"What is that supposed to mean?" you whisper.

"The two heads don't always agree," she whispers back as she lays down her sword.

Fire blows across the ceiling, and the smoke remaining says, "The mortal, too."

"Lay down your sword," Amphitrite whispers to you.

Trembling now, you do as she says.

"Amphisbaena," she says. "Scylla stole my daughter Rhode's wedding pearls. Can you tell us where they are?"

Another flame spills across the ceiling of the cavern, and the smoke left behind spells, "One says yes. Two says yes."

"That's great news," Amphitrite says. "Please, tell us where they are."

You feel something slither across your back, and before you can turn around, the slimy serpent's body, made of bright blue scales and lined with red spikes, has coiled around you, pinning your arms to your side.

"Amphisbaena!" Amphitrite scolds. "Let the mortal go, or I will take you to the bottom of the sea and unleash the monsters at my command!"

The serpent's body goes slack and slithers back into the darkness.

"Are you okay?" Amphitrite asks.

Still in shock, you dumbly nod.

“Now tell us, Amphisbaena,” the goddess commands. “Where are Rhode’s wedding pearls?”

Fire shoots across the top of the cave, and, when the smoke clears, the remaining letters floating in the air spell, “One says Phorcys’s castle. Two says Messina Strait.”

Amphitrite retrieves her sword from the ground and sheathes it, and you follow suit.

“Thank you,” the goddess says to the serpent in the darkness before Amphitrite whisks you away in her arms.

Once you are riding beside Amphitrite in the chariot, you say, “That was a colossal waste of time. We’re no better off than we were before.”

“Not true,” the goddess says as she steers the chariot toward Italy. “Think about it and tell me where you think we should go.”

[“The Messina Strait.”](#)

[“The old castle.”](#)



10.21

“Now that we know where,” Amphitrite says as the chariot descends toward land, “you need to decide how.”

“What do you mean?”

“Will you confront Scylla in her cave? Or will you wait to search the cave when she’s not there?”

[“I’ll confront her.”](#)

[“Search when she’s not there.”](#)



10.22

“Now you need to decide whether you’ll confront her with your sword or with a bribe,” Amphitrite says.

“What kind of bribe?”

She shows you a beautiful large pearl, the size of a golf ball.

“I’ve never seen a pearl that big.”

“It’s quite rare,” she says. “I hate to part with it, but I want you to succeed, dearie.”

She kisses you gently on the cheek.

Although you’re not entirely confident in your skills with the sword, you’d hate to see Amphitrite part with such a lovely pearl. You weigh the pros and cons and finally make your choice.

[“I’ll go in with the sword.”](#)

[“I’ll go in with the pearl.”](#)



10.221

Amphitrite lands the chariot on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside the city of Silla, named for the monster. Her cave is below us.”

“Do you have any advice for me, before I go?”

“As a matter of fact, I do. It occurred to me, as we were driving over here, that a sword might not serve you well against Scylla. She has six long necks and six grisly heads and three rows of sharp teeth in each mouth. She walks on twelve tentacle and has long crab pincers for arms. I don’t believe you’ll get close enough for the sword to do much good.”

“Then what do you suggest?”

A weapon appears in her hand. “My speargun. Can I teach you how to use it?”

“Yes, please!”

“Very well. Let’s go to that copse of trees, so you can practice on a target.”

Together you walk away from the cliff edge to a small forrest.

Amphitrite shows you the parts of the gun and demonstrates how to cock the rubber strap back onto the spear before taking aim and shooting the gun.

“Wow!” you shout, when the spear hits a tree about ten feet away.

“For the size of this gun, you’ll want to be no more than fifteen meters away above water and ten meters away below. Pull the rubber back to the first notch for land and back to this further notch when under water. Ready to try it?”

“Absolutely!”

She flies to the tree to retrieve the spear and reloads it into the gun before handing it over to you. “Can you pull the rubber back?”

You resist the urge to say, “That’s what she said.”

By holding the end of the gun against your chest, you can pull the rubber back to the first notch. Then you take aim.

“You might want to hold the gun steady with your second hand,” Amphitrite suggests.

Wishing she couldn’t see how much you’re trembling, you support the gun with your second hand and take aim. You’re amazed by how quickly the spear flies from the gun and are embarrassed when it completely misses the tree.

“You moved when you pulled the trigger,” she says. “Try again.”

Amphitrite pulls another spear from thin air. You load it into the gun, cock back the rubber, and take aim. Although you miss a second time, the third’s the charm. Amphitrite has you practice a dozen more times before she says you’re ready.

Then she takes you in her arms and flies with you over the cliff edge to the mouth of the cave below. Water crashes against the rocks, lightly spraying your back as you peer into the opening.

At first, you see nothing more than a primitive bench in the back of the room. It’s covered with bedding. But then the monster emerges from the darkness and, noticing the gun in your hand, she barrels toward you.

Full of panic, you take aim and shoot, but because you forgot to cock the rubber strap back, the spear doesn’t fly. Before you can correct the problem, Scylla opens one of her six mouths and bites off your head. (Game Over.)

A red banner with white, bubbly text that reads "GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!". The text is set against a teal background.



10.23

Amphitrite lands the chariot on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside the city of Silla, named for the monster. Her cave is below us.”

“Do you have any advice for me, before I go?”

“If she doesn’t seem agreeable to the trade, run,” she says. “Or be ready to draw your weapon. She may decide to take the pearl from you by force.”

You take a deep breath. You had hoped for a pep talk, not a story of doom and gloom.

“I’ll be right outside the cave,” she says. “If things go south, run from the cave, and I’ll take you to safety.”

You give her a weak smile.

She laughs and kisses you. “You can do this.”

“I can do this.”

She takes you in her arms and flies you to the mouth of the cave, where she hands over the giant pearl. “Good luck, dearie.”

When you peer inside the cave, you see nothing but a primitive bench covered with blankets against one of the back stone walls. As you slowly enter, you notice two tunnels that fork in opposite directions. From one of these, the monster emerges.

Her six long necks and six heads tower over you. The six dog heads yapping at her waist look ferocious and uncomfortable. The twelve tentacles and pincer arms appear as though they'd be impossible to escape, if she were to grab hold of you.

"Who are you and what do you want?" she screeches.

"I've come to make a trade." You show her the giant pearl. "A gift from Amphitrite in exchange for Rhode's wedding pearls."

"It's beautiful," the monster rasps as she holds out one of her pincers.

"Give me Rhode's necklace first," you say, withholding the pearl.

"So that you can deceive me?"

"Show me the pearls."

She shuffles backward toward one of the tunnels. You can barely see her until she emerges again with the necklace dangling from her pincer.

"Let's toss them to one another on the count of three," you suggest.

"You count," she says.

"One, two, three!" You toss the pearl high in the air.

When she doesn't toss the pearls, you draw your sword while she's looking up, waiting to catch the pearl, and you drive your weapon through her heart.

Blood spurts everywhere as she falls to the ground, shrieking in pain and flailing her heads and tentacles. You pull out the sword and use it to slice through the pincer holding the wedding pearls. When you finally get them free, you drop the bloody claw as you search for the giant pearl, dodging the beast's flailing limbs. You find beneath the bench, grab it, and run to Amphitrite.

"I got them both!" you cry, lifting your hands.

She takes you in her arms and flies with you back to the chariot, where she kisses you and kisses you and kisses you.

"You impress me, dearie," she says. "Are you ready for your final challenge?"

["Yes, but kiss me again first!"](#)

“No, but let’s go.”

“Absolutely!”



10.23

Amphitrite descends upon a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“On the outskirts of the city of Silla, named for the monster. Her cave is just below us.”

You take a deep breath. “Do you have any advice for me?”

“If you see her, run. I’ll be waiting right outside of the cave to bring you back to safety.”

You smile up at her. “I will.”

She takes you in her arms and kisses you. Then she whisks you from the cliff to the rocks below, just outside a cave.

The water hits against the rocks and little sprays reach your back, giving you a chill in the autumn breeze. As you peer into the cave, you see only a primitive bench covered in bedding at the back of the room.

“She’s not in there,” you say.

“Then hurry. She could return at any moment.”

You enter the cave and search the bedding. You also look beneath the bed and find nothing. As you move further back, you notice two tunnels that veer in opposite directions.

[You choose the tunnel to the right.](#)

[You choose the tunnel to the left.](#)



10.231

Light from cracks in the cavern illuminate the narrow tunnel. It goes on much further than you imagined. You hold your breath as you consider the possibility of running into the monster beyond the bend. Then you notice something sparkling on a ledge in the wall above your head.

You reach up and feel a pile of jewels. Among them is a string of pearls. You leave the other jewels in place and run from the cave with the pearls in your fist.

Amphitrite takes you into her arms. “Did you get them?”

You open your fist and reveal the pearls.

“Fantastic!” She whisks you up into the air and returns you to the chariot. “Are you ready to discover your final challenge?”

[“Yes, but first I want another kiss.”](#)

[“Absolutely!”](#)

[“No, but let’s get it over with.”](#)



10.232

Light from the cracks in the cavern illuminate the narrow path. You hold your breath, wondering if the monster could be just beyond the bend. Then you hear shuffling, like a snake slithering across rock, and you freeze, listening.

Before you can draw Athena's sword, the beast emerges from the darkness. She shrieks once, and then bites off your head. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



10.24

Amphitrite drives the chariot to the sea between Greece and Italy and lands on a small, deserted island.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“In the middle of the Ionian Sea. Phorcys’s old castle is on the ocean floor.”

“Okay. Then why did we stop here?”

“Because you need a strategy,” she says. “You can’t just go there and demand the pearls. Are you going to threaten Phorcys and Keto? Attempt to kill them? Or wait until no one is home and sneak around the place?”

“What do you think I should do?”

“You may be outnumbered, so I wouldn’t advise an attack. A covert operation is your best chance, in my opinion.”

You nod. “I think you’re right.”

The golden net appears around you as Amphitrite takes the reins and shouts, “To the old man in the sea!”

You pass all manner of colorful marine life as you plunge deeper and deeper toward the ocean floor. Amphitrite brings the chariot to a halt about twenty meters from the castle.

It’s not what you were expecting, with its uneven walls covered in algae and barnacles.

Amphitrite takes your hand and swims with you from the chariot to a window at the side of the castle. Inside, a merwoman and a part-man-part-sea-creature are sitting at a table eating a pile of crabs. You flinch, because they aren't sucking out the meat but eating the creatures whole--shells, pincers, and all.

Amphitrite pulls you to the back of the castle to another window, where she murmurs in your ear. "Sound travels far underwater, so be very quiet."

You nod and peer through the window.

"This is Scylla's room," she murmurs. "If the pearls are here, this is where they'd be. Be quick."

You're surprised when you realize the window has no pane. Water flows freely in and out.

To Amphitrite, you murmur, "Why isn't this place better protected? Anyone can swim inside."

"These are powerful monsters capable of protecting themselves. And they haven't had guards or servants since they lost against the Olympians in the Titan war."

You give Amphitrite a quick kiss on the cheek. "Here I go."

Once inside, you see a wooden chest on the floor at the foot of a bed, padded with a mat of seaweed. Across from the bed is a set of drawers and two closed doors.

[You open the chest.](#)

[You look through the drawers.](#)

[You check under the bed.](#)



10.241

One of the doors behind you swings open, and a shriek carries through the room as the monster descends upon you.

You swim at your top speed toward the window, where Amphitrite is waiting for you. Just as you reach her, the sea monster grabs your foot. You kick and scream with all your might. Then you remember Athena's sword. You draw it and slice the claw holding your leg. Amphitrite pulls you from the window and to the chariot.

"Are you okay?" she asks as she takes the reins and speeds towards the ocean's surface.

You nod, still in shock.

The chariot bursts from the sea into the clear blue sky before coming to a halt on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

"Why are you stopping here?" you ask.

"You have a choice to make," she says kindly. "I can take you home, with promises to visit as often as I can, or we can visit Scylla's cave, which is just below this crag."

["Take me home."](#)

["I'll visit Scylla's cave."](#)



10.28

“And will you go to Scylla with a weapon or a bribe?”

Amphitrite holds a speargun in one hand and a massive pearl the size of a golf ball in the other.

[“Speargun.”](#)

[“Pearl.”](#)



10.223

“Very well. Let’s go to that copse of trees, so you can practice on a target.”

Together you walk away from the cliff edge to a small forest.

Amphitrite shows you the parts of the gun and demonstrates how to cock the rubber strap back onto the spear before taking aim and shooting the gun.

“Wow!” you shout, when the spear hits a tree about ten feet away.

“For the size of this gun, you’ll want to be no more than fifteen meters away above water and ten meters away below. Pull the rubber back to the first notch for land and back to this further notch when under water. Ready to try it?”

“Absolutely!”

She flies to the tree to retrieve the spear and reloads it into the gun before handing it over to you. “Can you pull the rubber back?”

By holding the end of the gun against your chest, you can pull the rubber back to the first notch. Then you take aim.

“You might want to hold the gun steady with your second hand,” she suggests.

Wishing she couldn’t see how much you’re trembling, you support the gun with your second hand and take aim. You’re amazed by how quickly the spear flies from the gun and are embarrassed when it completely misses the tree.

“You moved when you pulled the trigger,” she says. “Try again.”

Amphitrite pulls another spear from thin air. You load it into the gun, cock back the rubber, and take aim. Although you miss a second time, the third's the charm. Amphitrite has you practice a dozen more times before she says you're ready.

Then she takes you in her arms and flies with you over the cliff edge to the mouth of the cave below. Water crashes against the rocks below, lightly spraying your back as you peer into the opening.

At first, you see nothing more than a primitive bench in the back of the room. It's covered with bedding. But then the monster emerges from the darkness and, noticing the gun in your hand, she barrels toward you.

Full of panic, you take aim and shoot, but because you forgot to cock the rubber strap back, the spear doesn't fly. Before you can correct the problem, Scylla opens one of her six mouths and bites off your head. (Game Over.)

A red banner with white, bubbly text that reads "GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!". The text is set against a red background with a white border.



10.224

“Do you have any advice for me, before I go?”

“If she doesn’t seem agreeable to the trade, run,” she says. “Or be ready to draw your weapon. She may decide to take the pearl from you by force.”

You take a deep breath. You had hoped for a pep talk, not a story of doom and gloom.

“I’ll be right outside the cave,” she says, handing over the pearl. “If things go south, run from the cave, and I’ll take you to safety.”

You give her a weak smile.

She laughs and kisses you. “You can do this.”

“I can do this.”

She takes you in her arms and flies you to the mouth of the cave. “Good luck, dearie.”

When you peer inside the cave, you see nothing but a primitive bench covered with blankets against one of the back stone walls. As you slowly enter, you notice two tunnels that fork in opposite directions. From one of these, the monster emerges.

Her six long necks and six heads tower over you. The six dog heads yapping at her waist look ferocious and uncomfortable. The twelve tentacles and pincer arms appear as though they’d be impossible to escape, if she were to grab hold of you.

“Who are you and what do you want?” she screeches.

“I’ve come to make a trade.” You show her the giant pearl. “A gift from Amphitrite in exchange for Rhode’s wedding pearls.”

“It’s beautiful,” the monster rasps as she holds out one of her pincers.

“Give me Rhode’s necklace first,” you say, withholding the pearl.

“So that you can deceive me?”

“Show me the pearls.”

She shuffles backward toward one of the tunnels. You can barely see her until she emerges again with the necklace dangling from her pincer.

“Let’s toss them to one another on the count of three,” you suggest.

“You count,” she says.

“One, two, three!” You toss the pearl high in the air.

When she doesn’t toss the pearls, you draw your sword while she’s looking up, waiting to catch the pearl, and you drive your weapon through her heart.

Blood spurts everywhere as she falls to the ground, shrieking in pain and flailing her heads and tentacles. You pull out the sword and use it to slice through the pincer holding the wedding pearls. When you finally get them free, you drop the bloody claw as you search for the giant pearl, dodging the beast’s flailing limbs. You find beneath the bench, grab it, and run to Amphitrite.

“I got them both!” you cry, lifting both hands.

She takes you in her arms and flies with you back to the chariot, where she kisses you and kisses you and kisses you.

“You impress me, dearie,” she says. “Are you ready for your final challenge?”

“Yes, but kiss me first!”

“No, but let’s go.”

“Absolutely!”



10.29

Amphitrite commands the horses to pull the chariot back into the sky. Knowing how much you enjoy the ride, she takes you all the way around the world, passing both the sun god, Helios, and the moon goddess, Selene, before returning you back to the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures began. Amphitrite lies with you for the rest of the day and leaves after sunset, with promises to return. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.2

Aphrodite takes you in her arms. You close your eyes against the blinding light of god travel, and when you open them again, you are standing beside the goddess on a mountaintop beside a wall of clouds.

“Spring Summer, Winter, and Fall!” Aphrodite says. “Open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Aphrodite, and my guest may enter!”

A roar, like the sound of a train, is followed by a brief shower. Then a rainbow appears as the clouds part and Aphrodite leads you inside.

Together, you fly across a gold-paved courtyard, past a fountain, to a large white building with tall columns and seven steps leading up to the main entrance. Each step is a different color of the rainbow.

Once inside, the two of you walk, hand in hand, on the marble floor into the great hall, where all the gods are seated on their thrones around the perimeter of the room.

Aphrodite quickly introduces you to those you have not yet met.

When you present the pomegranate to the gray-eyed goddess, she says, “Well done, mortal. Not very many can resist the temptation of discovering their own futures.”

“What should we give for the final challenge?” Aphrodite asks.

Poseidon stands from his throne. “I have an idea. My daughter Rhode had her wedding pearls stolen by the monster Scylla. Perhaps this mortal can get them back.”

“That’s a great idea,” Ares says.

“The mortal against Scylla?” Persephone says. “What kind of chance for victory could there possibly be?”

Apollo shakes his head. "Very little."

"Is that a vision or speculation?" Hera asks.

"Speculation."

"The mortal will have help," Athena points out. "What's the point of a challenge if it isn't dangerous?"

"Hear, hear!" Ares shouts.

Zeus claps his hands. "It's settled then."

Aphrodite turns to you. "Do you accept this challenge to retrieve Rhode's wedding pearls from the monster Scylla? I can still take you home with the promise to visit as often as I can."

"What will it be, mortal?" Poseidon asks.

["Take me home."](#)

["I accept the challenge."](#)



11.21

Aphrodite wraps her arms around you. You close your eyes to the light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you are standing beside the babbling brook in the field of flowers where you first began.

Aphrodite lies with you beside the water until sunset, when she leaves with promises to return as often as she can. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.22

Aphrodite links her arm in yours. “Well, then, my lovely. Before we go, I’d like a quick word with Hephaestus.”

Poseidon passes by and says to Aphrodite, “My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure, should you need it.”

“Thank you, Poseidon,” she says.

You follow her as she crosses the room to the god of the forge.

“May we speak privately?” she asks him. “The three of us?”

Hephaestus invites you through the door behind his throne. The room is full of machines and tools and weapons. Billows that seem to operate on their own keep the fire stoked.

“What can I do for you, Aphrodite?” Hephaestus asked.

“I’d like to borrow your special compass.”

Hephaestus’s mouth drops open. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Come on,” the goddess says. “I overheard Algaea talking about it some time ago. I promise not to tell anyone else about it.”

“And the mortal?” Hephaestus demands.

“Swear on the River Styx,” Aphrodite says to you. “You won’t tell a soul about his compass.”

“I swear,” you say.

Hephaestus gives a round golden compact to Aphrodite.

“Thank you,” the goddess says. “I promise to return it as soon as possible.”

Aphrodite links her arms with yours. “We cannot use this with god-travel. In order for the compass to point us to the object you desire, we’ll have to fly. Are you ready?”

“Yes,” you say.

Together, you and Aphrodite fly from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the blue sky. The sea sparkles like diamonds below, and the sea air refreshes you as it blows against your face and in your hair.

Aphrodite opens the compass and hands it to you. “Ask it to point you in the direction of Rhode’s wedding pearls.”

You take the compass. “Show me the location of Rhode’s wedding pearls.”

The needle spins and then points west.

“The Strait of Messina and the old castle are both in that direction,” Aphrodite says. “Let’s head that way. Watch the needle. If the pearls are at the castle, it should change directions once we pass the Ionian Sea.”

You nod as you continue to fly in Aphrodite’s arms from Greece. You wish you could enjoy the sea air on your face and the sunshine on your skin, but you can only stare at the needle.

After a while, you recognize Italy. “The needle hasn’t moved.”

“Then Rhode’s Pearls must be hidden in Scylla’s cave.”

Aphrodite sets you on your feet beside her on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside the city of Scilla, named for the monster. Her cave is beneath this crag.”

You look at the compass to find it spinning. “The pearls are close.”

“Let’s wait for her to leave her cave,” Aphrodite suggests. “Then you can sneak in, grab the pearls, and return to me.”

“Sounds good,” you say with more confidence than you feel. “Before we go, tell me what she looks like, so I know what to expect.”

“Scylla has six ugly heads. Only the center four have eyes. Her heads sit on long, serpentine necks. She walks on twelve tentacles, along with two long crab pincers. But the ugliest thing about her is her waist, from which protrude six yapping dog heads.”

“The monster sounds horrendous.”

“That’s an understatement.”

She flies you down to the rocks below, where water from the sea gently sprays your back. As you stand near the mouth of Scylla’s cave, you peer inside for signs of life.

The room is about four hundred square meters with nothing but a primitive bed against one wall. Seeing no one at home, you kiss Aphrodite’s cheek before creeping inside.

Once you’ve entered, you realize you’ve made a mistake, because the four-hundred-square-foot chamber is connected to two tunnels that veer in opposite directions, and Scylla could be hiding in one of them. The needle on the compass points to the tunnel on your right. You take a deep breath and go to it.

As you near the tunnel, you hear something that sounds like a snake slithering across rocks. Once your eyes adjust to the darkness, you see a monster, but it’s not the one Aphrodite described. From the waist down, it has the body of an enormous snake. From the waist up, it’s a beautiful woman with raven hair and turquoise eyes.

She hasn’t noticed you yet, for she’s turned away from you, reaching with her hand to a ledge in one of the walls.

[You run from the cave.](#)

[You draw your sword.](#)



11.231

“Did you get the pearls?” Aphrodite asks as you run to her arms.

“No. There was a monster inside--not Scylla. She was part woman part snake.”

“What color hair?”

“Black.”

“Echidna,” Aphrodite says. “I wonder what she’s up to in her sister’s cave.”

“Stealing, I think.”

“Let’s hide behind those rocks. Watch the needle and see if the location of the pearls changes.”

Together, you and Aphrodite hide. You enjoy being close to her, as her beauty continues to captivate you.

“Keep your eyes on that compass,” she says with a teasing grin.

You do as she says and are pleased when she rewards you with a kiss.

Then Aphrodite points to a figure slithering across the rocks and into the sea. “Echidna’s leaving. What does the compass say?”

“It hasn’t changed. The pearls are still inside the cave.”

Aphrodite returns you to the mouth of the cave. “Hurry, my lovely!”

You follow the needle to the right tunnel. A few jewels and precious stones dangle from one of the upper ledges, just out of your reach. You remove Athena's scabbard and use it to knock the strands to the cavern floor. There are three strings, and one of them are pearls. You grab the pearls and leave the others.

When you reach Aphrodite's arms, victorious, she whisks you into the sky and makes out with you while you fly to Mount Olympus. You've never experienced something so incredible.

In between kisses, she asks, "Are you ready to learn your final challenge?"

"I will be, after I've kissed every inch of you."

"I'm more than ready."

"I'll do anything for you, my goddess."



11.232

While the beast still reaches for the jewels, you

[slice off her outstretched arm.](#)

[cut off her beautiful head.](#)

[shout, “Take what you want, but leave the pearls for me!”](#)



11.234

Echidna opens her mouth and swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.235

Echidna's head falls at your feet while the serpent half of her body writhes in a tangled mess. Using the bloody sword, you swipe at the contents on the ledge above you, knocking down a mass of jewels. Avoiding the spastic creature, you leap to the jewels, find the pearls among them, and leave the rest, not wanting to start a war with Scylla.

Then you sheathe the sword and run from the cave with the wedding pearls dangling from your hand. Aphrodite meets you at the mouth of the cavern and whisks you away.

"I can't believe I did it!" you cry.

"I can, my lovely."

The goddess of love and beauty makes out with you all the way across the sky toward Mount Olympus.

When you reach the gates, she asks, "Are you ready to discover your final challenge?"

"Kiss me first."

"I'll do anything to be with you, my goddess."

"Hell, yeah, I'm ready!"



13.2

Hephaestus drives you in his chariot up into the beautiful blue sky to a mountaintop beside a wall of clouds.

“Spring Summer, Winter, and Fall!” the god of the forge shouts. “Open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Hephaestus, and my guest may enter!”

A roar, like the sound of a train, is followed by a brief shower. Then a rainbow appears as the clouds part as the chariot draws forward.

After he parks the chariot in a golden building, where other chariots are housed, you fly with him across a gold-paved courtyard, past a fountain, to a large white building with tall columns and seven steps leading up to the main entrance. Each step is a different color of the rainbow.

Once inside, the two of you walk, side by side, on the marble floor into the great hall, where all the gods are seated on their thrones around the perimeter of the room.

Hephaestus quickly introduces you to those you have not yet met.

When you present the pomegranate to the gray-eyed goddess, she says, “Well done, mortal. Not very many can resist the temptation of discovering their own futures.”

“What should we give for the final challenge?” Hephaestus asks.

Poseidon stands from his throne. “I have an idea. My daughter Rhode had her wedding pearls stolen by the monster Scylla. Perhaps this mortal can get them back.”

“That’s a great idea,” Ares says.

“The mortal against Scylla?” Persephone says. “What kind of chance for victory could there possibly be?”

Apollo shakes his head. “Very little.”

“Is that a vision or speculation?” Hera asks.

“Speculation.”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out. “What’s the point of a challenge if it isn’t dangerous?”

“Hear, hear!” Ares shouts.

Zeus claps his hands. “It’s settled then.”

Hephaestus turns to you. “Do you accept this challenge to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from the monster Scylla? I can still take you home and provide you with a life of luxury.”

“What will it be, mortal?” Poseidon asks.

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



13.21

Hephaestus leads you to his forge, which is filled with tools, weapons, and machines. A dozen billows fan the fire of their own accord. He offers you a chair while he makes you his first gift. When you ask what it is, he says it's a surprise. Not a half hour later, he presents you with a man that looks identical to your true love.

“He is like me in all ways,” the god says, “except his heart is not bound to another.”

You gaze at him, feeling skeptical at first, but when the man smiles warmly at you, the arrow in your heart fills you with desire.

“Hephaestus?” you ask the man.

“Hello, love,” he says.

The god delivers you and the man back to the babbling brook in the field of flowers where you first began. He gives you a bag of gold with promises of more. Then he leaves you with the man, who lies with you in the field of flowers and brings you joy like no other. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



13.22

Poseidon turns to the god of the forge. “My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure, should you need it.”

“Thank you, Lord Poseidon,” Hephaestus says.

Hephaestus invites you through the door behind his throne. The room is full of machines and tools and weapons. Billows that seem to operate on their own to keep the fire stoked.

“Swear on the River Styx,” Hephaestus says to you. “You won’t tell a soul about this special compass I want to loan you for the challenge.”

“I swear,” you say.

Hephaestus gives you a round golden compact.

“How does it work?”

“The needle will point to the object of your desire,” he says.

“Right now, it’s pointing at you.”

Hephaestus chuckles. “Tell it to show you the location of Rhode’s wedding pearls. But wait, until we leave Mount Olympus.”

“Okay.”

Together, you and Hephaestus fly in his chariot from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the blue sky. The sea sparkles like diamonds below, and the sea air refreshes you as it blows against your face and in your hair.

“Go ahead and ask it, love.”

You open the compass. “Show me the location of Rhode’s wedding pearls.”

The needle spins and then points west.

“The Strait of Messina and the old castle are both in that direction,” Hephaestus says. “Let’s head that way. Watch the needle. If the pearls are at the castle, it should change directions once we pass the Ionian Sea.”

You nod as the chariot flies from Greece. You wish you could enjoy the sea air on your face and the sunshine on your skin, but you can only stare at the needle.

After a while, you recognize Italy. “The needle hasn’t moved.”

“Then Rhode’s Pearls must be hidden in Scylla’s cave.”

Hephaestus lands his horseless chariot on a cliff edge overlooking the sea.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“Just outside the city of Scilla, named for the monster. Her cave is beneath this crag.”

You look at the compass to find it spinning. “The pearls are close.”

“Let’s wait for her to leave her cave,” the god suggests. “Then you can sneak in, grab the pearls, and return to me.”

“Sounds good,” you say with more confidence than you feel. “Before we go, tell me what she looks like, so I know what to expect.”

“Scylla has six ugly heads. Only the center four have eyes. Her heads sit on long, serpentine necks. She walks on twelve tentacles, along with two long crab pincers. But the ugliest thing about her is her waist, from which protrude six yapping dog heads.”

“The monster sounds horrendous.”

“That’s an understatement.”

Leaving the chariot on the cliff edge, he takes you down to the rocks below, where water from the sea gently sprays your back. As you stand near the mouth of Scylla's cave, you peer inside for signs of life.

The room is about four hundred square meters with nothing but a primitive bed against one wall. Seeing no one at home, you give Hephaestus a weak smile before you creep inside.

Once you've entered, you realize you've made a mistake, because the four-hundred-square-foot chamber is connected to two tunnels that veer in opposite directions, and Scylla could be hiding in one of them. The needle on the compass points to the tunnel on your right. You take a deep breath and go to it.

As you near the tunnel, you hear something that sounds like a snake slithering across rocks. Once your eyes adjust to the darkness, you see a monster, but it's not the one Hephaestus described. From the waist down, it has the body of an enormous snake. From the waist up, it's a beautiful woman with raven hair and turquoise eyes.

She hasn't noticed you yet, for she's turned away from you, reaching with her hand to a ledge in one of the walls.

[You run from the cave.](#)

[You draw your sword.](#)



13.231

“Did you get the pearls?” Hephaestus asks.

“No. There was a monster inside--not Scylla. She was part woman part snake.”

“What color hair?”

“Black.”

“Echidna,” he says. “I wonder what she’s up to in her sister’s cave.”

“Stealing, I think.”

“Let’s hide behind those rocks. Watch the needle and see if the location of the pearls changes.”

Together, you hide. You enjoy being close to him, as his beauty, though different from the other gods, continues to captivate you.

“Keep your eyes on that compass,” he says with a teasing grin.

You do as he says and are pleased when he squeezes your shoulder and smiles tenderly at you.

Then Hephaestus points to a figure slithering across the rocks and into the sea. “Echidna’s leaving. What does the compass say?”

“It hasn’t changed. The pearls are still inside the cave.”

He returns you to the mouth of the cave. “Hurry, love!”

You follow the needle to the right tunnel. A few jewels and precious stones dangle from one of the upper ledges, just out of your reach. You remove Athena's scabbard and use it to knock the strands to the cavern floor. There are three strings, and one of them are pearls. You grab the pearls and leave the others.

When you reach Hephaestus, victorious, he whisks you into his chariot and beams at you as you fly to Mount Olympus.

"You're very impressive, love," he says. "Are you ready to learn your final challenge?"

"I'm as ready as I'll ever be."

"I'm more than ready."

"I'll do anything for you, my lord."



13.232

While the beast still reaches for the jewels, you

[Slice off her outstretched arm.](#)

[Cut off her beautiful head.](#)

[Shout, "Take what you want, but leave the pearls for me!"](#)



13.234

Echidna opens her mouth and swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



13.235

Echidna's head falls at your feet while the serpent half of her body writhes in a tangled mess. Using the bloody sword, you swipe at the contents on the ledge above you, knocking down a mass of jewels. Avoiding the spastic creature, you leap to the jewels, find the pearls among them, and leave the rest, not wanting to start a war with Scylla.

Then you sheathe the sword and run from the cave with the wedding pearls dangling from your hand. Hephaestus meets you at the mouth of the cavern and whisks you away to his chariot.

"I can't believe I did it!" you cry.

"I can, love. You're very impressive. Are you ready to discover your final challenge?"

"I'm as ready as I'll ever be."

"I'll do anything to be near you, my lord."

"Hell, yeah, I'm ready!"



12.2

Hermes flies with you to a snow-covered mountain before a wall of clouds, where he says, “Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter, open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Hermes, and my guest may enter.”

You hear a roar, like a distant train, as rain falls in a sheet before you and then stops as quickly as it came, A rainbow takes its place as the clouds part. Then Hermes flies with you over a gold-paved courtyard, past a whale-shaped fountain, and into an enormous white palace with tall columns in the front and seven steps--each a different color of the rainbow--leading to the main entrance.

You walk beside him across the marble floor into an enormous room, where the gods sit their thrones around the perimeter of the room. Hermes quickly introduces you to those you have not yet met.

When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

“What do you propose for the second challenge?” Hermes asks her.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal can survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

From his throne, Hades says, “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Hermes.

Hermes nods to the god of sea and asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Hermes turns to you. “I have a plan that will help, but it will still be dangerous. Do you accept the challenge? Or would you like me to take you home with the promise to visit as often as possible?”

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“I accept the challenge.”](#)



12.21

Hermes wraps his arms around you and flies with you from the temple, through the gates, and out into the deep blue sky. You're thrilled when he kisses you, caresses you, and out-and-out makes out with you throughout the flight. It's the most amazing thing you've ever experienced.

He gently lays you down in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures began, and continues to make you feel things you've never felt before. At dawn, he gives you a bag of gold and promises to return as soon as he can.

You've never been so happy or so rich. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



12.22

Hermes wraps his arms around you and flies with you from the temple, through the gates, and out into the deep blue sky.

“We need to make a stop at the Underworld,” Hermes says. “I want to ask Hecate for help.”

“Great,” you say, sarcastically. “I’m sure Hydra will be happy to see me. Or are we facing the three-headed dog?”

“I’ve already let asked Hades for permission,” he says. “I doubt he would have allowed you into to the Seers’ Pit, but a visit to Hecate is acceptable to him.”

You hold on more tightly as Hermes speeds through the deep and narrow chasm to the Underworld.

He stops and hovers above a black river, before an enormous gate guarded by the three-headed dog. Cerberus looks much different than you imagined. He’s about six feet tall, black as night, with a sweeping dragon tail, and three ferocious heads resembling those of a French bulldog: tall bat-like ears, pug upturned noses, large frowning mouths with slight under-bites exposing white sharp teeth, and plenty of loose skin around the three necks. The eyes on the heads look red and intimidating.

The bright light of god travel wraps itself around you, and, when you open your eyes, you find yourself standing in a huge cavern alight by the river of fire. Chandeliers illuminated by candlelight hang from the ceiling, and beneath your feet are golden pavers. On the double throne at the back of the room, Hades and Persephone, King and Queen of the Underworld, sit, even though you saw them moments ago on Mount Olympus.

“Is Hecate back yet, my lord and lady?” Hermes asks.

“Here,” Hecate replies as she appears from thin air.

Hermes clears his throat. "Might we bother you for a location spell?"

Hecate gives you a once over as blood rushes to her pretty cheeks. If you didn't know better, you might think she was jealous of you. In spite of having some obvious animosity toward you, she says, "We'll need something that once touched the pearls--one of Rhode's scarves, perhaps, preferably one she no longer wears."

Hermes turns to you. "This shouldn't take long. Would you like to remain here with Hecate or come with me?"

["I'll wait here."](#)

["I'll go with you."](#)



12.23

“Come with me,” Hecate says to you.

You follow her from the throne room through a dark and winding corridor to another room. It has a high dome ceiling and is covered with dancing shadows, cast by the light of the Phlegethon, the river of fire. A stream runs from an upper crevice down a series of rocks and pools in a six-foot-wide basin before thinning and disappearing behind another smooth boulder.

“That’s where I wash,” Hecate explains when she sees you staring at it with wonder. “The spring is fresh and good enough to drink.”

Beside the basin and curled on a pillow is a small animal.

“Who’s this?” you ask.

Hecate puts a finger to her lips. “This is the time when she likes to sleep. That’s Galin, my polecat.”

“Let’s not disturb her then,” you whisper.

“My dog is awake and around here somewhere.” Hecate glances about the room. In a soft voice, she says, “Cubie? Where are you?”

A black Doberman pinscher with tall ears and a long tail crawls out from beneath the one big bed.

“There she is.” Hecate reaches over and pats the dog on the head. “Were you spying on us?”

“Absolutely,” the dog answers.

You’re shocked to hear the dog speak with actual words.

Hecate notices and says, “Cubie, this mortal has been made to fall in love with Hermes by Cupid’s arrow. Athena had the idea of testing the mortal for apotheosis.”

“You might want to think twice about immortality,” the dog says to you.

You bring your brows together, not sure if you should heed the advice of a dog.

As if she reads your mind, Hecate says, “Cubie is smarter than she looks. She was once the Queen of Troy.”

Before you can ask how a queen of Troy became a Doberman pinscher, Hecate beckons you into another room. Shelves of jars containing various liquids and dry herbs are hung above two long tables made of petrified wood.

Hermes appears out of thin air, startling you.

“Sorry, beautiful,” he says to you. He hands the scarf to Hecate. “Rhode is pleased that she might get her pearls back.”

“Good,” she says to Hermes. Then to you, she says, “Ready to begin?”

“Yes.”

“I’m ready if you are.”



12.25

You and Hermes stand beside one another in Hecate's room as Hecate takes a silver bowl and fills it with water from a spring that drips into a small basin between the two tables. Then she places the bowl on one of the tables and arranges four blue candles around it. She lights each of the candles along with an herb.

"This is a sprig of Jasmine," she explains before she extinguishes the flame and allows the smoke to wash over the table. Then she sets the smoking herb into an empty jar.

With one hand, Hecate holds Rhode's scarf to one of the candles until it catches fire. With the other hand, she takes a folded paper from a tall stack of papers and holds it against the burning scarf.

"This is a world map," she explains.

Once the map is engulfed in flames, Hecate drops it into the silver bowl of water and says, "Show me the location of Rhode's wedding pearls."

You watch with fascination as smoke rises from the bowl, leaving in its wake a tiny piece of the map. Hecate fishes it out of the water and shows you the words written on it: "Ionian Sea."

"The pearls are at the old castle," Hermes says. "Thank you, Hecate. You've just saved us a great deal of trouble."

Hecate hands you a vial filled with a black liquid.

"What's this?" you ask her.

"Oil," she says. "Once you reach the castle, empty the oil into Scylla's room and ask it to reveal the location of the pearls. The oil will drift through the water in their direction."

“I can’t thank you enough,” you say.

“You owe me one,” she says to Hermes.

He winks at the goddess. “I owe you a lot more than one.”

Hecate chuckles as Hermes takes your hand and god-travels with you from the Underworld. When you open your eyes, you’re standing beside him on a small deserted island in the middle of the ocean.

“Phorcys’s castle is at the bottom of the sea,” he says. “You need to decide something before we go. We might get lucky and find nobody home. They have to leave to find food, because nothing living ever comes within miles of their castle. But, if we find Phorcys and Keto or any of their monster offspring at home, will you want to sneak into Scylla’s room through a window and risk getting caught? Or will you want to wait until we see them leave to get their dinner?”

“Is there any chance they’ve already fed for the day?”

“Yes. But Athena gave us no time limit.”

You consider your options. If you wait, you’ll have a better chance of getting in and out without being killed. However, if the monsters have already fed for the day, you might get stuck waiting until tomorrow. Plus, there’s no guarantee that all of them will leave to feed at the same time, or that they won’t return while you’re still in the castle searching for the pearls.

[“Wait until they leave to feed.”](#)

[“I don’t want to wait.”](#)



12.24

“We’ll be right back,” Hermes tells Hecate as he takes your hand and god-travels you from the room.

“Don’t open your eyes,” Hermes says when you feel the open air against your skin. “Not until Helios dims himself.”

You assume it’s Helios who says, “As you wish, Hermes.”

“Okay, beautiful. You can open them now.”

You do as he says to find yourself seated in a golden cup beside Hermes and across from another couple.

A blush comes to Hermes’s cheeks. “I’m sorry to interrupt you, Helios...Rhode.”

That’s when you realize the couple must have been in one another’s arms before your arrival.

“How can we help you?” Rhode says with a hint of annoyance.

Hermes grins. “It’s how we can help you.”

“I beg your pardon?” Helios asks as he glances suspiciously at you.

“We’re searching for your wedding pearls,” Hermes explains to Rhode. “Hecate has agreed to do a location spell, but we need something of yours, preferably a scarf you no longer need.”

“While I’m happy to hear that, I wonder why you’re troubling yourselves with looking for something that belongs to me.”

You quickly tell the story of Poseidon finding you asleep, offering you a ride, and introducing you to Hermes just as Cupid shot you. Hermes tells them of Athena's set of challenges and Poseidon's idea for the second.

"I'll have to thank my father later, if you're successful," Rhode says as a scarf appears in her hands.

She gives it to you.

"Thank you," you say as you accept the scarf.

Then Hermes turns to you. "Ready, then?"

"Goodbye," you say to Helios and Rhode.

"Let's go."



12.26

Hermes wraps Poseidon's golden net around the two of you, so he can better hold you in his arms. Then you walk out together into the water, all the while sharing kisses, until you can no longer stand.

"Here we go," Hermes says.

As swift as Poseidon's chariot, Hermes dives into the sea and swims with you to the bottom of the ocean floor. You have little time to notice the marine life as you pass it, but you do notice the lack of it as you approach the castle.

The old castle is not at all what you imagined. Its uneven stone walls are covered in algae and barnacles, and the windows have no panes.

"It's not very secure," you say.

"It doesn't need to be," Hermes says. "Only an Olympian god would deign to visit, and even he would choose his battles with the sea monsters wisely. Besides, they lost their guards and servants when they lost the war with the Olympians centuries ago. Let's go see if anybody's home."

With his arms around your waist, Hermes tows you to one of the windows, through which you see three monsters sitting together at a long table. One is a merwoman, another is a merman but with lobster-like features, and a third is a beast with three heads: one lion, one goat, and one snake. You shudder at the site of them as they eagerly eat their meager meal of sea turtles--shells and all.

"I know of a cave not far from here where we can stake out the castle without being seen," Hermes says. "Come with me."

He tows you from the castle for about half a mile out and a half a mile up toward the surface to a cave. Although it's not very large, there's just enough room for the two of you to sit inside. From this vantage point, you can see the top of the castle, and you should be able to see if anyone leaves.

However, you aren't sitting together for very long, when you resume your make-out session from earlier. Hermes really knows how to please you, and you begin to care less and less about keeping your eyes on the castle. Before you know it, you're moaning with pleasure with your eyes closed, wishing this day could last forever.

You soon realize that Hermes doesn't need his eyes on the castle to sense movement, for after two or three hours of making out, he says, "Look."

Together you peer down at the ocean floor, where all three monsters are swimming from the castle in the opposite direction of you.

"This is your chance," Hermes says eagerly. "Come on."

He tows you to a window at the back of the castle. "That's Scylla's room. Pour the oil in there, find the pearls, and hurry back."

He kisses you for good luck before he climbs from beneath the golden net and helps you through the window. Once inside Scylla's room, you pour the black oil from the vial. At first it does nothing but pool in front of you. But within ten seconds, it drifts down in a line toward a chest at the foot of Scylla's bed.

[You open the chest.](#)

[You tow the entire chest to the window, where Hermes waits.](#)



12.261

A nest of snakes strikes at you, biting you in multiple places through the golden net. You can feel the venom burning you as it courses through your veins. Before you can cry out to Hermes, your throat closes, and you can no longer breathe. Hermes arrives at your side as you pass out.

When you next open your eyes, you are beside Hermes on a boat entering the gates of the Underworld, and although your memory is fading, you have a brief realization that you are one of the souls of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



12.262

You haul the chest through the window, where Hermes is waiting. Together, you god-travel back to the small deserted island.

When Hermes opens the lid, a nest of snakes strikes at him. He draws his sword and sliced them all to pieces, throwing their remains into the sea. Then you peer into the chest to find the strand of pearls, along with other jewels, inside.

“We did it!” you cry.

“Indeed,” Hermes says with a grin. “Are you ready for your final challenge?”

“You bet I am!”

“I’m beginning to think I was born ready.”

“Whatever it takes to be with you.”



16.2

Hecate flies with you to a snow-covered mountain before a wall of clouds, where she says, “Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter, open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Hecate, and my guest may enter.”

You hear a roar, like a distant train, as rain falls in a sheet before you and then stops as quickly as it came, A rainbow takes its place as the clouds part. Then Hecate flies with you over a gold-paved courtyard, past a whale-shaped fountain, and into an enormous white palace with tall columns in the front and seven steps--each a different color of the rainbow--leading to the main entrance.

You walk beside her across the marble floor into an enormous room, where the gods sit their thrones around the perimeter of the room. Hecate quickly introduces you to those you have not yet met.

When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

“What do you propose for the second challenge?” Hecate asks her.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal can survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

From his throne, Hades says, “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Hecate.

Hecate nods to the god of sea and asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Hecate turns to you. “I have a plan that will help, but it will still be dangerous. Do you accept the challenge? Or would you like me to take you home? I can give you gold and other gifts to perhaps balance out the heartache inflicted upon you by Cupid’s arrow.”

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“I accept the challenge.”](#)



16.21

Hecate wraps her arms around you and flies with you from the temple, through the gates, and out into the deep blue sky. You're thrilled by the feeling of being so close to her as she carried you over the sea.

She gently lays you down in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures began, and sings to you until you fall asleep. When you awaken, you find a bag of gold in one hand and a set of keys in the other. You look around, confused. But when you see the gold Lamborghini parked on the side of the road, you look up to the heavens and shout, "Thank you, Hecate!" (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



16.22

Hecate wraps her arms around you and flies with you from the temple, through the gates, and out into the deep blue sky.

“We need to make a stop at the Underworld,” she says. “I want to do another spell--a location spell that will determine whether the pearls are in Scylla’s cave or her room at the old castle.”

“Sounds good. Thank you.”

You hold on more tightly as Hecate speeds through the deep and narrow chasm to the Underworld.

Then the bright light of god travel wraps itself around you, and, when you open your eyes, you find yourself standing in a the very same throne room where Hades brought you earlier that day. On the double throne at the back of the room, Hades and Persephone, King and Queen of the Underworld, sit, even though you saw them moments ago on Mount Olympus.

You give them a nod as Hecate leads you from the room.

“I’ve just remembered that we’ll need something that once touched the pearls--one of Rhode’s scarves, perhaps,” Hecate says as she leads you enter the chambers. “Preferably one she no longer wears.”

“How will we do that?” you ask.

The dog named Cubie greets you at the door of the dome-shaped bedroom and introduces you to the polecat.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Galin says.

“Likewise,” you say.

“I need to get something from Rhode,” Hecate says to her friends. Then she turns to you. “She’s usually with Helios at this time of day. This shouldn’t take long. Would you like to wait here with Cubie and Galin or come with me?”

[“I’ll wait here.”](#)

[“I’ll go with you.”](#)



16.23

Cubie and Galin offer you a chair and then jump on the bed across from you.

“How is it that you became acquainted with our dear Hecate?” the polecat asks you.

You tell them the story of sleeping beside the babbling brook, being awakened by Hades, who offered you a ride and gave you a tour of the Underworld. You told about Cupid’s arrow and Athena’s challenges. And you explained how you succeed with the first.

“I’m impressed,” Cubie says.

“But you might want to give immortality some more thought,” the polecat says.

“Why would you say that?” you ask.

Galin tells you her story. She explains that she was once a midwife helping Alcmene deliver Hercules. Alcmene had been in labor for days. Hera had convinced the Fates to keep their arms crossed to prevent Hercules from being born, because Hercules was the product of Zeus’s infidelity; but Galin thought Alcmene would go mad with the labor pains. So Galin deceived the Fates by announcing that a son had been born. The Fates held up their arms in surprise, and Hercules was born.

“The Fates were embarrassed when they learned of the deception,” Galin explains. “They changed me into this. But first they cut off my female parts and warned me that if I ever gave birth, it would be through my throat!”

“How horrible!” you say.

“My story isn’t much different,” the Doberman pinscher says. “When Troy fell, along with my husband and children, Odysseus took pity on me. Rather than killing me, he turned me into his dog. But it was too

hard for me to forgive him for his crimes against my people, so he threw me out. Hecate took me, and I've been with her ever since."

"Like I said," Galin says, "Immortality is a long time, and you can't be assured that someone won't curse you, or swallow you, or ruin your existence in some permanent way for all of eternity."

You shudder.

Hecate appears out of thin air, startling you.

"Rhode is pleased that she might get her pearls back."

"Good," you say.

"Are you all right?" Hecate asks you.

Cubie and Galin avoid Hecate's gaze by staring guiltily at their feet.

You give Hecate a weak nod. "Fine."

"Fine enough to begin the spell?"

"Yes."

"I'm ready if you are."



16.25

Hecate takes a silver bowl and fills it with water from a spring that drips into a small basin between the two tables in the adjoining room. Then she places the bowl on one of the tables and arranges four blue candles around it. She lights each of the candles along with an herb.

“This is a sprig of Jasmine,” she explains before she extinguishes the flame and allows the smoke to wash over the table. Then she sets the smoking herb into an empty jar.

With one hand, Hecate holds Rhode’s scarf to one of the candles until it catches fire. With the other hand, she takes a folded paper from a tall stack of papers and holds it against the burning scarf.

“This is a world map,” she explains.

Once the map is engulfed in flames, Hecate drops it into the silver bowl of water and says, “Show me the location of Rhode’s wedding pearls.”

You watch with fascination as smoke rises from the bowl, leaving in its wake a tiny piece of the map. Hecate fishes it out of the water and shows you the words written on it: “Ionian Sea.”

“The pearls are at the old castle,” you say. “Thank you, Hecate. You’ve just saved us a great deal of trouble.”

Hecate hands you a vial filled with a black liquid.

“What’s this?” you ask her.

“Oil,” she says. “Once we reach the castle, empty the oil into Scylla’s room and ask it to reveal the location of the pearls. The oil will drift through the water in their direction.”

“I can’t thank you enough,” you say.

Hecate smiles as she takes your hand and god-travels with you from the Underworld. When you open your eyes, you’re standing beside her on a small deserted island in the middle of the ocean.

“Phorcys’s castle is at the bottom of the sea,” she says. “You need to decide something before we go. We might get lucky and find nobody home. They have to leave to find food, because nothing living ever comes within miles of their castle. But, if we find Phorcy and Keto or any of their monster offspring at home, will you want to sneak into Scylla’s room through a window and risk getting caught? Or will you want to wait until we see them leave to get their dinner?”

“Is there any chance they’ve already fed for the day?”

“Yes. But Athena gave us no time limit.”

You consider your options. If you wait, you’ll have a better chance of getting in and out without being killed. However, if the monsters have already fed for the day, you might get stuck waiting until tomorrow. Plus, there’s no guarantee that all of them will leave to feed at the same time, or that they won’t return while you’re still in the castle searching for the pearls.

[“Wait until they leave to feed.”](#)

[“I don’t want to wait.”](#)



16.24

“We’ll be right back,” Hecate tells Cubie and Galin as she takes your hand and god-travels you from the room.

“Don’t open your eyes,” she says when you feel the open air against your skin. “Not until Helios dims himself.”

You assume it’s Helios who says, “As you wish, Hecate.”

“Okay, hon’. You can open them now.”

You do as she says to find yourself seated in a golden cup beside Hecate and across from another couple.

A blush comes to Hecate’s cheeks. “I’m sorry to interrupt you, Helios...Rhode.”

That’s when you realize the couple must have been in one another’s arms before your arrival.

“How can we help you?” Rhode says with a hint of annoyance.

Hecate grins. “It’s how we can help you.”

“I beg your pardon?” Helios asks as he glances suspiciously at you.

“We’re searching for your wedding pearls,” Hecate explains to Rhode. “I want to perform a location spell, but we need something of yours, preferably a scarf you no longer wear.”

“While I’m happy to hear that, I wonder why you’re troubling yourselves with looking for something that belongs to me.”

You quickly tell the story of Hades finding you asleep, offering you a ride, and introducing you to Hecate just as Cupid shot you. Hecate tells them of Athena's set of challenges and Poseidon's idea for the second.

"I'll have to thank my father later, if you're successful," Rhode says as a scarf appears in her hands.

She gives it to you.

"Thank you," you say as you accept the scarf.

Hecate turns to you. "Ready, then?"

"Goodbye," you say to Helios and Rhode.

"Let's go."



16.26

Hecate wraps Poseidon's golden net around the two of you, so she can better hold you in her arms. Then you walk out together into the water, until you can no longer stand.

"Here we go," she says.

Almost as swift as Poseidon's chariot, Hecate dives into the sea and swims with you to the bottom of the ocean floor. You have little time to notice the marine life as you pass it, but you do notice the lack of it as you approach the castle.

The old castle is not at all what you imagined. Its uneven stone walls are covered in algae and barnacles, and the windows have no panes.

"It's not very secure," you say.

"It doesn't need to be," Hecate says. "Only a god would deign to visit and even then would choose his or her battles with the sea monsters wisely. Besides, Phorcys and Keto lost their guards and servants when they lost the war with the Olympians centuries ago. Let's go see if anybody's home."

With her arms around your waist, Hecate tows you to one of the windows, through which you see three monsters sitting together at a long table. One is a merwoman, another is a merman but with lobster-like features, and a third is a beast with three heads: one lion, one goat, and one snake. You shudder at the sight of them as they eagerly eat their meager meal of sea turtles--shells and all.

"I know of a cave not far from here where we can stake out the castle without being seen," Hecate says. "Come with me."

She tows you from the castle for about half a mile out and a half a mile up toward the surface to a cave. Although it's not very large, there's just enough room for the two of you to sit inside. From this vantage point, you can see the top of the castle, and you should be able to see if anyone leaves.

As you sit together watching the castle, Hecate asks you about your life. You feel comfortable enough with her to share everything--both your victories and your failures. She listens with interest and then offers to tell you a bit about herself.

She tells you that she was a Titan but fell in love with an Olympian and despised how the Titans treated others, so she helped the Olympians to victory. When her lover's daughter married someone her lover didn't approve of, you promised to watch over the daughter, to keep her safe.

It didn't take you long to realize the identity of the person to whom Hecate had sworn her heart. "Demeter? You swore yourself to Demeter?"

Hecate points to the ocean floor without answering. "They're leaving. The time has come."

She tows you to a window at the back of the castle. "That's Scylla's room. Pour the oil in there, find the pearls, and hurry back."

Hecate kisses you on the cheek for good luck before she climbs from beneath the golden net and helps you through the window. Once inside Scylla's room, you pour the black oil from the vial. At first it does nothing but pool in front of you. But within ten seconds, it drifts down in a line toward a chest at the foot of Scylla's bed.

[You open the chest.](#)

[You tow the entire chest to the window, where Hermes waits.](#)



16.261

A nest of snakes strikes at you, biting you in multiple places through the golden net. You can feel the venom burning you as it courses through your veins. Before you can cry out to Hermes, your throat closes, and you can no longer breathe. Hecate arrives at your side as you pass out.

When you next open your eyes, you are beside Hecate on a boat entering the gates of the Underworld, and although your memory is fading, you have a brief realization that you have become one of the souls of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



16.262

You haul the chest through the window, where Hecate is waiting. Together, you god-travel back to the small deserted island.

When Hecate opens the lid, a nest of snakes strikes at her. She draws her sword and slices them all to pieces, throwing their remains into the sea. Then you peer into the chest to find the strand of pearls, along with other jewels, inside.

“We did it!” you cry.

“Indeed,” Hecate says with a grin. “Are you ready for your final challenge?”

“You bet I am!”

“I’m beginning to think I was born ready.”

“Whatever it takes to be near you.”



14.2

Hades flies with you in his chariot to a snow-covered mountain before a wall of clouds, where he says, “Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter, open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Hades, and my guest may enter.”

You hear a roar, like a distant train, as rain falls in a sheet before you and then stops as quickly as it came, A rainbow takes its place as the clouds part. Then Hades drives the chariot over a gold-paved courtyard, past a whale-shaped fountain, and into a garage where other chariots are already parked. A young god with golden curls appears to unbridle the horses.

“Thank you, Cupid,” Hades says.

You blanch when you realize the identity of the other god. You aren’t sure whether you feel grateful or resentful, so you say nothing.

Hades takes your hand and flies with you from the garage, across the gold-paved courtyard, and to an enormous white palace with tall columns in the front and seven steps--each a different color of the rainbow--leading to the main entrance.

You walk beside him across the marble floor into an enormous room, where the gods sit their thrones around the perimeter of the room. Hades quickly introduces you to those you have not yet met.

When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

“What do you propose for the second challenge?” Hades asks her.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal can survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

Artemis lifts her chin. “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Hades.

Hades nods to the god of sea and asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Hades turns to you. “I have a plan that will help, but it will still be dangerous. Do you accept the challenge? Or would you like me to take you home? I can’t do anything about your heart, but I can give you great wealth, which will give you some happiness, I would think.”

[“Take me home.”](#)

“I accept the challenge.”



14.21

Hades takes your hand and flies with you from the temple and back to the chariot, where Cupid brings and bridles the horses. Then Hades takes the reins and leads the chariot through the gates and out into the deep blue sky. Together, you sail over the sea across the world, back to where you began.

From the chariot, he walks with you across the field of flowers to the babbling brook.

“I have a gift for you,” he says. “I didn’t want to mention it in front of the other gods.”

“Thank you, Lord Hades! I’m sure I’ll love it, whatever it is.”

Suddenly, there are two gods of the Underworld standing, side by side, before you.

You cover your heart. “You have a twin brother?”

Hades laughs. “No. This is a man, not a god. He was created for me by Hephaestus, the god of the forge. I asked him to make you this gift, so you wouldn’t live a life of heartache.”

You study the man beside the god. You feel the arrow in your heart compelling you to love him.

“What should I call you?” you ask him.

“Hades,” he says.

You’re shocked that he speaks and sounds exactly like the god.

“Shall we go for a walk?” the man asks, offering you his arm.

“Sure,” you say, bewildered by this turn of events.

As you walk off with the man, you glance back at the god and say, “Thank you.”

Hades nods and disappears. When you return home with your new love, you find a bag of gold waiting for you in your room. You wrap your arms around Hades’s neck and the two of you laugh with pleasure and delight. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



14.22

Hades takes your hand and flies with you from the temple and back to the chariot, where Cupid brings and bridles the horses. Then Hades takes the reins and leads the chariot through the gates and from the mountaintop, where the sun is beginning to set, leaving breathtaking streaks of purple and orange in its wake.

“That’s Helios being dramatic,” Hades says of the colorful sky.

[“It’s beautiful.”](#)

[“I love drama.”](#)



14.23

As you sail over the shimmering sea toward the coast of Turkey, Hades conjures his helm and places it on his head. You're shocked that you can still see him.

"Why aren't you invisible?" you ask him, wondering if the helm doesn't always work.

Hades laughs. "I am, but so are you. The protection of the helm extends to all who ride my chariot. I don't want us to be seen as we approach Cyclopes Island."

["Cyclopes Island? What's that?"](#)

["But Poseidon said the pearls would be either at the Messina Strait or the old castle."](#)



14.24

The chariot descends toward an island. It comes to a stop on a sandy beach.

“This is where Polyphemus lives,” Hades explains. Then he helps you from the chariot and leads you along the coastline away from the sun. You are surprised when he continues to hold your hand. “Polyphemus is a Cyclops, and his eye has special powers—not because he’s a Cyclops, but because he’s the son of Poseidon. His eye will reveal the location of the pearls.”

“Oh, I *see*,” you say, trying to be funny.

Hades laughs, and you feel grateful. Then he sends the chariot home.

You watch in awe as the two black stallions pull the golden chariot across the colorful sky.

Then you cock your head to the side. “I have a feeling the son of Poseidon isn’t just going to hand over his one eye to us because we ask him for it.”

“Beautiful *and* smart,” Hades says.

You blush and begin to wonder if, now that Hades is away from his wife, he’ll behave differently toward you. “So, what’s our plan?”

“Every morning, Polyphemus leaves his cave and comes to this beach to wash his eye.”

“Why the beach?” you ask. “Doesn’t he risk losing his eye in the sea?”

Hades stops and turns to admire the sun setting over the Aegean Sea. “There’s a pool in his cave, but it leads to the ocean floor, and he’s afraid of dropping his eye. He can’t swim. None of the Cyclopes can. That’s why Zeus trapped them on this island.”

“Wait, the son of Poseidon can’t swim?”

“You gotta love irony.”

“Yeah.”

“He comes here to the beach because the water is shallow, and, if he drops his eye, the waves will carry it back to shore.”

“Are we waiting here until morning, then?”

“It’s a beautiful sunset, yes?”

“Yes.”

“I thought we could spend the night here, so we know the moment Polyphemus comes over that hill with his sheep.”

You can’t believe your luck. Your hopes of intimacy with the god of the Underworld soar.

“I’ll do whatever you want me to do.”

“Just the two of us?”



14.25

Hades chuckles. “I don’t wish to lead you on, dear mortal. I’m holding your hand to keep you under the protection of the helm. I don’t want the Cyclops to spot you and ruin our chances of getting the eye.”

“Does that mean you’ll have to hold my hand all night?” you ask.

“I’d send you back to Mount Olympus or to the Underworld to wait for me, but I don’t want anyone to know what we’re up to.”

“Why not?”

“For one, Poseidon wouldn’t stand for it.”

“Yeah, I guess not.” It occurs to you that Hades might be making an excuse to be with you, even if he doesn’t want to admit it. “Is there another reason?”

“I want to hold onto the eye for a while, even after we use it to find the pearls.”

[“I’m beginning to feel sorry for Polyphemus.”](#)

[“Won’t he be blind without his eye?”](#)



14.26

“Don’t feel sorry for that brute. He’s a cannibal, a dimwit, and a brute. The other Cyclopes don’t even like him.”

Hades leads you up onto a cliff edge overlooking the beach. A single tree grows on it, offering shade from the setting sun. Hades releases your hand to conjure a blanket and spread it on the ground.

“Sit with me,” he says, putting his back against the thick trunk of the tree. “The helm will offer you protection as long as we are both on the blanket.”

You sit beside him, with your back against the tree, and, together, you watch the sunset over the Aegean and share a meal that appears when Hades snaps his fingers.

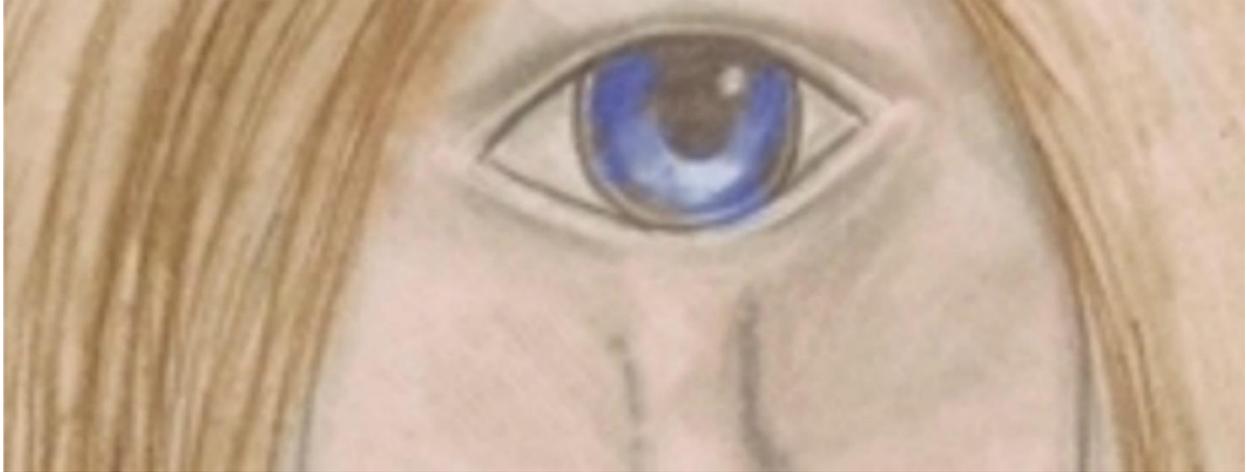
When darkness covers the earth and the stars appear in the sky, Hades points at the moon. “That’s Selene, the moon goddess, flying in her luminous chariot. Helios, her brother, has gone to the other side of the earth.”

“The stars are gorgeous tonight,” you say. “The only constellations I can ever recognize are the big and little dippers.”

“Big Bear and Little Bear,” he says. “Do you know their story?”

“No.”

“Yes, but I’d love you to tell it to me anyway.”



14.27

Hades spends the rest of the evening telling you the stories behind many of the constellations and teaching you how to identify them, based on the North Star. Eventually, you fall asleep beside him, because the next thing you know, you awaken to the morning light and the sound of sheep.

“Sleep okay?” Hades asks from where he sits against the trunk of the tree.

You sit up, having awakened to find yourself sprawled out over the blanket.

“Surprisingly well, considering.”

He arches a brow, but you decide not to explain your meaning. He must know the effect his presence has on you, ever since Cupid’s arrow.

Not many minutes pass when you see a giant wearing nothing more than a loin cloth come ambling down the hillside toward the beach. He carries a club in one hand.

“That’s Polyphemus,” Hades whispers near your ear.

“Alright, yer dirty mops!” Polyphemus shouts in a booming voice. “It’s time to get moving!”

“He doesn’t sound very nice,” you whisper.

“He’s not very bright, either, which makes him an easy target.”

“Come on yer muts!” Polyphemus bellows when he notices the sheep clumping close to the hilltop and what you now realize is the mouth of a cave. “Come on out. I’ll be right back.”

Polyphemus turns his fat body toward the shore and shuffles clumsily across the sand.

“We have to wait for him to remove the eye,” Hades whispers. “Once he holds it in his hand, I’ll snatch it before he knows what hit him.”

“What about me?” you ask.

“You’ll have to fly with me, so you aren’t seen.”

Hades takes your hand and makes the blanket and empty dishes disappear. Then, he lifts into the air and tows you toward the beach to wait. You hover about twenty meters above the giant.

As the giant approaches the shoreline, he plucks his eye from its socket, causing you to gag. There’s no blood or goo, but it’s still unnerving to see a creature holding its own eyeball.

Before the eye even touches the sea. Hades races down with you in tow, grabs the eye from the giant, and then flies into the sky.

“That was awesome!” you say. “Now, what?”

Hades hands the eye of Polyphemus over to you. A chill runs down your back, but you refuse to be squeamish when so much is riding on the success of this challenge.

“Ask the eye to look in the direction of Rhode’s wedding pearls,” he says.

Wondering why he doesn’t do it himself, you hold the eye in your palm with the iris looking up at you and say, “Look in the direction of Rhode’s wedding pearls.”

Another chill runs down your spine as the eye, of its own accord, turns toward Greece.

Hand in hand, you and Hades fly over Greece as the eye of Polyphemus gazes west.

When you cross the Ionian Sea, Hades says, “If the pearls were at the old castle, the eye would have faced downward. The fact that it didn’t tells me that the pearls must be in Scylla’s cave.”

“Should we test your theory?”

“Let’s.”

Hades points toward the toe of the boot of Italy. “That’s the location of Scylla’s cave. Let’s fly past and see what happens.”

Just as Hades suspected, the moment you fly over Italy, the iris of the eye turns toward the palm of your hand.

“Now what?” you ask.

“Now you need to take the eye into the cave under the protection of the helm,” he says. “But remember, the helm doesn’t disguise your sound and Scylla is a perceptive, immortal, vicious monster. You’ll want to be sure she’s away from her lair before you go in.”

Hades takes you to a cliff edge on the toe of the boot of Italy overlooking the Messina Strait.

“Scylla’s cave is below this crag,” he says. “I want to remind you, before we go to the cave, how important it is to be as silent as possible. Control your breathing. Don’t smack your lips or sniffle. Don’t scratch or adjust your clothes or weapons. In fact. You’d do better to leave all your weapons here.

You unstrap Athena’s shield and scabbard and drop them on the cliff edge. “Are you going into the cave with me?”

“I can’t,” he says. “But you know that already. I’ll hide behind the rocks and wait for you near the cave entrance. As soon as I see you, I’ll take you back to Mount Olympus.”

“Okay,” you say.

“But if we see Scylla in her cave, we’ll wait on the rocks below until she leaves.”

“Got it.”

Hades takes off the helm and puts it on your head. Then he takes your hand and flies with you to the rocks below. You gasp when the water hits the rocks and lightly sprays against your back. Hades puts a finger to his lips, and you realize being silent is harder than you imagined. You resist the urge to gasp again when the eye in your hand looks in the direction of the cave.

You peer through the entrance and find nothing but a primitive bed against one wall of what looks like a four-hundred-square-foot den. You glance at Hades. He nods and disappears.

You take a deep breath and realize again that your breathing needs to be better controlled. Then you creep along the rocks and into the cave, watching the direction of the eye.

At the back of the cave, you see two tunnels that veer in opposite directions. The eye directs you to the right.

Your heart rate increases as you consider the possibility that the monster could be hiding just beyond the bend. Then you notice the eye move. It turns and looks at you.

You gasp and then freeze, realizing you’ve made a sound. Why is the eye looking at you? Then it occurs to you that the eye may be pointing up. You look up and see a ledge in the wall, and something on it is sparkling.

You can't reach the ledge. It's about six inches from your reach. What should you do?

[Go back for Athena's scabbard.](#)

[Take the helm from your head just long enough to knock the contents to the floor.](#)

[Jump.](#)



14.28

Hades sweeps you in his arms and whisks you to the cliff edge.

“Did you get the pearls?”

“No. They were just out of my reach.” You pick up Athena’s scabbard. “I can reach them with this.”

“Good thinking.”

“But there’s something we didn’t consider.”

“What?” Hades asks as he pulls his brows together.

“There are tunnels connected to the cave. I don’t know how far back they go. Scylla could be hiding back there.”

Hades walks away from you.

You follow. “Where are you going?”

“If Scylla’s cave isn’t warded, I may be able to see through the rock and into her lair.”

You wait as he scans the crag.

“She’s got it protected. I can’t see if she’s there.” Then he adds, “But if she *is* there, she can’t stay there forever. We could stake out the cave until she either leaves or returns. If she leaves, you can make your move with confidence. If she returns, we can wait for her to leave again.”

“We could be here all day,” you say.

“Wouldn’t you rather take your time and play it safe?”

“I’ll be quick and take my chances.”

“Yes. Let’s stake out the cave.”



14.29

You manage to knock the pearls and other jewels from the ledge; however, before you can snatch them up, Scylla emerges from the back of the tunnel and lunges at you. The next thing you know, you're riding on Charon's raft with Thanatos beside you.

"Am I one of the dead?" you ask the beautiful boy.

Solemnly, he nods. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



14.291

You and Hades sit on the rocks near the mouth of Scylla's cave and wait. Although you can't speak, for fear of being caught by Scylla, you enjoy the opportunity to hold the hand of your true love, to look at him, and to be in his company for a little longer. You also don't mind gazing at the beautiful coast of Sicily opposite you. You spend the bulk of your stakeout daydreaming about a life with the lord of the Underworld.

After two hours of baking in the morning sun, Scylla emerges from her cave to harass a ship entering the strait. Hades motions for you to go.

You rush inside with Athena's scabbard, knock the jewels from the ledge, and grab the pearls, leaving the others on the cavern floor. Then you hasten out to Hades, who god-travels you back to Mount Olympus.

"I'm impressed," he says outside the gates. "Excellent work."

"Thank you, Lord. I'm sure you know, I did it for you."

He smiles down at you. "Are you ready to discover your final challenge?"

"For you, anything."

"Absolutely."

"Hell, yeah, I'm ready!"



17.2

Hypnos flies with you to a snow-covered mountain before a wall of clouds, where he says, “Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter, open the gates of Mount Olympus so that I, Hypnos, and my guest may enter.”

You hear a roar, like a distant train, as rain falls in a sheet before you and then stops as quickly as it came, A rainbow takes its place as the clouds part. Then Hypnos takes you in his arms and flies with you over a gold-paved courtyard, past a whale-shaped fountain, and to an enormous white palace with tall columns in the front and seven steps--each a different color of the rainbow--leading to the main entrance.

You walk beside him across the marble floor into an enormous room, where the gods sit their thrones around the perimeter of the room. Hip quickly introduces you to those you have not yet met.

When you present the fruit to Athena in the temple, she raises her brows and smiles at you.

“I’m impressed, mortal,” Athena says as she takes the fruit. “Not many can overcome the temptation of seeing their futures.”

“What do you propose for the second challenge?” Hip asks her.

“I have an idea,” Poseidon says. “My daughter’s wedding pearls were stolen a few years ago. Rhode’s husband, Helios, the sun god, saw who did it, but Rhode’s attempts to get them back have been unsuccessful. She badgers me about this constantly, as you might imagine.”

“Who stole them?” Zeus asks.

“Scylla,” Poseidon’s wife, Amphitrite, says. “I, too, have confronted Scylla, but the crab pretends to know nothing.”

“If two goddesses have been unable to retrieve the stolen pearls,” Persephone begins, “how can we expect a mere mortal to succeed?”

“The mortal will have help,” Athena points out.

“Even so,” Apollo says, “it’s not likely the mortal can survive.”

“Is that an opinion you formed from a vision or from speculation?” Hera asks Apollo.

“Speculation.”

“We can’t make it easy on a mortal to become one of us,” Ares argues. “If there’s little chance of victory, it’s a true hero’s test.”

Artemis lifts her chin. “I agree.”

“As do I,” Zeus says.

“It’s settled then,” Athena says. “The mortal is to retrieve Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla and return them here, to Mount Olympus.”

“My golden net will be at your disposal to conjure at will,” Poseidon says to Hypnos.

Hip nods to the god of sea and asks, “Do you know if Scylla has the pearls at her cave along the Messina Strait or back at her home in the old castle?”

“Helios saw Scylla steal the pearls, but he didn’t see where she hid them,” Poseidon says.

Hip turns to you. “I have a plan that will help, but it will still be dangerous. Do you accept the challenge? Or would you like me to take you home? Remember, I can visit you every night in your dreams. I can also give you gifts--great wealth. What do you say, gorgeous?”

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“I accept the challenge.”](#)



17.21

Hypnos wraps his arms around you while the blinding light of god-travel makes you close your eyes. When you open them again, you are standing beside Hip in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where you began your adventures.

“I’m in no hurry to get back,” he says as he lies down beside the water. “Join me?”

You lie beside him, enjoying the feel of his body against yours.

“I’ll miss you so much,” you say, regretting your decision not to accept the challenge.

“I know,” he says with a grin. “But you’ll have me every night in your dreams. Plus, one of these fabulous prizes can be yours!”

“Huh?”

He snaps his fingers, and a white Lamborghini appears in the field beside you. “Prize number one.”

He snaps them again, and a log cabin appears beside the car. “Prize number two--and I can move it anywhere for you.”

He snaps them a third time, and a poster appears on a tripod. It reads: *An all-expenses-paid vacation for two for one week in the beautiful Bahamas!* “Prize number three.”

“Oh my gosh!” you cry.

“Which will it be, gorgeous?”

[“The Lamborghini!”](#)

“The log cabin!”

“The trip to the Bahamas!”



17.211

“You get all three prizes!” Hip says with a huge smile.

“Seriously?”

He nods.

You lie on top of him, kissing his lips, his ear, his neck, his chest. You spend the rest of the day showing him how grateful you are. And Hypnos shows you a few things, too, making you feel things you’ve never felt before. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



17.22

Hip wraps his arms around you and flies with you from the temple, across the gold-paved courtyard, and through the gates of Mount Olympus into the clear blue sky.

“Since we don’t know whether Rhode’s wedding pearls are in Scylla’s cave or in her room at the old castle, we should ask Scylla,” Hip says with a grin.

“Yeah, right,” you say. “Like she’ll really tell us.”

“She will if she doesn’t know it’s us asking,” he says enigmatically.

“What do you have in mind?”

“Duh. The Dreamworld.”

You furrow your brows. “How will that help, exactly?”

“I’ll take my duties as Sleep back from Hecate. Then I’ll disintegrate, or fragment--that’s when I appear at many places at once. I’ll go the the Messina Strait and put Scylla into the deep boon of sleep. It doesn’t always work on immortals, but, if it does, then we can look for her in the Dreamworld.”

“I still don’t understand the plan,” you say as Hip descends toward the narrow chasm toward the Underworld.

You bury your face in his chest as you enter the chasm. When you open your eyes, your standing beside Hip in the Field of Asphodel.

“Lie down with me,” he says, so you do. “You don’t need to do a thing. Just go to sleep. If I can get Scylla to fall asleep, I’ll appear to her as her mother, Keto. Scylla is terrified of her mother. I’ll get Scylla to admit where she’s hiding the pearls.”

“Oh, okay,” you say. “Do you think that will work?”

“Only one way to find out.”

You yawn.

“When I’m done, I’ll give my duties back to Hecate, so I can take you to the pearls.”

You close your eyes and fall asleep.

When you open your eyes, you see Hip running through a colorful prism.

[You follow him.](#)

[You wait for him.](#)



17.221

“Hip!” you call.

He doesn’t seem to hear you, for he keeps running.

The colorful prism transforms into a series of different locations: a bedroom, a barn, a riverbank, a sea cave. You find yourself sitting on a rock near the opening of the cave, where a merwoman slithers inside.

Since you’ve lost sight of Hip, you stay put.

“Poseidon has been nagging me for his daughter’s wedding pearls, Scylla,” the merwoman says.

From the rock, you lean closer to the entrance to the cave. Beside the merwoman is the strangest monster you’ve ever seen. It has six long necks, each with a huge head. Only the center heads have eyes. It walks on tentacles--you count twelve. For arms, it has crab pincers. But the strangest part of the creature is its waist, where the heads of six dogs yap and howl.

“So?” the strange monster called Scylla replies to the merwoman. “They’re mine now.”

“Of course, they are,” the merwoman says. “That’s what I keep telling him. But his badgering has me worried that he might come looking for them. Tell me you have them hidden someplace smart.”

“Maybe I’ll move them to a better place.”

“Why?” the merwoman asks. “Where are they now?”

“On a very high ledge on one of my shelves in the back tunnel.”

“Which tunnel?”

Scylla narrows her eight eyes. “What difference does it make?”

“It doesn’t,” the merwoman hisses. “I just want to make sure you know where they are and that you’re being smart, you stupid daughter.”

The ugly monster sulks, and you almost feel sorry for her.

As the merwoman leaves, she notices you sitting on the rocks and gives you a look of surprise.

“Who’s that?” Scylla asks from behind her.

“My dinner!” the merwoman says as she grabs you and leaps into the sea.

You struggle against the merwoman, but to no avail.

She slaps you in the face and says, “Wake up!” She does this repeatedly, which confuses you, because your eyes are wide open.

But then you do open your eyes to find yourself in the field of asphodel, lying beside Hip.

“I told you to wait here,” he said. “Let’s hope the shock didn’t wake Scylla. Come on. There’s no time to waste.”

You blink your eyes, confused.

[“What’s happening?”](#)

[“What the hell just happened?”](#)



17.222

Hip smiles down at you.

“You were asleep,” he says. “What you just experienced was a dream. Now, come on. We can’t waste time.”

You close your eyes against the blinding light of god-travel, and, when you open them, you find yourself standing on a rock near the mouth of a cave.

“Where are we?” you ask.

“On the southern coast of Italy, at the Messina Strait,” Hip whispers. “This is Scylla’s cave. She’s still asleep.”

You cover your mouth at the sight of an enormous monster lying on a primitive bed. Tentacles and necks are in a tangled mess, and dog heads snore.

“You have a choice,” Hip says. “Rhode’s wedding pearls are on a rock ledge in one of the back tunnels of her lair. You can either sneak in there now, while she’s sleeping, or we can hideout until she leaves the cave.”

“What do you think I should do?”

“Both are risky. She could wake up while you’re still in there. But she could also return before you find the pearls.”

“Can’t you make her stay asleep?”

“I gave my duties back to Hecate, so I wouldn’t put you to sleep. Hecate can try, but it doesn’t work as well on immortals.”

“I’ll go now.”

“Let’s stakeout the cave.”

“You decide for me.”



17.23

You tip-toe across the rocks and into Scylla's cave. You hold your breath as you near her massive, strange, sleeping body. When you're faced with two tunnels, you waste no time deliberating.

[You go left first.](#)

[You go right first.](#)



17.231

You creep along the winding tunnel, searching for ledges in the wall. After turning this way and that along the twisting path, you decide to turn back, to search the other tunnel.

You enter the main cavern and freeze when the monster opens its eight eyes and glares at you. In your peripheral vision, you see Hip coming, but before he reaches you, the ugly monster opens one of its big mouths and swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



17.232

You haven't gone far when you see a series of ledges in the wall of the cave. On the very top ledge, something sparkles in the dim light seeping in from a crack above. You can't reach it with your hand, so you use Athena's scabbard to lift what appear to be several necklaces from the wall. To your great joy, one of them is a strand of pearls. You take the pearls and return the others to the ledge. Then you creep past Scylla, through the mouth of the cave, and into Hip's arms.

He whisks you back to Mount Olympus and sets you on your feet before the wall of clouds.

"You did it," he said with a gleam in his eyes.

"I did it."

He gives you a luscious kiss that you wish would never end. Then he asks, "Are you ready to learn what your final challenge is?"

"You bet I am!"

"Yes, but please kiss me again."

"I'll do anything to be with you, Hip."



17.24

“A stakeout it is, then,” Hip says with a smile. “You see that island on the other side of the strait?”

You nod. “It’s beautiful.”

“That’s Sicily. Can you see the lighthouse over there?”

You strain your eyes. “I think so.”

“I’ll have a perfect view of Scylla’s cave from there.”

He takes you in his arms and flies with you across the Messina Strait to the lighthouse on the tip of Sicily. This part of the island seems deserted. There are a few ruins along the coast within view, but they’re devoid of tourists. Miles away, you see resorts and restaurants, but you must be as invisible to the people there as they are to you.

Hip sets you on your feet inside the lighthouse tower and points to Scylla’s cave.

“It’s too far away for me to see the mouth of the cave,” you say.

“No worries, gorgeous. I can see Scylla sleeping on her bed,” he says with a cocky tone you find attractive.

He pins your back against the rail and presses his body close to yours.

“I hope I’m not distracting you,” you tease.

“You’re definitely distracting me,” he says before he kisses you. “But I think I can handle it.”

You make out together in the tower for at least an hour before Hip notices Scylla leaving her cave.

“She’s going to harass that boat,” he says. “Now’s your chance.”

He god-travels you to the rocks outside her cave. You rush inside and find two tunnels that veer off in opposite directions.

[You go left first.](#)

[You go right first.](#)



17.241

You creep along the winding tunnel, searching for ledges in the wall. After turning this way and that along the twisting path, you decide to turn back, to search the other tunnel.

You enter the main cavern and freeze when the monster leaps from the sea and into the cavern. As soon as she sees you, she shrieks and glares at you. In your peripheral vision, you see Hip coming, but before he reaches you, the ugly monster opens one of its big mouths and swallows you whole. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



17.242

You haven't gone far when you see a series of ledges in the wall of the cave. On the very top ledge, something sparkles in the dim light seeping in from a crack above. You can't reach it with your hand, so you use Athena's scabbard to lift what appear to be several necklaces from the wall. To your great joy, one of them is a strand of pearls. You take the pearls and return the others to the ledge. Then you run through the mouth of the cave and into Hip's arms.

He whisks you back to Mount Olympus and sets you on your feet before the wall of clouds.

"You did it," he said with a gleam in his eyes.

"I did it."

He gives you a luscious kiss that you wish would never end. Then he asks, "Are you ready to learn what your final challenge is?"

"You bet I am!"

"Yes, but please kiss me again."

"I'll do anything to be with you, Hip."



PART FOUR: THE THIRD CHALLENGE

4.3

Zeus flies you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You bow to the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, “Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed.”

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“Since the mortal has made it this far,” Zeus begins, “I’d like to be of service by distracting the Minotaur. The mortal will still need to navigate and find the plant without getting lost and before Asterion returns.”

“Asterion?” you ask.

“That’s the Minotaur’s given name,” Persephone explains.

Hephaestus stands from his throne. “I agree that a distraction is in order. The mortal has already proven worthy, by my estimation.”

“Such a distraction won’t ensure success, by any means,” Apollo says.

Hera asks, “A prediction or speculation?”

“Fact,” Apollo replies. “Men and women have died by getting lost in that maze and by dying of thirst or starvation.”

“Then are we in accord?” Athena asks? “Zeus may distract Asterion while the mortal searches for the plant?”

“Aye,” the gods say together.

Zeus turns to you. “Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home. As I’ve mentioned before,” he glances nervously at Hera before turning back to you and saying, “I can give you riches and other gifts to offset your broken heart.”

[“Take me home.”](#)

[“I accept the challenge.”](#)



4.311

Zeus flies with you from the temple and through the gates of Mount Olympus. Outside the gates on the snow-covered mountaintop, he takes you into his arms.

“I promise to visit every chance I get,” he says just before he kisses you.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside Zeus in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

Zeus lies with you beside the water and spends the rest of the day showing you all the ways he can make up for not being with you every day.

At some point, you fall asleep in his arms, because you wake up at sunset to find yourself alone. Beside you in the grass is a bag of gold and a set of keys. Parked a few meters away is a brand-new silver Lamborghini.

You lift your smiling face to the sky and shout, “Thank you, Zeus!” (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.312

Zeus takes your hand and flies with you from the temple to his chariot, where Cupid bridles the horses. Then you fly together from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

“Have you ever heard of Mount Ida?” Zeus asks.

[“Yes.”](#)

[“No.”](#)



4.3121

“I suppose there is more than one mountain with that name, but I’m referring to what they call Psiloritis in Crete. It’s on the same island as the Minotaur’s labyrinth.”

“I see.”

“I bring it up because it’s where I was raised.”

“Really?”

“After my mother saved me from being swallowed by my father, she hid me away in a cave there,” Zeus explains. “I was raised by two ornery nymphs and their milk goat, whom they loved more than me.”

“Doesn’t sound like a happy childhood.”

“No. But I do have happy memories of the curetes.”

“Curetes?”

“Male dancers who wore armor and played cymbals and tambourines. My mother and grandmother invoked them to dance near my cave to drown out my cries, so my cannibal father wouldn’t discover their secret.”

“So, what do the curetes have to do with my challenge?” you ask.

“I’ll ask them to put on a show for the Minotaur,” Zeus explains. “While he’s watching the show, and possibly engaging in the dance, you’ll search for the wolfsbane using these.”

Zeus gives you a headlamp and a ball of string.

“I don’t know about this.”

“Great plan!”



4.3122

The chariot descends toward a heavily populated island with modern buildings covering nearly every square inch, except for one finger jetting out into the green sea with what appears to be the ruins of an ancient fort.

Further inland, ruins stretch for acres and acres. Zeus brings the chariot down among them, where tourists are still walking in and among the partially ravaged buildings. Since none of them react to a horse-drawn chariot, you realize they can't see it.

A few mountains hover over the landscape. Zeus flies with you from the chariot to the highest peak.

“Where are my merry men?” Zeus shouts.

As if on cue, a band of boys in armor spring from the surrounding trees. They play their tambourines and cymbals. They chant a quick beat as they skip and hop like cloggers.

[You clap and dance around to their beat.](#)

[“How interesting,” you say with furrowed brows.](#)



4.3123

When the dancers come to a halt and stand at attention before their lord, Zeus says, “Curetes, I need your help.”

“Anything, King Zeus,” one of the men shouts.

“This mortal has been tasked with finding an ancient wolfsbane from the Minotaur’s labyrinth. I need you to distract Asterion for an hour. Can you do that?”

“Yes, my lord!” they shout in unison.

“Let’s go!” Zeus shouts back.

The men dance and sing as they skip down the mountain. They move so swiftly, that, from a distance, their shiny armor, if visible to mortals, might look like rain.

Zeus takes you in his arms and flies with you from the mountain down to the ruins, to a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Zeus past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” Zeus points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

You nod as you strap the headlamp to your head.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

You hear the curetes arrive. They chant, dance, and crash their cymbals and shake their tambourines.

Soon you notice a bull man and a beautiful raven-haired goddess emerge from the labyrinth. The curetes immediately draw them into their dance, giving the Minotaur a set of cymbals and the goddess a tambourine.

Zeus hands you a pair of gloves. “Asterion and his sister, Ariadne, lead a boring life. But I don’t know how long they’ll dance, so hurry, darling one. Go now, while their backs are turned.”

You pull on each glove as you rush to the secret entrance near the fallen pillar and step inside. You flip on the lamp and unroll the ball of string as you descend into the darkness.

The tunnel is wide enough for a train, so you have to move your head from side to side to search for the purple helmet-shaped flower.

When you come to a fork, you must quickly decide whether to turn right or left.

[You turn right.](#)

[You turn left.](#)



4.321

You follow the tunnel to the right. It continues to bend and twist until it comes to a deadend. Before you can turn around, a nest of snakes falls on you. They bite you repeatedly, despite your attempts to brush them off and get away. Full of panic, you drop the string and run for your life. When you come to the fork, you see the string you dropped on the ground and follow it, but your head is suddenly dizzy and your vision blurry.

Unable to go on, you fall to the cavern floor and writhe in pain until you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.322

You follow the tunnel to the left. It bends and twists repeatedly until it forks again.

[You go to the right.](#)

[You go to the left.](#)



4.3221

As you follow the tunnel to the right, you trip on the uneven cavern floor and land in a cluster of flowers. With your headlamp, you see they are purple helmet-shaped flowers. Everywhere your bare skin has touched the plant--your forearms, neck, and face, immediately begin to burn. You become nauseated, dizzy, weak, and lightheaded. Your heart seems to beat a million miles an hour as you struggle to breathe. Too weak to climb to your feet, you lie there until you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



4.3222

You follow the tunnel to the left. It bends and twists until it veers off into two directions. At the fork, you see a cluster of purple helmet-shaped flowers. You pluck as many stems as you can carry and then follow your string back toward the entrance.

You pause outside the labyrinth to see the Minotaur and his sister still dancing with the curetes. In the next moment, Zeus is at your side. He takes you into his arms and carries you off to Mount Olympus.

“I’m very pleased,” Zeus says as you fly together over the sea from Crete. “But I want to warn you to be on your guard against those who might secretly oppose your apotheosis.”

[“Thanks for the warning.”](#)

[“I’ll keep my eyes open.”](#)

[“Please protect me, Lord Zeus.”](#)



5.3

Hera flies with you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

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Hera takes you in her arms and flies with you from the mountain down to the ruins, to a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Hera past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” Hera points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

You nod as you strap the headlamp to your head.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

You hear the curetes arrive. They chant, dance, and crash their cymbals and shake their tambourines.

Soon you notice a bull man and a beautiful raven-haired goddess emerge from the labyrinth. The curetes immediately draw them into their dance, giving the Minotaur a set of cymbals and the goddess a tambourine.

Hera hands you a pair of gloves. “Asterion and his sister, Ariadne, lead a boring life. But I don’t know how long they’ll dance, so hurry, dear one. Go now, while their backs are turned.”

You pull on each glove as you rush to the secret entrance near the fallen pillar and step inside. You flip on the lamp and unroll the ball of string as you descend into the darkness.

The tunnel is wide enough for a train, so you have to move your head from side to side to search for the purple helmet-shaped flower.

When you come to a fork, you must quickly decide whether to turn right or left.

[You turn right.](#)

[You turn left.](#)



5.321

You follow the tunnel to the right. It continues to bend and twist until it comes to a deadend. Before you can turn around, a nest of snakes falls on you. They bite you repeatedly, despite your attempts to brush them off and get away. Full of panic, you drop the string and run for your life. When you come to the fork, you see the string you dropped on the ground and follow it, but your head is suddenly dizzy and your vision blurry.

Unable to go on, you fall to the cavern floor and writhe in pain until you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.322

You follow the tunnel to the left. It bends and twists repeatedly until it forks again.

[You go to the right.](#)

[You go to the left.](#)



5.3221

As you follow the tunnel to the right, you trip on the uneven cavern floor and land in a cluster of flowers. With your headlamp, you see they are purple helmet-shaped flowers. Everywhere your bare skin has touched the plant--your forearms, neck, and face, immediately begin to burn. You become nauseated, dizzy, weak, and lightheaded. Your heart seems to beat a million miles an hour as you struggle to breathe. Too weak to climb to your feet, you lie there until you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



5.3222

You follow the tunnel to the left. It bends and twists until it veers off into two directions. At the fork, you see a cluster of purple helmet-shaped flowers. You pluck as many stems as you can carry and then follow your string back toward the entrance.

You pause outside the labyrinth to see the Minotaur and his sister still dancing with the curetes. In the next moment, Hera is at your side. She takes you into her arms and carries you off to Mount Olympus.

“I’m very pleased,” Hera says as you fly together over the sea from Crete. “But I want to warn you to be on your guard against those who might secretly oppose your apotheosis.”

[“Thanks for the warning.”](#)

[“I’ll keep my eyes open.”](#)

[“Please protect me, Lady Hera.”](#)



6.3

Ares flies with you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You bow to the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“Kill him,” Ares said. “So, what will it be? Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home?”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



6.311

Ares flies with you from the temple and through the gates of Mount Olympus. Outside the gates on the snow-covered mountaintop, he takes you into his arms.

“I promise to visit every chance I get,” he says just before he kisses you.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside Ares in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

Ares lies with you beside the water and spends the rest of the day showing you all the ways he can make up for not being with you every day.

At some point, you fall asleep in his arms, because you wake up at sunset to find yourself alone. Beside you in the grass is a bag of gold and a set of keys. Parked a few meters away is a brand-new red Lamborghini.

You lift your smiling face to the sky and shout, “Thank you, Ares!” (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.312

Ares takes your hand and flies with you from the temple to his chariot, where Cupid bridles the horses. Then you fly together from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

“Are you excited about facing the Minotaur with your axe and sword?”

“Yes.”

“Not really.”



6.3121

“I know you can do this,” Ares says as he descends among the ruins on the island of Crete.

Since not a single tourist among the throng notices you, you suppose you must be invisible to them.

Ares hands you a headlamp and a spool of string. “Strap on the lamp and rig your belt through this spool, so you can be handsfree.”

You do as he says. He helps. You enjoy how close he is, handling your body. He notices and grins.

“Wear these gloves to protect your hands from the wolfsbane.”

You take them and slip them on.

“I want you to have your sword drawn before you even enter the labyrinth. Got it?”

You nod. Your heart begins to race.

“Ready?” he asks.

“I don’t know about this.”

“Ready.”



6.3122

Ares takes you into his arms and gives you a long, lingering kiss.

“That felt like goodbye,” you say with a shaky voice.

“Not goodbye. Good luck.”

He leads you down to the ruins, to a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Ares past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” Ares points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

You nod as you adjust the headlamp on your head.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

“The wall looks so real.”

Ares takes the end of the string and ties a heavy rock to it. “Set this on the ground near the entrance. The weight of the rock will unwind the string as you move through the tunnels, but check behind you every now and then, to be sure it’s working.”

“Got it.”

“I’ll be waiting for you here, baby doll. When you come out, victorious, you and I are going to celebrate.”

You smile up at him. He kisses you once more.

“I’ll be right back,” you say, trying to sound optimistic.

When you reach the magic wall, you step throughout it, feeling like Harry Potter must have when he entered Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. At the entrance, you drop the heavy rock on the end of your string and watch to be sure the spool unwinds as you move forward in the darkness.

The tunnel is wide enough for a train, so you have to move your head from side to side to search for the purple helmet-shaped flower.

When you come to a fork, you must quickly decide whether to turn right or left.

[You turn right.](#)

[You turn left.](#)



6.321

You follow the tunnel to the right. It continues to bend and twist until it comes to a deadend. You turn back in the direction you came,

[back to the fork and go left this time.](#)



6.322

You follow the tunnel to the left. It bends and twists repeatedly until it forks again.

[You go to the left again.](#)

[You go to the right.](#)



6.3221

As you follow the tunnel to the left, you trip on the uneven cavern floor and land in a cluster of flowers. With your headlamp, you see they are purple helmet-shaped flowers. Everywhere your bare skin has touched the plant--your forearms, neck, and face, immediately begin to burn. You become nauseated, dizzy, weak, and lightheaded. Your heart seems to beat a million miles an hour as you struggle to breathe. Too weak to climb to your feet, you lie there until you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.3222

You follow the tunnel to the right. It bends and twists until it veers off into two directions. Before you can choose which way to go, the Minotaur appears out of the darkness.

He's at least seven feet tall, with the body of a god from the neck down and the head of a ferocious bull.

"Who are you? And what are you doing here?" he asks.

[You charge with your sword.](#)

["Athena sent me."](#)



6.33

The minotaur bats your sword from your hand, and it falls out of reach on the cavern floor.

You pull off the shield and throw it at the beast and run in the opposite direction.

You only get a few meters when you run into his sister, who stands with her blade drawn. Without seeing her in the darkness, and in your haste to get away from the Minotaur, you accidentally impale yourself on her blade.

You fall to the ground as your blood gushes from your wound.

The Minotaur leans over you and asks again, "Who are you and why did you come?"

But before you can reply, your head spins, darkness overtakes you, and you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.34

“Athena?” he asks.

You show him her sword and shield. “She asked me to navigate through the labyrinth, find the ancient wolfsbane for Artemis, and return with it to Mount Olympus.”

“Why?” he asks.

“Artemis needs it to teach irresponsible hunters a lesson,” you say. “And the gods want to see if I’m worthy of apotheosis.”

“So, this is a test, huh?” he asks.

You nod. “I’ve already taken a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit and found Rhode’s wedding pearls--stolen by Scylla--and delivered them both safely to Mount Olympus. If I can pass this final test, I’ll become immortal.”

A raven-haired goddess appears behind the Minotaur. “And why do you want that? Eternity is a very long time. Some might say *too long*.”

You explain about Cupid’s arrow and your love for Ares.

“Let’s show the mortal where the wolfsbane grows,” the Minotaur says. “I’m a sucker for a good love story.”

You wonder if this could be a trap. You never expected the monster to offer help.

[“No, thanks. I’ll find it myself.”](#)

“Thanks. I’m very grateful.”



6.35

“Be careful,” the Minotaur says. “There are venomous snakes, rabid rats, and other dangers here.”

You turn and go down the opposite tunnel. It twists and turns. You go right and left, then left then right. Before too long, you realize that your spool is empty. You aren’t sure how long you’ve been wandering through the maze without it. You try to backtrack, but you can’t find your way.

As panic sets in, you run this way and that. Then you trip on the uneven ground of the tunnel and land in a cluster of flowers. By the light of your lamp, you’re horrified to discover that they’re purple and helmet-shaped.

Your skin burns where they’ve touched you--your face, neck, and wrists. You begin to feel dizzy, light-headed, and nauseated. Then your throat constricts, and you can’t breathe. You try to call to the Minotaur for help, but you can’t make a sound.

After what seems like hours pass, you finally give in to the darkness and give up your soul. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



6.36

“This way,” the Minotaur says.

You follow him through the darkness, still wondering if this could be a trap. You must take seven different turns before you stop at a fork where a cluster of flowers grow.

“I’d pick them for you,” he says, “but you’re the one with the gloves.”

You pick a bunch, leaving one behind, so more is sure to grow.

“Thank you,” you say.

“I’ll show you the way out,” he says.

That’s when you realize your string has run out. You aren’t sure how long you went without it. You hope and pray that the Minotaur is telling the truth and is truly your friend and not your foe.

Relief sweeps over you when you reach the entrance. You thank the Minotaur again and run through the magic wall, where Ares is waiting for you.

“Excellent!” Ares cries when he sees the flowers.

He takes your hand and god-travels you to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“There’s something you need to know before we go inside,” he says. “There may be some gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. They may try to kill you.”

[“Thanks for the warning.”](#)

“I’ll keep my eyes open.”

“Please protect me, Ares!”



7.3

Artemis flies with you in her arms through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You bow to the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis steps forward. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to your side, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have an idea,” Artemis says. “It will still be dangerous. Will you accept?”

“I’m too afraid. Take me home.”

“I accept.”



7.311

Artemis flies with you from the temple and through the gates of Mount Olympus. Outside the gates on the snow-covered mountaintop, she takes you into her arms.

“I promise to visit every chance I get,” she says just before she kisses you.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside Artemis in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

Artemis lies with you beside the water and spends the rest of the day showing you all the ways she can make up for not being with you every day.

At some point, you fall asleep in her arms, because you wake up at sunset to find yourself alone. Beside you in the grass is a bag of gold and a set of keys. Parked a few meters away is a brand-new red Lamborghini.

You lift your smiling face to the sky and shout, “Thank you, Artemis!” (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



7.312

Artemis takes your hand and flies with you from the temple. Then you fly together from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

“I have two different strategies in mind for you,” she says. “I could challenge the Minotaur to a shooting contest while you search for the wolfsbane in the labyrinth, or...”

“Or, what?” you ask.

“You could extend the challenge, asking for wolfsbane as a prize should you win.”

You consider this option, unsure of what you should do.

“What do you suggest?” you ask.

“I don’t know. They both have advantages and disadvantages,” she says. “If I compete with the Minotaur, I can keep him distracted for a long time, but you might never find the wolfsbane. On the other hand, if you compete and win, the wolfsbane is guaranteed.”

“But if I lose...”

“Exactly. So, what will it be, sweet cheeks?”

“You shoot. I’ll search.”

“I’ll shoot and win.”



7.3121

Artemis flies with you to the island of Crete and lands near the ruins. Since not a single tourist among the throng notices you, you suppose you must be invisible to them.

Artemis hands you a headlamp and a spool of string. “Strap on the lamp and rig your belt through this spool, so you can be handsfree.”

You do as she says. She helps. You enjoy how close she is, handling your body. She notices and grins.

“Wear these gloves to protect your hands from the wolfsbane.”

You take them and slip them on.

“Move quickly through the tunnel, but be careful. The ground may be uneven. I wouldn’t want you to trip and bash your head against the stone.”

“I’m glad to know that,” you say with a bit of sarcasm.

“Be sure to check periodically that the spool is still spinning out string,” she says. “People have died getting lost in that maze.”

You nod. Your heart begins to race.

“Ready?” she asks.

“Ready as I’ll ever be.”

“Ready.”



7.31211

Artemis takes you into her arms and gives you a long, lingering kiss. “You’ve got this.”

She leads you down to the ruins, to a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Artemis past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” Artemis points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

You nod as you adjust the headlamp on your head.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

“The wall looks so real.”

Artemis takes the end of the string and ties a heavy rock to it. “Set this on the ground near the entrance. The weight of the rock will unwind the string as you move through the tunnels, but check behind you every now and then, to be sure it’s working.”

“Got it.”

“Hide behind this column while I lure the Minotaur and his sister from the maze.”

“Will do.”

Artemis flies to the secret entrance and shouts, “Asterion! I challenge you to a shooting contest!”

Not long after, the bull man emerges. From the neck down, he is as beautiful as any god. But on top of his neck sits the ferocious head of a bull--like the one in the painting, with the broad snout and curved horns.

Following the beast is a raven-haired goddess--the Minotaur’s sister.

You can’t hear what they’re saying, but you’re relieved when you see Artemis stake a target into the ground with a bull’s eye in the center of it.

As soon as they’re engaged, you creep to the secret entrance and step inside. Just inside the mouth of the cave, you drop the heavy rock on the end of your string and watch to be sure the spool unwinds as you move forward in the darkness.

The tunnel is wide enough for a train, so you have to move your head from side to side to search for the purple helmet-shaped flower.

When you come to a fork, you must quickly decide whether to turn right or left.

[You turn right.](#)

[You turn left.](#)



7.321

You follow the tunnel to the right. It continues to bend and twist until it comes to a deadend. You turn back in the direction you came,

[back to the fork and go left this time.](#)



7.322

You follow the tunnel to the left. It bends and twists repeatedly until it forks again.

[You go to the left again.](#)

[You go to the right.](#)



7.3221

As you follow the tunnel to the left, you trip on the uneven cavern floor and land in a cluster of flowers. With your headlamp, you see they are purple helmet-shaped flowers. Everywhere your bare skin has touched the plant--your forearms, neck, and face, immediately begin to burn. You become nauseated, dizzy, weak, and lightheaded. Your heart seems to beat a million miles an hour as you struggle to breathe.

Then a snake slithers along the cavern floor toward you. You scream. Undeterred, it slithers onto chest, coils around your neck, and tightens until it constricts your air flow. Too weak to fight it, you lie there until you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



7.3222

You follow the tunnel to the right. It bends and twists until it veers off into two directions.

[You go left.](#)

[You go right.](#)



7.33

You move as quickly as you can through the tunnel, scanning the area for signs of the purple helmet-shaped flower.

While you shine your light to the right, you miss seeing a hole in the cavern floor. Suddenly, you're freefalling until you land in a pit, piled high with skeletons. You flinch and move away from the pile, wondering if this is where the Minotaur drops the remains of the things he eats when he's finished with them.

You cry out for help. Then you hear something moving in the darkness near you. You turn the lamp from one side to another. Then you feel them crawling up your body. It's a nest of rats. There are hundreds of them, and they're hungry. They gnaw at your flesh--biting every inch of your skin. You scream and bat them away, but there are too many of them. You can do nothing as they eat you alive. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



7.34

[You realize your spool of string has run out. Should you go on anyway? Or turn back?]

[You go on.](#)

[You turn back.](#)



7.35

You decide to make it easy on yourself by turning to the right each time you come to a fork. By the sixth turn, you come upon a cluster of the purple helmet-shaped flowers. You pick as many as you can carry, leaving some behind so the plant can continue to propagate.

Then you turn back, going right at each fork, until, much to your relief, you find your string and follow it the rest of the way.

You stop near the maze entrance to make sure the Minotaur and his sister are still engaged with Artemis. You see them laughing as Artemis tells them a story. You rush from the entrance to the column, where Artemis told you to hide, and wait.

Not sure if she can hear you, you pray to Artemis to let her know you got the wolfsbane and are waiting for her. Not long after, the arrow target disappears, Artemis waves goodbye to the siblings, and, as they return to their maze, she returns to you.

She kisses your cheek when she sees you with the wolfsbane. “Well done! Now let’s get out of here.”

Outside the gates of Mount Olympus, she kisses you again and says, “I want to warn you that there may be some gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Don’t panic, but do be on your guard.”]

[“Thank you, goddess.”](#)

[“That hardly seems fair.”](#)

[“Please protect me, Artemis!”](#)



7.36

You wind the string around the spool as you follow it toward the entrance, when the spool is half full, you turn back into the maze, this time choosing to turn down an alternate path. You haven't gone very far when you stumble upon a coven of tiny bats. They swarm you, land on you, and, to your horror, bite at you.

You drop the spool of string to swipe at them as you run in the opposite direction. You continue to flail your arms, to keep them off of you, but, in your frenzied madness, you trip and fatally bash your head on a rock. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



7.3122

Artemis flies with you to the island of Crete and lands among the ruins.

“What about all the tourists?” you ask.

“No worries, sweet cheeks. They can’t see us.”

She leads you down to the ruins, to a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Artemis past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” Artemis points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

“Yeah.”

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

“The wall looks so real.”

“Come on.”

You follow Artemis down the steps to the fallen pillar.

“Asterion! I have a proposition for you!” Artemis shouts at the secret entrance.

Moments later, the bull man emerges from the labyrinth, followed by a raven-haired goddess.

“Who’s this?” the Minotaur asks, with his eyes on you.

“While getting a tour of Mount Olympus by Lord Zeus, this mortal was shot by Cupid and compelled to love me.”

“Oh, no,” the bull’s sister says. “That’s terrible.”

“Athena came up with an idea to help me,” you say. “Three challenges to prove I’m worthy of apotheosis.”

“How’s that going for you?” the Minotaur asks.

“Good so far,” you say. “I got a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit and delivered it, uneaten, to Mount Olympus. Then I rescued Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla.”

“We’re here for the final test,” Artemis says. “The mortal challenges you to a shooting match. If you lose, you have to give us some ancient wolfsbane from the labyrinth. If you win, the mortal loses the chance to become one of us.”

You wish everything wasn’t riding on your ability to shoot an arrow. But there it was.

“I accept,” the Minotaur says.

Artemis leads the group away from the tourists, to a flat area, where she sets up a target. She stakes it into the ground and adds a bull-s eye.

Then she gives you her bow and quiver of arrows. The Minotaur conjures his own.

“Ariadne, will you flip a coin?” Artemis asks. “Asterion, call it while it’s in the air.”

“Heads,” he says.

“It’s tails,” Ariadne says.

Artemis turns to you. “Will you shoot first or second?”

“First.”

“Second.”



7.37

You fit an arrow and take your stance. You aim down the bow toward your target as you draw the bow back, past your ear, like Artemis taught you.

Then you say a silent prayer that the arrow flies straight. You keep your eyes open. You be very careful not to move, and you let the arrow fly.

When it hits the bull's eye, your mouth falls open. It occurs to you that Artemis may have helped you.

“Great shot,” the Minotaur says.

“Thanks,” you say, as you move out of the way.

Then the Minotaur fits an arrow, takes aim as he draws the bow back. When he lets the arrow fly, you pray that he misses.

When his arrow hits the line just outside of the bull's eye, you jaw drops again. The Minotaur turns to you and shakes your hand.

“You win,” he says. “I’ll be right back with your prize.”

After the Minotaur and his sister leave you, you throw your arms around Artemis.

“Nothing will get in the way of our being together,” you say.

Artemis gives you a pair of gloves. “Protection from the wolfsbane.”

You slip them on as the Minotaur returns with a bouquet of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

“Congratulations,” he says. “And best of luck.”

“Thanks again,” you say.

Then Artemis takes you in her arms and flies you to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“There’s something you should know,” she says. “There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Don’t panic, but be on your guard.”

“That doesn’t sound good.”

“Thanks for the heads up.”

“Please protect me, goddess.”



7.38

The Minotaur fits an arrow, takes aim as he draws the bow back. When he lets the arrow fly, you pray that he misses.

When his arrow hits the line just outside of the bull's eye, you jaw drops again.

The Minotaur turns to you. "Your turn."

You fit an arrow and take your stance. You aim down the bow toward your target as you draw the bow back, past your ear, like Artemis taught you.

Then you say a silent prayer that the arrow flies straight. You keep your eyes open. You be very careful not to move, and you let the arrow fly.

When it hits the bull's eye, your mouth falls open. It occurs to you that Artemis may have helped you.

"Great shot," the Minotaur says as he shakes your hand.

"Thanks," you say.

"You win," he says. "I'll be right back with your prize."

After the Minotaur and his sister leave you, you throw your arms around Artemis.

"Nothing will get in the way of our being together," you say.

Artemis gives you a pair of gloves. "Protection from the wolfsbane."

You slip them on as the Minotaur returns with a bouquet of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

“Congratulations,” he says. “And best of luck.”

“Thanks again,” you say.

Then Artemis takes you in her arms and flies you to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“There’s something you should know,” she says. “There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Don’t panic, but be on your guard.”

“That doesn’t sound good.”

“Thanks for the heads up.”

“Please protect me, goddess.”



8.3

Apollo flies with you in his arms through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You bow to the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis steps forward. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her throne, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have an idea,” Apollo says. “It will still be dangerous. Will you accept?”

“I’m too afraid. Take me home.”

“I accept.”



8.311

Apollo flies with you from the temple and through the gates of Mount Olympus. Outside the gates on the snow-covered mountaintop, he takes you into his arms.

“I promise to visit every chance I get,” he says just before he kisses you.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside Apollo in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

Apollo lies with you beside the water and spends the rest of the day showing you all the ways he can make up for not being with you every day.

At some point, you fall asleep in his arms, because you wake up at sunset to find yourself alone. Beside you in the grass is a bag of gold and a set of keys. Parked a few meters away is a brand new shiny black Lamborghini.

You lift your smiling face to the sky and shout, “Thank you, Apollo!” (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



8.312

Apollo takes your hand and flies with you from the temple. Then you fly together from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

“I have two different strategies in mind for you,” he says. “I could challenge the Minotaur to a shooting contest while you search for the wolfsbane in the labyrinth, or...”

“Or, what?” you ask.

“You could extend the challenge, asking for wolfsbane as a prize, should you win.”

You consider this option, unsure of what you should do.

“What do you suggest?” you ask.

“I don’t know. They both have advantages and disadvantages,” he says. “If I compete with the Minotaur, I can keep him distracted for a long time, but you might never find the wolfsbane. On the other hand, if you compete and win, the wolfsbane is guaranteed.”

“But if I lose...”

“Exactly. So, what will it be, my love?”

“You shoot. I’ll search.”

“I’ll shoot and win.”



8.3121

Apollo flies with you to the island of Crete and lands near the ruins.

“So many tourists,” you comment.

“We’re invisible to them, my love.”

“That’s a relief.”

Apollo hands you a headlamp and a spool of string. “Strap on the lamp and rig your belt through this spool, so you can be handsfree.”

You do as he says. He helps. You enjoy how close he is, handling your body. He notices and grins.

“Wear these gloves to protect your hands from the wolfsbane.”

You take them and slip them on.

“Move quickly through the tunnel, but be careful. The ground may be uneven. I wouldn’t want you to trip and bash your head against the stone.”

“I’m glad to know that,” you say with a bit of sarcasm.

“Be sure to check periodically that the spool is still spinning out string,” he says. “People have died getting lost in that maze.”

You nod. Your heart begins to race.

“Ready?” he asks.

“Ready as I’ll ever be.”

“Ready.”



8.31211

Apollo takes you into his arms and gives you a long, lingering kiss. “You’ve got this.”

He leads you down to the ruins, to a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Apollo past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” Apollo points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

You nod as you adjust the headlamp on your head.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

“The wall looks so real.”

Apollo takes the end of the string and ties a heavy rock to it. “Set this on the ground near the entrance. The weight of the rock will unwind the string as you move through the tunnels, but check behind you every now and then, to be sure it’s working.”

“Got it.”

“Hide behind this column while I lure the Minotaur and his sister from the maze.”

“Will do.”

Apollo flies to the secret entrance and shouts, “Asterion! I challenge you to a shooting contest!”

Not long after, the bull man emerges. From the neck down, he is as beautiful as any god. But on top of his neck sits the ferocious head of a bull--like the one in the painting, with the broad snout and curved horns.

Following the beast is a raven-haired goddess--the Minotaur’s sister.

You can’t hear what they’re saying, but you’re relieved when you see Apollo stake a target into the ground with a bull’s eye in the center of it.

As soon as they’re engaged, you creep to the secret entrance and step inside. Just inside the mouth of the cave, you drop the heavy rock on the end of your string and watch to be sure the spool unwinds as you move forward in the darkness.

The tunnel is wide enough for a train, so you have to move your head from side to side to search for the purple helmet-shaped flower.

When you come to a fork, you must quickly decide whether to turn right or left.

[You turn right.](#)

[You turn left.](#)



8.321

You follow the tunnel to the right. It continues to bend and twist until it comes to a deadend. You turn back in the direction you came,

[back to the fork and go left this time.](#)



8.322

You follow the tunnel to the left. It bends and twists repeatedly until it forks again.

[You go to the left again.](#)

[You go to the right.](#)



8.3221

As you follow the tunnel to the left, you trip on the uneven cavern floor and land in a cluster of flowers. With your headlamp, you see they are purple helmet-shaped flowers. Everywhere your bare skin has touched the plant--your forearms, neck, and face, immediately begin to burn. You become nauseated, dizzy, weak, and lightheaded. Your heart seems to beat a million miles an hour as you struggle to breathe.

Then a snake slithers along the cavern floor toward you. You scream. Undeterred, it slithers onto chest, coils around your neck, and tightens until it constricts your air flow. Too weak to fight it, you lie there until you die. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



8.3222

You follow the tunnel to the right. It bends and twists until it veers off into two directions.

[You go left.](#)

[You go right.](#)



8.33

You move as quickly as you can through the tunnel, scanning the area for signs of the purple helmet-shaped flower.

While you shine your light to the right, you miss seeing a hole in the cavern floor. Suddenly, you're freefalling until you land in a pit, piled high with skeletons. You flinch and move away from the pile, wondering if this is where the Minotaur drops the remains of the things he eats when he's finished with them.

You cry out for help. Then you hear something moving in the darkness near you. You turn the lamp from one side to another. Then you feel them crawling up your body. It's a nest of rats. There are hundreds of them, and they're hungry. They gnaw at your flesh--biting every inch of your skin. You scream and bat them away, but there are too many of them. You can do nothing as they eat you alive. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



8.34

You realize your spool of string has run out. Should you go on anyway? Or turn back?

[You go on.](#)

[You turn back.](#)



8.35

You decide to make it easy on yourself by turning to the right each time you come to a fork. By the sixth turn, you come upon a cluster of the purple helmet-shaped flowers. You pick as many as you can carry, leaving some behind so the plant can continue to propagate.

Then you turn back, going right at each fork, until, much to your relief, you find your string and follow it the rest of the way.

You stop near the maze entrance to make sure the Minotaur and his sister are still engaged with Apollo. You see them laughing as Apollo tells them a story. You rush from the entrance to the column, where Apollo told you to hide, and wait.

Not sure if he can hear you, you pray to Apollo to let him know you got the wolfsbane and are waiting for him. Not long after, the arrow target disappears, Apollo waves goodbye to the siblings, and, as they return to their maze, he returns to you.

He kisses your cheek when he sees you with the wolfsbane. “Well done! Now let’s get out of here.”

Outside the gates of Mount Olympus, he kisses you again and says, “I want to warn you that there may be some gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Don’t panic, but do be on your guard.”

“Thanks.”

“That hardly seems fair.”

“Please protect me, Apollo!”



8.36

You wind the string around the spool as you follow it toward the entrance, when the spool is half full, you turn back into the maze, this time choosing to turn down an alternate path. You haven't gone very far when you stumble upon a coven of tiny bats. They swarm you, land on you, and, to your horror, bite at you.

You drop the spool of string to swipe at them as you run in the opposite direction. You continue to flail your arms, to keep them off of you, but, in your frenzied madness, you trip and fatally bash your head on a rock. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



8.3122

Apollo flies with you to the island of Crete and lands among the ruins. Since not a single tourist notices you, you suppose you must be invisible to other mortals.

He leads you down to the ruins, to a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Apollo past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” he points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

“Yeah.”

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

“The wall looks so real.”

“Come on.”

You follow Apollo down the steps to the fallen pillar.

“Asterion! I have a proposition for you!” he shouts at the secret entrance.

Moments later, the bull man emerges from the labyrinth, followed by a raven-haired goddess.

“Who’s this?” the Minotaur asks, with his eyes on you.

“While getting a tour of Mount Olympus by Lord Zeus, this mortal was shot by Cupid and compelled to love me.”

“Oh, no,” the bull’s sister says. “That’s terrible.”

“Athena came up with an idea to help me,” you say. “Three challenges to prove I’m worthy of apotheosis.”

“How’s that going for you?” the Minotaur asks.

“Good so far,” you say. “I got a pomegranate from the Seers’ Pit and delivered it, uneaten, to Mount Olympus. Then I rescued Rhode’s wedding pearls from Scylla.”

“We’re here for the final test,” Apollo says. “The mortal challenges you to a shooting match. If you lose, you have to give us some ancient wolfsbane from the labyrinth. If you win, the mortal loses the chance to become one of us.”

You wish everything wasn’t riding on your ability to shoot an arrow. But there it was.

“I accept,” the Minotaur says.

Apollo leads the group away from the tourists, to a flat area, where he sets up a target. He stakes it into the ground and adds a bull-s eye.

Then he gives you his bow and quiver of arrows. The Minotaur conjures his own.

“Ariadne, will you flip a coin?” Apollo asks. “Asterion, call it while it’s in the air.”

“Heads,” he says.

“It’s tails,” Ariadne says.

Apollo turns to you. “Will you shoot first or second?”

“First.”

“Second.”



8.37

You fit an arrow and take your stance. You aim down the bow toward your target as you draw the bow back, past your ear, like Apollo taught you.

Then you say a silent prayer that the arrow flies straight. You keep your eyes open. You be very careful not to move, and you let the arrow fly.

When it hits the bull's eye, your mouth falls open. It occurs to you that Apollo may have helped you.

“Great shot,” the Minotaur says.

“Thanks,” you say, as you move out of the way.

Then the Minotaur fits an arrow, takes aim as he draws the bow back. When he lets the arrow fly, you pray that he misses.

When his arrow hits the line just outside of the bull's eye, you jaw drops again. The Minotaur turns to you and shakes your hand.

“You win,” he says. “I’ll be right back with your prize.”

After the Minotaur and his sister leave you, you throw your arms around Apollo.

“Nothing will get in the way of our being together,” you say.

Apollo kisses you again and again and then gives you a pair of gloves. “Protection from the wolfsbane.”

You slip them on as the Minotaur returns with a bouquet of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

“Congratulations,” he says. “And best of luck.”

“Thanks again,” you say.

Then Apollo takes you in his arms and flies you to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“There’s something you should know,” he says. “There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Don’t panic, but be on your guard.”

[“That doesn’t sound good.”](#)

[“Thanks for the heads up.”](#)

[“Please protect me, Apollo.”](#)



8.38

The Minotaur fits an arrow, takes aim as he draws the bow back. When he lets the arrow fly, you pray that he misses.

When his arrow hits the line just outside of the bull's eye, you jaw drops again.

The Minotaur turns to you. "Your turn."

You fit an arrow and take your stance. You aim down the bow toward your target as you draw the bow back, past your ear, like Apollo taught you.

Then you say a silent prayer that the arrow flies straight. You keep your eyes open. You be very careful not to move, and you let the arrow fly.

When it hits the bull's eye, your mouth falls open. It occurs to you that Apollo may have helped you.

"Great shot," the Minotaur says as he shakes your hand.

"Thanks," you say,

"You win," he says. "I'll be right back with your prize."

After the Minotaur and his sister leave you, you throw your arms around Apollo.

"Nothing will get in the way of our being together," you say.

Apollo kisses you again and again and then gives you a pair of gloves. "Protection from the wolfsbane."

You slip them on as the Minotaur returns with a bouquet of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

“Congratulations,” he says. “And best of luck.”

“Thanks again,” you say.

Then Apollo takes you in his arms and flies you to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“There’s something you should know,” he says. “There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Don’t panic, but be on your guard.”]

“That doesn’t sound good.”

“Thanks for the heads up.”

“Please protect me, Apollo.”



9.3

Poseidon flies you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Amphitrite.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the goddess of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the goddess. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Poseidon says. “But it will still be dangerous. So, what will it be, dear mortal? Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



9.311

Poseidon flies with you from the temple and through the gates of Mount Olympus. Outside the gates on the snow-covered mountaintop, he takes you into his arms.

“I promise to visit every chance I get,” he says just before he kisses you.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside Poseidon in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

Poseidon lies with you beside the water and spends the rest of the day showing you all the ways he can make up for not being with you every day.

At some point, you fall asleep in his arms. You wake up at sunset to find yourself alone. Beside you in the grass is a bag of gold and a set of keys. Parked a few meters away is a brand shiny blue Lamborghini.

You lift your smiling face to the sky and shout, “Thank you, Poseidon!” (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.312

Poseidon takes your hand and flies with you from the temple to his chariot, where Cupid bridles the horses. Then you fly together from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

“So, what’s your plan?” you ask.

“My golden net worked well for you underwater, did it not?”

“Yes, but I don’t see what that has to do with...”

“I’ll command the waters to flood the labyrinth,” Poseidon explains. “With the golden net, you’ll be able to breathe, to see as the gods do.”

“But what if the Minotaur attacks me?”

“He won’t. He can’t swim. His bull head is dense and heavier than the rest of his body. He’s always been terrified of the water because of it.”

“So, he’ll drown.”

“A temporary state.”

You shudder.

“Your real threat is his sister, Ariadne. We’re flying now to Mount Kithairon to enlist her husband’s help.”

“Her husband?”

“Dionysus. The god of wine.”

“Why does Ariadne choose to live with her brother?”

“Guilt, I believe. And I don’t think she approves of her husband’s lifestyle.”

The chariot descends on the mountainside among tall pine trees.

Once the mares have come to a halt, Poseidon takes you into his arms. “I’m so proud of you, dear mortal. You’ve come so far. Pass this last test, and we can be together forever.”

You beam up at the beautiful god--at his eyes the color of the sea, his sun-bleached hair, his broad shoulders.

“Are you ready to meet Dionysus?” he asks.

[“I’d rather kiss you some more.”](#)

[“I’m ready.”](#)



9.3121

Poseidon takes your hand and leads you up the mountain to a clearing, where a hodge-podge band of men, women, and animals are sleeping on the ground, without tents or bedding. Only the dancing smoke lifting from the ashy remnants of a bonfire shows any sign of life, until a nearly naked god with two golden braids appears from the woods.

“Lord Poseidon,” the bleary-eyed god says. “What brings you into my neck of the woods?”

“I need your help,” Poseidon says. “If you’ll come with me now to distract your wife for a half hour or so, I’ll be in your debt.”

“This sounds like an opportunity I can’t pass up,” the god says. “But what do you want with her brother?”

“Nothing at all,” Poseidon says.

Dionysus arches a brow as he follows the two of you to Poseidon’s chariot.

Sitting between two beautiful, strong gods, you sail through the sky from Mount Kithairon to the island of Crete.

The ruins are being visited by dozens of tourists.

“Look at them,” Dionysus says with a wry grin. “So intrigued by old palaces and temples and yet so ignorant of what really took place here.”

“Won’t they see us?” you ask.

“No,” Poseidon says as he lands among the ruins. “Even you are invisible to them today, dear mortal.”

Dionysus climbs from the chariot. "I suppose Ariadne and I can have a picnic and people watch."

"I'd rather you take her away from here," Poseidon says as he takes your hand and follows the other god. "Perhaps a picnic beneath the Northern Lights near the North Pole?"

Dionysus narrows his eyes. "What are you planning?"

"Just a small flood."

"You're drowning her brother?" the god of wine asks. "She'll never forgive me."

"Of course, she will," Poseidon says. "Swear you had nothing to do with it."

"What about the tourists?" you ask. "Will they be affected?"

Poseidon squeezes your hand. "I'll make sure the waters are limited to the labyrinth."

You flinch when Dionysus vanishes. In another moment, you see him flying away with Ariadne. He glares at Poseidon as he leaves.

"Now's our chance," Poseidon says. "Wear these gloves to protect your hands from the wolfsbane."

You take them and slip them on.

The golden net appears, draped around you.

"I'll use the current to speed up your momentum, but don't hesitate to pluck the flowers as soon as you can."

You nod. Your heart begins to race.

"Pray to me when you have the wolfsbane," he says. "I'll then use the current to pull you back to the entrance."

"Are you sure this will work?"

"Only the Fates know the future," he says. "But I have confidence in my plan."

You resist the urge to say, "That makes one of us."

"Ready?" he asks.

["I don't know about this."](#)

“Ready.”



9.3122

Poseidon kisses you through the net. “Good luck, dear mortal.”

The god takes you into his arms and flies with you over the ruins to a set of steps. “The entrance is there, near that fallen pillar.”

“I don’t see it.”

“There’s a ward creating the illusion of a stone wall. Stand by it and allow the water to carry you through the maze.

“Here goes nothing.”

You take the steps to the entrance and wait. Within seconds, a wave of water washes up from the coast. Tourists run for their lives. So much for them not being affected.

You have no time to ponder their fates, for the water knocks you from your feet and into the maze. You struggle to keep your head in front of your body, facing forward, so you can search for the purple helmet-shaped flowers.

After the initial sweep, the current lessens, and now you can use your arms and legs to control your path.

When you come to a fork, you must quickly decide whether to swim right or left.

[You swim left.](#)

[You swim right.](#)



9.321

You follow the tunnel to the left. It continues to bend and twist until it comes to a deadend. You try to swim back, but it's difficult to move against the current.

Suddenly a nest of snakes surrounds you. They bite at you through the net, sinking their fangs all over your body. You struggle against them--kicking your legs and flailing your arms. This only makes you dizzy and weak.

In spite of the golden net, your throat closes and you can no longer breathe. You flail harder against the water as you fight to remain conscious. But you lose the battle. Within moments, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes comes for you and takes you to the Underworld with the other souls of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.322

You follow the tunnel to the right. It bends and twists repeatedly until it forks again.

[You go to the left.](#)

[You go to the right.](#)



9.3221

As you follow the tunnel to the left, you see a cluster of flowers growing between the rocks in the wall. They are purple helmet-shaped flowers.

You pluck a handful and pray to Poseidon. The water suddenly changes course, flowing in the opposite direction. You hit against the rock wall several times before you manage to get turned around where you can see where you're going.

By the time you leave the maze, you're banged up but feeling victorious. The water drains away, back to the coast and into the ground, leaving mud and a few fallen trees and pillars in its wake. The tourists have evacuated the area. You hope no one was hurt or killed.

As Poseidon takes you into his arms, your mind can focus on little else save the fact that you will now become immortal and live all your days with the god you love.

As he flies with you back to Mount Olympus, he strokes your face and kisses you again and again. But at the gates, he brings the chariot to a halt and says, "Beware of gods who may secretly oppose your apotheosis. I'll do what I can to protect you while you're vulnerable, but trust no one."

["Thank you, Poseidon."](#)

["Oh, great. I thought my worries were over."](#)

["I trust you to keep me safe."](#)



9.3222

You follow the tunnel to the right. It bends and twists until it veers off into two directions. Before you can choose which way to go, the Minotaur appears out of the darkness, floundering in the water and fighting for his life.

He's at least seven feet tall, with the body of a god from the neck down and the head of a ferocious bull.

[You charge with your sword.](#)

[You swim in the opposite direction.](#)

[You share your golden net with him.](#)



9.33

The minotaur bats your sword from your hand and flails and kicks at you.

You feel the wind knocked out of your chest just before you bash your head against the stone wall.

Your blood seeps from your body, turning the water around you red. As the Minotaur drowns beside you, your head spins, darkness overtakes you, and you die. (Game Over.)





9.34

You kick and paddle as fast as you can away from the monster. It's hard going against the current. Eventually you make your way to another fork in the maze.

[You swim right.](#)

[You swim left.](#)



9.341

[In your haste to put distance between you and the monster, your net gets caught on a rock and is ripped from you. You swim back and tug on it with all your might. The net rips in half.

Running out of breath, you attempt to put some of the net to your face, but it does nothing to help you. You pray to Poseidon for help. And although the water reverses direction and drags you back, you've been without air for too long. You try to breathe, and the water burns your lungs. You open your mouth and eyes wide before you give in to the darkness.

Before long, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes comes for you. He takes you to the Underworld to be with the other souls of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



9.35

“Who are you?” the Minotaur asks, once he calms down.

You tell him your story. Then you ask, “Why can’t you breathe underwater, like the other immortals?”

“Not all immortals can,” he says. “Only gods and goddesses and sea monsters. The Cyclopes and I and a handful of others don’t have the gift.”

“Poseidon said you’d live, but I couldn’t stand to watch you drown.”

“Thank you. But why aren’t you frightened of me?”

“I am,” you say, showing him your trembling hand. “I’m scared out of my mind.”

“But you saved me anyway.”

“I was hoping that if I helped you, you’d spare me.”

“I’ll do even better than that,” he says. “I’ll take you to the wolfsbane.”

He takes your hand and tows you through the maze. You begin to worry that this could be a trap. You must take seven different turns before you stop at a fork where a cluster of flowers grow.

“I’d pick them for you,” he says, “but you’re the one with the gloves.”

You pick a bunch, leaving one behind, so more is sure to grow.

“Thank you,” you say.

“I’ll show you the way out,” he says.

“I’ll pray to Poseidon to drain the maze.”

“That sounds dangerous. What if you hit your head and get knocked unconscious?”

“I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Pray to him. I’ll protect you.”

You do as he says, and suddenly, the water changes course. It’s faster than you expected, like a wild water ride, and you can see why the Minotaur was concerned for your safety. You’re grateful as he uses his arms and legs to kick off the walls, so that you aren’t thrown against them by the current.

Relief sweeps over you when you reach the entrance and the water has drained away. You’re shocked to see the damage it left in its wake--fallen trees and pillars. You wonder if any tourists were injured or killed.

You turn to thank the Minotaur again, but he has vanished.

“You did it!” Poseidon cries when he sees the flowers.

He removes the net, which quickly vanishes. Then he takes you in his arms.

“What’s the matter?” he asks.

“You said no one would get hurt.”

“No one did. I made sure of it. They ran to safety. I promise.”

Relieved, you kiss him. “Thank you.”

He flies with you in his arms back to his chariot before taking the reins and shouting, “To Mount Olympus.”

You reel with the knowledge that you have succeeded in proving your worth. Soon, you will become immortal.

Outside the gates, Poseidon turns to you and strokes your cheek.

“There’s something you need to know before we go inside, dear mortal,” he says. “There may be some gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Stay alert.”

[“What? But I won! I passed the tests!”](#)

“I’ll keep my eyes open.”

“Please protect me, Poseidon!”



10.3

Amphitrite flies you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Amphitrite says. “But it will still be dangerous. So, what will it be, dearie? Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



10.311

Amphitrite flies with you from the temple and through the gates of Mount Olympus. Outside the gates on the snow-covered mountaintop, she takes you into her arms.

“I promise to visit every chance I get,” she says just before she kisses you.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside the goddess in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

Amphitrite lies with you beside the water and spends the rest of the day showing you all the ways she can make up for not being with you every day.

At some point, you fall asleep in her arms. You wake up at sunset to find yourself alone. Beside you in the grass is a bag of gold and a set of keys. Parked a few meters away is a navy-blue Lamborghini.

You lift your smiling face to the sky and shout, “Thank you, Amphitrite!” (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



10.312

Amphitrite takes your hand and flies with you from the temple to Poseidon's chariot, where Cupid bridles the horses. Then you fly together from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

"So, what's your plan?" you ask.

"My golden net worked well for you underwater, did it not?"

"Yes, but I don't see what that has to do with..."

"I'll command the waters to flood the labyrinth," Amphitrite explains. "With the golden net, you'll be able to breathe, to see as the gods do."

"But what if the Minotaur attacks me?"

"He won't. He can't swim. His bull head is dense and heavier than the rest of his body. He's always been terrified of the water because of it."

"So, he'll drown."

"A temporary state."

You shudder.

"Your real threat is his sister, Ariadne. We're flying now to Mount Kithairon to enlist her husband's help."

"Her husband?"

“Dionysus. The god of wine.”

“Why does Ariadne choose to live with her brother instead of her husband?”

“Guilt, I believe. And I don’t think she approves of her husband’s lifestyle.”

The chariot descends on the mountainside among tall pine trees.

Once the mares have come to a halt, Amphitrite takes you into her arms. “I’m so proud of you, dearie. You’ve come so far. Pass this last test, and we can be together forever.”

You beam up at the beautiful goddess--at her eyes the color of the sea, her sun-bleached hair, her slim waist, and her hour-glass physique.

“Are you ready to meet Dionysus?” she asks.

[“I’d rather kiss you some more.”](#)

[“I’m ready.”](#)



10.3121

Amphitrite takes your hand and leads you up the mountain to a clearing, where a hodge-podge band of men, women, and animals are sleeping on the ground, without tents or bedding. Only the dancing smoke lifting from the ashy remnants of a bonfire shows any sign of life, until a nearly naked god with two golden braids appears from the woods.

“Lady Amphitrite,” the bleary-eyed god says. “What brings you into my neck of the woods?”

“I need your help,” she says. “If you’ll come with me now to distract your wife for a half hour or so, I’ll be in your debt.”

“This sounds like an opportunity I can’t pass up,” the god says. “But what do you want with her brother?”

“Nothing at all,” Amphitrite says.

Dionysus arches a brow as he follows the two of you to Poseidon’s chariot.

Sitting between them in the chariot, you sail through the sky from Mount Kithairon to the island of Crete.

The ruins are being visited by dozens of tourists.

“Look at them,” Dionysus says with a wry grin. “So intrigued by old palaces and temples and yet so ignorant of what really took place here.”

“Won’t they see us?” you ask.

“No,” Amphitrite says as she lands among the ruins. “Even you are invisible to them today, dearie.”

Dionysus climbs from the chariot. “I suppose Ariadne and I can have a picnic and people watch.”

“I’d rather you take her away from here,” Amphitrite says as she takes your hand and follows the other god. “Perhaps a picnic beneath the Northern Lights near the North Pole?”

Dionysus narrows his eyes. “What are you planning?”

“Just a small flood.”

“You’re drowning her brother?” the god of wine asks. “She’ll never forgive me.”

“Of course, she will,” Amphitrite says. “Swear you had nothing to do with it.”

“What about the tourists?” you ask. “Will they be affected?”

The goddess squeezes your hand. “I’ll make sure the waters are limited to the labyrinth.”

You flinch when Dionysus vanishes. In another moment, you see him flying away with Ariadne.

“Now’s our chance,” Amphitrite says. “Wear these gloves to protect your hands from the wolfsbane.”

As you slip them on, the golden net appears, draped around you.

“I’ll use the current to speed up your momentum, but don’t hesitate to pluck the flowers as soon as you can.”

You nod. Your heart begins to race.

“Pray to me when you have them,” she says. “I’ll then use the current to pull you back to the entrance.”

“Are you sure this will work?”

“Only the Fates know the future,” she says. “But I have confidence in my plan.”

You resist the urge to say, “That makes one of us.”

“Ready?” she asks.

[“I don’t know about this.”](#)

[“Ready.”](#)



10.3122

Amphitrite kisses you through the net. “Good luck, dearie.”

The goddess takes you into her arms and flies with you over the ruins to a set of steps. “The entrance is there, near that fallen pillar.”

“I don’t see it.”

“There’s a ward creating the illusion of a stone wall. Stand by it and allow the water to carry you through the maze.

“Here goes nothing.”

You take the steps to the entrance and wait. Within seconds, a wave of water washes up from the coast. Tourists run for their lives. So much for them not being affected.

You have no time to ponder their fates, for the water knocks you from your feet and into the maze. You struggle to keep your head in front of your body, facing forward, so you can search for the purple helmet-shaped flowers.

After the initial sweep, the current lessens, and now you can use your arms and legs to control your path.

When you come to a fork, you must quickly decide whether to swim right or left.

[You swim left.](#)

[You swim right.](#)



10.321

You follow the tunnel to the left. It continues to bend and twist until it comes to a deadend. You try to swim back, but it's difficult to move against the current.

Suddenly a nest of snakes surrounds you. They bite at you through the net, sinking their fangs all over your body. You struggle against them--kicking your legs and flailing your arms. This only makes you dizzy and weak.

In spite of the golden net, your throat closes, and you can no longer breathe. You flail harder against the water as you fight to remain conscious. But you lose the battle. Within moments, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes comes for you and takes you to the Underworld with the other souls of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



10.322

You follow the tunnel to the right. It bends and twists repeatedly until it forks again.

[You go to the left.](#)

[You go to the right.](#)



10.3221

As you follow the tunnel to the left, you see a cluster of flowers growing between the rocks in the wall. They are purple helmet-shaped flowers.

You pluck a handful and pray to Amphitrite. The water suddenly changes course, flowing in the opposite direction. You hit against the rock wall several times before you manage to get turned around where you can see where you're going.

By the time you leave the maze, you're banged up but feeling victorious. The water drains away, back to the coast and into the ground, leaving mud and a few fallen trees and pillars in its wake. The tourists have evacuated the area. You hope no one was hurt or killed.

As Amphitrite takes you into her arms, your mind can focus on little else save the fact that you will now become immortal and live all your days with the goddess you love.

As she flies with you back to Mount Olympus, she strokes your face and kisses you again and again. But at the gates, she brings the chariot to a halt and says, "Beware of gods who may secretly oppose your apotheosis. I'll do what I can to protect you while you're vulnerable, but trust no one."

["Thank you, Amphitrite."](#)

["Oh, great. I thought my worries were over."](#)

["I trust you to keep me safe."](#)



10.3222

You follow the tunnel to the right. It bends and twists until it veers off into two directions. Before you can choose which way to go, the Minotaur appears out of the darkness, floundering in the water and fighting for his life.

He's at least seven feet tall, with the body of a god from the neck down and the head of a ferocious bull.

[You charge with your sword.](#)

[You swim in the opposite direction.](#)

[You share your golden net with him.](#)



10.33

The minotaur bats your sword from your hand and flails and kicks at you.

You feel the wind knocked out of your chest just before you bash your head against the stone wall.

Your blood seeps from your body, turning the water around you red. As the Minotaur drowns beside you your head spins, darkness overtakes you, and you die. (Game Over.)





10.34

You kick and paddle as fast as you can away from the monster. It's hard going against the current. Eventually you make your way to another fork in the maze.

[You swim right.](#)

[You swim left.](#)



10.341

In your haste to put distance between you and the monster, your net gets caught on a rock and is ripped from you. You swim back and tug on it with all your might. The net rips in half.

Running out of breath, you attempt to put some of the net to your face, but it does nothing to help you. You pray to Amphinrite for help. And although the water reverses direction and drags you back, you've been without air for too long. You try to breathe, and the water burns your lungs. You open your mouth and eyes wide before you give in to the darkness.

Before long, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes comes for you. He takes you to the Underworld to be with the other souls of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



10.35

“Who are you?” the Minotaur asks, once he calms down.

You tell him your story. Then you ask, “Why can’t you breathe underwater, like the other immortals?”

“Not all immortals can,” he says. “Only gods and goddesses and sea monsters. The Cyclopes and I and a handful of others don’t have the gift.”

“Amphitrite said you’d live, but I couldn’t stand to watch you drown.”

“Thank you. But why aren’t you frightened of me?”

“I am,” you say, showing him your trembling hand. “I’m scared out of my mind.”

“But you saved me anyway.”

“I was hoping that if I helped you, you’d spare me.”

“I’ll do even better than that,” he says. “I’ll take you to the wolfsbane.”

He pulls the nets and tows you through the maze. You begin to worry that this could be a trap. You take at least seven different turns before you stop at a fork where a cluster of flowers grow.

“I’d pick them for you,” he says, “but you’re the one with the gloves.”

You pick a bunch, leaving one behind, so more is sure to grow.

“Thanks,” you say.

“I’ll show you the way out,” he says.

“I’m to pray to Amphitrite to drain the maze.”

“That sounds dangerous. What if you hit your head and get knocked unconscious?”

“I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Pray to him. I’ll protect you.”

You do as he says, and suddenly, the water changes course. It’s faster than you expected, like a wild water ride, and you can see why the Minotaur was concerned for your safety. You’re grateful as he uses his arms and legs to kick off the walls, so that you aren’t thrown against them by the current.

Relief sweeps over you when you reach the entrance and the water has drained away. You’re shocked to see the damage it left in its wake--fallen trees and pillars. You wonder if any tourists were injured or killed.

You turn to thank the Minotaur again, but he has vanished.

“You did it!” Amphitrite cries when she sees the flowers.

She removes the net, which quickly vanishes. Then she takes you in her arms.

“What’s the matter?” she asks.

“You said no one would get hurt.”

“No one did. I made sure of it. They ran to safety. I promise.”

Relieved, you kiss her. “Thank you.”

She flies with you in her arms back to the chariot before taking the reins and shouting, “To Mount Olympus.”

You reel with the knowledge that you have succeeded in proving your worth. Soon, you will become immortal.

Outside the gates, Amphitrite turns to you and strokes your cheek.

“There’s something you need to know before we go inside, dearie,” she says. “There may be some gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. Stay alert.”

“What? But I won! I passed the tests!”

“I’ll keep my eyes open.”

“Please protect me, Amphitrite.”



11.3

Aphrodite flies with you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Aphrodite says. “But it will still be dangerous. So, what will it be, my lovely? Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



11.311

Aphrodite flies with you from the temple and through the gates of Mount Olympus. Outside the gates on the snow-covered mountaintop, she takes you into her arms.

“I promise to visit every chance I get,” she says just before she kisses you.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside the goddess in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

Aphrodite lies with you beside the water and spends the rest of the day showing you all the ways she can make up for not being with you every day.

At some point, you fall asleep in her arms. You wake up at sunset to find yourself alone. Beside you in the grass is a bag of gold and a set of keys. Parked a few meters away is a shiny red Lamborghini.

You lift your smiling face to the sky and shout, “Thank you, Aphrodite!” (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.312

Aphrodite takes your hand and flies with you from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

“So, what’s your plan?” you ask.

“Cupid has informed me that the Minotaur’s sister, Ariadne, is visiting her husband today--a lucky break. While you use Hephaestus’s compass to find the wolfsbane, I’ll appear to the Minotaur as his female equivalent and seduce him.”

Jealousy runs through your veins. “I don’t like it.”

Aphrodite laughs. “My lovely, if you really want to spend eternity with me, you’ll have to get used to me being with other lovers. I am, after all, the goddess of love. It’s what I do best.”

You clench your jaw, knowing you’ll take the goddess however you can have her.

“Once you find the flowers, ask the compass to take you to me,” she says before she kisses you.

Chills of pleasure rush down your spine. You pull her close to you, anxious for your chance to be with her for as long as you please.

Together, you descend toward a heavily populated island with modern buildings covering nearly every square inch, except for one finger jutting out into the green sea with what appears to be the ruins of an ancient fort. Further inland, ruins stretch for acres and acres.

“I wasn’t expecting so many tourists,” you say as you land among them.

“Don’t worry, my lovely. They can’t see us.”

She leads you through the ruins. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

“Is that what the Minotaur looks like?” you ask.

“Only the head.”

Aphrodite points. “The entrance is on the other side of that fallen pillar. You hide behind this column while I lure the Minotaur out. Once you see us talking, take those steps down to that fallen pillar. See it?”

You nod.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. It looks like a solid wall but isn’t. Just step through it and follow the compass to the wolfsbane.”

“Okay,” you say.

“Wear these gloves for protection.”

You slip them on.

“And this headlamp, so you can see in the darkness.”

You strap it on.

She kisses you. “Ready?”

“No, but let’s do this.”

“Ready for victory.”



11.32

You wait by the column as Aphrodite transforms her head into that of a cow before she walks to the secret entrance and calls out, “Asterion? Are you at home?”

Within minutes, the Minotaur emerges and looks suspiciously at Aphrodite, as though he anticipates a trap. You can’t hear what Aphrodite is saying, but something she says makes the Minotaur blush. Then she takes his hand and wraps it around her slender waist as they walk into the sunshine among the tourists.

You rush to the entrance with the compass and whisper, “Direct me to the ancient wolfsbane.”

The tunnel is large enough for a train and pitch dark. You flip on your headlamp and keep your eyes on the compass. When you come to a fork, the compass points to the right, so you go right.

You follow the compass each time you come to a fork, making six or seven turns before you finally see a cluster of the purple helmet-shaped flowers. Carefully, you pick a bouquet, leaving some behind so it can propagate.

Then you say to the compass, “Please take me back to Aphrodite.”

The needle spins. You wait for several seconds, then over a minute, to find that the needle won’t stop.

You wonder if it’s broken or if it can’t find Aphrodite because of her disguise, so you say, “Show me the way out of the Minotaur’s Labyrinth.”

Still the needle spins. If you’re to succeed in this final challenge, you have to get out on your own, but what if you die in the process? Should you give up and pray to Aphrodite to rescue you?

[You try to retrace your steps.](#)

You pray to Aphrodite to rescue you.



11.321

As you try to find your way back out of the labyrinth, you continually glance at the compass to see if it's working, but the needle spins, as if the device has gone haywire.

Because you were focused more on watching the needle than on paying attention to your route, you aren't sure which way to go when you approach the first fork.

[You turn left.](#)

[You turn right.](#)



11.3211

As you go around the bend, you hear a strange shuffling sound. You freeze for a moment to listen, clutching the wolfsbane. When you don't hear it, you continue down the twisting path. But then you hear it again. It sounds more like breathing this time--raspy breathing.

"Hello?" someone says from around the next bend. "Is someone there? Please, help me!"

[Fearing a trap, you go the other way.](#)

[You go toward the voice.](#)



11.3221

You backtrack to the first fork and go the other way. The tunnel winds around until it forks again.

[You go right.](#)

[You go left.](#)



11.3231

The tunnel twists and turns until you reach a deadend.

Before you can turn back, something attacks you from behind. You're pushed to the ground as claws and teeth tear your flesh. You struggle against your attacker, trying to shine the headlamp on it. Soon you realize it's more than one.

A pack of four wolves is ripping you to shreds as you scream and flail and kick. You pray to Aphrodite, but in a matter of minutes, you are eaten alive. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.3232

As you veer to the left, you trip on a rock and fall to your hands and knees. The compass flies from your hand, and the headlamp slips off. The lamp crashes against the ground before going out.

In total darkness, you fight against panic as you feel around for the light. You manage to find the compass, but where is the lamp? Perhaps the switch has been turned off and you only need to find it and switch it back on. You dread the possibility that the lamp has been busted and you have no way of escaping the darkness.

When you do find the lamp, your worst fear is realized. Should you give up the challenge and ask for Aphrodite's help? Or should you try to find your way back to the entrance in complete darkness?

[You fumble around in the darkness.](#)

[You pray to Aphrodite to rescue you.](#)



11.3311

You spend what feels like hours trying to make your way back in the darkness. Your throat is so dry that you'd give anything for a sip of water--anything but forfeiting the challenge. Your desire to be with Aphrodite is so great that you refuse to give up.

Hours turn into days. You feel confused, frustrated, and exhausted. You decide to rest with your back against the wall. At some point, you must have fallen asleep because you are awakened by footsteps.

"Hello?" you cry out. "Help me, please!"

Whoever had been roaming the tunnels in your direction turns the other way. You recall the person you once heard crying out for help--you don't even know how many days ago. Could it be that same person? Would you be better off if you'd stopped to help?

You close your eyes and go to sleep--for how long, you do not know. But at some point, you are awakened by a beautiful dark-haired boy with bright blue eyes. He takes you to a riverboat. At first, you're relieved to finally be rescued, but when you see the three-headed dog guarding the enormous black iron gate, you realize that you are now entering the Underworld as one of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.322

You don't wait long, when Aphrodite appears before you in her usual form, her body glowing like a beacon of light. She looks like an angel. Your eyes fill up with tears knowing that you won't be spending eternity with her.

"Take me home," you say. "I've failed the challenge."

She takes you in her arms as the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surrounds you. When you open your eyes, you're standing in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where you first began.

"Stay with me awhile," you say.

She lies with you beside the water and cheers you up beyond your expectations. She makes you feel things you've never felt before. Your heart is overjoyed. She lies beside you until the sun sets, and then she kisses you and promises to return again soon.

You fall asleep feeling happy and content. When you awaken at dawn, you find a bag of gold tied with a keychain. A key dangles from the chain. You look around and find, less than ten meters away, a shiny red Lamborghini waiting for you.

You lift your face to the sky and shout, "Thank you, Aphrodite!" (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.3222

“Hello?” you say.

“I’m over here! Oh, thank the gods someone’s found me!”

In the light of your lamp, you see an old man crouched on the ground, leaning against the stone wall. His lips are parched and his eyes sunken in. He looks thin and weak.

It’s obvious he can’t walk, and you doubt you will get far if you have to carry his weight. You can’t become a god if you don’t make it out alive. But if you leave him, he’ll likely die. On the other hand, you could both die.

[You continue past him, ignoring his pleas for help.](#)

[You pray to Aphrodite to come and rescue you both.](#)

[You help the old man to his feet and hope to find your way out together.](#)



11.32220

You spend what feels like hours trying to find your way. Your throat is so dry that you'd give anything for a sip of water--anything but forfeiting the challenge. Your desire to be with Aphrodite is so great that you refuse to give up.

Hours turn into days. You feel confused, frustrated, and exhausted. You decide to rest with your back against the wall. At some point, you must have fallen asleep because you are awakened by footsteps.

"Hello?" you cry out. "Help me, please!"

Whoever had been roaming the tunnels in your direction turns the other way. You recall the person you once heard crying out for help--you don't even know how many days ago. Could it be that same person? Would you be better off if you'd stopped to help?

You close your eyes and go to sleep--for how long, you do not know. But at some point, you are awakened by a beautiful dark-haired boy with bright blue eyes. He takes you to a riverboat. At first, you're relieved to finally be rescued, but when you see the three-headed dog guarding the enormous black iron gate, you realize that you are now entering the Underworld as one of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.32221

You don't wait long, when Aphrodite appears before you in her usual form, her body glowing like a beacon of light. She looks like an angel. Your eyes fill up with tears knowing that you won't be spending eternity with her.

"I couldn't leave this old man here to die," you say. "Please help us, even though it means I'll fail."

She takes the old man's hand before taking yours, and then the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surrounds you. When you open your eyes, you're standing in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where you first began.

"The old man?" you ask.

"Safe. We dropped him off at the hospital in Crete before we came here."

You blink, amazed by how quickly the gods can move from one place to another.

"Stay with me awhile," you say.

She lies with you beside the water and cheers you up beyond your expectations. She makes you feel things you've never felt before. Your heart is overjoyed. She lies beside you until the sun sets, and then she kisses you and promises to return again soon.

You fall asleep feeling happy and content. When you awaken at dawn, you find a bag of gold tied with a keychain. A key dangles from the chain. You look around and find, less than ten meters away, a shiny red Lamborghini waiting for you.

You lift your face to the sky and shout, "Thank you, Aphrodite!"

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



11.32222

“Please, tell me you have water,” the man says.

“I’m sorry.”

“Do you know the way out?” he asks. “Or have you run out of thread, too?”

“I didn’t bring thread. I have a magic compass, but it’s broken.”

“A magic compass? Can I see it?”

You hand it to him and shine your lamp on it so he can look at it. You notice the needle has stopped spinning.

“Hold on.” you take the compass and study it. The needle spins again. “You hold it.”

The man takes it again, and the needle stops spinning. It points ahead.

“What are you asking the compass to show you?” you ask.

“The nearest glass of water.”

Together, you navigate through the labyrinth. When you emerge into the light of day, you fall to your knees and shout, “Hallelujah!”

Aphrodite, still disguised as a cow woman, notices you and flies to your side. The Minotaur follows.

“Who are you two, and why are you here?” the Minotaur demands.

Before you can reply, Aphrodite takes the compass from the old man, grabs your hand, and god-travels with you back to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“The old man!” you say.

“The other tourists will find him.”

You nod and realize what you’ve done. “I’ve passed the tests! We’ll be together forever!”

“Yes, my lovely. But there’s something you should know. There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. I’ll do what I can to protect you, but trust no one.”

“You’ve got to be kidding!”

“Thank you, Aphrodite.”

“I’ll trust you only.”



13.3

Hephaestus flies with you in his chariot through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Hephaestus says. “But it will still be dangerous. So, what will it be, love? Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



13.311

“Before we go, come with me to my forge,” Hephaestus says.

You bow goodbye to the other gods and sadly follow your heart’s true love.

“Have a seat,” he says, pointing to a table and chairs. “This will take a minute.”

As you sit, you look around at all the fascinating things in his workshop. The tools, machines, devices, and the fire of the forge--stoked by billows that move on their own--are an amazing sight, especially since they were created by your love.

After several minutes have passed, Hephaestus returns to your side, but behind him is his twin.

“I didn’t know you had a twin brother,” you say.

“I don’t. This isn’t a god; it’s a man. I made him for you.”

“I don’t understand?” You glance back and forth between the two of them, comparing their features. They are identical.

“When you gaze upon him, do you feel the same desire in your heart as when you gaze upon me?”

You climb to your feet and stand before the man. You look into his eyes. He smiles back at you.

“You’re beautiful,” he says with the same voice as the god.

Chills of pleasure tingle your skin. You break out in goosebumps.

“Thank you,” you say to the man. “So are you.”

The man takes your hand. Hephaestus takes the other.

You close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel, and when you open them again, you find yourself standing beside Hephaestus in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where your adventures first began.

“Hephaestus?”

“Yes, love?” you ask.

“Where’s the man you made?”

“I am the man.”

He takes you in his arms and kisses you. You feel as though you could burst with happiness and joy.

“Would you like to come to my place?” you ask him.

“Indeed, I would,” he says.

You say a silent prayer to Hephaestus as the two of you walk, hand in hand, toward home. (Game Over.)

A red banner with white, bubbly text that reads "GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!". The text is centered and has a thick white outline, giving it a 3D, bubbly appearance. The banner is set against a solid red background.



13.312

Hephaestus flies with you in his chariot from the gates of Mount Olympus and into the clear blue sky.

“So, what’s your plan?” you ask.

“While you use my compass to find the wolfsbane, Aphrodite will appear to the Minotaur as his female equivalent and seduce him. I’ll appear to his sister as Dionysus, her husband, and pick a fight with her.”

“That’s awesome!” you say. “This could really work!”

“It will work,” he says.

“Once you find the flowers, ask the compass to take you to me,” he says.

“Got it.”

The chariot descends toward a heavily populated island with modern buildings covering nearly every square inch, except for one finger jetting out into the green sea with what appears to be the ruins of an ancient fort. Further inland, ruins stretch for acres and acres.

“I wasn’t expecting so many tourists,” you say as you land among them.

“Don’t worry, love. They can’t see us.”

He leads you through the ruins. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

“Is that what the Minotaur looks like?” you ask.

“Only the head.”

Hephaestus points. “The entrance is on the other side of that fallen pillar. You hide behind this column while Aphrodite and I lure the Minotaur and his sister out. Once you see us talking, take those steps down to that fallen pillar. See it?”

You nod.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. It looks like a solid wall but isn’t. Just step through it and follow the compass to the wolfsbane.”

“Okay,” you say.

“Wear these gloves for protection.”

You slip them on.

“And this headlamp, so you can see in the darkness.”

You strap it on.

“Ready?”

“No, but let’s do this.”

“Ready for victory.”



13.32

You wait by the column as Aphrodite appears, transformed into a cow woman. Hephaestus transforms into a half-naked god with golden braids. Then the two of them fly to the secret entrance of the maze.

“Asterion? Ariadne? Are you at home?”

Within minutes, the Minotaur emerges and looks suspiciously at Aphrodite, as though he anticipates a trap. Ariadne doesn’t look pleased to see her husband. You can’t hear what Aphrodite is saying, but something she says makes the Minotaur blush. Then she takes his hand and wraps it around her slender waist as they walk into the sunshine among the tourists.

Hephaestus engages Ariadne in an argument. When he walks away from the labyrinth in a huff, she follows.

You rush to the entrance with the compass and whisper, “Direct me to the ancient wolfsbane.”

The tunnel is large enough for a train and pitch dark. You flip on your headlamp and keep your eyes on the compass. When you come to a fork, the compass points to the right, so you go right.

You follow the compass each time you come to a fork, making six or seven turns before you finally see a cluster of the purple helmet-shaped flowers. Carefully, you pick a bouquet, leaving some behind so it can propagate.

Then you say to the compass, “Please take me back to Hephaestus.”

The needle spins. You wait for several seconds, then over a minute, to find that the needle won’t stop.

You wonder if it’s broken or if it can’t find Hephaestus because of his disguise, so you say, “Show me the way out of the Minotaur’s Labyrinth.”

Still the needle spins. If you're to succeed in this final challenge, you have to get out on your own, but what if you die in the process? Should you give up and pray to Hephaestus to rescue you?

[You try to retrace your steps.](#)

[You pray to Hephaestus to rescue you.](#)



13.321

As you try to find your way back out of the labyrinth, you continually glance at the compass to see if it's working, but the needle spins, as if the device has gone haywire.

Because you were focused more on watching the needle than on paying attention to your route, you aren't sure which way to go when you approach the first fork.

[You turn left.](#)

[You turn right.](#)



13.3211

As you go around the bend, you hear a strange shuffling sound. You freeze for a moment to listen. When you don't hear it, you continue down the twisting path. But then you hear it again. It sounds more like breathing this time--raspy breathing.

"Hello?" someone says from around the next bend. "Is someone there? Please, help me!"

[Fearing a trap, you go the other way.](#)

[You go toward the voice.](#)



13.3221

You backtrack to the last fork and go the other way. The tunnel winds around until it forks again.

[You go right.](#)

[You go left.](#)



13.3231

The tunnel twists and turns until you reach a deadend. Before you can turn back, something attacks you from behind. You're pushed to the ground as claws and teeth tear your flesh. You struggle against your attacker, trying to shine the headlamp on it. Soon you realize it's more than one. A pack of four wolves is ripping you to shreds as you scream and flail and kick. You pray to Hephaestus, but in a matter of minutes, you are eaten alive. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



13.3232

As you veer to the left, you trip on a rock and fall to your hands and knees. The compass flies from your hand, and the headlamp slips off. The lamp crashes against the ground before going out.

In total darkness, you fight against panic as you feel around for the light. You manage to find the compass, but where is the lamp? Perhaps the switch has been turned off and you only need to find it and switch it back on. You dread the possibility that the lamp has been busted and you have no way of escaping the darkness.

When you do find the lamp, your worst fear is realized. Should you give up the challenge and ask for Hephaestus's help? Or should you try to find your way back to the entrance in complete darkness?

[You fumble around in the darkness.](#)

[You pray to Hephaestus to rescue you.](#)



13.3311

You spend what feels like hours trying to make your way back in the darkness. Your throat is so dry that you'd give anything for a sip of water--anything but forfeiting the challenge. Your desire to be with Hephaestus is so great that you refuse to give up.

Hours turn into days. You feel confused, frustrated, and exhausted. You decide to rest with your back against the wall. At some point, you must have fallen asleep because you are awakened by footsteps.

"Hello?" you cry out. "Help me, please!"

Whoever had been roaming the tunnels in your direction turns the other way. You recall the person you once heard crying out for help--you don't even know how many days ago. Could it be that same person? Would you be better off if you stopped to help?

You close your eyes and go to sleep--for how long, you do not know. But at some point, you are awakened by a beautiful dark-haired boy with bright blue eyes. He takes you to a riverboat. At first, you're relieved to finally be rescued, but when you see the three-headed dog guarding the enormous black iron gate, you realize that you are now entering the Underworld as one of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



13.322

You don't wait long, when Hephaestus appears before you in his usual form, his body glowing like a beacon of light. Your eyes fill up with tears knowing that you won't be spending eternity near your heart's true love.

"Take me home," you say. "I've failed the challenge."

He takes you in his arms as the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surrounds you. When you open your eyes, your standing in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where you first began.

"Lie down for a while," Hephaestus says to you. "Try to rest. I'm going to make you a gift and deliver it within the hour."

"A gift?"

"Wait for me here, okay, love?"

You do as he asks. At some point, you fall asleep and are awakened by the sound of footsteps in the grass.

"Hephaestus?"

"Yes, love," he says.

You're shocked when he lies beside you in the flowers and takes you in his arms.

"What about your wife?"

"I'm not married, love. I'm all yours."

“Your gift was a divorce?”

He throws back his head and laughs. “No, love. This must be confusing. I’m not Hephaestus the god. I’m Hephaestus the man, created for you by the god of the same name.”

Your mouth drops open as you process what you’ve been told. Then you throw your arms around his neck with delight.

He lies with you beside the water and makes you feel things you’ve never felt before. Your heart is overjoyed.

An hour later, as the sun sets, you walk hand in hand from the brook toward home. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



13.3222

“Hello?” you say.

“I’m over here! Oh, thank the gods someone’s found me!”

In the light of your lamp, you see an old man crouched on the ground, leaning against the stone wall. His lips are parched and his eyes sunken in. He looks thin and weak.

It’s obvious he can’t walk, and you doubt you will get far if you have to carry his weight. You can’t become a god if you don’t make it out alive. But if you leave him, he’ll likely die. On the other hand, you could both die.

[You continue past him, ignoring his pleas for help.](#)

[You pray to Hephaestus to come and rescue you both.](#)

[You help the old man to his feet and hope to find your way out together.](#)



13.32221

You don't wait long, until Hephaestus appears before you in his usual form, his body glowing like a beacon of light.

"I couldn't leave this old man here to die," you say. "Please help us, even though it means I'll fail."

He takes the old man's hand before taking yours, and then the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surrounds you. When you open your eyes, you're standing in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where you first began.

"The old man?" you ask.

"Safe. We dropped him off at the hospital in Crete before we came here."

You blink, amazed by how quickly the gods can move from one place to another.

"Stay here awhile," he says. "I'll deliver a gift for you within an hour."

"A gift?"

"Wait for me here, okay, love?"

You do as he asks. At some point, you fall asleep and are awakened by the sound of footsteps in the grass.

"Hephaestus?"

"Yes, love," he says.

You're shocked when he lies beside you in the flowers and takes you in his arms.

“What about your wife?”

“I’m not married, love. I’m all yours.”

“Your gift was a divorce?”

He throws back his head and laughs. “No, love. This must be confusing. I’m not Hephaestus the god. I’m Hephaestus the man, created for you by the god of the same name.”

Your mouth drops open as you process what you’ve been told. Then you throw your arms around his neck with delight.

He lies with you beside the water and makes you feel things you’ve never felt before. Your heart is overjoyed.

An hour later, as the sun sets, you walk hand in hand from the brook toward home. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



13.32222

“Please, tell me you have water,” the man says.

“I’m sorry.”

“Do you know the way out?” he asks. “Or have you run out of thread, too?”

“I didn’t bring thread. I have a magic compass, but it’s broken.”

“A magic compass? Can I see it?”

You hand it to him and shine your lamp on it so he can look at it. You notice the needle has stopped spinning.

“Hold on.” you take the compass and study it. The needle spins again. “You hold it.”

The man takes it again, and the needle stops spinning. It points ahead.

“What are you asking the compass to show you?” you ask.

“The nearest glass of water.”

Together, you navigate through the labyrinth. When you emerge into the light of day, you fall to your knees and shout, “Hallelujah!”

Hephaestus notices you and transforms into himself. Then he flies to you, takes the compass from the old man and takes you back to his chariot.

“The old man!” you say as the chariot takes off.

“The other tourists will find him.”

You nod and realize what you’ve done. “I’ve passed the tests! I’ll become immortal!”

“Yes, love. But there’s something you should know. There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. I’ll do what I can to protect you, but trust no one.”

“You’ve got to be kidding!”

“Thank you, Hephaestus.”

“I’ll trust you only.”



12.3

Hermes flies with you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Hermes says. “But it will still be dangerous. So, what will it be, beautiful? Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



12.311

Hermes takes you in his arms as the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surrounds you. When you open your eyes, you're standing in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where you first began.

"Stay with me awhile," you say.

He lies with you beside the water and cheers you up beyond your expectations. He makes you feel things you've never felt before. Your heart is overjoyed. He lies beside you until the sun sets, and then he kisses you and promises to return again soon.

You fall asleep feeling happy and content. When you awaken at dawn, you find a bag of gold tied with a keychain. A key dangles from the chain. You look around and find, less than ten meters away, a shiny silver Lamborghini waiting for you.

You lift your face to the sky and shout, "Thank you, Hermes!" (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



12.312

Hermes takes you in his arms, and you close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel. When you open them again, you are flying over the island of Crete.

As you hover with Hermes over the ruins and crowds of tourists, you realize you must be invisible to other mortals.

“What’s the plan?” you ask Hermes.

“Hecate’s agreed to help,” he says. “I’ll distract the Minotaur and his sister with a game of Night Frisbee while you use a spell to find the wolfsbane.”

“*Night Frisbee?*” you repeat. “Does that mean we have to wait until nightfall?”

“It does,” Hermes says with a grin. “I wonder how we’ll pass the time.”

You smile from ear to ear. “I’ve got ideas.”

“Is that so, beautiful?”

You nod, unable to stop smiling.

“So do I,” he says. “We could go to this beautiful beach house I know in Costa Rica, where morning has yet to arrive. Or, I have a yacht anchored near the Philippine Islands, where the sun is about to set. Which will it be, beautiful?”

[“The beach house in Costa Rica.”](#)

[“Your yacht in the Philippines.”](#)



12.3121

Hermes flies with you in his arms halfway across the world to Costa Rica. As you near his beach house, illuminated by lights both inside and out, you're delighted by its beauty. It's modern, angular, and mostly windows, facing the sea on one side and the jungle on the other. An inviting pool with a fountain and tree in its center adds beauty to the beach side, and a deck with twin hammocks and a family of monkeys on the jungle side intrigue you.

Inside the house, you find another treat: a glass floor in one room that offers you a view of the ocean floor and the marine life living there.

Two massage tables are positioned on the glass with a donut-shaped pillow for your face, that allows you to watch the underwater life as you enjoy your massage. Hermes invites you to disrobe and lie on one of the tables, so you do.

He oils his hands and works his magic on you. He starts with your shoulders and kneads down your back, all the way to your tailbone. He rubs your neck, the back of your head, and each ear. Then he works down your arms and hands, one at a time. Then each leg. You sigh with pleasure as he rubs down each thigh.

After an hour of this delightful experience, the massage turns into something more. Hermes picks you up and carries you to the four-poster bed with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the sea. He makes you feel things you've never experienced before. After, you sip coffee together on the balcony and watch the sunrise.

"We should head back to Crete," Hermes says. "Are you ready?"

["No, but let's go."](#)

["Hell, yeah!"](#)



12.3122

Hermes flies with you in his arms halfway around the world to the Philippine islands, to his yacht, anchored about a hundred meters from Boracay.

The lights on the yacht make the sea around it shimmer, adding to the beauty of the spectacular sunset on the horizon.

“This is so beautiful,” you say as he carefully sets you on a couch with a table on the upper deck.

“Glad you like it.” He offers you a glass of wine and then clinks his glass to yours. “A toast to a beautiful evening and a glorious victory to follow.”

“Cheers,” you say.

Hermes snaps his fingers, and a tray of food appears on the table. Together, you enjoy grapes, cheese, sausages, and bread as you share a tasty bottle of wine and watch the sunset.

When night falls, Hermes carries you from the upper deck to his cabin below, to a jacuzzi tub, filled with warm water and floating flower petals. Candles illuminate the room, and three portals offer views of the underwater life.

With gentle hands, he bathes you, using a soapy sponge that smells like lavender and rosemary. His gentle touch soon becomes more passionate. You kiss him as he lifts you from the tub and carries you to his king-size bed, where he brings you pleasures you’ve never known.

After, you fall asleep in his arms, but sometime later, he awakens you.

“It’s time to return to Crete. Are you ready, beautiful?”

“No, but let’s go.”

“Hell, yeah!”



12.32

Hermes holds you in his arms as he flies across the darkening sky toward Crete, where dusk has just begun to settle. You land among the ruins, no longer overrun with crowds of tourists. Only Hecate is there, waiting.

“Hello, again,” she says to you,

“Hi, Hecate,” you say. “Thanks for helping me again.”

She hands you a pair of steel rods. “Hold them straight out in front of you as you walk through the maze. I’ll be watching from above. As you get close to the wolfsbane, I’ll make the rods move closer together. If you get further away from it, I’ll move the rods further apart. Do you understand?”

You nod.

She gives you a pair of gloves and a headlamp, and you put them on.

“I’ll do the same after you have the plant and you’re on your way out. If you are going in the right direction, I’ll move the rods together; if it’s the wrong path, I’ll move them further apart.”

“Got it. Thank you.”

Hermes squeezes your shoulder. “Hide behind these columns until you see me with the Minotaur and his sister playing Night Frisbee among the stars.”

“The entrance is at the bottom of those steps near that fallen pillar,” Hecate says.

“Where?”

“That wall is an illusion,” Hermes says. “You can step right through it.”

The god squeezes your shoulder once more before he flies down to the hidden entrance to the maze and shouts, “Asterion! Ariadne! How about a few rounds of Night Frisbee?”

Within seconds, the Minotaur appears, followed by a raven-haired goddess you presume to be his sister. The Minotaur, who looks like any other god from the neck down, is carrying a golden disc. You’re surprised when the bull head speaks.

“You’ve come to challenge the champion, have you?”

Hermes grins. “I told you I would.”

“That was nearly a year ago.”

“Better late than never. Ready?”

“Of course, we are,” Ariadne says. “Come on, Asterion. I’m bored to death.”

“Let’s go,” the Minotaur says.

Once you see them in the sky above the island, you hasten to the secret entrance and are amazed when you can pass through the magical wall into the maze. You turn on the headlamp and find the tunnel is big enough for a train. Then you hold the rods out in front of you and make your way through the labyrinth.

When you come to a fork, the rods move together when you turn toward the left and apart when you move toward the right, so you go left.

This continues for a while. You feel confident that Hecate is leading you to the wolfsbane. Your feelings are validated when you come upon a cluster of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

You pick several stems, leaving a few behind to propagate. Then you turn and retrace your steps.

But when you turn back the other way, the rods move apart. This would normally mean you should turn the other way, but why would Hecate lead you deeper into the maze?

“You retrace your steps, in spite of the rods.”

“You allow the rods to guide you, anyway.”



12.321

When you approach the next fork in the maze, you look down as far as you can to the right and then as far as you can to the left. Neither look familiar.

[You go right.](#)

[You go left.](#)

[You turn back and allow the rods to guide you.](#)



12.3211

You turn around the bend where you suddenly feel things crawling all over your body. Then they sting-- one after another. You bat at them, seeing from the light of your headlamp that you've walked into a nest of deadly scorpions.

You bat and swat and flail and scream at the top of your lungs. The venom courses and burns through your veins. Your throat tightens, your head spins, and you can no longer breathe. You fall to the ground. Hecate appears, but it's too late. You give into the darkness.

Sometime later, Hermes comes for you. He takes you onto a riverboat. His face is solemn. You feel groggy, trying to recall why you're there. But when you see Cerberus beside the black iron gate, you have a moment of understanding: you're entering the Underworld as a soul of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



12.3212

You wind around the bend of the tunnel when, suddenly, you find yourself face to face with the Minotaur. Filled with sudden panic, you draw Athena's sword and charge. The Minotaur jumps to the side, but his sister, who was standing behind him, has a weapon drawn, and you accidentally impale yourself on the blade.

Blood oozes from your chest with each pump of your heart as you fall to the ground.

"Ariadne!" the Minotaur shouts.

"The mortal attacked you," she says. "It was an accident."

You gasp and gasp, but air won't come. Your lungs and throat burn. Your head spins.

The next thing you know, Hermes has brought you on a riverboat. His face is solemn. You feel groggy, trying to recall why you're there. But when you see Cerberus beside the black iron gate, you have a moment of understanding: you're entering the Underworld as a soul of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



12.322

Although it makes no sense that Hecate is leading you deeper into the maze, you allow the rods to guide you.

After what seems like an hour has passed, the rods overlap, which signals that you need to turn around.

The only explanation you can think of for the goddess leading you deeper into the labyrinth only to have you turn back is that there must have been danger in the way of your exit. You feel better now that you know you are heading toward, rather than away, from the entrance.

When you finally reach the secret entrance, Hermes is there waiting for you. He scoops you into his arms and god-travels with you back to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“That was terrifying,” Hermes says.

“Imagine how I felt!” you say.

“I couldn’t keep the game going long enough. I was afraid the Minotaur would keep you as his prisoner, or worse, his meal.”

“I’m so glad that’s over,” you say.

“You did it, beautiful.” Hermes covers your mouth with his.

“One word of caution,” Hermes says. “There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. I’ll do my best to protect you, but trust no one.”

[You kiss Hermes, to show your thanks.](#)

“Thanks for the warning.”

“But I passed all their tests!”



16.3

Hecate flies with you through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Hecate says. “But it will still be dangerous. So, what will it be, hon’? Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



16.311

Hecate takes you in her arms as the blinding light and pressure of god-travel surrounds you. When you open your eyes, you're standing in the field of flowers beside the babbling brook, where you first began.

"Stay with me awhile," you say. "Please?"

She lies with you beside the water and strokes your hair.

"That feels nice," you say.

"There's a house in Costa Rica that's heavily warded against the other gods," she says. "If you'd like, I can take you there and be with you."

You lift your brows with surprise.

"But you must promise never to speak of it," she says.

"I promise."

She takes you into her arms and flies with you halfway across the world, where the first morning light hasn't yet made its appearance. She lies with you in a bed covered with rose petals and makes you feel things you've never felt before. Your heart is overjoyed. She lies beside you until the sun sets, and then she carries you home.

When you awaken the next day, you find a bag of gold beside your bed. It's worth millions. Although your heart will always ache for the love you can never have, the riches will certainly provide distractions.

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



16.312

Hecate takes you in her arms, and you close your eyes to the blinding light of god-travel. When you open them again, you are flying over the island of Crete.

As you hover with Hecate over the ruins and crowds of tourists, you realize you must be invisible to other mortals.

“What’s the plan?” you ask.

“Hermes has agreed to help,” she says. “He’ll distract the Minotaur and his sister with a game of Night Frisbee while I use magic to guide you to the wolfsbane.”

“*Night Frisbee?*” you repeat. “Does that mean we have to wait until nightfall?”

“It does,” she says with a grin. “I wonder how we’ll pass the time.”

You smile from ear to ear. “I’ve got ideas.”

“Is that so, hon’?”

You nod, unable to stop smiling.

“So do I,” she says. “You’ve greatly impressed me, and I’m ready to share my heart with you in secret. We could go to this beautiful beach house I know in Costa Rica, where morning has yet to arrive. Or, there’s a yacht anchored near the Philippine Islands, where the sun is about to set. Which will it be, hon’?”

[“The beach house in Costa Rica.”](#)

[“Your yacht in the Philippines.”](#)



16.3121

Hecate flies with you in her arms halfway across the world to Costa Rica. As you near the beach house, illuminated by lights both inside and out, you're delighted by its beauty. It's modern, angular, and has many windows, facing the sea on one side and the jungle on the other. An inviting pool with a fountain and tree in its center adds beauty to the beach side, and a deck with twin hammocks and a family of monkeys on the jungle side intrigue you.

Inside the house, you find another treat: a glass floor in one room that offers you a view of the ocean floor and the marine life living there.

Two massage tables are positioned on the glass with a donut-shaped pillow for your face, that allows you to watch the underwater life as you enjoy your massage. Hecate invites you to disrobe and lie on one of the tables, so you do.

She oils her hands and works her magic on you. She starts with your shoulders and kneads down your back, all the way to your tailbone. She rubs your neck, the back of your head, and each ear. Then she works down your arms and hands, one at a time. Then each leg. You sigh with pleasure as she rubs down each thigh.

After an hour of this delightful experience, the massage turns into something more. Hecate takes your hand and leads you to a four-poster bed with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the sea.

"You must swear to tell no one," she says.

"I swear."

She kisses you and makes you feel things you've never experienced before. After, you sip coffee together on the balcony and watch the sunrise.

“We should head back to Crete,” Hecate says. “Are you ready?”

“No, but let’s go.”

“Hell, yeah!”



16.3122

Hecate flies with you in her arms halfway around the world to the Philippine islands, to a yacht, anchored about a hundred meters from Boracay.

The lights on the yacht make the sea around it shimmer, adding to the beauty of the spectacular sunset on the horizon.

“This is so beautiful,” you say as she carefully sets you on a couch with a table on the upper deck.

“Glad you like it.” She offers you a glass of wine and then clinks her glass to yours. “A toast to a beautiful evening and a glorious victory to follow.”

“Cheers,” you say.

Hecate snaps her fingers, and a tray of food appears on the table. Together, you enjoy grapes, cheese, sausages, and bread as you share a tasty bottle of wine and watch the sunset.

When night falls, Hecate leads you from the upper deck to a cabin below, to a jacuzzi tub, filled with warm water and floating flower petals. Candles illuminate the room, and three portals offer views of the underwater life.

With gentle hands, she bathes you, using a soapy sponge that smells like lavender and rosemary. Her gentle touch soon becomes more passionate.

“You must swear to tell no one,” she says.

“I swear.”

You kiss her and pull her into the tub with you. Together, you experience pleasures you’ve never known.

You fall asleep in her arms in the warm jacuzzi, but sometime later, she awakens you.

“It’s time to return to Crete. Are you ready, hon’?”

[“No, but let’s go.”](#)

[“Hell, yeah!”](#)



16.32

Hecate holds you in her arms as she flies across the darkening sky toward Crete, where dusk has just begun to settle. You land among the ruins, no longer overrun with crowds of tourists. Only Hermes is there, waiting.

“Hello, again,” he says to you,

“Hi, Hermes,” you say. “Thanks for helping me.”

Hecate hands you a pair of steel rods. “Hold them straight out in front of you as you walk through the maze. I’ll be watching from above. As you get close to the wolfsbane, I’ll make the rods move closer together. If you get further away from it, I’ll move the rods further apart. Do you understand?”

You nod.

She gives you a pair of gloves and a headlamp, and you put them on.

“I’ll do the same after you have the plant and you’re on your way out. If you are going in the right direction, I’ll move the rods together; if it’s the wrong path, I’ll move them further apart.”

“Got it. Thank you.”

Hecate squeezes your shoulder. “Hide behind these columns until you see me with the Minotaur and his sister playing Night Frisbee among the stars.”

“The entrance is at the bottom of those steps near that fallen pillar,” Hermes says.

“Where?”

“That wall is an illusion,” Hermes says. “You can step right through it.”

Hecate squeezes your shoulder once more before she vanishes.

Hermes flies down to the hidden entrance to the maze and shouts, “Asterion! Ariadne! How about a few rounds of Night Frisbee?”

Within seconds, the Minotaur appears, followed by a raven-haired goddess you presume to be his sister. The Minotaur, who looks like any other god from the neck down, is carrying a golden disc. You’re surprised when the bull head speaks.

“You’ve come to challenge the champion, have you?”

Hermes grins. “I told you I would.”

“That was nearly a year ago.”

“Better late than never. Ready?”

“Of course, we are,” Ariadne says. “Come on, Asterion. I’m bored to death.”

“Let’s go,” the Minotaur says.

Once you see them in the sky above the island, you hasten to the secret entrance and are amazed when you can pass through the magical wall into the maze. You turn on the headlamp and find the tunnel is big enough for a train. Then you hold the rods out in front of you and make your way through the labyrinth.

When you come to a fork, the rods move together when you turn toward the left and apart when you move toward the right, so you go left.

This continues for a while. You feel confident that Hecate is leading you to the wolfsbane. Your feelings are validated when you come upon a cluster of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

You pick several stems, leaving a few behind to propagate. Then you turn and retrace your steps.

But when you turn back the other way, the rods move apart. This would normally mean you should turn the other way, but why would Hecate lead you deeper into the maze?

“You retrace your steps, in spite of the rods.”

“You allow the rods to guide you, anyway.”



16.321

When you approach the next fork in the maze, you look down as far as you can to the right and then as far as you can to the left. Neither look familiar.

[You go right.](#)

[You go left.](#)

[You turn back and allow the rods to guide you.](#)



16.3211

You turn around the bend where you suddenly feel things crawling all over your body. Then they sting-- one after another. You bat at them, seeing from the light of your headlamp that you've walked into a nest of deadly scorpions.

You bat and swat and flail and scream at the top of your lungs. The venom courses and burns through your veins. Your throat tightens, your head spins, and you can no longer breathe. You fall to the ground. Hecate appears, but it's too late. You give into the darkness.

Sometime later, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes comes for you. He takes you onto a riverboat. His face is solemn. You feel groggy, trying to recall why you're there. But when you see Cerberus beside the black iron gate, you have a moment of understanding: you're entering the Underworld as a soul of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



16.3212

You wind around the bend of the tunnel when, suddenly, you find yourself face to face with the Minotaur. Filled with sudden panic, you draw Athena's sword and charge. The Minotaur jumps to the side, but his sister, who was standing behind him, has a weapon drawn, and you accidentally impale yourself on the blade.

Blood oozes from your chest with each pump of your heart as you fall to the ground.

"Ariadne!" the Minotaur shouts.

"The mortal attacked you," she says. "It was an accident."

You gasp and gasp, but air won't come. Your lungs and throat burn. Your head spins.

The next thing you know, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright blue eyes has brought you on a riverboat. His face is solemn. You feel groggy, trying to recall why you're there. But when you see Cerberus beside the black iron gate, you have a moment of understanding: you're entering the Underworld as a soul of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



16.322

Although it makes no sense that Hecate is leading you deeper into the maze, you allow the rods to guide you.

After what seems like an hour has passed, the rods overlap, which signals that you need to turn around.

The only explanation you can think of for the goddess leading you deeper into the labyrinth only to have you turn back is that there must have been danger in the way of your exit. You feel better now that you know you are heading toward, rather than away, from the entrance.

When you finally reach the secret entrance, Hecate is there waiting for you. She takes you into her arms and god-travels with you back to the gates of Mount Olympus.

“That was terrifying,” she says.

“Imagine how I felt!” you say.

“Hermes couldn’t keep the game going long enough. I was afraid the Minotaur would keep you as his prisoner, or worse, his meal.”

“I’m so glad that’s over,” you say.

“You did it, hon’.” Hecate gives you her beautiful smile.

“One word of caution,” she says. “There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. I’ll do my best to protect you, but trust no one.”

[“Thank you, Hecate.”](#)

“Thanks for the warning.”

“But I passed all their tests!”



14.3

Hades flies with you in his chariot through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Hades says. “Nevertheless, it will still be dangerous. Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



14.311

Hades takes your hand and flies with you from the temple and back to the chariot, where Cupid brings and bridles the horses. Then Hades takes the reins and leads the chariot through the gates and out into the deep blue sky. Together, you sail over the sea across the world, back to where you began.

From the chariot, he walks with you across the field of flowers to the babbling brook.

“I have a gift for you,” he says. “I didn’t want to mention it in front of the other gods.”

“Thank you, Lord Hades! I’m sure I’ll love it, whatever it is.”

Suddenly, there are two gods of the Underworld standing, side by side, before you.

You cover your heart. “You have a twin brother?”

Hades laughs. “No. This is a man, not a god. He was created for me by Hephaestus, the god of the forge. I asked him to make you this gift, so you wouldn’t live a life of heartache.”

You study the man beside the god. You feel the arrow in your heart compelling you to love him.

“What should I call you?” you ask him.

“Hades,” he says.

You’re shocked that he speaks and sounds exactly like the god.

“Shall we go for a walk?” the man asks, offering you his arm.

“Sure,” you say, bewildered by this turn of events.

As you walk off with the man, you glance back at the god and say, “Thank you.”

Hades nods and disappears. When you return home with your new love, you find a bag of gold waiting for you in your room. You wrap your arms around Hades’s neck and the two of you laugh with pleasure and delight. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



14.312

Hades leads you back to his chariot and commands his stallions to fly to Crete.

Once you've left Mount Olympus and are sailing across the clear blue sky, Hades says, "You can use the eye of Polyphemus to help you find the wolfsbane, and the helm will help you to see in the darkness."

"I had a feeling that was your plan."

"But you'll need to be careful," he says. "Take your time, so you can be as silent as possible. If the Minotaur discovers you, you're on your own, unless you want to forfeit."

"I'd rather die than do that."

"Death isn't such a bad thing, either," Hades says. "If you've been compassionate to others and have accepted, or at least tolerated, those who are different from you, and if you've done no intentional harm to others in your pursuit of happiness, if you've been kind and helpful, you'll go directly to the Elysian Fields. It's what many mortals refer to as *Heaven*."

"And if I wasn't that good?" you ask.

"If you performed heinous acts against others--rape, torture, murder--then you'll be sent to Tartarus. Other crimes will land you in Erebus, to be cleansed before moving on to the Fields of Elysium. [Take a look at this map.](#)"

After looking over the map, you hope it will be a long time before you join the dead.

The chariot descends toward an island you presume to be Crete. It's heavily populated with modern buildings covering nearly every square inch, except for one finger jutting out into the green sea with what appears to be the ruins of an ancient fort.

Further inland, ruins stretch for acres and acres. Hades brings the chariot down among them, where tourists are still walking in and around the partially ravaged buildings. Since none of the people react to a horse-drawn chariot, you realize they can't see it.

"Where these gloves to protect your hands from the wolfsbane," Hades says.

You slip them on.

"And here's the eye," he says. "Whatever you do, don't lose it. It's quite useful to me. Besides, Poseidon would never forgive me if he ever learned I had something to do with its disappearance."

"Why can't Polyphemus just grow another one?" you ask as you follow Hades from the chariot.

"The bodies of immortals can repair themselves and even reattach limbs and the head. But if we lost a limb or an organ, we couldn't replace it. Have you heard the story of how Zeus punished Prometheus for giving you mortals fire?"

["Yes."](#)

["No."](#)



14.313

“It’s too gruesome to tell, anyway. But trust me when I say that that is the only eye Polyphemus will ever own.”

“Does that mean you plan to return it?” you ask as you follow him through the ruins.

“Of course. When I’m done with it.”

He guides you up a set of steps, where tourists are coming and going. When you reach a hall with pillars, you are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

You follow Hades past partially fallen stones into a large central court. To the south of the central court, are more stairs—refurbished, reinforced, and beautiful.

“Do you see that fallen pillar near the base of those stairs?” Hades points beyond the stonewall where the two of you are standing.

You nod.

“That’s the secret entrance to the labyrinth. Magic makes it appear to be another stonewall, but it’s an illusion.”

“The wall looks so real.”

“Yes.” He hands you the helm, which you place on your head.

“Ready?” he asks.

“No, but I’m doing it anyway.”

“You bet! I’m ready to be like you!”

“Ready.”



14.314

“Direct me to the ancient wolfsbane,” you say to the eye.

Although the eye of Polyphemus is gross, you’re grateful to have it as you venture through the magic wall and into the labyrinth. You walk slowly and quietly, trying to control your breathing. You keep one hand on the hilt of Athena’s sword.

The eye helps you to easily navigate through the maze until you come upon what appears to be a deep pit. The eye points forward. Should you attempt to jump to the other side? Or should you scale the stone wall and climb to the other side?

[Jump.](#)

[Climb.](#)



14.315

You back up to get a running start. As you run toward the pit, you trip on a rock and fall at least three meters to the bottom, landing in a pile of bones. The helm has fallen from your head and the eye from your hand.

You climb to your feet and feel around in the darkness for the helm when suddenly a nest of rats attacks you and eats chunks of your flesh.

You swipe them off, but there are too many. In a matter of minutes, they eat you alive. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



14.316

In order to climb the wall, you have to put the eye of Polyphemus someplace safe.

If you put it into your pocket, you risk squashing the eye when you bend your legs. But if you put it in your mouth, gently between your teeth, you could accidentally bite down on it, if you were to fall.

[You put the eye into your pocket.](#)

[You put the eye into your mouth.](#)



14.317

You grasp the footholds in the cavern wall with your gloved hands and find places to lodge your feet, one at a time. As you cling to the footholds with your hands and back foot, you find another foothold for your front foot.

Slowly, you make your way to the other side of the pit and are relieved when you find the eye unharmed.

Once again, the eye helps you to navigate through the maze, helping you at every fork along the path. But less than fifteen minutes pass when you come upon a small stream running along the floor of the cavern. Not wanting to be heard sloshing about, you carefully walk along its edge.

You've only gone a few steps when you lose your balance and drop the eye into the stream!

[You chase the eye through the stream.](#)

[Quietly, you creep on the edge of the stream.](#)



14.318

Not wanting to disappoint Hades--or worse, to incur his wrath--you chase the eye as fast as you can, sloshing through the water. You're so loud, that you think even the tourists walking on the ground above can hear it.

You struggle not to lose sight of the eye as you follow the stream deeper into the maze. You come to a halt when the Minotaur appears in the stream, blocking your path.

"Reveal yourself!" he demands.

[You remove the helm.](#)

[You slowly and quietly draw Athena's sword.](#)

14.3181

“Who are you and why are you here?” the Minotaur asks.

You tell him your story, showing him Athena’s scabbard and shield, and explaining how you have Hades’s helm.

“If I’m to have any chance of being near Hades and avoiding a life of despair, I need to find the ancient wolfsbane and return it to Mount Olympus.”

“I know the plant and can help you find it.”

You lift your brows in surprise, wondering if you can trust the monster. What if he intends to disarm you to make it easier to eat you?

“There’s also the matter of the eye of Polyphemus,” you say. “I dropped it in this stream. Hades will kill me if I don’t return it to him.”

“This stream pools a few hundred feet from here. Follow me.”

[You decide to trust the Minotaur and follow him.](#)

[You slowly and quietly draw Athena’s sword.](#)



14.31811

He leads you down the stream to where it pools. You find the eye of Polyphemus swirling in circles. You pick it up, relieved it isn't damaged.

"The wolfsbane is this way," the Minotaur says.

Carrying the helm in one hand and the eye in the other, you follow the Minotaur deeper into the maze, hoping he doesn't plan to trap you.

He stops before a cluster of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

"The wolfsbane!" you say, picking clumps of it. "Thank you so much!"

"Let me show you the quickest way out of the labyrinth," the Minotaur says as he leads the way back.

When you don't come upon the pool and the stream that empties into it, you once again fear that you're being tricked. However, only a few more minutes pass when you see light at the end of the tunnel.

"The exit is that way," the Minotaur says.

"I can't thank you enough!" you cry.

You run toward the secret entrance, with the taste of victory on your lips.

Waiting outside of the cave is Hades. He smiles proudly when he sees you with the eye and wolfsbane. Then he takes your hand and flies with you back to his chariot.

"You've surprised me, mortal," he says. "I didn't think you could do it."

“The Minotaur helped me.”

“I meant all of it--all three tests. You passed them.”

“I can’t believe it either.”

As he drives the chariot into the sky toward Mount Olympus, he says, “There’s something you should know. There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. I’ll do my best to protect you, but trust no one.”

“Thank you, Lord Hades.”

“I trust no one but you, Lord Hades.”

“I thought the danger ended with the final challenge.”



14.319

You slowly and quietly follow the stream through several twists and turns of the maze until it stops in a pool. You see the eye of Polyphemus swirling in a circle at the center. You reach in and pull the eye out.

You hold the eye once more in your hand and whisper, “Show me the way to the wolfsbane.”

You follow the direction of the eye through many more twists and turns. It shows you which path to take at every fork. Then you come upon a cluster of purple helmet-shaped flowers.

Ecstatic, you pick several clumps of it and then whisper, “Show me the way out of the labyrinth.”

The eye moves. You’re surprised when it doesn’t take you the same way you came. You don’t go by the stream at all. And, when you see the light at the end, you realize the path from the maze was shorter than the one in.

You run toward the secret entrance, with the taste of victory on your lips.

Waiting outside of the cave is Hades. He smiles proudly when he sees you with the eye and wolfsbane. Then he takes your hand and flies with you back to his chariot.

“You’ve surprised me, mortal,” he says. “I didn’t think you could do it.”

“I can’t believe it either.”

As he drives the chariot into the sky toward Mount Olympus, he says, “There’s something you should know. There may be one or more gods who secretly oppose your apotheosis. I’ll do my best to protect you, but trust no one.”

[“Thank you, Lord Hades.”](#)

“I trust no one but you, Lord Hades.”

“I thought the danger ended with the final challenge.”



14.3182

You hold your breath and fight against your trembling as you creep toward the Minotaur.

Suddenly, the beast bats in the air with his hands and knocks your sword from your hand. With a kick, he sends you flying backward. The helm falls from your head, and you sit on the cavern ground in darkness.

Frightened for your life, you scramble to your feet and run in the opposite direction. The beast cries out to you to stop, but you keep scrambling with your arms out in front. Then you trip on a rock and bash your head against the cavern floor.

At first you feel nothing but the warm blood flowing from your head. Then you feel as though you've been hit by a train. Blood gurgles in your throat, blocking your air. You choke, inhale your own blood, which burns like fire in your throat and lungs.

Moments later, a beautiful boy with dark hair and bright eyes comes to you and takes you to a riverboat. When you see Cerberus guarding the entrance, you realize you're entering the Underworld as a soul of the dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



17.3

Hypnos flies with you in his chariot through the gates of Mount Olympus. When you enter the temple with Rhode's wedding pearls dangling from one fist, the gods applaud and cheer. You pump your fist in the air and then present the strand to Poseidon.

"I shouldn't say that I'm shocked, but I am," the god of the sea says. "Not many mortals could have pulled this off."

You smile at the god. "Thank you."

"Now for the final challenge," Athena says. "Any ideas?"

Artemis stands from her throne. "I have one."

"Please, daughter," Zeus says. "Tell us what it is."

"I see a great many hunters who treat their prey with disrespect. They kill purely for sport and discard the carcasses like trash."

"What can this mortal do about it?" Aphrodite asks.

"I used to punish these hunters by shooting them with a special poison," Artemis says. "I'd make an ointment out of a rare form of wolfsbane and apply it to the tips of my arrows. It made the hunters suffer for many hours before they died. There's only one place I know of where the ancient plant can be found: in the Minotaur's labyrinth."

As Artemis returns to her seat, Athena says, "Thank you, Artemis. The mortal would need to navigate through the labyrinth and return here with the plant--a difficult challenge, indeed."

“Hear, hear,” Ares says.

“What does this plant look like?” Hermes asks.

“It has helmet-shaped purple flowers with green rounded leaves,” Artemis explains. “It can grow up to a meter tall.”

“You’ll want to wear gloves,” Demeter warns you.

“How will I get past the Minotaur?” you ask.

“I have a plan,” Hypnos says. “It will still be dangerous. Do you accept? Or would you prefer for me to take you home.”

“Take me home.”

“I accept the challenge.”



17.311

Hip takes you in his arms and flies across the clear blue sky. He takes you back to the field of flowers near the babbling brook, where your adventures began.

“Don’t leave me,” you say.

“I’ll stay for a bit.”

“I can’t bear to be away from you.”

He lies down with you beside the water. “I have a gift for you.”

“Thank you! I’ll cherish it forever,” you say.

He chuckles. “You don’t even know what it is yet.”

“It doesn’t matter. I’d love anything from you.”

He presents you with a globe he’s pulled out of thin air. “This is a dream globe.”

“It’s pretty.”

“If you ask it to show you the god of sleep, you’ll be able to see me doing my work in the Dreamworld. You’ll be able to talk to me face to face through the globe.”

You throw your arms around his neck. “Thank you! I truly will cherish this forever!”

“I’m glad you’re pleased, gorgeous. Now kiss me.”

He spends the day with you, making you feel pleasures you've never known. When he leaves at sunset, he promises to visit every night in your dreams. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!

17.312



Hip takes you in his arms and flies with you across the deep blue sky. Then he descends on a heavily populated island with modern buildings covering nearly every square inch, except for one finger jutting out into the green sea with what appears to be the ruins of an ancient fort.

You land together among acres and acres of ruins and a throng of tourists. It's soon obvious that you and Hip are invisible to them.

Hypnos pulls a blanket out of thin air and spreads it on the grass on the outskirts of the ruins, away from the crowd.

“What are you doing?” you ask.

He lies on the blanket and pats the space beside him. “Come and hear my plan.”

You lie beside him on the soft white blanket.

“I have a question for you first,” Hip says as he props himself on one elbow and gently strokes your hair. “Have you ever heard the saying that if you are dying in your dream and don't wake up before you die, you'll die in your waking life, too?”

“No, I haven't.”

“I have, but I thought it was a myth.”

“Yes.”



17.313

Well, it's true," he says. "If you don't wake before you die in the dream, you'll die in your waking life, too."

"How scary. But why are you telling me this?"

"Because, gorgeous, that's how you'll defeat the Minotaur."

"You want me to go into the Dreamworld and kill the Minotaur there?" you ask.

"Exactly. But I'm afraid I won't be able to keep him asleep long enough for you to finish the job, so I'm going to leave a basket of cakes near the entrance."

"Cakes laced with potions?"

"Sleeping potions, yes."

"And you're sure the Minotaur will eat them?"

"No. But, if he does, I'll know when he's asleep, after I've taken my duties back from Hecate. And then I'll put you to sleep too. Then I'll find you in the dreamworld and take you to him."

"What if he kills me in the dream instead?"

"I'll do my best to wake you from the dream before that happens."

"But it could happen?"

"It's a risk. Yes."

You know you should agree to the plan, but you're terrified.

Hip strokes your cheek. "If you succeed in killing him in the Dreamworld, I'll wake you from your slumber and carry you to the labyrinth. Then you can search for the wolfsbane using a headlamp and a spool of thread to mark your path." He kisses you and then asks, "What do you think of the plan?"

"It's the only one we have."

"It's brilliant."



17.314

Hip leaves your side to deliver the poppy cakes to the labyrinth and to receive his duties from Hecate. You enjoy the sunshine on your skin and, before long, find yourself chasing Hip through a prism of colors.

You laugh with glee as you run. “Where are you going, Hip? You’re too fast for me!”

“How easily you’ve forgotten!” he calls out to you as he extends his hand.

You jump over purple, pink, and blue and onto a platform of green. “What is this place?”

“Tell me who I am.”

“Hypnos,” you say as you catch up to him and take his hand.

“God of?”

“Sleep!” A light goes on in your head. “This is the Dreamworld. Where’s the Minotaur?”

“This way. Draw your sword.”

You find yourself inside the labyrinth. Surprisingly, you can see, even though you don’t have your headlamp.

Suddenly Hip is at your ear. “Remember, this is a dream. You can do anything you like in a dream. You can fly, you can imagine yourself with super-strength and Ninja skills. Use this knowledge to your advantage.”

Hypnos disappears, leaving you alone with your sword in the labyrinth.

You charge into the tunnel with your sword in front of you.

You sneak along the winding tunnel, quietly and cautiously.



17.315

You aren't wandering long when you see the Minotaur bathing in a pool at the end of a stream. He's naked and relaxed. It would be easy to sneak up behind him and slit his throat.

[You sneak up behind him and slit his throat.](#)

[You sheathe your sword and say, "Hello."](#)



17.316

The Minotaur gasps as your blade cuts across his throat and his blood spills down his body. His beautiful body flinches with surprise and then stills as his ugly bull tongue hangs from his mouth. He dies staring at you with shock and reproach.

You're startled when Hip appears behind you. "Good work, gorgeous! Now wake up! There's no time to lose!"

You wipe the blood from Athena's blade. "I *am* awake. What are you talking about?"

"Wake up! You need to find the wolfsbane before the Minotaur's body heals and his soul returns."

You open your eyes to find yourself lying on the soft white blanket a few hundred meters from the ruins.

"Finally," Hip says, as he sweeps you into his arms.

He cradles you like a baby as he flies over the ruins to a hall with pillars, where he sets you on your feet. You are surprised by the fresco painting of a bull. It is larger than life in deep browns and blacks against the white stone. Two huge horns curl and point from each side of its ferocious head.

It reminds you of your dream. "Did I really kill the Minotaur?"

"Only temporarily," Hip says. "Now, listen. The entrance to the maze is on the other side of that fallen pillar. See it?"

You nod.

"That's the secret entrance to the labyrinth. It looks like a solid wall but isn't. Just step through it and search for the wolfsbane as quickly as possible. I don't know how much time you have."

“Okay,” you say.

“Wear these gloves for protection.”

You slip them on.

“And this headlamp, so you can see in the darkness.”

You strap it on.

“Here’s a ball of yarn. Use it to find your way back to me.”

“I will,” you say as you take the red string.

“Ready?”

“Can I have a kiss for luck?”

“Ready.”



17.3161

Hip cups your face and kisses you, but not nearly as long as you'd like. "Good luck! And hurry!"

You rush down the steps, past the tourists, to the fallen pillar and the fake wall. It feels surreal when you step into the labyrinth and begin unwinding the ball of red yarn.

At the first fork you come to, you hesitate. Hip said to hurry, so you must decide quickly.

[You go right.](#)

[You go left.](#)



17.3162

You rush down the winding tunnel. It twists and turns many times before you come to a narrow spring running along the center of the tunnel. You follow the spring, hoping it will lead to vegetation and possibly the wolfsbane. At each fork you come to, you follow the water.

As you come around the bend, you're horrified by the sight of the Minotaur in the pool, just as you left him in your dream.

You hear a movement beside him. You turn your head to shine the lamp and see a woman--a raven-haired goddess.

"Did you do this to my brother?" she ask through her tears.

[You turn and run the other way.](#)

["It was a dream. I'm so sorry."](#)

[You draw Athena's sword.](#)



17.321

The Minotaur's sister tackles you to the cavern floor, takes Athena's sword, and slits your throat while saying, "How do *you* like it?"

You feel the warm blood spilling down your neck and soaking into your clothes. Your head spins and you can't breathe. You try to say you're sorry, but you die before you can manage to speak.

Thanatos is soon beside you. He pulls you from your dead body and takes you to the Underworld, where you board Charon's ferry. As you pass Cerberus and enter the black iron gates, you finally realize that you are dead. (Game Over.)

GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



17.3163

You follow the winding tunnel as it twists and turns until you reach a deadend.

You turn around and quickly wind up the yarn as you retrace your steps to the last fork. When you reach it, you go the other way, eventually coming upon a narrow spring running along the center of the tunnel. You follow the spring, hoping it will lead to vegetation and possibly the wolfsbane. At each fork you come to, you follow the water.

As you come around the bend, you're horrified by the sight of the Minotaur in the pool, just as you left him in your dream.

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17.317

The Minotaur leaps from the pool and strips off your clothes, ravaging you with his tongue.

You struggle against him, punching and kicking, as he carries you into the pool with him.

His thick tongue licks every square inch of your skin as you continue to fight him off.

Then Hip appears. "Asterion! Stop!"

The Minotaur sits up. "This is my dream, Hypnos. I can do what I want."

"Wake up!" Hip yells at you as he attempts to pull you away from the Minotaur. "Come on, gorgeous! I need you to wake up."

"Get out of my dream, Hypnos!" the Minotaur growls just before he takes Athena's sword from its scabbard and drives it through your heart.

Hip rushes to your side. "You've got to wake up, gorgeous. Please!"

You feel the warm blood pouring from your body and spilling into the cold pool of water.

The Minotaur wears a look of bewilderment on his face. "I thought this would force the figment to show itself."

"This isn't a figment," Hip says, as you lay dying. "This is the projection of a mortal who came to your dream to kill you."

"But why?" the Minotaur asks.

“Gorgeous, please wake up!”

You feel confused. You blink several times. You *are* awake, aren't you?

Suddenly Hip's brother, Thanatos, appears at your side and takes you to Charon's boat. It's then that you finally realize that you are entering the Underworld as one of the dead. (Game Over.)



GAME OVER ! PLAY AGAIN!



PART FIVE: APOTHEOSIS

The gods and goddesses applaud you as you stand in the center of the great hall on Mount Olympus. Zeus brings you a golden cup.

“Ambrosia,” he says. “By the power vested in me as the king of the Olympians, you shall become immortal as you drink this cup.”

You smile at all the gods surrounding you. Then you put the cup to your lips and drink.

At first, you don’t feel anything. You look at Zeus, wondering if something’s gone wrong. Then you feel a tingling sensation that starts in your toes and rushes, like the wind, through your body to the very top of your head.

Gasps fill the room.

“You’re stunning,” someone says.

“Beautiful, strong, and worthy,” another adds.

Then Hades asks, “Have you decided how you will serve? Or did you not realize that you’d have to choose a purpose within three months for your transformation to become permanent?”

“A purpose?” you ask.

“I’m the goddess of love,” Aphrodite says. “In what way will you serve the world or humanity?”

Glancing around at all the gods, you say, “You can be sure I will figure it out before my three months are up.”

The other gods applaud you once again. You gaze across the room at your heart’s true love.

Then Zeus invites the Muses to perform. He asks all gathered to partake in dancing. As you move from one dance partner to the next, you are enthralled with your new life--so near the one you love--and you are anxious to figure out your purpose and to begin your next adventure.



Eva Pohler is a *USA Today* bestselling author of over twenty-nine novels in multiple genres, including mysteries, thrillers, and young adult fantasy based on Greek mythology.

If you enjoyed this interactive game, you will love the novel, which consists of different challenges than those found in this text-based game. Find [Gods of Olympus here](#).

You might also enjoy her young adult series based on Greek mythology: [The Underworld Saga](#), [The Vampires of Athens](#), [Vampires and Gods](#), and [Cupid's Captive](#).

For more free games and to learn more about Eva and her books, please visit her website at <https://www.evapohler.com>.