

# OUR AMERICAN ODYSSEY

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

Open stage. Lighting and/or projections suggests sky and sea. Orchestral introduction.

(Odysseus enters carrying bow and arrow; walks to downstage center.)

ODYSSEUS

I am Odysseus, man of triumph and sorrow  
I sing of your past, present, and tomorrow.

Leading my men home after the sack of Troy  
Evading all monsters who would destroy  
Our ship was blown asunder.  
Eager for plunder, my men with reckless greed  
On the gods' forbidden cattle did feed.  
Exhausted, I cried and slept and cried.  
All my men died.

Clinging to the shattered mast  
Drifting through eternal time  
Gasping for breath in the ocean brine  
Tossed by the sea through endless space  
Racked with pain,  
I saw Death's face.  
Still, I endure.

I landed in a fantastical place,  
Filled with the clamor and clash of men  
Wild fury in each face.  
The tumult rose again and again  
In the most unholy din.  
Bidding for goods unseen  
An astonishing scene!  
A place so wondrous and strange,  
The New York Stock Exchange.

c Marjorie M. Rusche, June 12, 2023

(Lights brighten. The Cyclops enters holding fistfuls of ticker tape.)

ODYSSEUS

The Cyclops!  
Creature of limitless appetite  
That brutal lawless monster  
Who feeds on cyclical destruction.

CYCLOPS

Buy! Sell! Buy!  
Bigger! Better! More!  
Huge bonuses!  
I'm making millions, billions, trillions!

Create credit default swaps.  
Subprime mortgage bonds,  
Trash!  
Grow loan volumes with synthetic CDOs.

Buy! Sell! Buy!  
Bigger! Better! More!  
Huge bonuses!  
I'm making millions, billions, trillions!

(The Cyclops approaches Odysseus).  
Are you in?

(They shake hands.)

ODYSSEUS AND CYCLOPS

Buy a new home with no down payment,  
If you have no income we don't care.  
Huge loans with no collateral  
Give us huge bonuses,  
And then . . .  
(break apart)  
Foreclosures!  
Foreclosures!  
Foreclosures!

We rake in profits fat and thin.  
The game is rigged, we always win.  
We financed mortgages that never had a chance,  
We flipped those houses, what a merry dance!  
We rake in profits fat and thin,  
the game is rigged, we always win.  
We're making millions, billions, trillions!  
Stocks go up,  
Stocks go down,  
Zeus thunders! We plunder!

(Odysseus breaks away.)

ODYSSEUS

I played along with the monster  
I had to make a living.  
Now the markets are collapsing  
And the Dow keeps sinking  
No one is thinking as the  
House of Cards falls down.

Mortgage-backed securities slumped in value!  
Lehman Brothers! Deutsche Bank!  
Goldman Sachs! Morgan Stanley!  
Bear Stearns! Fanny Mae! Freddy Mae!  
Bank of America!

(Strutting around the stage and boasting.)

CYCLOPS

I'm too big to fail.  
I eat and drink and gorge on flesh.  
No one can stop me.  
No one.

Buy! Sell! Buy!  
Bigger! Better! More!  
Huge bonuses!  
I'm making millions, billions, trillions!

(Odysseus shoots an arrow into the eye of the Cyclops, who stumbles offstage.)

(Bell rings.)

ODYSSEUS

The stock market shut down.  
The bubble burst. Nothing left.  
Busted, broke.  
It's over. The ink is red.  
I'm homeless.  
I fought so valiantly,  
But now I'm done,  
The market's bust.  
Now I'm no one.  
Still, I endure.

Entranced by the siren song of easy gold  
I sold and bought and bought and sold.  
The market became a monster  
Draining blood from my heart.  
Then I became a monster of greed.

War is behind me, my past,  
I'm tired of fighting.  
For far too long I numbed my heart to  
killing, vengeance, dying.  
If only ... I could forget . . .

(Stage lights gradually turn red.)  
Blood, blood, nothing but blood!  
Blood, blood, oceans of blood!  
I'm no one.

(Stage lights normal.)  
Taking foolish chances, I've lost it all  
(Stage lights soften; rose-gold tone.)  
Yet unexpected grace leads me on  
A breath of hope.  
Dreaming of a world of peace and plenty.  
Guided by the golden light of love,  
I will return to my true home,  
My paradise, my Penelope.

## Scene 2

Postmodern Ithaca. Penelope's banquet hall.

(The suitors are carousing, throwing food, furniture, wine glasses and grabbing at the maids who are obligated to wait on them.)

SUITORS (T.B. choir)  
More! More! More wine!  
Bring us more!  
More! More wine!

MAIDS (S.A. choir)  
In a minute!

SUITORS  
Your minute is up!  
Now fill up my cup!

MAIDS  
In a minute!  
Just a minute!

SUITORS  
More! More! More to eat!  
Bring us more!

MAIDS  
In a minute!  
Just a minute!

SUITORS  
Bring us more!

MAIDS  
More!

MAIDS AND SUITORS  
Right now!

(Antinous emerges from crowd.)

ANTINOUS

When I am King of Ithaca.

No need for men to think.

For when I am King of Ithaca

All men will need to do is drink!

SUITORS

More! More! More wine!

MAIDS

In a minute!

SUITORS

More! More wine!

MAIDS

In a minute!

Just a minute!

SUITORS

Your minute is up!

Now fill up my cup!

MAIDS

In a minute!

ANTINOUS

When I am King of Ithaca

Penelope as my bride.

You will do what I say

No place to hide.

My power will be absolute.

My pockets will be filled with loot.

When I am King!

SUITORS, MAIDS, and ANTINOUS

SUITORS

More! More! More wine!

Bring us more!  
More! More wine!  
Your minute is up!  
Now fill up my cup!  
More! More to eat!  
Bring us more! Right now!

MAIDS

In a minute!  
Just a minute!  
In a minute!  
More! Right now!

ANTINOUS

When I am King!  
More to eat!  
Bring us more! Right now!

(Suitors stalk the Maids in slow motion.)

SUITORS

Come here, my darling, don't be shy.  
You want to keep your job, don't you?  
Come here, my sweetling, don't be shy.  
I'll make it worth your while.  
We want more!

(Food fight resumes.)

MAIDS and SUITORS

SUITORS

More! More! More to eat!  
Bring us more!  
Right now!

MAIDS

In a minute!  
Just a minute!  
In a minute!

SUITORS

More! Right now!

(Antinous approaches one of the maids.)

ANTINOUS

Come here you pretty thing

Come sit on my lap.

MAID

You have your drink  
My job is done.  
Leave me alone.

ANTINOUS

Oh, come, you can't expect me to drink alone.  
(He grabs her.)

MAID

Leave me alone.  
Let me go!

ANTINOUS

Kiss me, or you'll be sorry!

SUITORS, MAIDS, ANTINOUS, and PENELOPE  
SUITORS

Come here, my darling, don't be shy.  
You want to keep your job, don't you?  
Come here, my sweetling, don't be shy.  
I'll make it worth your while.  
More! More! More to eat!  
Bring us more! Right now!

MAIDS

Let me go! No!  
You have no right to treat us so!  
Let us go!

ANTINOUS

I am the new King of Ithaca  
All of this is mine  
You are mine.

(Penelope enters.)

PENELOPE

Let them go.  
Let her go! Let them go!



ANTINOUS  
Penelope, Penelope,  
Good Penelope, you are too harsh.

(CHORUS freezes in place.)

PENELOPE  
Really?  
You have molested my maids,  
Gorged on my food and  
guzzled my wine for years.

ANTINOUS  
We drink your wine,  
We drink your wine, it's true.  
(He toasts her.)

PENELOPE  
You have depleted my resources.  
You have depleted my resources and my patience.

(throws glass to floor and chases Penelope.)

ANTINOUS  
Come here my lovely Penelope  
Why not marry me?

(She evades him, brushes him off.)

PENELOPE  
Get out, Antinous.  
I'm sick of you.  
I'm sick of you and your retinue.

ANTINOUS  
You made a promise,  
You and your dead husband  
We gave you our brothers and sons  
Odysseus led them to war.

PENELOPE  
Yes, I promised.

ANTINOUS

You promised your home would be open to us  
And any who were in need.

PENELOPE

Yes, I promised.  
I promised hospitality  
But you have abused that promise.

ANTINOUS

You promised.  
What would your dead husband say to that?

PENELOPE

He still lives.

ANTINOUS

Then where is he?

PENELOPE

He's on his way home.

ANTINOUS

You're deluded.  
Making up excuses to delay  
Your next wedding day.

PENELOPE

He still lives.  
Get out, Antinous,  
I'm sick of you and your retinue.

ANTINOUS

We will stay until you marry again.

PENELOPE

I will not marry again until I finish a burial shroud for my father-in-law.  
At least, respect the dead.  
Leave me now, I need to weave.

(She stares him down.)

ANTINOUS

Fine. You can't weave forever.

We will still loom large.

(CHORUS reanimates.)

SUITORS, MAIDS, PENELOPE, and ANTINOUS

SUITORS

More! More! More to eat!

Bring us more! Right now! More!

More! More wine!

Your minute is up!

Now fill up my cup!

More! More to eat!

Bring us more! Right now!

MAIDS

Just a minute!

In a minute!

More! Right now!

In a minute!

Just a minute!

ANTINOUS

You made a promise to Ithaca

Penelope be my bride.

Your husband will never return

Don't keep us waiting.

Make me your King!

PENELOPE

I will not marry again until I finish a burial shroud for my father-in-law.

Respect the dead.

Leave me now, I need to weave.

I will not marry again. I will not.

I must finish a burial shroud. Respect the dead.

Leave me now, I need to weave.

SUITORS

More!

ANTINOUS

Let's go!

(Antinous and Suitors exit laughing. Maids escape offstage.)

PENELOPE

Welcome words on his lips, and murder in his heart.

“Penelope’s Lament”

(Penelope walks around stage, sometimes pausing, restoring order.)

Ah, Where is Odysseus. Now there was a man. Ah!

Will he return? Or was he just a dream? A dream?

Is he still alive? Or is he dead already?

Lost in the House of Death? Death! Ah!

So many years of sorrow.

So many years, years of numbing grief.

I cry and cry alone.

(pacing nervously)

If only fate would send me a sign,

To help me find a path through this uncertainty.

I swore to do my duty, be the people’s voice.

(stops in place)

But exhaustion hinders me.

(resumes pacing)

Those brazen, grasping suitors,

Consuming everything they see,

And now they want the rest of the property--

Including me!

(standing downstage center, searching the sky)

Where is Odysseus? Now there was a man. Ah!

Is he still alive? Or is he dead already?

Lost in the House of Death? Death!

I have persisted against all odds.

Skillfully weaving to outwit my enemies.

But I can’t weave forever.

Where is Odysseus? Now there was a man.

Will he return? Or was he just a dream?

My love, be real, be true!

### Scene 3

Circe's Malibu Spiritual Retreat.

(Circe, a shrewd New Age entrepreneur with a slightly crazed appearance, kneeling on rug or yoga mat on floor with cushions scattered around downstage center playing a Tibetan singing bowl pitched at E; with an assortment of crystals, incense, stones, and misc. New Age paraphernalia semi-circled around her.)

CIRCE

Why be stuck in the mud of a subhuman state,  
Chained to your sloth, lust, and gluttony?  
Why be stuck in the mud when you don't have to wait  
To roam free in the fields of Tranquility? Ah!  
Reach enlightenment now!  
Come find enlightenment!

(holds up crystals, plays with them)

I have resonant crystals and oils essential  
Yoga, meditation, and a patented juice cleanse  
Massage with hot stones--it's all experiential.  
So that with yourself you can make amends. Ah!  
Reach enlightenment now!  
Come find enlightenment!

(stands, starts throwing play money on the floor)

What is a small fee  
When you can set your mind free!  
(Suitors disguised as pigs enter, rooting around for food upstage.)

(Odysseus marches in, confronts Circe.)

ODYSSEUS

Circe, we have been here long enough.  
We need to go home.

CIRCE

I don't see any chains around your wrists.  
We are not in some fatal tryst  
You can come and go as you please.

ODYSSEUS

Yes, I can go,

(gestures to pigs; pigs snort again)  
But a ship without a crew will not get very far.  
I promised to take them to a better place.

CIRCE  
And you have.  
I will bring them to enlightenment.  
I will turn them back to men when they have reached a higher plane.

ODYSSEUS  
And how long will that take?

CIRCE  
(counting on her fingers)  
Five years.

ODYSSEUS  
We do not have five years.

CIRCE  
Men have spent lifetimes trying to reach spiritual heights,  
That I enable them to reach in five years. Ah!  
Reach enlightenment now!  
Come find enlightenment!  
And you make it sound like a subprime mortgage.

ODYSSEUS  
We have this argument all the time.  
They came to you looking for food  
Not for (sarcastic) "inner peace."

CIRCE  
(she shoos the pigs offstage)  
Lucky for them to be getting both.

ODYSSEUS  
There must be some shortcut to enlightenment,  
Some easier way,  
Some bargain we might make.

(Circe circles around him.)

CIRCE

You want to strike a bargain?  
I charge a small enrollment fee,  
To cover the costs,  
This place isn't free.  
As time passes the cost grows  
And the cliff under my home erodes by degree.  
More and more the threat shows  
That we may tumble into the sea.  
If YOU were to help me raise the funds,  
I might help your men speed up their quest for enlightenment.

(aside)

ODYSSEUS

I doubt that the Buddha ever thought up such a bribe.

(hard-core business woman; counting out money)

CIRCE

Do we have a deal or not?

(to Circe)

ODYSSEUS

Most of what I have I lost in the crash,  
But I will give you what is left.

CIRCE

And I have the perfect way so it looks as if  
I didn't cook the books.  
I will charge it all as a session  
For past life regression.

ODYSSEUS

We might as well give it a try.

(Stage lights dim. Atmosphere becomes misty. Circe lights some candles and positions Odysseus on the cushions in preparation for his past life regression session.)

CIRCE

Ah!

Reach enlightenment now!

Come find enlightenment!

Close your eyes

Let your mind wander back

Let it wander to its furthest recess.

Back to where it began.

What do you see? See!

(sitting up)

ODYSSEUS

I see the insides of my eyelids.

(she pushes him back down)

CIRCE

What do you see with your mind's eye?

ODYSSEUS

The water.

Endless waves.

CIRCE

Reach back even further.

ODYSSEUS

Endless waves, endless, endless waves.

CIRCE

What do you see now?

ODYSSEUS

A form.

Someone in the distance.

CIRCE

Look closer.

What is it doing?



(Penelope appears at edge of stage wearing a veil. She and Odysseus gradually come nearer to each other throughout the scene, but cannot see each other.)

ODYSSEUS

Walking towards me,  
Slowly towards me.

CIRCE

Does it speak?

PENELOPE

Odysseus. Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS

My name. It speaks my name.

CIRCE

Do you know this figure?

ODYSSEUS

Yes. But from where? I can't place it yet.

(Penelope moves closer.)

PENELOPE

Odysseus.

(sits up)

ODYSSEUS

Oh, Penelope.

CIRCE

Penelope?

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

Odysseus.

Oh, Penelope.

CIRCE

Who is Penelope?

ODYSSEUS  
My dear wife.

PENELOPE  
Odysseus.  
Why do I feel you near,  
When I know you are far?

(stands up)  
ODYSSEUS  
Oh, Penelope.  
I feel you are near  
Even though you are far.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS  
Odysseus.  
Oh, Penelope.

(They reach out to touch each other, but are unable to connect.)  
PENELOPE  
One of fate's cruel tricks  
To be haunted by a ghost of a living man.

ODYSSEUS  
One of fate's kind tricks  
To be haunted by the ghost of a living form.

PENELOPE  
Assuming you do still live.

ODYSSEUS  
For I now know you live

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS  
Assuming you do still live  
For I now know you live  
And are not lost to me forever.

PENELOPE  
If I could see your face.

ODYSSEUS

If I could feel your warmth.

PENELOPE

If I could see your face, feel your warmth.

ODYSSEUS

If I could hear your voice.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

If I could hear your voice.

ODYSSEUS

If I could say one word.

PENELOPE

Even for just one word.

ODYSSEUS

Wait. Wait.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

Odysseus.

Oh, Penelope.

Please wait.

CIRCE

What's happening?

How did she get here?

ODYSSEUS

My Penelope. Please wait for me.

PENELOPE

I will.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

We will be reunited.

CIRCE

You mean this is working?  
He got more than he bargained for.  
Is this one of his tricks?

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

Odysseus.  
Oh, Penelope.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

I feel you near,  
Even though you are far.

CIRCE

He actually sees a living form?  
He talks to it as if it lives.  
I've not seen this before. Ah!

(Penelope and Odysseus close enough to touch each other, but cannot see each other through Penelope's veil.)

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

Why do I feel you near,  
When I know you are far?  
I feel you near,  
Even though you are far.

ODYSSEUS

One of fate's kind tricks  
To be haunted by the ghost of your living form.  
For I now know you live.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

For I now know you live  
And are not lost to me forever.

CIRCE

It is time, time to come back.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

Wait for me.

CIRCE

It is time. This session is ended.  
We've run out of time.

CIRCE, PENELOPE, and ODYSSEUS

PENELOPE

Then I will see your face

CIRCE

Wake up!

ODYSSEUS

Then I will feel your warmth.

PENELOPE

Then I will hear your voice.

CIRCE

Wake up!

PENELOPE AND ODYSSEUS

I will hold a vision of you in my heart. Ah!  
I feel you are near,  
Even though you are far.

CIRCE

I'll turn the pigs back into men.  
And I'll help you on your way.  
You're free to go home.

PENELOPE & ODYSSEUS

I will hold a vision of you in my heart.

PENELOPE, ODYSSEUS & CIRCE

Ah!

CURTAIN

## ACT TWO

### Scene 1

(Penelope's studio in postmodern Ithaca. Contemporary wall hangings incorporating classical Greek meanders and labyrinths. Penelope is sitting at her loom, singing while making fiber art. Clea is assisting her.)

PENELOPE

Ah.

CLEA

I'm glad that you are feeling happier.

PENELOPE

Taking a journey to creativity heals me.

(holds up the wall hanging she is working on, displays to Clea)

It's so gratifying to have a tangible result,  
Instead of being depleted by an insurmountable dilemma.

CLEA

You mean the suitors?

PENELOPE

Yes.

(She puts down wall hanging, resumes weaving.)

The endless partisan political posturing.

The grab and grab and get what you can by any means attitude.

The endless quest for power.

The total disregard for human dignity.

CLEA

You mean the suitors?

PENELOPE

Yes.

(She stands and faces Clea.)

Are all the maids going to quit?

CLEA

Yes.

Because of the suitors.

Their lust grows stronger and stronger.

The suitors grow ever more depraved.

PENELOPE

I believe you.

This has gone on long enough.

(paces, thinking)

PENELOPE

Tell the suitors I will marry again.

CLEA

What?

PENELOPE

Tell them I will soon hold an archery competition.

CLEA

What?

PENELOPE

And to the winner I will grant his nuptial petition.

CLEA

You cannot marry one of these men.

PENELOPE

Do not worry.

(She waltzes around the stage.)

The competition that I devise

Will make it impossible to win the prize.

(stops waltzing, approaches Clea)  
Then the suitors will go away.  
Ask the maids to stay.

PENELOPE and CLEA  
Tell them what I say.  
I will tell them what you say  
And plead with them to stay.

(Clea starts pacing.)

PENELOPE  
Are you ok?  
Are you prepared for your immigration interview?

CLEA  
Almost.  
They need to confirm my identity.  
With luck I'll be validated instead of hated  
And get to stay in the U.S. of A.

(Slides or videos of immigrants might be shown; arriving at Ellis Island, migrant camps on Mexican-U.S. border, migrants wading across Plo Grande, etc.)

Fleeing death I left my homeland  
Dreaming of the Promised Land.  
Fleeing death, I dreamt of America.

PENELOPE  
Fleeing death.

CLEA  
Fleeing death I left my homeland  
Dreaming of the Promised Land.

PENELOPE  
Fleeing death.



PENELOPE and CLEA  
Fleeing death, I/you dreamt of America.  
The land of opportunity  
The shining city on a hill.

CLEA  
This is better than what I left,  
But hardly what I hoped for.  
Serving drunken lowlifes  
Who grab at you and tell you to be grateful.  
Who make themselves truly hateful.  
Who threaten deportation  
For insubordination.

PENELOPE and CLEA  
Fleeing death I/you dreamt of America  
The shining city on a hill.

CLEA  
My fate is not the worst.  
Still it's hard to make it through the day,  
Knowing any second my life might go away.  
My fate is not the worst.  
I'm not a family torn apart at the border.  
I'm not a child detained in a cage.  
I'm not a migrant worker living in COVID infested camps.  
Picking crops for piece rate pay.  
PENELOPE and CLEA  
Picking crops for piece rate pay.

CLEA  
Trapped, Trapped.  
Intense heat, polluted air.  
Trapped, Trapped.  
Burning forests sparked by lightning, impossible to breathe.  
Picking crops for piece rate pay.  
Trapped, Trapped.  
Relentless sun, always working  
No shade, no rest, no water.  
No papers, impossible to live here, impossible to leave.

(She pantomimes mechanically bending, picking a crop, putting in basket.)

Fleeing death I left my homeland  
Dreaming of the Promised Land.  
Fleeing death, I dreamt of America.

PENELOPE  
America.

CLEA  
They were going to kill me,

PENELOPE and CLEA  
Kill me/you.  
No good reason.  
Fleeing death.  
They accused me of treason.

(Slides or projections stop, Penelope and Clea move downstage center, sing to each other.)

PENELOPE and CLEA  
There will be a solution,  
A happy resolution.

(They hug and comfort each other.)  
All will be well.  
Soon we will have safe and loving homes.  
Uncertainty and danger, will leave soon.  
We will retrieve the better angels of our nature,  
And achieve a safe harbor, a loving home.  
All will be well.

(both singing directly to audience)  
Can we be compassionate America.  
The shining city full of light.  
Shining city full of love.  
Be my land of opportunity.  
Be my home, America, united. Ah!

## Scene 2

“Calypso’s Cayman Island luxury resort. Park your treasure here.” Sign on driftwood, or flashing neon lights, or in surtitles. Odysseus and Calypso are partying. Calypso dancing around Odysseus, who is swinging in hammock or reclined in lounge chair. Odysseus wearing straw hat, shorts, and brightly colored large floral shirt; Calypso a modern punk goddess look, tastefully seductive. Tropical island slides projected. Or, background videos of sandy beach, palm trees, water, that gradually become more tempestuous. Relaxed, warm, playful; lighting is summer-day sunny. Both start with lighter pop voices; gradually intensify to operatic throughout scene.

CALYPSO

In my world, all is pleasure, sunshine, radiant sunsets,  
In my world, all is pleasure, night-time.  
Night-time games of chance.  
In my world all is pleasure, sunshine, radiant sunsets,  
In my world, forget your pain.  
Try a calming lotus pina colada.

(Calypso hands Odysseus a drink. Odysseus drinks.)

ODYSSEUS

Oh lustrous goddess, bewitching queen,  
The most beautiful I’ve seen.

CALYPSO

I saved you from the wine dark sea.  
I so treasure your company.  
Love me, love me I’ll satisfy all of your desires,  
Stay with me, stay with me,  
And you immortal shall be.  
If you stay with me.

(They embrace, she refills his cup.)

CALYPSO

You seem to like lingering on my Isle, Odysseus.

(drinks again, slightly tipsy)

ODYSSEUS

It's a nice little haven for taxes and men.

CALYPSO

An escape from all things inevitable.

Even death.

Odysseus, I want us to have days like this forever.

I want to make you immortal.

Let me turn you from man to god.

This is no taunt

I can give you the thing all men want.

(considering, releases himself from her embrace)

ODYSSEUS

No. No.

CALYPSO

No?

ODYSSEUS

No.

CALYPSO

You jest.

ODYSSEUS

As a haven your island is very nice,

But it is a synthetic paradise.

(stands, starts distancing himself from Calypso.)

Calypso, who could rival you?

No beauty could compare.

Calypso, who enchants the heart like you?

Who has your charm? Your wit?

(increasingly flatters Calypso in hopes of staving off her rage.)

I could wax poetic through each day

And not run out of things to say

But your perfection is not enough for me to stay.  
I love Penelope.

I should not have entertained you  
I should never have betrayed her.  
I've made every mistake a man could make.  
But though I regret all my acts  
That doesn't change the fact.  
I love Penelope.  
It's a love that pervades me, it is my existence.  
Without her I never could be whole  
For we share a common soul.  
Calypso, I must go home.

CALYPSO

Who would believe,  
That you could pull a man from the wine-dark sea  
Nurse him back to vitality  
Give him shelter, affection all for free.  
Offer him immortality  
Ensure there is nothing he could possibly lack  
Then find that he's jabbed a knife in your back.  
Ingrate!

The man I saved, wind drove him on,  
The current bore him here--  
I welcomed him warmly,  
Vowed to make the man immortal,  
Ageless, all his days.

ODYSSEUS

How can I get out of here?  
Break free of this synthetic paradise?

CALYPSO

Still eager to leave?

ODYSSEUS

Don't be angry, don't be angry with me, please.

CALYPSO  
Still eager to leave?

ODYSSEUS  
Don't be angry.

CALYPSO and ODYSSEUS

CALYPSO  
Hardly right for mortal woman to rival immortal goddess.

ODYSSEUS  
Don't be angry.

CALYPSO  
Hardly right for mortal woman to rival immortal goddess.

ODYSSEUS  
All that you say is true,

CALYPSO  
How?

ODYSSEUS  
How well I know.

CALYPSO  
In build? In beauty?

ODYSSEUS  
Don't be angry. My wise Penelope falls far short of you  
In build? In beauty?

ODYSSEUS  
She is mortal after all.

CALYPSO  
If you only knew what pains are fated to fill your cup

ODYSSEUS  
Don't be angry.

CALYPSO  
Before you reach that shore, You'd stay right here.

ODYSSEUS  
All that you say is true, how well I know.

CALYPSO

You'd stay right here, in our house,  
Rule with me.

ODYSSEUS

She is mortal after all.

CALYPSO

Love me, love me I'll satisfy all of your desires,  
Stay, stay with me,  
And you immortal shall be, immortality.

CALYPSO and ODYSSEUS

Immortality.

ODYSSEUS

How can I make you understand what I feel?  
My Penelope bravely found me,  
Knew me in the Otherworld.  
Although we could not touch  
Her odyssey gives me strength to continue my journey.  
We love, we love each other, love each other.  
We have a true understanding.

CALYPSO

No. No. No. No!  
If you will not become immortal of your own free will,  
Then I will make you immortal against your will.  
You will live on this island as my prisoner for eternity.

ODYSSEUS

If that is your will,  
Then it is not a fate I can fight.  
It may be what I deserve.  
But understand that if you keep me here,  
You will wake ev'ry morning  
Look upon me and know  
My sole thought will always be  
Penelope.

## CALYPSO

Get out!

I send you back to the sea, back to the sea.

May the gods curse you, Curse you.

May they wreck your ship and toss you to the waves

Leaving you with nothing.

And when you clutch at life

When all you see before you are the gates of Hades and a watery grave

Think of me, and say, "she offered me immortality."

Go! Go! Go!

(Calypso exits, while casting a spell on the elements.)

(downstage center, to audience)

## ODYSSEUS

Our lives are much too brief.

Our mortal flesh so frail.

It makes our times of love all the sweeter.

After many hardships,

Twenty years of fighting, wandering,

I long to return to my kingship.

My native land.

Where I am who I really am.

And if a god will wreck me yet again on the wine-dark sea,

I can bear that too.

I will bear that too with a spirit tempered to endure.

Much have I suffered,

Labored long in the waves and wars.

And if a god will wreck me yet again

Add this to the total,

Add this to the total,

Bring the trial on!



### Scene 3

Post-modern Ithaca. Penelope, downstage center, is weaving in her guest room. A shabby-looking Odysseus enters upstage, observing Penelope from every angle while remaining unseen by her.

(Penelope pauses her work, stares into distance.)

PENELOPE

Dreams are hard to unravel,  
Such wayward drifting things.  
But not every dream will come to pass.

(She resumes weaving.)

Where? Where? Where is Odysseus?  
When does my life rebegin?

(Odysseus circles towards and approaches Penelope.)

ODYSSEUS

My Lady. Thank you for your kindness in sheltering me -- a wandering beggar.

PENELOPE

The gods decree hospitality.  
Tell me about your wandering.  
(Penelope motions for him to sit down.)

ODYSSEUS

I've sailed and sailed the wine-dark sea.  
(he stands)  
Faced down monsters.  
Slew demons yet could not rest.

PENELOPE

Then, why Ithaca? What draws you here?

ODYSSEUS

I'm searching for someone from long ago.

PENELOPE

Who?

(aside)

ODYSSEUS

You.

PENELOPE

Who?

(Odysseus takes a few steps towards Penelope.)  
Rumors have spread about an archery competition.  
I'd like to try.

PENELOPE

The stakes are high.  
The competition will determine my next husband.

ODYSSEUS

Why? Why?

PENELOPE

It's a ruse.  
Pleasure-obsessed suitors have besieged me for years  
Devouring my food and drink.  
They bully my help,  
Ignore my concerns  
And destroy the future, the future of Ithaca.

They will stay in my house  
Until I remarry.  
They will leave my house  
When no one wins.  
When no one wins.

(Odysseus moves closer to Penelope.)

ODYSSEUS

A clever strategy.

PENELOPE

I'm using my former husband's bow.

ODYSSEUS

Your former husband? His name?

PENELOPE

Odysseus. Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS

Odysseus?

I know him.

PENELOPE

You do?

ODYSSEUS

Oh yes, I know him very well.

Rumors say he is on his way home.

PENELOPE

If only what you say is true.

I still miss him.

After so many years

Only wisps of memory remain.

Rumors, fragments of dreams.

I'm tired of waiting, not knowing.

(Odysseus puts his hand on Penelope's arm.)

ODYSSEUS

I understand your sorrow,

The strain of your uncertainty,

I suffer with you.

But what if he still lives?  
What if he still lives?

PENELOPE  
One hears this, one hears that,  
Who among us  
Can always tell truth from illusion?

ODYSSEUS  
He can't be far from here.

(Lighting warms, more rose-gold. Penelope sees Odysseus in a new light.)

PENELOPE  
You seem familiar.  
I know I've seen you before.

(She circles around Odysseus.)  
I know I've seen you before.

ODYSSEUS  
You have.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS  
In a dream?

PENELOPE  
I have travelled in my spirit.  
Reweaving the broken threads of our lives  
In my vision.

(She flirtatiously taps him on the shoulder.)  
You are welcome to participate  
In tomorrow's archery competition.

ODYSSEUS

The stakes are high.

PENELOPE

The stakes are high.

(They turn away from each other.)

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

PENELOPE

Even though a homeless beggar.

I feel he understands me,

Cares for me.

Could it really be he?

Is lost love returning?

Tomorrow will reveal everything.

Love is returning.

Tomorrow I will know.

Tomorrow we will know.

ODYSSEUS

I built this room, the bed, the loom

I'm home. I'm home.

When can I tell her

I love her as my own?

Lost love is returning.

(They turn towards towards each other.)

Tomorrow will reveal everything.

Love is returning.

Tomorrow I will know.

Tomorrow she will know.

Love.

Tomorrow we will know.

(They reach to embrace each other, but shy away, exit in opposite directions.)

## Scene 4

(Postmodern Ithaca. Festive atmosphere. Large gathering room or open stage with warm, bright light and lush floral, garden projections. Entrance archway upstage center. Marble-looking statues suggesting Greek goddesses. Some Maids and Suitors are dancing, some processing in. Clea and Antinous enter from opposite sides of the stage.)

(Penelope enters upstage center through flowery archway carrying Odysseus's bow.)

PENELOPE

Welcome, welcome all  
To this my wedding day.  
Suitors, take your chance,  
Find new romance.

(Throughout this scene, the chorus is placed on stage so that they can easily see the conductor.)

MAIDS AND SUITORS

The chance of romance.

PENELOPE

To win me as your bride

(She holds up bow.)

String the mighty bow of Odysseus

Take careful aim and

Shoot the target.

(She pantomimes shooting an arrow.)

MAIDS AND SUITORS

Bulls-eye!

PENELOPE

The target is outside.  
Hit the invisible target,  
Hit the invisible target.

MAIDS AND SUITORS

Hit, Hit the bulls-eye!

PENELOPE

The arrow bursts into flames.

MAIDS AND SUITORS

Flames!

(Antinous approaches Penelope.)

ANTINOUS

How can anyone shoot an invisible target?  
How will I?

PENELOPE

With strength and skill  
And a steady will,  
Shoot the target.

(Odysseus enters, upstage left, blends into crowd.)

To make a start,  
See with more than your eyes,  
See with your heart.

MAIDS

Suitors, take your chance.  
Find new romance.

SUITORS

The chance of romance.

ANTINOUS

This contest is a sham.

The prize is already mine!

(grabs Penelope's arm)

You are mine.

PENELOPE

(breaking free)

That is a lie, a lie, a lie!

(Walking around stage, greeting people.)

Welcome, welcome all

To this my wedding day.

Suitors, take your chance,

Find new romance.

MAIDS AND SUITORS

The chance of romance.

(She walks around the stage, brandishing the bow, taunting the suitors.)

PENELOPE

Who will try?

MAIDS AND SUITORS

The chance of romance.

Try the chance of romance.

(Several suitors rush forward, she hands the bow to one. They all shoot, including Antinous -- all fail.)



PENELOPE

You have all missed the mark.

ANTINOUS

This contest is a sham.

I never lose.

PENELOPE

Claiming something is true

Does not make it so.

ANTINOUS

Ithaca needs a strong man.

I alone can fix everything.

(Antinous struts around the stage.)

(Odysseus emerges from the crowd.)

ODYSSEUS

May I try? May I?

MAIDS AND SUITORS

Who is this ragged stranger?

Where did he come from?

He isn't one of us.

Not one of us.

ANTINOUS

You need a strong man like me

Not some homeless beggar.

(Clea emerges from the crowd.)

CLEA

Poverty often hides true nobility.

PENELOPE

Sometimes truth is found in a moonbeam on the sea.

(hands bow to Odysseus)

See with your heart.

ODYSSEUS

See the moonbeam on the sea.

Nothing will keep us apart.

(Odysseus aims and shoots. Arrow flames offstage. Penelope retrieves the arrow, brings it front center stage.)

PENELOPE

Bulls-eye!

The arrow burst into flames.

MAIDS AND SUITORS

Bulls-eye! Flames!

Heroic beggar.

(Penelope approaches Odysseus, puts arrow in holder, then offers her hand.)

PENELOPE

My husband.

(She recognizes him.)

Odysseus!

MAIDS AND SUITORS

Odysseus!

PENELOPE

Is it really you?

ODYSSEUS

My lady, my Penelope.

I am Odysseus, your husband.

PENELOPE

Odysseus! My husband.

ODYSSEUS AND PENELOPE

Nothing will keep us apart.

(They embrace.)

PENELOPE

I'm stunned with wonder,

My secret heart always shrank with fear

Some fraud might come

Fool me with his talk.

The world is full of that sort,

Pretending to love.

ODYSSEUS

My love, My Penelope.

I am Odysseus.

ODYSSEUS AND PENELOPE

Nothing will keep us apart.

(Antinous attempts to come between Penelope and Odysseus.)

ANTINOUS

Beware, old beggar, Penelope is mine.

(Odysseus places himself between Penelope and Antinous.)

ODYSSEUS

I am Odysseus.

Home!

MAIDS AND SUITORS  
Odysseus! Home!

ANTINOUS  
This beggar is an imposter.  
This contest is a sham.  
I never lose.  
(aside)  
If I lose, I have no worth,  
I die.

CLEA  
Odysseus won.

(to Clea)  
ANTINOUS  
You are not one of us.  
(shoves her)  
Who are you to tell me what is true?

(stands her ground)  
CLEA  
I have my papers now.  
As a legal citizen,  
My voice will be heard.

ODYSSEUS  
Our homeland will be governed by laws, not brutes.  
Justice, not the violence of the mob.

PENELOPE  
Compassion and mercy will guide us.  
There is enough for everyone.

(to the suitors)

PENELOPE

To the maids you dishonored  
Give your respect.

(to the maids)

SUITORS

We were wrong to treat you so.  
We vow to treat you with respect.

MAIDS

Celebrate, Celebrate,  
Celebrate the day.

(to Antinous)

PENELOPE

Antinous, be a useful citizen  
To try to be King is total folly.

ANTINOUS

Situations always change,  
Ruling powers rearrange.  
I'll find a way back,  
I should own the throne.  
(he exits)

CLEA

I finally have a safe home.

ENSEMBLE:

CLEA, MAIDS AND SUITORS

MAIDS

Celebrate, Celebrate the day.

SUITORS

We vow to treat you with respect.

CLEA

Love is true paradise.

TUTTI

Love is true paradise. Love!

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

So joyous now to see you,

I will never let you go.

This is true paradise.

TUTTI

Love is true paradise.

Grace.

PENELOPE and ODYSSEUS

Our love renewed, our home restored.

Love that lasts through time and space.

Eternal grace.

END OF THE OPERA