LOOM

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Characters

Actor #1:
Queen of the Dead F, ageless, but maybe a bratty teenager, a pawn, a Goddess
Siren #3 – Queen of the Dead in disguise

Actor #2:
Hermes – M, Messenger God,
Jim – M, Chloe's dead fiancé,
Henry – M, Sissy's dead brother, a burn victim
Sisyphus – M, dead laboror & friend to The Queen

Actor #3
Clotho - F, Spinner of yarns, a dreamer, the oldest, a Divine Being
Chloe - F, mortal who lost her fiancé
Burn Victim - dead soul wandering around in limbo
Ghost - dead soul in the Underworld
Siren - former friend of The Queen, turned into a siren

Actor #4
Lachesis – F, Measurer of yarns, practical, ordered, middle sister, a Divine Being
Sissy - F, girl who lost her brother
Ghost - dead mortal soul in the Underworld
Siren - F, former friend of The Queen, turned into a siren

Actor #5
Atropos – F, Cutter of yarns, a chaos muppet, the youngest, a Divine Being
Burn Victim - dead mortal soul wandering around in limbo

Scene Breakdown:

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Settings:
Cave of the Weird Sisters: God Realm; Dream Realm

Time:
Timeless; Present Day

LOOM

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PROLOGUE

Lights up on QOTD, skipping rope and gathering seeds.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

One seed for yes, Two seeds for no. Three seeds for maybe, Four seeds I'll go. Five seeds I'll tarry And six I'll be thine...

I love being outside. It's summer and it smells like earth and wind. I live here in this cottage by the sea - Mother and me.

Mother has been weeping for three days. Each time I go outside to skip rope or pick blackberries for supper, I catch her looking at me as though she's seeing me for the last time. She thinks I don't notice - just tells me not to catch cold –

but I see her wiping her eyes. I hear her at night. She always turns her back.

Mother, why are you crying?...Autumn?

What is Autumn? What are -

Something stops me, because I remember...something...someone: I'm afraid and...dark kisses and promises...

There are dead people and six pomegranate seeds laid out carefully before me. There's a choice...

Creepy moaning sounds of thousands of undead. She drops the seeds.

I'm so tired.

Lights Fade.

Lights Up.

HERMES

Calling, Offstage
Where are you...? My queen...?

Picks up a pomegranate seed & inspects it.

HERMES

She's been here! ...but how long ago?

I need to find her before she does something ...irreparable – My QUEEN!

A beat. Finds another seed, picks it up...

Here's another –

Picks up another seed

...and another...

(he looks off in the distance towards where the pomegranate seeds lead)

HERMES

But this leads to the cave of… OH NO.

Lights fade out as he follows the trail.

The sounds of spinning can be heard – whatever that means to you. Lights up on Clotho in one corner of the stage, spinning...whatever that means to you.

SCENE 1

CLOTHO

I'm the spinner. I spin. You see me: here I am, SPINNING. Women's work, since time begun. Strange phrase: "since time begun". I know I was there, but I don't remember. Spinning – always spinning. Spinning yarns. Not just any yarns, SPECIAL yarns. Yarns of young, yarns of old –

Lights up on Lachesis, in another corner of the stage. She has a pile of yarn on her lap or table, it is connected to the pile Clotho has spun. She measures it with a ruler, then marks it with a Sharpie.

LACHESIS

-88 years! Such a miracle, modern medicine! You gotta be careful, measuring. It's not arbitrary: it's an exact science. No one gets more than their allotment, though some are greedy and always want more. Nothing wrong with that! But you can't escape –

CLOTHO

-Wish I could escape, sometimes. How long have I been doing this? I couldn't say. "Since time begun". Forever. Did I mention this was special yarn? It bleeds a little, in my hands. It leaves...residue.

She lifts her hand for the audience to see – it is stained with the color of the yarn

Residue makes me long for –

LACHESIS

Longer and longer! 113 years? A drop in the bucket for us, but very long, for mortals. OH! 3 years. So sad. Not even much of a start. Sometimes, I –

CLOTHO

-I wish I was mortal, sometimes. I do. It's gotten bad, lately. When the yarn bleeds, I see. Thoughts, lives, feelings. We're not supposed to interfere. Do the job. Spin, spin, spin. But the colors I see as the yarn flows through my hands –

LACHESIS

-from her hands to my hands to my other sister's hands. That's the way it works, day in, day out. That's the way it's always been. What would it be like to just stop...or even...TRADE? What if –

CLOTHO

What if I...no, I'm embarrassed to say. But: sometimes, I can't help myself. I go in a little, to see what it's all about. I'm fairly sure I'm not supposed to. But the feelings that course through me sometimes, when the yarn bleeds –

LACHESIS

She's more the bleeding heart, my older sister. She bends the rules, but I cling to them. If you don't have order, you have nothing! So I measure. I measure, she spins, and –

Lights up on Atropos in yet another corner of the stage. Her yarn is connected to that of Clotho and Lachesis, but it is wrapped around her several times, and she is flummoxed.

ATROPOS

Um... Help?

CLOTHO

I can't help it – I jump in a little. I follow the yarn and jump into their stories. I know I'm not supposed to, but –

LACHESIS

Suppose we DID trade, or break the rules – what then? Would everything fall apart? Would the world end? Mass hysteria? IF we –

ATROPOS

Hey...HEY! I need help!

Chlotho and Lachesis finally look over at Atropos.

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

What are you doing?

ATROPOS

I can't find them!

LACHESIS

Find –

CLOTHO

-What?

ATROPOS

My shears. They're missing.

CLOTHO

The scissors?

LACHESIS

Missing?

ATROPOS

GONE!

CLOTHO

That's impossible!

LACHESIS

How?

Atropos is tangled in more and more yarn.

ATROPOS

Help me!

Lachesis and Clotho look at each other, uncertainly. This has never happened.

ATROPOS

HELP ME!

Uncertainly, they drop whatever implements they are holding and cautiously approach Atropos.

ATROPOS

PLEASE!

CLOTHO

What do we do?

LACHESIS

assessing
Not sure.

ATROPOS

I'm stuck!

Lachesis grabs hold of some of the yarn.

LACHESIS

To Clotho, uncertainly
Spin her out?

Clotho grabs Atropos by the shoulders and spins her in the opposite direction until Atropos, swooning a little, is freed.

ATROPOS

Woo! ...I'm a little dizzy.

LACHESIS

Angry
How many lives is this? You need to cut them before this gets out of hand!

ATROPOS

I can't!

CLOTHO

Why not?

ATROPOS

I told you!

LACHESIS

Your shears are missing.

ATROPOS

That.

CLOTHO

How are we supposed to –

LACHESIS

We'll have to figure it out.

ATROPOS

Should we call someone?

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

Who?

ATROPOS

I dunno...maybe we try The Ritual?

CLOTHO

Couldn't hurt

LACHESIS

I suppose

All go back to their corners. Clotho spins, Lachesis measures and marks, Atropos waits hopefully.

ATROPOS

There were

CLOTHO

There are

LACHESIS

There will be

ATROPOS/CLOTHO/LACHESIS

three conjoined sisters
Whom Erebus begat on Night,

ATROPOS

Who dream for men at birth evil and good to have

ATROPOS/CLOTHO/LACHESIS

By name:

CLOTHO

Assertive
Clotho, the spinner who spins the thread of life!

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Echoing
…the spinner…

LACHESIS

Practical; anxious
Lachesis, the measurer who assigns each life its destiny.

CLOTHO/ATROPOS

Echoing
…the measurer…

ATROPOS

And Atropos,

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

Patronizing
the smallest in stature

ATROPOS

Indignant
But the most terrible! She Who Cannot Be Turned or Avoided, who

ALL

Cuts the thread at death!

Lachesis and Clotho look over at Atropos, who is trapped in yarn again.

ATROPOS

It didn't work.

Lachesis and Clotho go back over and untangle her from the yarn.

Sound FX: a loud, foreboding noise.

CLOTHO

What

LACHESIS

was

ATROPOS

that?

The noise again, louder, closer.

CLOTHO

Something happened.

LACHESIS

Something's wrong!

ATROPOS

Someone's coming…

(Hermes enters, following trail of seeds– they recognize each other)

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

You!

SCENE 2

HERMES

Where is she? Have you seen her?

ATROPOS

Her?

HERMES

Sisters of destiny, pardon my intrusion, I don't suppose you've noticed anything…out of the ordinary…taking place?

CLOTHO

Our work

LACHESIS

Has been

ATROPOS

Interrupted!

HERMES

Interrupted how?

ATROPOS

My shears are missing!

HERMES

Oh dear. That's –

CLOTHO

It's not good.

LACHESIS

It's bad.

ATROPOS

Very, VERY bad!

HERMES

I wonder...

LACHESIS

Why are YOU here, messenger?

HERMES

Ah yes. Allow me: perhaps we can help each other.

CLOTHO

Help?

ATROPOS

How?

HERMES

The Queen has gone missing.

Blackout.

Dark lights up. QOTD walking slowly, deliberately.

INTERLUDE

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

When I'm in transit it floods back. The memories build. When I reach either destination, through the earth's crust and crossing the River Lethe, the memory of the other place fades with each step.

Every six months, I do this. Follow the messenger up, or follow the messenger down.

She is a human tug-of-war rope

I am rope, sinewy, knotted rope, growing frayed with age as generations pass. Rope in an ancient tug-of-war.

My mother. My husband. My Mother. My husband. My mother. My husband. Six months here; six months there.

Repeats "six months here/there" line until she falls, ragged, to the ground.

Neither asks what I prefer.

I don't know what to do.

Gathering herself, slowly.

It wasn't always this way. There was a time when I lived all year round above the surface, with my mother. I was a child. It was a beautiful life, but...you can't be a child forever.

She smiles.

You've heard the tales of how he took me, but this is how it happened:

Singing

One seed for yes, two seeds for no, three seeds for maybe, four seeds I'll go. Five seeds I'll tarry, six I'll –

She looks up, startled

Oh! Who are you? Why yes, I'd LOVE to go for a ride in your chariot and see your kingdom!

I said yes. And he whisked me away. Showed me the dark splendor of the underworld...and asked me to stay. To be his queen.

Lights out.

Lights up on 3 sisters and Hermes.

SCENE 3

LACHESIS

So what do you want us to do?

CLOTHO

How do we help?

ATROPOS

We have our own problems.

HERMES

Our problems may be one and the same.

LACHESIS

How do you figure?

HERMES

I was following her trail, and it led me here.

CLOTHO

Her trail?

Pulls out pouch.

ATROPOS

What's in there?

Hermes opens pouch, pours out a handful of pomegranate seeds.

ATROPOS

Seeds!

HERMES

She left a trail of them, and it led here.

CLOTHO

What are you thinking?

LACHESIS

That SHE stole the scissors?

ATROPOS

SHE has my shears?

HERMES

It checks out.

CLOTHO

Good an explanation as any.

ATROPOS

But...how?

LACHESIS

We've been here the whole time.

CLOTHO

No one's been here.

ATROPOS

We would know, if they had!

HERMES

The trail stops here. Your scissors are missing. You do the math.

CLOTHO

Maybe...

LACHESIS/HERMES/ATROPOS

What?

CLOTHO

...if she was sneaking around here and didn't want to be found out...

HERMES

Yes?

CLOTHO

...I do it sometimes...NOT FOR VERY LONG!

LACHESIS

Do what?

CLOTHO

Don't be mad.

ATROPOS

What did you do?

CLOTHO

...I only do it sometimes, just a little peek, a little glimpse –

LACHESIS

What did you do?

CLOTHO

Just for a few mintues. I don't see how it'd hurt.

ATROPOS

Spit it out!

HERMES

WHERE DO YOU THINK SHE IS?

CLOTHO

It's like dreaming.

HERMES

What's like dreaming?

CLOTHO

It's the yarn. It's like a dream. I get it on my hands and...I jump in sometimes.

ATROPOS

Jump into WHAT?

LACHESIS

Their lives. That's it, isn't it? You bend the rules and jump into their lives.

CLOTHO

I'm sorry. Yes.

LACHESIS

You KNOW you're not supposed –

CLOTHO

Yes, I know! But –

HERMES

Can you stop bickering? We need to find her.

ATROPOS

And we need to find my shears!

CLOTHO

Okay – okay.

LACHESIS

Why don't we do this logically – you tell your side, my sister will tell hers.

HERMES

Very well.

Pause

I suppose it's my fault. I was escorting her.

ATROPOS

The Queen?

HERMES

The Queen. We had left Hades, going to her mother. She was distraught and couldn't do it anymore.

CLOTHO

Do what anymore?

HERMES

The back and forth? 6 months in Hades, 6 months on the surface...I was only half listening.

LACHESIS

Isn't she the one who made that choice for herself?

HERMES

...at the beginning...

CLOTHO

She got sick of the routine.

HERMES

Maybe? I was only half listening. Have my own concerns. We took a little rest on the way up. I nodded off, and when I came to, she was gone!

ATROPOS

So...what happens if you don't find her?

HERMES

I need to find her.

ATROPOS

What happens if you don't?

HERMES

Pointedly
What happens if you don't find your shears?

ATROPOS

Point taken. Chaos for all. Right?

HERMES

Her mother foists eternal winter onto the earth.

ATROPOS

And who KNOWS what else will go wrong.

HERMES

To Clotho
Your turn.

CLOTHO

I know a little something about getting sick of routine.

LACHESIS

Explain.

CLOTHO

I've done it a few times, and not for very long. At first I wanted to see if it could be done, and once I figured that out...oh, there are SO many journies one can take!

LACHESIS

It's against the rules.

CLOTHO

Whose rules?

HERMES

We're wasting time.

CLOTHO

Fine. If The Queen came here, and accidentally touched the yarn while our backs were turned...she very well could be stuck in some mortal's life.

ATROPOS

Stuck...or hiding!

LACHESIS

Then how did she take the scissors?

ATROPOS

Maybe she took the scissors and then jumped into a yarn?

HERMES

That sounds plausible.

ATROPOS

You think?

HERMES

Good an explanation as any.

LACHESIS

So what do we do?

CLOTHO

We need to follow her.

ATROPOS

Follow?

HERMES

How?

LACHESIS

How do we know which thread to follow?

ATROPOS

They're all jumbled now, cuz we can't cut!

LACHESIS

Go to the end.

CLOTHO

The end?

LACHESIS

To where the last thread was cut. Maybe that's where she jumped in?

ATROPOS

Good idea!

They go to Atropos' tangled pile of yarn, find the end.

HERMES

How do we...you know...dive in?

They look at Clotho

CLOTHO

Uh...

LACHESIS

You're the one who bent the rules in the first place.

ATROPOS

How do YOU dive in? Without us knowing?

LACHESIS

Speak for yourself – I've had my suspicions for awhile!

HERMES

Can we focus?

LACHESIS

Do we need a ritual?

CLOTHO

Maybe a little one... I said before it's like dreaming. You grab the yarn...

ATROPOS

How?

CLOTHO

Like this.

She fondles the yarn.

You rub it so it stains your skin and then...

Closes her eyes.

HERMES

What shall I do?

CLOTHO

Keep watch

ATROPOS

...and make sure no one else comes in!

CLOTHO

We dreamed.

LACHESIS

We dream

ATROPOS

We'll dream

CLOTHO

I see only random dreams

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Bits and pieces

CLOTHO

Coulds

LACHESIS

What-ifs

ATROPOS

Might-be's

CLOTHO

Days bleeding into

LACHESIS

Years bleeding into

ATROPOS

Decades and centuries –

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Millenia.

CLOTHO

Past is present

LACHESIS

Now is past

ATROPOS

Future is now

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

And so it goes.

CLOTHO

falling dreams

LACHESIS

waking death

CLOTHO

So many ends of different yarns to spin

The many different threads become, throughout this sequence, a big tangle of knots

LACHESIS

To measure each in its turn –

ATROPOS

Which is which? I can't tell which one to cut, all of

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

The dying - a cluster of knots in many colors and lengths

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

Cannot untangle!

ATROPOS

Need to cut, cut, cut

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

In one fell swoop

Clotho grabs tangled clot of yarn, holds it to her forehead. Closes eyes. Lachesis and Atropos circle her. Hermes steps to the periphery, and fades offstage.

CLOTHO

We dreamed...

LACHESIS

We dream...

ATROPOS

We'll dream...

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

A chant

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

SCENE 4

Lights fade and shift. Lachesis and Atropos fade into periphery. Sound of waves. Clotho is on a deserted beach. Projection of beach/waves on the back wall of stage. Actors playing Lachesis and Atropos unroll giant piece of light blue fabric - becomes waves. They play with the waves in the background.

CLOTHO

A dream! I'm in a dream...someone's life! I –

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Whispering

Dreaming

Dreaming

Dreaming

CLOTHO

Whose life have I jumped into? Whose dreams...

A dim, dreamy figure appears. Figure gets closer: it's Jim, in contemporary clothing, wet from head to toe. He approaches Clotho from behind.

JIM

Don't forget the task at hand!

Clotho startled, whirls around.

CLOTHO

What? Who are -

Studies him closely. She becomes Chloe, the mortal whose life she has jumped into.

JIM

Surprise!

He waves at her.

Hello Chloe.

CHLOE

What? You're – how are you – you're -

She sees him & faints. He catches her.

Not knowing what else to do, he studies her a moment, then slaps her lightly. She opens her eyes.

Lachesis and Atropos, continue their dance of the waves all over the stage.

CHLOE

Touching his face
How…how is it possible that you're here?

JIM

Don't cry... Please don't. It'll be okay.

CHLOE

Recoiling
Not sure I can handle this.

JIM

I'm sorry.

It's been hard for you.

CHLOE

I miss you.

I've missed you so much. You have no idea…

JIM

Maybe I do.

CHLOE

But you're –

JIM

Not sure where to begin. I've missed you too. But we –

He puts his arms around her again. She struggles, then melts into him..

CHLOE

Whispering
You're here. You're really here!

A beat.

JIM

Serious again, and bittersweet
We don't have much time.

CHLOE

Much time? You've hardly –

JIM

The Task At Hand.

CHLOE

Trying to remember
Right...what was that?

JIM

I'm not sure… you have a task, and all I remember is we were swimming in the ocean and –

CHLOE

No.

She pulls away, to opposite side of stage.

JIM

Gently
But I have to –

CHLOE

NO! It may be a dream and it may be a hallucination but if you could just BE with me here for a moment and not –

JIM

I know.

CHLOE

Because you've been –

JIM

I know.

CHLOE

And I had to –

JIM

I know.

CHLOE

The nights I lay awake, wishing I could dream it all away, wishing –

JIM

I know.

CHLOE

That I'd wake up and find you there, that it was all just -

JIM

I know.

CHLOE

How can you possibly know? HOW ARE YOU HERE?

JIM

Things have not exactly followed –

CHLOE

For *twenty years* you've been –

JIM

You think I've been gone, but –

CHLOE

Looks at him pointedly
What does *that* mean?

JIM

That day…at the beach, swimming in the ocean –

CHLOE

I told you, I don't want – CAN'T – talk about –

JIM

Things have gone a little crazy.

CHLOE

Crazy how?

JIM

The Task At Hand.

CHLOE

You mean –

JIM

You're looking for...?

CHLOE

Trying to remember
It's getting fuzzy

JIM

I don't want to upset you, but –

CHLOE

No, you're right, The Task At Hand.

JIM

THINGS are all screwed up –

CHLOE

What things?

JIM

Everything! You need to find what's missing. Fast.

CHLOE

My LIFE has gone missing! I've tried to move on, but it's like I'm superglued to that one point in time – like I died with you that day –

JIM

Funny you should say that.

CHLOE

None of this is funny.

JIM

Gently
I died.

CHLOE

Whispering
I know.

JIM

We were swimming.

Lights get dreamier, wave dance weaves in and out of Chloe and Jim's little circle, as they swim.

CHLOE

Laughing
Ooooh, I just hit a warm spot!

JIM

Laughing
It's COLD!

CHLOE

I forgot my sunscreen!

JIM

Wanna go back in?

CHLOE

Not yet! Let's swim for a bit – it's sooo beautiful out here!

JIM

I miss swimming in the ocean so much!

CHLOE

Yeah – me too. We need to get out more!

JIM

I know – I can't believe we have to fly back tomorrow.

CHLOE

It'll all seem like a dream by next week.

JIM

We could always conveniently miss our plane…

CHLOE

And what – live off credit cards?

JIM

Find work…build a shack on the beach…

CHLOE

Laughing
Who's going to build it? You??

Splashes him

JIM

Hey!

He splashes back.

JIM

We could make it official.

CHLOE

What?

JIM

Us.

CHLOE

What do you mean?

JIM

We could do it here – postpone our trip back by a couple of days, and have a little ceremony on the beach…

CHLOE

You want to get married here?

JIM

Why not? Think of how much money and time it'll save everyone.

CHLOE

Laughing
You do have a point! My mother has been bugging me about setting a date and finding a dress.

JIM

Yeah – see? We could avoid all that and just do it here, on the beach, under the stars…

CHLOE

Who knew you were such a helpless romantic?

JIM

Creeped out
Woah! Something just brushed against my leg.

CHLOE

Teasing
Scaredy-cat! It was probably just some seaweed.

JIM

Jeeeesus, this is some undertow –

CHLOE

Oh my god. This is crazy how shallow it is all of a sudden –

JIM

I have a bad feeling about this. Let's go back in. Something's wrong.

They look 'out to sea' - a giant tidal wave as Lachesis and Atropos envelop them in fabric and return to the periphery. Jim and Chloe freeze under the fabric.

Lights change. Lachesis and Atropos slowly retrieve fabric, roll it up.

JIM

The Task At Hand.

CHLOE

You keep saying that. What task -

JIM

Something's lost – it must be found, because no one will be able to rest until it is.

CHLOE

Thinking hard.
The scissors!

JIM

Scissors?

CHLOE

They're missing. The scissors are missing! And we need to find...still doesn't answer why *you're* here.

JIM

I'm dead.

CHLOE

Yes...

JIM

I have nowhere to go. We all need to rest. We need to find a way out. You have to find her.

CHLOE

Her...

JIM

Everything depends on it. Can't play around forever in jumping into dreams. I'm fading. I need your help. WE NEED YOUR HELP!

CHLOE

We...?

JIM

The dead. ALL OF THE DEAD.

You need to wake up.

Blackout.

JIM

Voiceover

WAKE UP!

SCENE 5

Lights up – Jim is gone. Clotho is asleep. Atropos and Lachesis are also sleeping, to the side of her. Clotho starts awake.

CLOTHO

OH!

Lachesis and Atropos awaken..

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

SO?

CLOTHO

So.

LACHESIS

Did you figure it out?

ATROPOS

Did you find my shears?

CLOTHO

I was...I was a woman named Chloe and my fiancé was dead.

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

…and?

CLOTHO

REST! – he said -

LACHESIS

…rest?

ATROPOS

…rest?

CLOTHO

“Everything depends on it. We need your help. We all need your help.”

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

…help?

CLOTHO

The dead. They can’t get in.

LACHESIS

Get in?

ATROPOS

To Where?

CLOTHO

The land of the dead, of course –

LACHESIS

The underworld –

ATROPOS

HADES!

CLOTHO

To Atropos
You lost your shears –

ATROPOS

She TOOK my shears!

LACHESIS

Understanding
If you can't cut the thread at death –

CLOTHO

The dead can't rest and...he said something about "fading". Not sure what it means, but we may be short on time.

We need to –

Clotho grasps for yarn

CLOTHO

…spin a dream of swimming in the ocean with my love and then the ocean

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

the wave!

CLOTHO

Dreams of being swept away, without warning

LACHESIS

Trying to stay afloat, clinging to a rock –

CLOTHO

Clinging to each other

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

for dear life

ATROPOS

Watching the death current

CLOTHO

A tumbling soup of trees,

LACHESIS

Cars

ATROPOS

Bodies

CLOTHO

And then –

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Our hands ripped apart, he becomes

LACHESIS

Part of that terrible stew of bodies, cars, barbed wire

ATROPOS

The dying –

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

-And the dead!

CLOTHO

Tangled knots once more

LACHESIS

Too many to count

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

NEEDS TO BE CUT –

ATROPOS

Can't CUT!

LACHESIS

This is bad.

CLOTHO

All is not lost yet.

ATROPOS

What do we do?

LACHESIS

To Clotho
You jumped into a life. Maybe if we all –

ATROPOS

You think?

CLOTHO

Couldn't hurt.

Lachesis grabs yarn.

LACHESIS

Let's begin!

CLOTHO

We dreamed.

LACHESIS

We dream

ATROPOS

We'll dream

CLOTHO

I see fog

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Bits and pieces

CLOTHO

Coulds

LACHESIS

What-ifs

ATROPOS

Might-be's

CLOTHO

Fog -

LACHESIS

Smoke?

ATROPOS

Choking and dense -

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

FIRE.

CLOTHO

Past is present

LACHESIS

Now is past

ATROPOS

Future is now

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

And so it goes.

CLOTHO

choking dreams

LACHESIS

burning death

CLOTHO

So many ends of different yarns to spin

The many threads begin to become, throughout this sequence, a tangle of knots

LACHESIS

To measure each in its turn –

ATROPOS

Which is which? Can't cut, can't -

CLOTHO

Pick one!

ATROPOS

Any one!

Lachesis grabs a thread decisively.

LACHESIS

THIS ONE!

Lachesis closes eyes, yarn in hand. Clotho and Atropos begin to circle her.

CLOTHO

We dreamed...

LACHESIS

We dream...

ATROPOS

We'll dream...

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

A chant

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

SCENE 6

Lights fade and shift. Clotho and Atropos fade to the periphery..

Crackling sound of fire. Smoke and fog. A fog machine or...? Get creative.

Lachesis finds herself amid fog.

LACHESIS

Smoke and mirrors...fog. Hello?

CLOTHO/ATROPOS

Whispering

Dreaming

Dreaming

Dreaming

LACHESIS

Determined

Don't forget: find her. Find the shears.

She coughs.

So smoky!

She walks a couple circles, on a journey..

LACHESIS

A little easier to breathe over here.

Muttering, reminding herself:

Find her. Find the shears.

Takes a breath.

She stands, panting,Burn Victim 1 in burnt half-mask runs past her.

LACHESIS

Hey!

Clotho stops,turns.

LACHESIS

Hey you!

BURN VICTIM 1

Me?

LACHESIS

Yes, you. Where are you coming from?

BURN VICTIM 1

Fire!

LACHESIS

Fire?

BURN VICTIM 1

Are you daft? Forest fire. Biggest one in decades. We gotta get outta here!

Runs offstage.

LACHESIS

Wait!

A beat.

LACHESIS

Muttering again
Find her. Find the shears.

Burn Victim 2 in burned half-mask, approaches.

BURN VICTIM 2

Calling out
Spot! Where are you!

LACHESIS

Hey –

BURN VICTIM 2

Spot! SPOT! Here, boy!

Notices Lachesis

BURN VICTIM 2

Have you seen my dog?

LACHESIS

Your dog?

BURN VICTIM 2

Jack Russell, about yay-high, white with a big brown spot over his eye? Answers to Spot?

LACHESIS

Sorry

BURN VICTIM 2

Where could he be? SPOT!

LACHESIS

Where are you coming from?

BURN VICTIM 2

My house – was trying to get away from the fire. There was a loud bang, and Spot got spooked - I have to find him!

LACHESIS

I have to find...something...too.

BURN VICTIM 2

What? Maybe we can help each other.

LACHESIS

I have to find...

She closes her eyes.

Find her. Find the...the...shears?

BURN VICTIM 2

Giving her a funny look

How is that important? Spot – OH.

Burn victim stops.

LACHESIS

What's the matter?

BURN VICTIM 2

I...not sure. I feel like...

Some kind of weird movement.

LACHESIS

You okay?

BURN VICTIM 2

I think I'm –

Something drastic happens – Burn Victim 2 burns up and fades away – horribly frightened and panicked before disappearing.

LACHESIS

WHAT? She just...

That was horrible.

All that is left is a small piece of cloth.

LACHESIS

She just burned up. She just...

Lachesis reinforces intention..

LACHESIS

Muttering

Find her, find the shears.

Find her, find the shears.

Find her find the...

Walks in circles, comes upon Henry another burn victim in a more elaborate burnt costume, sitting on a rock. Stumbles over him.

LACHESIS

OH! Sorry – I didn't see you.

HENRY

I saw you!

LACHESIS

Are you coming from the fire too?

HENRY

Yes...well...no.

LACHESIS

No?

HENRY

Not THAT fire.

LACHESIS

There's another fire?

HENRY

There was. This one is now. That one was...then. But I'm still stuck *here,* and it feels like...

LACHESIS

Where is HERE? I've been trying to work it out, but no one will tell me. The last person I met –

She shudders.

HENRY

Don't mind them – they don't know yet.

LACHESIS

Know what? She didn't know what was happening to her.

HENRY

They're still stuck.

LACHESIS

Yes – she was stuck, and then she just...burnt up!

HENRY

Burnt up?

LACHESIS

Burned up and faded away.

HENRY

anxious
I been stuck. Been stuck here for...dunno. A long time. Or was it just yesterday? There was a fire. And...

Henry does a movement similar to Burn Victim's.

LACHESIS

No!

She grabs his arms and steadies him.

HENRY

What was that?

LACHESIS

You...

HENRY

Felt like...I dunno. Suddenly felt really faint and...thanks for steadying me.

LACHESIS

You're welcome.

Starts walking.

HENRY

Where are you going?

LACHESIS

Sorry – I have to find –

HENRY

What?

LACHESIS

Scissors. I need to stay on track. It looks like something really bad might happen if I don't!

HENRY

Did you lose them in the fire?

LACHESIS

They're not mine. But I have to find them. I think it will help.

HENRY

Help?

LACHESIS

I need to...I'm still me, I need to...find her, find the...

HENRY

Find what?

LACHESIS

Where is here?

HENRY

HERE is where.

LACHESIS

Don't play with my words – this is important.

HENRY

I'm important.

LACHESIS

Yes, yes – if I find the scissors, maybe –

HENRY

Don't you KNOW me?

LACHESIS

KNOW you?

HENRY

Yes.

Lachesis swoons.

LACHESIS

Whoa, I feel a little...

HENRY

Are you okay?

Puts out her hand to steady herself. She looks at him again is now Sissy.

SISSY

MOM! Henry's outside and he won't give me –

They freeze. A beat. Look at each other.

HENRY

What did you just say?

SISSY

A little afraid.
I – I'm not sure. I called you 'Henry'.

HENRY

Curious
Henry…is that my name?

SISSY

You don't remember?

HENRY

I...I don't know. It seems familiar – like it's something –

SISSY

- that's just on the tip of your tongue. Yeah.

HENRY

And you yelled for 'Mom'. Who's 'Mom'?

SISSY

I…I'm not sure but it makes me think of an afghan blanket and the smell of Chanel No. 5.

HENRY

ME TOO!

Both pause again, look at each other.

SISSY

This is weird.

HENRY

We know each other, don't we?

SISSY

I think, maybe yes..

SISSY

How?

HENRY

Dunno, but...

Sniffs
Do you smell that? Pine needles…right?

SISSY

Pine needles…and –

Sound of flames, continues through scene. Next bit is dreamy and trancelike, maybe in stage whispers.

HENRY

We used to go up to the cabin in the summertime!

SISSY

The cabin – and cook s'mores over the fireplace in the living room –

HENRY

And sit around with Mom and Dad telling ghost stories until midnight –

SISSY

The one about the dark house on the hill -

HENRY

"…and in the dark, dark box…"

HENRY/SISSY

THERE WAS A GHOST!!!

They laugh.

SISSY

We used to have picnics by the lake!

HENRY

Chicken salad sandwiches and watermelon –

SISSY

You would spit the seeds out at me

Recalling something

…seeds…

HENRY

And you'd run away screaming,

SISSY

Because you spit them in my hair! Mom! Mom! Henry's being MEAN!

HENRY

No, I'm just playing, trying to see –

Both freeze, look at one another.

HENRY

What just happened?

Sissy moves away.

SISSY

Spooked

WHAT are you doing here?

HENRY

I'm stuck here, and now something else is happening and I can't get into -

He follows - she runs.

SISSY

NO. You're my...you're my...you're my...

Tearing up.

HENRY

I don't remember.

SISSY

We were at the cabin. Mom and Dad had gone into town to get groceries. We were on vacation.

HENRY

The cabin!

SISSY

I was making dinner. It was my fault.

HENRY

What was your fault?

SISSY

You were only 14, and I stepped away from the stove...there was a grease fire and... It was my fault. You were my brother and my best friend and I killed you.

HENRY

I distracted you.

SISSY

You've been dead for fifteen years. How is it I'm speaking to you?

HENRY

Dunno.

SISSY

Where is...here?

HENRY

Shrugs
Been here forever.

SISSY

Shaking
My little brother.

SISSY

I'm looking for something...someone. Find...find the...

HENRY

Who?

SISSY

She stole something.

HENRY

She?

SISSY

I can't remember...spinning in a dream...I'm not really...I'm...

She grasps her head. Henry sees a flash of something

HENRY

Startled
OH! – You're –

SISSY

What?

HENRY

In awe
Your FACE!

SISSY

What's wrong with? Mom, Henry's –

HENRY

NO. Your face. For a moment...

SISSY

What?

HENRY

Freaking out
You're not...you're not...

SISSY

I'm not WHAT?

HENRY

Shaking his head
I saw your true face.

SISSY

My true – what are you talking about?

HENRY

You're not my sister. You're –

SISSY

Of course I'm –

HENRY

No – you're someone – something...not human... A MUSE? Something –

SISSY

Don't be ridiculous

HENRY

Somethig DIVINE –

SISSY

I'm just your sister.

HENRY

Get away!

SISSY

Henry – I miss you. Things were never the same after you –

HENRY

I'm stuck here, I'm fading and you're not human...maybe you can help me?

SISSY

Help you how? I dunno what you're going on about

HENRY

Stop pretending! I SAW YOUR FACE.

SISSY

I'm not! I'm –

HENRY

You were looking for something...find her, find the...

Sound FX. Lachesis snaps back.

LACHESIS

SHEARS! Yes!

Grabs his arm.

LACHESIS

Thank you. You're right. I'm not – and I need to –

Henry repeats awkward Burn Victim movement.

HENRY

Help me!

LACHESIS

Oh no! It's happening again!

She grasps his arms, steadies him.

HENRY

What's happening to me?

LACHESIS

I think this is what happens when she can't cut the thread.

HENRY

What happens?

LACHESIS

Hesitates

HENRY

WHAT?

LACHESIS

You burn away into nothing.

HENRY

What? No! Help me!

LACHESIS

Yes. That is part of this. Helping you. If I find the shears...But you must tell me where I am.

HENRY

frightened
I'm not sure. I've been stuck here...thought it would never end, but I'd rather be stuck than...

LACHESIS

You need to be in the land of the dead. Or...

HENRY

Land of the dead?

LACHESIS

There are dead people here. Burn victims. But...the one burnt up, so I think it's not the land of the dead.

HENRY

Not the land of the dead. Purgatory, maybe? Some kind of limbo?

LACHESIS

And you can't pay your way out?

HENRY

NO, not that kind of purgatory, just...a station along the way.

LACHESIS

Right. She took the scissors, and we have to find her and them.

HENRY

WE? I'll help you.

LACHESIS

You already have.

Walks off.

HENRY

Following

Wait.

LACHESIS

What?

HENRY

I'm coming with you.

LACHESIS

I'm afraid that's not possible.

HENRY

Why not?

LACHESIS

Dunno – it's just the way of things.

HENRY

But if you're a divine creature, don't you have the power to –

LACHESIS

I am bound by laws just as you are. But you've helped.

HENRY

I need to get out of here! Before I...what did you say? Burn up? Fade away?

LACHESIS

I know. I'm working on it. We're working on it!

HENRY

Oh No –

He repeats Burn Victim movement, starts to burn up, fades away, screaming.

Lachesis puts her head in her hands.

LACHESIS

Distraught

Oh my gods. Not again.

SCENE 7

Blackout. Sound FX.

Lights up – Lachesis asleep. Atropos and Clotho sleeping, off to the side. Lachesis starts awake.

LACHESIS

Touching her face

No.

Atropos and Clotho waken.

CLOTHO/ATROPOS

SO?

LACHESIS

So.

CLOTHO

Did you dive in?

ATROPOS

Did you find my shears?

CLOTHO

Not yet.

CLOTHO

Did you learn anything new?

LACHESIS

I was in a sort of...limbo. Purgatory.

ATROPOS

Purgatory?

LACHESIS

Lots of dead people. Too many. Dead people who weren't supposed to be there. And they started to...

Shudders..

CLOTHO

Are we any closer to finding her? Finding them? Who were you?

LACHESIS

I was me. And –

ATROPOS

YOU?

LACHESIS

And...a mortal woman. I was half in and half out. I had a brother.

CLOTHO

A brother...

LACHESIS

He was dead. But he was stuck. And then he –

ATROPOS

Stuck in limbo?

CLOTHO

Stuck in purgatory?

LACHESIS

There was a fire, and he was stuck there. They're all stuck. But they've started to...burn up. To fade away. Forever. WE need to get them out. We need to get them to Hades. And we need to do it fast.

CLOTHO

What do you mean burn up?

ATROPOS

...fade away?

LACHESIS

I saw it happen twice. First with a burn victim, then my brother. They begain to look strange, and then they just...went up in smoke. It was horrible. It looked like...I think their souls die.

WE NEED TO FIND HER.

CLOTHO

Yes, we figured that out already.

ATROPOS

We need to find *the schissors*.

LACHESIS

We need to go deeper.

ATROPOS

Deeper?

LACHESIS

Further.

CLOTHO

Where?

ATROPOS

When?

Clotho grabs skein of yarn.

CLOTHO

The string.

LACHESIS

The Thread

ATROPOS

The yarn.

ALL

The yarn will know.

All grasp the yarn

ATROPOS

Dreams of

LACHESIS

my little brother!

CLOTHO/ATROPOS

Dead for years

LACHESIS

A wildfire, they said, started in a cabin

ALL

Thousands of acres of California forest

ATROPOS

Burned

LACHESIS

Burning

ALL

Hundreds of homes

ATROPOS

Destroyed

LACHESIS

In Destruction

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Hundreds of people killed

CLOTHO

Bodies

LACHESIS

Charred

ATROPOS

Beyond recognition.

CLOTHO

The yarn –

LACHESIS

We can't seem

ATROPOS

To stop it from

CLOTHO

Tangling!

The different threads become, throughout this sequence, a tangle of knots

ATROPOS

AGAIN, I must cut the mass and set them free but -

CLOTHO

So many ends of different yarns to spin

LACHESIS

To measure each in its turn –

ATROPOS

Which is which? Even if I *could* cut -

ALL

The dying - a cluster of knots in many colors and lengths

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

Cannot untangle!

ATROPOS

Need to cut, cut, cut

ALL

ONE fell swoop

Atropos grabs tangled yarn,holds it to forehead, closes eyes. Lachesis and Clotho circle her.

CLOTHO

We dreamed...

LACHESIS

We dream...

ATROPOS

We'll dream...

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

A chant

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

SCENE 8

Lights fade and shift. Clotho and Lachesis fade to periphery. Each is staggering as if wind is pushing them into center of stage.

Sound of wind.

Atropos, center, pushing against wind.

ATROPOS

It's so windy!

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

Whispering

Dreaming

Dreaming

Dreaming

ATROPOS

Determined

Must find her. Find the shears.

She walks a couple circles on a journey.

Lights fade and shift to something...dreamy. Sound of dripping cuts into wind - stalactites dripping continuously inside a giant cavern. Lachesis and Clotho unfold a long piece of fabric which becomes a river, then exit.

Atropos opens eyes, surveys surroundings. Sound FX: whispering and moaning of the dead. She's on the road to Hades.

ATROPOS

Calling out, cautiously

Hello...?

A cave...cavern. Not ours.

Listens, in wonder.

Whispers...moans...The underworld. Land of the dead.

She nods

Hello?....Hellooooooo?

Perhaps a zoetrope brought center stage? It spins, giving the effect of spirits floating around cave. Moaning and whispering increases. Atropos reaches hand as if to touch.

ATROPOS

So many dead...the soul detritus of millennia...

Closes eyes, trying to tune into the whispers, which grow stronger.

ATROPOS

Whispers, like threads of yarn...

LACHESIS/CLOTO

echoing

...whispers...

Whispers grow louder speaking "Imposter!" repeatedly.

Ghosts circle Atropos – they are the dead now.

GHOSTS

Whispering, grows in volume.

Imposter!

Imposter!
Imposter!

ATROPOS

Yes, but only because...

GHOST 1

Who are you!

GHOST 2

What are you!

GHOSTS

What is your business here?

ATROPOS

I...um...I

GHOSTS

SPEAK!

ATROPOS

I – I seek an audience. I must find something.

GHOST 1

Find something?

ATROPOS

My sister has –

GHOST 2

An audience?

ATROPOS

Lost the –

GHOSTS

WHAT IS IT YOU SEEK?

ATROPOS

I seek an audience with...with...the dead?

GHOSTS

WE ARE THE DEAD

ATROPOS

Yes...

GHOSTS

What do you want of us?

ATROPOS

I seek information of...your queen.

GHOSTS

SHE!

GHOST 2

Who dwells under the earth!

GHOSTS

SHE!

GHOST 1

Who was once an innocent maiden snatched from her mother

GHOSTS

SHE!

ATROPOS

Whose name it is not safe to speak aloud.

GHOSTS

Whispering.
The Queen of the Dead.

ATROPOS

Yes. Where is she?

GHOST 2

Funny you should question.

GHOST 1

Funny you should ask!

ATROPOS

Well?

GHOST 2

It seems the Queen has gone missing.

GHOST 1

It seems the Queen is not here.

ATROPOS

I coulda told you that. The question is: why did the yarn spin me here?

Sound FX: sound of something heavy being rolled around.

ATROPOS

What's that noise?

GHOST 2

Someone's coming.

Looks off

GHOST 1

Someone's approaching.

Looks off in the direction of the noise.

Sisyphus rolls boulder (papier mache!)onstage.. He rolls the boulder to the others.

SISYPHUS

I must rest a moment.

leans against boulder, winded.

SISYPHUS

Greetings.

ATROPOS

I KNOW you!

SISYPHUS

Oh?

ATROPOS

Yes. Of course. I remember your yarn. We cut it TWICE!

SISYPHUS

...my reputation precedes me.

ATROPOS

Of course! Anyone who vexes Papa Z so much...

Puts out her hand. He shakes it.

SISYPHUS

To whom do I have the pleasure...?

ATROPOS

Littlest Fate Sister.

SISYPHUS

Atropos!

ATROPOS

The one and only.

SISYPHUS

She who cuts the thread at death!

ATROPOS

That's me!

SISYPHUS

Pleased to finally make your acquaintance.

ATROPOS

Likewise.

A beat.

ATROPOS

Well. Now we have that out of the way, why would the yarn lead me to you?

SISYPHUS

You seek information? Of what?

ATROPOS

The Queen of the Dead.

SISYPHUS

Ah.

ATROPOS

You know her?

SISYPHUS

Funny you should ask. We go way back.

ATROPOS

I know you tricked her, but...

SISYPHUS

Bygones. We were friends.

ATROPOS

That's how you treat your friends?

SISYPHUS

shrugs
I was desperate.

ATROPOS

Likely story.

SISYHPUS

What do you want to know about the Queen?

ATROPOS

I'm trying to find her. She took something of mine, and I need it back.

SISYPHUS

Ah yes. I've heard rumors.

ATROPOS

Rumors?

SISYPHUS

Things have been strange here lately. Dead people talk.

ATROPOS

What do they say?

SISYPHUS

So many things...

ATROPOS

Well?

SISYPHUS

She threw a fit and left.

ATROPOS

A fit?

SISYPHUS

Said she was sick of all of us "pestering her with our attentions". Then there was the fight with his lordship...

ATROPOS

Hades?

SISYPHUS

There was yelling. There was throwing.

ATROPOS

Sounds intense.

SISYPHUS

...and then she left, and no one has seen her since.

ATROPOS

...does anyone have any idea where she might've gone?

SISYPHUS

I heard his lordship paid a visit to her mother. That didn't go over well.

ATROPOS

She wasn't there.

SISYPHUS

Have you noticed how hot it's been lately? Not only was she not there, but her mother was furious. And when her mother gets furious...

ATROPOS

...the climate changes above ground.

SISYPHUS

Exactly.

ATROPOS

Okay...so again, I ask: why did the yarn bring me to you? What do you know that no one else doesn't? You said you were friends.

SISYPHUS

That might be overstating it, but –

ATROPOS

What do you know?

SISYPHUS

It's possible I might have an idea where she is.

ATROPOS

What?

SISYPHUS

We used to chat quite a bit. You could call me her confidante.

ATROPOS.

Really?

SISYPHUS

How do you think I was able to trick her? She trusted me. I used that to my advantage. Can you blame me?

ATROPOS

Let's leave that question for now – we're in a time crunch. What do you know?

SISYPHUS

She had friends.

ATROPOS

Besides YOU?

SISYPHUS

No need to get snippy. Yes, she had friends. She would cry to me about how she missed them, how she'd love to see them, but her mother turned them into sirens.

ATROPOS

Oh yes – I heard something about that. Her playmates, the wood nymphs who were picking flowers with her when she first met her husband.

SISYPHUS

Her mother was angry they didn't stop him from taking her, and changed them into sirens.

ATROPOS

SIRENS?!

SISYPHUS

Just reporting what I heard.

ATROPOS

But don't they live on some rock in the middle of the ocean?

SISYPHUS

Shrugs
Just reporting what I heard.

ATROPOS

Sighing
I don't even know if I get seasick! ...but I guess I'll have to take one for the team.

SISYPHUS

Glad I could help!

ATROPOS

Gives him the stinkeye

Yeah...thanks.

SISYPHUS

If you've got what you need, I should probably get back to work.

ATROPOS

Wait...one more thing –

SISYPHUS

...yes?

ATROPOS

Can I borrow your boulder?

SISYPHUS

Uh...I gotta move it back up the hill. Penance, you know.

ATROPOS

I don't need to take it anywhere. I just need to use it as a touchstone of sorts.

SISYPHUS

How long will it take

ATROPOS

Hopefully, just a few moments.

Closes eyes, places hands on the boulder.

ATROPOS

O Rock of ages...symbol of all rocks...through this rock, transport me to the realm of the sirens so I may fulfill my quest!

Transport me.

Transport me.

Transport me!

SCENE 9

A clap of thunder and a flash. Lights out. Sisyphus exits. Sounds FX: ocean waves. Women's voices hum a mesmerizing tune. Lights up – Atropos in the same place, 3 female figures in half-masks covering their eyes have appeared around the boulder. They stop humming.

ALL SIRENS

You're not from a sailing ship!

SIREN #1

Who are you?

SIREN #2

Where did you come from?

SIREN #3

What do you want of us?

ALL SIRENS

Why did you not meet your fate against the rocks?

ATROPOS

I'm not the captain of the ship – I'm one of you.

SIREN #1

One of us?

ATROPOS

More or less.

SIREN #2

A siren?

SIREN #3

You're not one of us.

ATROPOS

Not one of you...exactly. A divine being.

ALL SIRENS

Divine being?

ATROPOS

Look, I don't have a lot of time. I'm searching for someone. For something. I need your help.

SIREN #1

We don't help –

ALL SIRENS

We lure men to their deaths.

ATROPOS

Yes, yes, I know. I'm Atropos, the youngest Fate sister. Time is of the essence. I need to find –

SIREN #1

What business do you have with us?

ATROPOS

I'm looking for someone...something.

SIREN #2

And that should concern us...why?

ATROPOS

This concerns everyone. You, me, this rock, the sea – EVERYTHING!

ALL SIRENS

Everything?

ATROPOS

No time to explain. The dead can't get into Hades, and I need to find the Queen – I heard you were her friends?

SIREN #3

What do you need of her?

ATROPOS

My shears. She stole the Scissors of Fate!

SIREN #3

Stole?

SIREN #1

Your scissors?

SIREN #2

Why does this concern us?

ATROPOS

Exasperated
It concerns *everyone*. The dead can't get into the underworld, so they're roaming around all over the place, because I can't cut their threads. And now, her mother's mad.

ALL SIRENS

Terrified
Her mother?

SIREN #1

Why didn't you say so in the first place?

SIREN #2

She turned us into sirens.

SIREN #1 & #2

...and condemned us to live eternity on this rock!

ATROPOS

Then you'll help?

SIREN #1

What is it you want to know?

ATROPOS

Have you seen her? Has she talkd to you? I need to find her. The Queen.

SIREN #3

Why do you assume we know anything?

Sirens 1 & 2 look at 3 pointedly.

SIREN #3

What?

SIREN #1

Tell her.

SIREN #3

No. I –

SIREN #2

TELL HER!

SIREN #3

No.

ATROPOS

Tell me WHAT?

SIREN #1

I'm not going to be victimized by your mother again!

ATROPOS

What?

SIREN #2

Me neither.

SIREN #3

But –

SIREN #1

We've already taken the fall for you once.

SIREN #3

If she finds out we're involved again, who knows what she'll do?

SIREN #1

If you have any love for us at all -

SIREN #3

Signing.

Very well.

Takes off mask to reveal herself: Queen of the Dead.

ATROPOS

YOU!

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

You've found me. Congrats.

ATROPOS

Finally

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

What is it you want?

ATROPOS

I told you: my shears.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

What do I get in return?

ATROPOS

Uh...

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

If I help you, if I give them back, you need to help me.

ATROPOS

Okay. I promise to help you. Can I have my scissors?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

I don't have them here. I've hidden them.

ATROPOS

Where?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

In a safe place. Help me first, and you have my word: I'll return them.

ATROPOS

Fine. But you have to come with me.

SIREN #1

Where are you going?

SIREN #2

Can we come too?

ATROPOS

I'm afraid not.

To QOTD

Say your goodbyes.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Thank you for letting me stay with you to rest and think!

SIREN #1

...for as much rest that can happen on a rock in the middle of the sea.

SIREN #2

...and please tell your mother you went to the underworld willingly – I'd sure like to get off this rock myself!

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

I promise to tell her. And persuade her to take back her curse. Goodbye, sweet friends.

They embrace.

ATROPOS

Take my hand.

Clasp hands.

ATROPOS

Close your eyes and...

Close eyes. Blackout. Siren music. Sound of thunder.

SCENE 10

Lights up. Back in the cave of Fates, Atropos and QOTD asleep, Clotho & Lachesis on the periphery. Hermes enters.

HERMES

Wake up everyone! This is no time to be –

They are waking up.

HERMES

Kneeling
My QUEEN!

HERMES

To the fates
You found her!

ATROPOS

Groggy
I found her.

CLOTHO

Where?

LACHESIS

When?

ATROPOS

With her friends...the sirens.

CLOTHO

Where are the scissors?

LACHESIS

Where are the shears?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Not yet.

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

What?

ATROPOS

We need to help her first.

LACHESIS

Help her? After she broke into our house?

CLOTHO

After she stole from us?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

I'm sorry for any anguish I may have caused.

CLOTHO

Anguish? We've been running around space and time trying to find you!

LACHESIS

Watching people die unpleasant deaths and burn up into nothing!

HERMES

The dead are roaming the earth causing havoc – they can't get to the underworld without the scissors.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Now everyone can understand what it feels like, to be pestered continuously by dead people!

HERMES

...and then there's the small matter of your mother.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

What does she have to do with any of this?

HERMES

Your husband was trying to find you and went to her. And of course –

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

- She became angry.

FATES

And you know what happens when she gets angry!

HERMES

Gently
Atropos needs her scissors back.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

I need things to be different.

pause
Have you talked to the my husband?

HERMES

He is in a black, foul state, brooding as no one else can! He demands you come home at once.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

He's such a big baby! But I need to iron out this mess.

HERMES

We don't have time for –

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Well, Hon, you'll just have to make time, won't you?

HERMES

I don't think Fate made allowances for –

ATROPOS

I did promise we'd help.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

You did.

ATROPOS

Sisters?

CLOTHO

Fine. How? What are we supposed to do?

LACHESIS

What do you need?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

I love my husband...I do. But I'm not ready to go back!And I don't want to see my mother, either. If I go back to either of them willingly, they're each going to think they won. I need to do something different this time!

ATROPOS

We can dream into the future – find a dream of the solution to your mess there?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

What if it doesn't work? He can be very stubborn. And then there's the issue of my mother.

CLOTHO

We can help you try.

LACHESIS

We help you, we help ourselves, we help the universe. Everything must be kept in balance.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

All right then. It's worth a try. Let's dream into the future!

(they join hands.)

ALL

SO!

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

The future!

CLOTHO

Past is gone

LACHESIS

Now is past

ATROPOS

Future is now!

CLOTHO

We dreamed

LACHESIS

We dream

ATROPOS

We'll dream

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Riddles and puzzles and labyrinths

HERMES

Oh my!

ATROPOS

Future dreams

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

Bits and pieces

CLOTHO

Coulds

LACHESIS

What-ifs

ATROPOS

Might-happens

CLOTHO

Days bleeding into

LACHESIS

Years bleeding into

ATROPOS

Decades and centuries –

CLOTHO/LACHESIS ATROPOS

Millenia.

CLOTHO

Past is present

LACHESIS

Now is past

ATROPOS

Future is now

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

And so it goes.

ATROPOS

Future tripping visions

CLOTHO

… weave dreams of a world overrun by the dead

LACHESIS

Tough to say how many – can't count the multitudes

ATROPOS

Apathy…disease…walking dead

CLOTHO

Polar ice caps melting

LACHESIS

Superstorms raging

ATROPOS

Drought across America's breadbasket

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Climate change

CLOTHO

Subzero temperatures threaten to obliterate this year's orange crop

LACHESIS

Wildfires rage out of control, no containment in sight

ATROPOS

The tides awaken the tectonic plates and faultlines give way

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

CHAIN REACTION!

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

I was afraid of something like this.

HERMES

This is the future?

ATROPOS

One possible future. How angry do you think your mother is?

HERMES

She wouldn't! Would she?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

She has no problem doing it again.

ATROPOS

What, exactly?

HERMES

Just like before.

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

WHAT???

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

She has no care of mortals. She doesn't have to deal with them, ever, living OR dead. If she gets angry, she'll ravage the earth till she gets her way. That's what she did last time. Why winter exists at all! This time…who knows??? No more summer EVER, or –

CLOTHO

Climate change.

HERMES

That's not all.

LACHESIS

Climate change and more death. Collapse.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

And MORE grumpy dead mortals to deal with! It just goes on and on.

ATROPOS

So what's the solution?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

I lose. That's the solution.

HERMES

No, my queen, certainly there's another –

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Crying
Stop trying to sugar-coat it. It's the truth! Whatever I do, I'm always caught in the middle trying to make him or my mother happy. A continuous circle where I get the short end of the olive branch.

(they watch Queen sob quietly)

HERMES

Awkwardly
Uh…there, there...everything's going to be okay…

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

What do *you* know? You come and go, play your little tricks as you please. I have never made a choice in my LIFE that didn't have dire consequences!

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Join the club!

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Yes, that's true – but it's your *work* that affects things, not your life!

CLOTHO

We have no life.

LACHESIS

We are here, and we weave the strands of life.

ATROPOS

That is all.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

But at least you can jump into the dreams of mortals…

CLOTHO

Yes, it's something. But it's not always the easiest.

HERMES

All right – ENOUGH with this festival of pity! It's not a competition. We need a a solution so the world doesn't cave in – now or in the near future! Quit feeling sorry for yourselves and let's figure this out!

THE QUEEN

Don't yell at me!

ATROPOS

He's right. Time's running short. We need to figure this out!

CLOTHO

Well! Out of the mouths of babes…

ATROPOS

You know, I'm only minutes younger than you, and in the great scheme of things, that doesn't make much difference!

LACHESIS

To Clotho/Atropos
This is no time for bickering!

To The Queen
I empathize with your dilemma. There must be some way–

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Struck by a thought
Euripides! Can't believe I forgot about this –a couple centuries ago he told me the story upon my return one year. I can't believe I didn't think of it!

HERMES

Euripides…the poet?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

The poet and my friend! He was telling me about a dream he had – turned it into an amusement for the pan-Athenaic festival. Didn't win any prizes, but it gave me an idea...

CLOTHO

A dream, you say?

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Euripides's dream.

LACHESIS

Dreams we understand!

ATROPOS

Dreams we can climb into!

CLOTHO

Dreams we can work with!

HERMES

Then let's cut to the chase! I think I remember what dream this is...I was in it.

CLOTHO

We dreamed...

LACHESIS

We dream...

ATROPOS

We'll dream...

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

A chant

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

We dreamed...we dream...we'll dream...

SCENE 11

Fates exit and QOTD is Helen, travelling with Hermes, the most beaufitul woman in the world.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Where are we going?

HERMES

Far away from here, my lady Helen.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Helen? I'm – ah yes. The wife of Menelaus...and Paris.

HERMES

Euripides' dream. Just let it take you.

Queen of the Dead

Let it take me...

Some kind of transformation.

My husband will be cross when he finds out I'm gone. He gets so very jealous!

HERMES

It's for your own good.

HELEN

Why does everyone keep saying that? And who are you?

HERMES

A simle herald, nothing more. This way, please.

HELEN

Why must I go?

HERMES

You have special purpose, away from Sparta. You must be kept away at all costs.

HELEN

But that's absurd! All I've ever done is try to be a good wife and mother, before that a good little girl, yet I get blamed for things NOT my fault!

HERMES

And if you stay in Sparta, you will be blamed again, for one of the most devastating wars to ever befall the world.

HELEN

But what could I possibly do that would cause –

HERMES

You were expecting some foreign visitors? Emissaries from Troy?

HELEN

What do prince Hector and his brother to do with me?

HERMES

Your face will set off an unstoppable series of events.

HELEN

My cursed face. It's brought me more pain than joy. And here, once again, ripped from everything I know -

HERMES

You and all mortals, pawns of a game between gods – Aphrodite would manipulate you and Paris for her own, but Hera has other plans. Stealth and speed are of the essence.

HELEN

Where are we going?

HERMES

South – to Thebes. Until it's all over.

HELEN

Till what's all over?

HERMES

The war over your face.

HELEN

But again I ask – what of my husband and my daughter?

HERMES

There are plans for a replacement in your likeness.

HELEN

No one will notice I'm gone?

HERMES

Exactly. No one will notice you're gone.

HELEN

Smiles
It would be nice to take a little vacation...

SCENE 12

Lighting shift. Back in the waking world. Sisters awaken, mask is removed. QOTD smiles.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

No one will notice I'm gone! Like Hera with Helen, we fashion my likeness! *She* can be the one to stay in Hades for half the year, then return to my mother. SHE can be the dutiful wife and daughter – and I can do as I choose.

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

The perfect solution!

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Helen's likeness was made from a cloud – I like it! A cloud...

To Hermes
Will you help?

HERMES

I'm glad to.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Let's not delay!

Grabs Hermes's hand.

ATROPOS

WAIT!

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

What?

CLOTHO

You have something that belongs to me.

LACHESIS

You need to uphold your part of the deal.

ATROPOS

We have work to do.

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

It's only fair.

Shears are revealed. A lighting change, perhaps a sound cue. Monumental exchange.

ATROPOS

My shears!

Cradles them like a baby, kissing and cuddling them in ecstasy

QUEEN OF THE DEAD

Let's be off!

Queen and Hermes exit. Something to denote the shift is underway.

SCENE 13

The sisters, alone at last, quest complete. They regard each other, regard their particular implements lovingly, renewed.

CLOTHO

Past is past.

LACHESIS

Now is present.

ATROPOS

Future looms ahead!

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Everything is how it should be!

Beat. Sound cue – the dead, waiting for their threads to be cut.

Return to the ritual from beginning of play

ATROPOS

There were

CLOTHO

There are

LACHESIS

There will be

ATROPOS/CLOTHO/LACHESIS

three conjoined sisters
Whom Erebus begat on Night,

CLOTHO

robed in red

LACHESIS

Hair of white

ATROPOS

Who give to men at birth evil and good to have

ATROPOS/CLOTHO/LACHESIS

By name:

CLOTHO

Romantic
Clotho, the spinner who spins the thread of life

LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Echoing
…the spinner…

LACHESIS

Practical; scatterbrained
Lachesis, the measurer who assigns each life its destiny

CLOTHO/ATROPOS

Echoing
…the measurer…

ATROPOS

And Atropos,

CLOTHO/LACHESIS

Patronizing
the smallest in stature

ATROPOS

Indignant
But the most terrible! She Who Cannot Be Turned or Avoided,

CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ATROPOS

Vehement
WHO CUTS THE THREAD AT DEATH!

Loud cutting noise as Atropos cuts the threads.Blackout.

End of play.