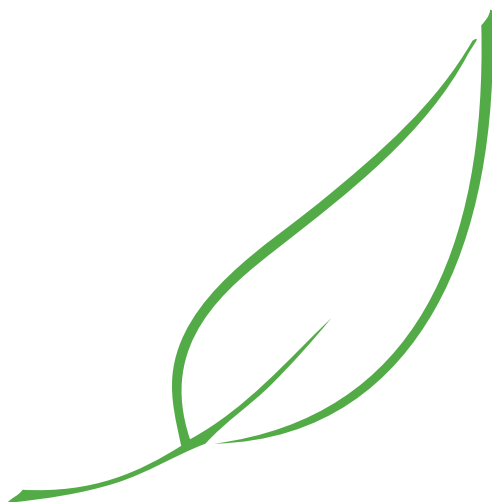


The Misjudgment Of Oenone

By Michael R. McGuire



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SYNOPSIS: Everyone knows the Judgment of Paris; how he chose the fairest of three goddesses and in so doing won the hand of Helen, thus starting the Trojan War. Few recall, however, that Paris already had a wife: Oenone, an immortal nymph and healer. *The Misjudgment of Oenone* is the tragic story of a great woman who makes the wrong choices.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 females, 5 males)

OENONE (f)	no-nonsense mountain nymph and healer; dresses simply
ERIS (f)	Goddess of Discord; bitter and spiteful
ARES (m)	God of War; cowardly and cruel, brother of ERIS
APHRODITE (f)	Goddess of Love and Beauty; selfish and heartless
HEPHAESTUS (m)	God of The Forge, lame in one leg and ugly
ATHENA (f)	Goddess of Wisdom and War; proud and vain
ARTEMIS (f)	Goddess of the Hunt and Nature; independent and haughty
HANDMAIDEN (f)	A gold-plated automaton created by HEPHAESTUS.
HERMES (m)	messenger of the gods, a scoundrel.
THETIS (f)	sea nymph, young and selfish
DORIS (f)	THETIS' mother
ZEUS (m)	king of the gods
HERA (f)	queen of the gods
PARIS (m)	the most handsome mortal alive, dumb and happy

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Ares' Palace.

SCENE 2: Ares' Palace.

SCENE 3: Hephaestus' Workshop.

SCENE 4: Ares' Palace.

SCENE 5: Bride's Chambers.

SCENE 6: Grand Olympian Hall.

SCENE 7: Balcony outside the Hall.

ACT TWO:

SCENE 1: Oenone's Home on Mt. Ida.

SCENE 2: Outside Oenone's Home.

SCENE 3: Oenone's Bedroom.

SCENE 4: Outside Oenone's Home.

SCENE 5: Outside Oenone's Home.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Various settings can be created simply by using suggestion and minimal set pieces. Although humorous in parts, this is a drama. Pacing should be careful and deliberate and the pauses written into the script should be played for maximum emotional impact. The middle of the play with the callow Paris can be played more for laughs. The young Paris ought to be directed to be likable in spite of his thick-headedness. On his likeability rests the core of Oenone's tragedy. The pacing of the middle of the play should be faster for a greater comic effect. The various gods and goddesses ought to be larger than life while the mortals behave in a more naturalistic style. Oenone herself is somewhere in between.

PROP LIST

- ☐ Oenone's satchel
- ☐ A hand mirror
- ☐ A leafy branch
- ☐ Bandages
- ☐ A small chest
- ☐ A beautiful jeweled necklace
- ☐ A hairbrush
- ☐ Hephaestus' Hammer and a sheet of metal
- ☐ A suit of armor for Athena
- ☐ A box of arrowheads
- ☐ A tray of food and drinks
- ☐ A small sack
- ☐ Artemis and Athena's weapons
- ☐ A healing salve
- ☐ A noxious vat
- ☐ A mug of hot liquid
- ☐ A wineskin
- ☐ Ares' spear
- ☐ Three knives
- ☐ A golden apple
- ☐ Two copper coins

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: Howls of anguish. Lights up on OENONE. SHE carries a satchel and is dressed simply. SHE waits.

ERIS: **(enters)** Hurry. **(OENONE follows ERIS. Lights up on ARES, reclined, howling. His leg drips blood. HE clutches a mirror in one hand, but is not looking into it. A small chest sits beside his chair.)** Hurry.

(OENONE goes to ARES. SHE kneels and inspects his wounded leg.)

ARES: Ahhh! Be careful!

OENONE: You'll have to be still.

(ARES screams, kicks at her and knocks her to the floor.)

ERIS: She's traveled a long way!

OENONE: And I'll travel back. Goodbye.

ARES: No!

ERIS: **(reluctant)** Please. Stay.

OENONE: Do not kick me.

ARES: You're a healer. Where's your gentleness? Who is this clumsy cow?

OENONE: I'm going.

ERIS: Please! Stay! His howls - I can't stand them. My ears!

OENONE: **(pause)** Hold his leg.

(ERIS restrains ARES' leg. OENONE examines it.)

ARES: **(shrieking)** Tormentor! I'll rip you apart! Stop!

OENONE: A spear!

ERIS: Yes. A spear.

OENONE: It didn't go deep.

ARES: It feels like it hit the bone!

OENONE: It's a graze. It will heal without me.

ARES: No! It must heal now! Can you heal it?

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OENONE: I can heal it now, but there's no need. My medicines are rare. Scarce. This wound will heal itself.

ARES: Heal me now!

OENONE: I'll give you something for the pain...

ARES: Make her heal me! Make her do it!

ERIS: He'll pay you.

OENONE: He doesn't need anything. **(OENONE opens her satchel and pulls out a leafy branch. SHE plucks a leaf and feeds it to ARES. HE bites her finger.)** Ow!

ARES: I'll eat your guts! Heal me! I command you!

OENONE: Nasty brute.

ERIS: Isn't he? What did you give him?

OENONE: For the pain.

ARES: It isn't working.

OENONE: Who stabbed you?

ARES: Make the cow heal me!

ERIS: He'll grant you power.

OENONE: Why were you stabbed?

ARES: Make her heal me!

ERIS: Anything you desire. What do you desire?

OENONE: Nothing.

ARES: Nonsense! You lie! What do you want?

OENONE: I want...to leave.

ARES: Wretched! You are wretched! Do you know who I am? You say I'll heal in time? And then, after a time, I'll come looking for you. Understand?

OENONE: Don't waste your threats. Someday you'll be wounded. Really wounded. You'll truly need my services. Kill me and who will help you?

ERIS: Reason, reason. He'll kill you and regret it later. Reason means nothing to my brother when he's like this.

OENONE: My medicines are scarce!

ARES: Listen! There are other healers. None so good, perhaps, but there are other healers.

ERIS: It will be an ugly death, I'm afraid.

OENONE: Then do it. **(pause)**

ERIS: You'd die before helping him?

OENONE: How does your leg feel.

ARES: It's in agony! **(pause)** No. Wait. It... **(stands)**

OENONE: Sit. I'll help bandage it.

ARES: The pain... gone.

OENONE: Sit!

(ARES sits. OENONE bandages his leg.)

ERIS: Clever girl.

OENONE: Save your compliments.

ERIS: Well done. What do you desire?

OENONE: Nothing.

ERIS: I don't believe you.

OENONE: Your leg will heal.

(ARES gazes at himself in the mirror. HE runs his fingers through his hair.)

ERIS: Agony does not become him, you see. Your journey was long?

OENONE: Long enough.

ERIS: Have you come to Olympus before?

OENONE: No.

ERIS: You've given aid to a god.

OENONE: I am no mortal, so easily impressed. I've done my work. I'll go.

ERIS: His wailing was unbearable.

OENONE: I heard it miles off. Farewell.

ERIS: Stay a bit.

ARES: ***(puts down the mirror)*** There is no reason for her to stay.

ERIS: You might stub a toe.

ARES: She's done her work! Give her a jewel, a bauble, send her on her way! ***(exits)***

ERIS: You did not fear him.

OENONE: Didn't I?

ERIS: You'll be rewarded.

OENONE: Who stabbed him?

ERIS: It was a battlefield wound. I was with him, but we didn't see who hurled the spear.

ERIS: ***(opens the chest and pulls out a beautiful jeweled necklace)***

The spoils of War.

OENONE: I have no need of that.

ERIS: You could be quite beautiful.

OENONE: So?

ERIS: Turn.

OENONE: I told you, I have no need of –

ERIS: You've been arrogant and overconfident and you've survived.
So far. Turn!

(OENONE turns. ERIS places the necklace on her.)

OENONE: Thank you.

ERIS: You are quite beautiful.

OENONE: What good does beauty do anyone?

ERIS: ***(grabs the mirror and holds it up for OENONE to see)*** Beauty
is power. I wish that I were beautiful. Do you like what you see?

OENONE: ***(pause)*** No.

ERIS: Another lie. You've come a long way to heal my pathetic brother.
You've endured our less than perfect hospitality. Stay a bit.
Olympus has much to offer.

OENONE: No.

ERIS: Yes.

OENONE: I should begin my journey back.

ERIS: There will be a party.

OENONE: I am no mortal, nor am I a goddess. A party in Olympus is
no place for me.

ERIS: Ah, but *this* party. Gods, mortals and everything in between!

OENONE: Mortals in Olympus?

ERIS: Many mortals!

OENONE: I have no interest in parties.

ERIS: Your eyes are sad. Are your eyes always so sad?

OENONE: So I've been told.

ERIS: I like you and I don't know why, for I never like anyone. You'll
stay for the party. I insist. Will you stay?

OENONE: ***(pause)*** Yes. I'll stay.

ERIS: Wonderful. Come with me. We'll find you a place to sleep.

(They exit.)

SCENE 2

AT RISE: It is morning. Enter OENONE, still groggy from sleep. SHE wears her nightgown and the necklace. SHE moves about, somewhat disoriented. Enter APHRODITE, pulling on a shoe and rushing to leave. They nearly collide.

OENONE: Excuse me.

APHRODITE: Who are you? Why are you here?

OENONE: I am... ***(sees APHRODITE and stands stunned)***

APHRODITE: Who sent you?

OENONE: You are...beautiful.

(Voices approaching. A commotion.)

APHRODITE: Hide me.

OENONE: Hide you?

APHRODITE: Quickly! I beg you!

(OENONE ushers APHRODITE to a corner and covers her with a cloak. Enter HEPHAESTUS followed by ARES and ERIS.)

HEPHAESTUS: Where is she?!

ARES: You may not enter my home like this! You must go!

HEPHAESTUS: I know she is here! You think you can keep her from me?

ARES: Please! You are mistaken! She isn't here!

HEPHAESTUS: ***(spotting OENONE)*** Are you she?

OENONE: She who?

HEPHAESTUS: No games, no lies! Are you the healer?

OENONE: Yes. My name is Oenone. I am a healer.

HEPHAESTUS: ***(to ARES)*** You thought to keep her from me when I've dragged this useless leg around so long?

ARES: Her? You seek her?

HEPHAESTUS: Who else would I seek here?

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ARES: Forgive me, brother. It's early. My head is not clear.

HEPHAESTUS: A great healer visits Olympus and I am not immediately informed?

ARES: She arrived late last night.

HEPHAESTUS: Oenone the Healer, I am Hephaestus. Long have I suffered because of my lame leg. I beg you, can you help me?

OENONE: It is an old wound. Not easily healed, but –

HEPHAESTUS: But?

OENONE: I will visit you. I will do what I can.

HEPHAESTUS: **(grabbing and embracing her)** Thank you!

OENONE: Oh! I haven't done anything yet!

HEPHAESTUS: Today! Will you come today?

OENONE: I will. How will I find you?

HEPHAESTUS: My workshop is below the great volcano to the east. The road is not far. Thank you.

(HEPHAESTUS exits. ARES nearly collapses.)

ARES: That was close! Where is she?

ERIS: Where is who?

(APHRODITE comes out of hiding.)

ARES: You were there?!

APHRODITE: I'm going home.

ARES: Yes, but wait. He mustn't see you leave here. Come.

(ARES and APHRODITE exit. ERIS laughs softly.)

OENONE: This amuses you. Who was she? I've never seen anyone, man, woman, god or goddess, so lovely...

ERIS: You have just met Aphrodite, Goddess of Beauty and Love.

OENONE: Ah!

ERIS: And the wife of Hephaestus.

OENONE: Oh!

ERIS: Hence my amusement. Hephaestus suspects nothing.

OENONE: Pure coincidence he came here. Looking not for his wife, but for me.

ERIS: No coincidence. I told Hephaestus you were here. Funny, no?

OENONE: Not. Not funny. Cruel.

ERIS: Cruelty *is* funny. They are one and the same.

OENONE: No.

ERIS: No? You have no cruelty in you, do you? Oenone the Healer, full of compassion. But when was the last time you laughed?

OENONE: I...

ERIS: You hid her, didn't you?

OENONE: Yes.

ERIS: Then you're in on it. You've helped her deceive her own husband.

OENONE: I didn't know. This is none of my business.

ERIS: **(laughs)** She didn't know.

OENONE: Why? Why did you call him here?

ERIS: We all have our roles to play. You are a healer. I am Discord.

OENONE: Discord.

ERIS: Argument, conflict, dispute. But enough, it's early. Will you brush my hair?

OENONE: Brush your hair?

ERIS: That would be nice. Will you?

OENONE: Will you have a kinder disposition if I do?

ERIS: **(hands her a brush)** It's possible.

OENONE: Why Discord?

ERIS: Why anything? My brother is War. We are what we are.

OENONE: **(brushing ERIS' hair)** I chose to be a healer.

ERIS: Did you?

OENONE: Yes. A choice.

ERIS: Why?

OENONE: I...could not bear the sounds of suffering. I never could.

ERIS: So then was it a choice?

OENONE: **(still brushing, silent; finally SHE finishes)** I ought to attend to Hephaestus.

ERIS: How do I look?

OENONE: Kindness is the greatest beauty.

ERIS: **(laughs)** Then I must be ugly indeed! Will you return?

OENONE: Why?

ERIS: I enjoy talking to you. And my hair feels soft. Will you return?

OENONE: **(pause)** I will return. I need my satchel, my boots... breakfast. "A healer must care for herself first." Excuse me.

(OENONE exits.)

SCENE 3

AT RISE: HEPHAESTUS' Workshop. HEPHAESTUS toils away, banging on a hammer on a sheet of metal. A HANDMAIDEN holds the metal and turns it for him as he works. Enter ATHENA and ARTEMIS.

ATHENA: Good morning.

HEPHAESTUS: Ah! Athena! Your armor is ready. **(HE exits)**

ATHENA: You ought to consider a fine suit of armor.

ARTEMIS: Too much noise. It would scare away the animals. I need quiet and stealth. No, I come for arrowheads as only Hephaestus can make them.

(APHRODITE tries to enter quietly. The HANDMAIDEN spots her.)

HANDMAIDEN: Good morning, Mistress!

(ATHENA and ARTEMIS turn to regard her. SHE looks disheveled and guilty.)

ARTEMIS: Ah, Aphrodite!

ATHENA: Out so early?

APHRODITE: Yes.

ARTEMIS: Never knew you to wake before noon.

APHRODITE: Sometimes. Before noon. Sometimes.

ATHENA: Has she been to bed yet, do you think?

ARTEMIS: Yes, but not her own, I think.

APHRODITE: Oh, be silent Virgin Goddess. What do you know of my life?

(ATHENA and ARTEMIS laugh. Enter HEPHAESTUS with a delicate and beautiful suit of armor.)

HEPHAESTUS: Here it is! My finest creation of armor! See how it tapers here and here? Offering the finest protection from both arrows and sword blades and yet creating a sublime line enhancing the splendor and prestige of the wearer! Function and Form perfectly wed!

(APHRODITE tries to slink away. HEPHAESTUS spots her.)

HEPHAESTUS: Is that my wife I see in my shop so early this morning?

APHRODITE: Yes, my husband.

HEPHAESTUS: Finally taken an interest in my work, have you?

APHRODITE: An interest?

ARTEMIS: Indeed she has! She was just telling us she wants you to construct a helmet for her that covers her entire head and protects that pretty, pretty face. Be a shame if anything should happen to such delicate features.

HEPHAESTUS: Cover her face! I won't hear of it!

(HEPHAESTUS rushes to APHRODITE. SHE endures his embrace.)

APHRODITE: My husband...

HEPHAESTUS: Look at her. Such loveliness, such flawlessness, such a fine, fine face. How could I bear to cover it? I weep at the thought!

ATHENA: Perhaps, then, a set of golden manacles to keep her from –

APHRODITE: Silence! This is my home, such as it is, and I will not tolerate your petty disrespect.

HEPHAESTUS: My darling, I am sure they intend no disrespect. Are you not loved by all?

ATREMIS: By some more than others.

APHRODITE: Enough! I came merely because I missed the sight of my husband. What more reason does a wife need?

(APHRODITE kisses HEPHAESTUS' cheek. HE sighs.)

ATHENA: She's clouded his mind.

APHRODITE: Now, good night.

ARTEMIS: Good night? Good morning.

APHRODITE: Yes, yes, good morning. **(exits)**

HEPHAESTUS: Truly, I am the most fortunate of all the Gods.

ARTEMIS: Truly he is...

ATHENA: Till knowledge intervenes.

(OENONE enters.)

HEPHAESTUS: **(to ATHENA)** Does my work suit you?

ATHENA: Indeed. Put this on my account?

HEPHAESTUS: Your credit is always good.

ARTEMIS: **(to ATHENA)** Wait for me, I'll walk back with you. **(to HEPHAESTUS)** I've come for my order of arrowheads.

HEPHAESTUS: **(sees OENONE)** Ah, Oenone!

(OENONE bows.)

ATHENA: And who is this?

HEPHAESTUS: Please, be at home while we fetch Artemis' order.

(HEPHAESTUS and HANDMAIDEN exit.)

ARTEMIS: I've never seen her.

ATHENA: Nor I.

OENONE: My name is Oenone.

ARTEMIS: She's no goddess.

ATHENA: You're here for the wedding party, then?

OENONE: I was told of this party, though I did not know it was for a wedding. I came to Olympus, however, for my work.

ATHENA: And what work is that? Answer.

OENONE: I'm a healer.

ARTEMIS: A healer?

ATHENA: We're immortals here. What need have any here for healers?

ARTEMIS: My brother is both a god and a healer. Why would any have need of you? A mortal healer?

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OENONE: I am neither goddess nor mortal. I'm a nymph from Mount Ida. As for who might have need, I came at the request of Eris on behalf of her brother Ares. I stay with them.

ATHENA: Ares!

ARTEMIS: And Eris, that petty little bug. That gnawing little rodent.

ATHENA: Ares the Coward, Ares the Cruel, Ares the Craven Dog of War. Ha!

ARTEMIS: No wonder he called you. My brother would never stoop to heal Ares!

ATHENA: And what happened to your poor, poor Ares? How did he come to need your services?

OENONE: A spear to the calf. Really a minor wound...

ATHENA: And you came to Olympus for this?

ARTEMIS: If she serves one such as he, I spit on her.

ATHENA: As do I!

OENONE: Please! I am a healer. I go where summoned. His howls were awful.

ATHENA: Yes, last night, we heard them, remember?

ARTEMIS: Yes, they woke me. A shrill wail, like a fawn left alone in the icy rain.

ATHENA: If it was you who ended his pitiful howling, then I'll thank you for a night's sleep.

HANDMAIDEN: **(enters with a box)** Great Artemis, your arrowheads. My master blesses them, may they shoot straight and deadly.

ARTEMIS: **(takes the box)** Shall we?

ATHENA: Yes. But first a warning for our visiting healer. Ares and Eris are despised by most. You'd do well to part ways before their stench clings to you. Hear me?

(OENONE bows. ATHENA and ARTEMIS exit.)

HANDMAIDEN: My master, Hephaestus, wishes to see you now. Please accompany me.

(HANDMAIDEN exits and OENONE follows.)

SCENE 4

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AT RISE: ARES' home. ERIS paces, bubbling with rage. OENONE enters, weary.

ERIS: Where have you been?

OENONE: I saw Hephaestus.

ERIS: I was not invited!

OENONE: You wished to see Hephaestus with me?

ERIS: To the party!

OENONE: Oh?

ERIS: Am I not a goddess? Do I not dwell here on Olympus? How can I be excluded?

OENONE: I'm exhausted.

ERIS: I alone! Do you understand? I alone, of all those who dwell here, was not invited!

OENONE: I need rest.

ERIS: Listen to me!

OENONE: I am. Listening.

ERIS: Am I so foul?

OENONE: Why weren't you invited?

ERIS: Who can say? And in the end, what does it matter? I've been shunned!

OENONE: I'm sorry.

ERIS: Spare me your useless pity.

OENONE: I need sleep! If I can't find it here, then I'll leave.

ERIS: Like the rest! Abandon me!

OENONE: I know nothing of the politics of Olympus. What words can I say? How can I help you? I've worked all day on a god's ruined leg to no avail. A leg so utterly shattered that I could do nothing. Even my most tender touch sent fire through his limb, yet he would not let me stop. All day seeing the agony I caused. And yet Hephaestus would not cry out, and that only made it worse. I'm spent! Now you wish to speak of some party you were not invited to. What? Speak! Tell me what you wish of me!

ERIS: **(leaps at OENONE, grabbing her)** Do you not know that pains of the mind can be far worse than pains of the body?

OENONE: Release me!

ERIS: Do you not know?

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OENONE: Release me.

ERIS: Is my pain so unworthy?

OENONE: Eris. Let go. Eris. Be calm.

(ERIS cries, OENONE holds her.)

ERIS: Why? Why?

OENONE: I don't know. Shush. Perspective, please.

ERIS: But why?

OENONE: Listen. Listen to me. I will stay with you. During this party.

You will not be alone. I will stay with you. Do you hear me?

ERIS: Yes...

OENONE: And?

ERIS: And you will stay with me.

OENONE: Yes. Now shush.

ERIS: ***(pause)*** We'll drink wine. ***(pause)*** We don't need them.

(Enter ARES followed by HERMES. ERIS quickly pulls away from OENONE and hides her eyes.)

ARES: That's her.

HERMES: Ah! I've got a message for you, if you are Oenone the Healer.

OENONE: I am.

HERMES: You have been invited by Zeus, King of the Gods and Goddesses, to attend the festivities celebrating the nuptials of the mortal king, Peleus, to the Great Sea Nymph Thetis.

OENONE: I?

ERIS: Her?

ARES: Have you been crying, Sister?

ERIS: No! Why her?

OENONE: Yes, why me?

HERMES: Hephaestus is thankful for your services and spoke to Lord Zeus on your behalf. This is a great honor.

OENONE: Respectfully, I must decline.

HERMES: Decline?

ARES: Are you daft, woman? This is no minor shindig!

OENONE: I have other commitments.

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ERIS: Anything for me, Great Messenger?

HERMES: Uh, no.

ERIS: You know I have not been invited?

HERMES: I just deliver the news, I don't make it. Were it up to me, I'd have you there to liven things up.

ERIS: **(to OENONE)** Go. I don't need you.

OENONE: I think, perhaps, you do.

HERMES: If you reconsider...

OENONE: I won't.

ERIS: Go. Go, go, go, go.

OENONE: You want me to go?

ERIS: You heard me.

ARES: You'd be a fool not to, but what do I care? **(exits)**

ERIS: Go and tell me how they all talked about me. Report their wicked words to me. Tell me what they say about Eris, Goddess of Discord. Damn them!

OENONE: Does my invitation include a guest?

HERMES: Huh?

OENONE: Must I attend alone?

HERMES: I don't know.

OENONE: Will you find out for me?

HERMES: I could do that. I suppose you'll not want me to mention the name of your intended guest?

OENONE: Ask as you will.

HERMES: I want her to come, so I'll keep her name out of it for now.

OENONE: And why is that? Why do you want Discord at this party?

HERMES: These things can be such a yawn. **(to ERIS)** Buck up, kid. Who cares what those snobs think?

ERIS: Certainly not I.

HERMES: I'll bring word as soon as I get it. **(exits)**

ERIS: Pity, pity poor Eris, is that it?

OENONE: If you attend as my guest, I'll expect you to behave.

ERIS: You really fear nothing, do you?

OENONE: For now, I won't abandon you.

ERIS: I think you could never abandon anyone. Your nature.

OENONE: My choice.

ERIS: Choice, ha!

OENONE: I will help you because I choose to help you.

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ERIS: They'll all hate you if you bring me.

OENONE: Let them.

ERIS: There's something in you, hidden.

OENONE: No, I'm afraid I'm wholly on the surface. I need sleep.

ERIS: And what will you dream of?

OENONE: My home. Mount Ida. The gorgeous slopes. And you? What do you dream?

ERIS: I don't dream. Good night. If your stupid plan works, I might even thank you. **(exits)**

OENONE: Good night.

SCENE 5

At Rise: DORIS fusses over THETIS.

THETIS: Married. Married, married, married.

DORIS: At last!

THETIS: Is my husband handsome, do you think?

DORIS: Do *I* think? Do *you* think?

THETIS: He isn't *ugly*. Still, compared with what might have been...

DORIS: Enough! Too late! It's done. Love him and love him well. He may come to be handsome in your eyes, just as a beauty can come to be ugly without love.

THETIS: Oh, Mother, what do you know?

DORIS: What do I know? What do I know? Think you father was the first I ever loved?

THETIS: What?

DORIS: A one-eyed Shepard. **(laughs)** Odd, yes, but mostly manly he was and I loved him. More than loved him.

THETIS: What happened?

DORIS: Alas, he did not love me back.

THETIS: Oh.

DORIS: Oh, indeed.

THETIS: Married, married, married.

DORIS: At last! Fifty daughters! Forty-nine gone and now you! At last!

(Enter HEPHAESTUS followed by ZEUS and HERA. THETIS rushes to embrace HEPHAESTUS.)

HEPHAESTUS: Never has a bride been lovelier! My dear Thetis!

THETIS: Oh, my dear Hephaestus!

(THETIS turns to ZEUS and bows. SHE is suddenly stiff, cold and formal.)

ZEUS: Thetis, I greet you.

THETIS: Lord Zeus, I greet you.

HEPHAESTUS: The grandest wedding, truly.

(THETIS falls back into HEPHAESTUS' arms.)

ZEUS: ***(to HERA)*** It ought to have been, what I spent.

HERA: Your guests are arriving. Compose yourself.

DORIS: Save your embraces for you husband.

THETIS: Oh, Mother! No one would suspect me of loving *him*!

(HEPHAESTUS breaks away from her.) No, I didn't mean it that way. I mean, I only meant –

HEPHAESTUS: I know.

HERA: Hurry, hurry!

(HERA ushers ZEUS and DORIS out. The three exit.)

THETIS: A certain jaunt to your step.

HEPHAESTUS: A healer has come to Olympus.

THETIS: Oh? Wasn't it I who nursed you when...?

HEPHAESTUS: You'll meet her tonight. My leg hasn't felt so fine since... ***(pause)*** Happy?

THETIS: Oh, truly.

HEPHAESTUS: Good.

THETIS: You?

HEPHAESTUS: Me?

THETIS: Tell me about marriage. Is it wonderful?

HEPHAESTUS: Difficult to say. I've been more fortunate than most. It certainly can be.

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THETIS: My husband is a king! A king! A mortal, perhaps, but a king!

HEPHAESTUS: He's a fine man.

THETIS: He is, isn't he?

HEPHAESTUS: Who do you think whispered his name into Zeus' ear?

Give him time, he'll make you happy.

THETIS: That's all I want to be. Happy.

HEPHAESTUS: Time. Time and patience. You taught me that.

THETIS: Did I? I seem to have forgotten my own lesson.

HEPHAESTUS: Come, your guests await.

THETIS: Yes. **(pause)** Yes.

(SHE hugs him. They exit.)

SCENE 6

AT RISE: Lights up in ZEUS and HERA, side by side on thrones. Before them mingle ATHENA and ARTEMIS, ARES and APHRODITE, HERMES and DORIS. The HANDMAIDEN circulates, serving food and drinks. Enter HEPHAESTUS and THETIS. All applaud THETIS.

ZEUS: I welcome all to Olympus to celebrate the marriage of fair Thetis, last of the Neriads, daughter of Nereus and Doris, and King Peleus!

(All applaud.)

ZEUS: ***(to himself)*** Oh, this most miserable day...

(HERA overhears him and swats his arm. Dance music swells. HEPHAESTUS grabs APHRODITE and clumsily swirls her around the dance floor as the others look on.)

HEPHAESTUS: Ah, to dance with you!

APHRODITE: I'm tired, dear.

(HERMES grabs ARTEMIS. They do a crazy jitterbug.)

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HERA: **(to ZEUS)** Who knew *she* could dance?

ZEUS: Ah, ha!

(ZEUS grabs HERA and they waltz. DORIS and THETIS join the masses, swirling dance. They all cavort, switching partners with abandon. Only ATHENA and ARES stand aside. ARES half-heartedly approaches her. SHE glares at him with disgust. The music softens and the lights dim, but more raucous Olympians can still be seen and heard, barely. Lights up on OENONE and ERIS as they enter. OENONE is apprehensive. ERIS carries a small sack.)

OENONE: This must be it.

ERIS: Yes. Where is your necklace?

OENONE: Beneath my tunic.

ERIS: It ought to be seen.

OENONE: No need.

ERIS: Do you have a man? A husband?

OENONE: Again, no need.

ERIS: It ought to be seen. Take it out.

OENONE: You may cease ordering me about.

ERIS: I am a goddess. You are not.

OENONE: If we are to be anything, it will be friends and equals.

Otherwise you can crash this party alone.

ERIS: Fearless, fearless Oenone. Take the necklace out. For me.

OENONE: For you?

ERIS: Please.

OENONE: A hard word for you, "please."

ERIS: A mean, spiteful word, "please."

OENONE: And yet so powerful.

(OENONE takes out the necklace. Enter PARIS, a handsome, brash and vacant young man. HE runs, almost crashes into ERIS, stumbles and falls.)

PARIS: Whoa! ***(laughs)*** Almost busted my head!

ERIS: Watch your step!

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OENONE: Are you okay?

PARIS: No worries. (**OENONE helps him up.**) Hey, thanks! What's up?

OENONE: "What's up?"

PARIS: How's it going? Wicked cool, party, huh?

ERIS: Wicked?

OENONE: Cool?

PARIS: Rockin', don'tcha think? Like, whoa, can you believe this, dude?

OENONE: Which of us is "dude"?

PARIS: Oh, my bad. You ladies having a good time and all? Is this too much or what, huh? Sorry, I'm a little toasted. Too much ambrosia. Tried the ambrosia? Awesome ambrosia, dude.

ERIS: Shall I slay him?

OENONE: No.

PARIS: Hey, so, anyways, check you chicks on the flip-flop. Cool?

ERIS: Barbarian.

PARIS: Really? Thanks, dude! Gotta run! (**exits, running**)

OENONE: This is what you wished to attend?

ERIS: Mortals, feh! The only good thing about them is that eventually they die.

PARIS: (**enters, running**) Oh, hey, dudes, sorry I was uncouth, didn't, like, introduce myself. Name's Paris. Who are you, dudes?

ERIS: We are not "dudes".

OENONE: I am Oenone the Healer. She is Eris, Goddess of Discord.

PARIS: Whoa, that's cool. So, like, what's discord?

ERIS: (**sighs**) Argument, conflict, dispute.

PARIS: (**laughs**) Wicked cool, dude! Hey, gotta run.

ERIS: Yes. Run. Fast.

PARIS: (**spots OENONE's necklace**) Whoa! That's awesome, dude! Check it out! (**sees her face**) Hey, you're kinda cute! (**grins**)

OENONE: (**flustered**) Please. Run along, buy.

PARIS: (**laughs**) Cool! Peace, dudes! (**exits, running**)

OENONE: There's no requirement that we attend.

ERIS: The mortal desires you.

OENONE: I've no use of men, less still of mortal men.

ERIS: Even one so fair as he?

OENONE: Fair? A moment ago you wanted to slay him.

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ERIS: Slaying the fair is one of the true joys of my life.

OENONE: I'll convince myself you're joking.

ERIS: Let's go in. I even brought a gift. (*indicates her sack*)

OENONE: A gift? From you?

ERIS: You'll discover, dear girl, surprises aplenty with me.

(They exit. Lights up on the Olympian revelers. The party has calmed and the attendees are relaxing, drinking and eating in various groups: ATHENA and ARTEMIS, HEPHAESTUS, THETIS and DORIS, APHRODITE and ARES, HERA and ZEUS. HERMES sits alone playing a wistful tune on a pipe. Enter PARIS near HERMES.)

PARIS: Cool tune, dude.

HERMES: Thanks.

PARIS: Rockin' party, huh?

HERMES: Yep.

PARIS: (*points offstage*) Who's that?

HERMES: Dionysus. He coordinated the party and brought the wine.

Over there's my brother Apollo. Real stick-in-the-mud. That's Hestia and next to her is Demeter. Boring!

PARIS: Where's the chicks, dude?

HERMES: Chicks?

PARIS: You know, the ladies?

HERMES: Hmm, what sort of ladies are you looking for?

PARIS: Preferably single. Don't wanna cause no bad vibes, y'know.

HERMES: (*points*) I give you Athena and Artemis. Single as single can be.

PARIS: Yeah? No other dudes around?

HERMES: I guarantee it.

PARIS: Whoa! They're pretty hot. Can't believe they don't have guys already.

HERMES: Your lucky day, bud!

PARIS: Thanks for the tip, dude!

HERMES: No prob.

(PARIS meanders over to ATHENA and ARTEMIS. Enter OENONE and ERIS as HERMES tries to slip past them to exit. HE sees ERIS, grins and bows.)

HERMES: Good evening!

ERIS: Leaving?

HERMES: For a bit. You'd be proud of me. Look.

(HERMES points to PARIS as HE sidles up to ATHENA and ARTEMIS. As they watch, ATHENA and ARTEMIS draw weapons, threatening PARIS. HERMES barely suppresses laughter.)

OENONE: He'll be killed!

ERIS: Whatever you've done is clever, but do not usurp my position.

HERMES: Usurp? You inspire me, milady! ***(kisses her hand then dashes off)***

ERIS: Silver-tongued snake.

OENONE: That mortal fool...We ought to –

(OENONE moves to help PARIS, but ERIS stops her.)

ERIS: Have you no sense of fun? Humor?

OENONE: Humor? He'll die!

ERIS: What is humor except bad things happening to other people?

OENONE: Release me.

(As they watch, ATHENA and ARTEMIS put their weapons away. PARIS relaxes, reclining at ATHENA's feet. ARTEMIS storms off.)

ERIS: Now what's happened there, do you suppose?

OENONE: I don't know.

ERIS: Look at him.

OENONE: Mooning over her.

ERIS: Did the mortal regard *us* that way?

OENONE: She is Athena.

ERIS: So? Am I not a goddess? Am I less than she? Why her?

OENONE: So many gods and goddesses here. I've never –

ERIS: She's a daughter of Zeus, that's all. Think they're so special...

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(As they watch, HERA and APHRODITE wander over to where ATHENA and PARIS are. PARIS seems overwhelmed.)

OENONE: Seems the mortal's fair face is not lost on goddesses, even.

ERIS: Nor on you.

OENONE: Please. What use are men?

ERIS: Do you so cherish loneliness?

OENONE: I have...grown accustomed to it. I have my work.

ERIS: And what of love?

OENONE: I love those I heal. I love them. It's enough.

ERIS: You are rather unconvincing.

OENONE: Oh, and what do you care of love?

ERIS: Love and Discord go hand in hand.

OENONE: I've no use of love and less use of discord. Understand me?

ERIS: We're simply speaking.

OENONE: Speak of something else.

ERIS: Have you ever known love?

OENONE: I have, I said!

ERIS: True love.

OENONE: Speak of something else!

ERIS: Have you ever known true love?

OENONE: I warn you...!

ERIS: You warn me? Will the healer do me harm? You claim a heart of dust, but look! Such passion! Again I ask, have you ever known true love? Wild? Intemperate? Mad?

OENONE: Have you?!

ERIS: ***(pause)*** No.

OENONE: You infuriate me.

ERIS: I've never known love. Of any sort.

OENONE: Then you sadden me, too.

ERIS: Oh, do I?

OENONE: This is tiresome. Why did you want to badly to come here? And why was I foolish enough to bring you? I ought to have stayed on Mount Ida and let you suffer your brother's pitiful wails!

HEPHAESTUS: There she is!

(HEPHAESTUS brings THETIS and DORIS down to OENONE and ERIS. OENONE bows. THETIS glares openly at ERIS.)

THETIS: You are Oenone.

HEPHAESTUS: **(wincing as HE puts weight on his bad leg)** Look, my limp is not so bad.

THETIS: I nursed him when he first injured his leg. So long ago.

OENONE: There's little I can do, I'm afraid.

THETIS: There was little to do then, less now.

OENONE: A blessing on your new marriage.

DORIS: Is she the one who healed Ares?

THETIS: Yes.

OENONE: I –

HEPHAESTUS: She heals any in need!

ERIS: Even if she regrets it later.

THETIS: His leg will never be as it once was.

OENONE: I know.

THETIS: I did all that could be done.

OENONE: I'm sure you did.

THETIS: I'm sure I did, too.

HEPHAESTUS: Oenone is a healer. It's her trade!

THETIS: She's admitted that she cannot heal you.

HEPHAESTUS: Look what she's already done.

ERIS: Looks the same to me.

HEPHAESTUS: But it *feels* better! Look! **(putting more weight on his bad leg and wincing again)** See?

DORIS: **(to ERIS)** And who might you be?

ERIS: Address me with respect, old woman. I am a goddess.

DORIS: And my husband is a god. Who are you, I asked.

THETIS: She is Eris, mother. Discord. Though why she's here, I can not guess.

OENONE: She is –

ERIS: Was it you, then, who made sure I was not invited?

THETIS: This is my wedding day. I'll invite, or not invite, as I see fit.

HEPHAESTUS: Come now, ladies...

THETIS: And you, Eris, were most certainly not invited.

OENONE: Eris is *my* guest.

THETIS: I know. Seize my position with Hephaestus, invite Discord to my wedding –

OENONE: I was invited and told I was permitted a guest.

THETIS: And who invited you, charlatan?

HEPHAESTUS: I invited,, through Zeus... I, uh –

ERIS: Thetis, who is not a goddess, sought to exclude Eris, who is?

THETIS: I did and I shall! Discord has no place at my wedding nor in my marriage nor in my life!

ERIS: You thought I could be denied so easily?

OENONE: You must behave. This is her day –

HEPHAESTUS: Enough! Both you, Thetis and you, Oenone, have been kind to me. Now you'll both be kind to one another.

DORIS: Don't you see that this false healer, this fraud, this quack...her mere presence offends my daughter? After all Thetis did for you, Hephaestus!

OENONE: I'll go. We'll both go.

ERIS: No! We stay! My friend Oenone was invited! I am her guest! All fair! We stay! We stay, we stay, we stay!

ZEUS: **(moving in, attracted by the hubbub)** What is this ruckus?

(All bow before ZEUS. THETIS rises first and falls seductively into ZEUS' arms. ZEUS is stricken with panic.)

THETIS: How can you allow Discord at my wedding, Great Zeus?

ZEUS: Why has Eris come here?

OENONE: **(stands)** Great Father of All, I beg your mercy and forgiveness. I brought Eris as my guest. I am Oenone of Mount Ida, nymph and healer. I was invited here by your word through your son and messenger, Hermes. I had him inquire about a guest for myself and ...Please, forgive us. We shall leave.

THETIS: Do I no longer please you, milord? These two will ruin everything!

ZEUS: Please me or no, I must resist your charms! Please your new husband, not me!

THETIS: You desired me once.

ZEUS: Once...**(softly)** and still.

THETIS: Yet married me off to a mere mortal! You owe me this! Send these two harpies off or better, slay them!

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OENONE: We'll leave freely.

ERIS: We will not!

ZEUS: Leave me be, Thetis! Today you are a bride, but not mine!

THETIS: When have such considerations ever concerned the great Zeus?

ZEUS: I desire you still, yet... *(panics further, casting THETIS aside)*
Leave me be! *(exits)*

ERIS: Perhaps you are not as enchanting as you imagine.

THETIS: You, you, you! You will not ruin my wedding day! You'll not bring your discord here!

DORIS: She has already.

HEPHAESTUS: Why, Oenone? Why would you bring her here?

OENONE: I – I –

(SHE exits, holding back tears. Lights down.)

SCENE 7

AT RISE: Enter OENONE, crying softly, bathed in moonlight. A cacophony of voices. Arguing, shouting, screaming. OENONE looks over her shoulder, but stays put. Enter HEREMES and ARTEMIS.

HERMES: What's the hullabaloo?

OENONE: I – It's chaos in there.

(Exit ARTEMIS, bow ready, toward the commotion.)

HERMES: Discord?

OENONE: Discord. My fault.

HERMES: Ah, don't sweat it. This wing-ding needed a little discord.

OENONE: I never should have come.

HERMES: Better see what I can do...

(HERMES exits. Enter ZEUS, followed closely by HERA.)

HERA: It's mine, I tell you!

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ZEUS: I've had too much ambrosia! We'd better get on home!

HERA: Mine, mine, mine! Hear me?

(ZEUS exits pursued by HERA. Enter APHRODITE.)

APHRODITE: Tell your little friend that her gift had better have been intended for me!

OENONE: Friend? Gift?

(Enter ARES.)

APHRODITE: ***(to ARES)*** Keep your distance!

ARES: Fancy a mortal over a god, do you?

APHRODITE: I desire you alone.

ARES: Even I know the lies of Love. Know you the fury of War?

HEPHAESTUS: ***(enters)*** Darling!

APHRODITE: Take me home, my dear husband.

HEPHAESTUS: All must know the gift was for you.

ARES: For her. For her.

HEPHAESTUS: See? Even Ares agrees, a neutral party, for what possible interest can he have in the matter?

ARES: None! No interest at all!

HEPHAESTUS: See?

(APHRODITE exits in a huff, HEPHAESTUS after her.)

ARES: Speak a word or this, healer, and nothing will stay my spear.

(ARES exits. Enter ATHENA followed by ARTEMIS.)

ARTEMIS: But why would one such as you possibly want – ?

ATHENA: The gift will be mine!

ARTEMIS: We are warriors, you and I. The same. Do I long for this pointless, so-called gift?

ATHENA: Aye, we are warriors both, but different. Where is your pride? Look at the mud smudged on your cheek, the brambles in you uncombed hair –

ARTEMIS: So?

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