

ORACLE

By K Stanger

ORACLE

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For Dad

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ORACLE was originally produced as a reading at La MaMa ETC, 47 Great Jones Street Studios, New York, NY as part of the La MaMa Umbria Playwright Reading Series, Featuring the following cast:

Pythia, Stheno, Polydectes, Andromeda.....Giorgia Fagotto Fiorentini
Danae, Medusa.....Elle Milewski
Dolius, Euryale, Perseus.....Julia VanTrees Cowitt
King Acrisius.....Anthony Crosby
Dictys.....Jayden Key
Stage Directions.....Julia Duffy

CAST: 7 Women, 4 Men

PYTHIA	The Oracle of Delphi
DANAE	Princess of Argos
KING ACRISIUS	King of Argos
THE GORGONS	Three Sisters: Euryale, Stheno, Medusa
DOLIUS	Danae's Maid
PERSEUS	A Young Man
DICTYS	A Fisherman
KING POLYDECTES	King of Seriphos
ANDROMEDA	Princess of Aethiopia

Playwright's Note

The play may be double cast as follows:

DANAE will also play MEDUSA.

PYTHIA will also play STHENO, KING POLYDECTES and ANDROMEDA

DOLIUS will also play EURYALE and PERSEUS

Making the total cast five players.

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PART I ARGOS
SCENE 1

Setting: We begin in the fog of a dark mountain forest. The audience should feel enveloped by the set. If staged in a proscenium, the world of the play should spill out as if we are seated in a thrust.

At Rise: Out of the fog, PYTHIA emerges. She spends a long time looking at us, examining us. She moves like a snake, cat, or crow. She looks right into our eyes—without fear or curiosity—it is almost as if she has known each of us all our lives. To us she speaks.

PYTHIA. Do you know where you are? High up in the mountains—maybe you have come to seek me in my eternal rot. You have been called here. Perhaps you already know me. Or else you are a spirit that has slept long inside my halls...do you have something for me? In any case, if you are here, it is not by mistake. All who seek are changed, all who are called are rearranged, and if you dwell here, you well know the muddy secrets and dreadful worms we feast upon. You are here. And so, a particular kind of magic slithers within you. One that is thirsty, or tempered, or well-read. But here there is no place to hide, here there is no eye that cannot see you. For a while we shall look at one another, and breathe. For a time we may forget we are not one. And if you dare to open—you will know a new truth. For here is where all things come to rest, to question, to dissolve. As all things go. *(Pythia disappears again into the fog, as she fades, palace walls are revealed. KING ACRISIUS, of middle age, sits gazing out a window at his kingdom, Argos. A young DANAË skips in, carrying something tightly in her fist.)*

DANAË. Father!

ACRISIUS. My heart, what have you found today? *(Danae hurls herself into The King's arms. She laughs as he takes hold of her and lifts her up. The King settles his daughter next to him, where she carefully*

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unwraps a handkerchief and reveals a small black stone. Danae hands the stone to her father who examines it, holding it up to the light. As he does this, the stone flashes from black to green and back again.)

ACRISIUS. Ah, a wishing stone.

DANAE. A wishing stone?

ACRISIUS. Yes, is that not why you brought it here to me?

DANAE. I thought that it was pretty.

ACRISIUS. It is, but it also holds a magic.

DANAE. But it is just a rock!

ACRISIUS. It is a rock. A rock formed from the thick magma that burns inside the center of our mother.

DANAE. Mother? My mother?

ACRISIUS. No dear, our mother. Our kingdom of Argos.

DANAE. The rock is a tiny kingdom!

ACRISIUS. In a way—

DANAE. Did *my* mother make a rock?

ACRISIUS. She did bring you into this world.

DANAE. I am a rock! I am a kingdom! *(The King laughs.)*

ACRISIUS. Yes, my love, you are like this rock.

DANAE. Why?

ACRISIUS. Because this stone grants wishes.

DANAE. How do I make a wish?

ACRISIUS. First you must listen to the rock, here, hold it to your ear. *(Danae and the King lift the rock to their ears, listening together.)*

DANAE. It says nothing.

ACRISIUS. We are listening for the wish, it may be more of a feeling than something you can hear. Try again. *(Danae holds the stone close to her ear, she closes her eyes, scrunches her nose, and takes a deep breath. After a moment the stone's magic seems to pour into Danae, just as her father described. She shares an excited look with the King.)*

DANAE. Now what?

ACRISIUS. Now whisper your wish to the stone as quietly as you can. *(Danae holds the stone in her little hands close to her heart, then she brings it to her lips and whispers so inaudibly we might not even know that she has spoken.)*

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ACRISIUS. Hold it with you until your wish comes true. (*Danae grasps the stone tightly and with excitement, she leans on her father's shoulder. They sit in a comfortable silence for a moment.*)

DANAE. Mother braided my hair today.

ACRISIUS. She did?

DANAE. Yes—and I didn't even ask her to!

ACRISIUS. Very good.

DANAE. When will you go to see her?

ACRISIUS. Soon, my heart.

DANAE. I should have given her my wish.

ACRISIUS. If not for her, what did you wish for?

DANAE. I wished for our wishes.

ACRISIUS. Our wishes?

DANAE. Yes.

ACRISIUS. And what are our wishes?

DANAE. For myself a brother, And for you a son. (*Acrisius takes a moment to look out again at Argos, the kingdom his father had given him. With its orchards of fertile trees, the expansive plains, and there off in the distance—the misty mountains lining its border.*)

ACRISIUS. That is a very good wish, my heart.

DANAE. Thank you, father.

ACRISIUS. Hold tight to that stone.

DANAE. You keep it. With you the wish will be true.

(*Danae hands her father the stone who holds her hand tightly in his, the stone between them.*)

(*We return to the world of fog. The Gorgon sisters enter, STHENO, EURYALE, and MEDUSA, they are statue-like with jagged wings and snakes for hair, which slither about as they do. The sisters sing to us.*)

STHENO. Stones can shake strong palace walls asunder. Little stones stick in your shoe like glue. And poke your toes, like daggers.

EURYALE. Round stones roll up villages and seas, spew out symphonies or sirens, churn up rivers, or lakes.

MEDUSA. Stones don't feel like I do. Stones don't have skin like me. Stone hearts don't beat, or break.

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STHENO, EURYALE, and MEDUSA. Heads are made of butter, but hearts are made of stone. The fleshy kind that peels like onion, or the bubble-filled kind that crumbles unknown.

EURYALE. Stone.

MEDUSA. Stone.

STHENO. Stone.

STHENO, EURYALE, MEDUSA. Be careful, or not, to watch what you've got, before it all turns to stone.

MEDUSA. You'll journey now, moons ahead, where girls turn into women. Where kings and fools live hand in hand—their daughters rarely with them. *(The Gorgon sisters disappear with the fog.)*

SCENE 2

Just outside the palace walls, Danae, now a grown woman, lays in a field of goats, her arms hanging up in the air, her fingers tracing the outlines of clouds. Acrisius approaches her silently, about to surprise her.

DANAE. You know I can hear you.

ACRISIUS. You're too bright for me now... and yet all your days are spent here with the goats.

DANAE. They are the only creatures that come close to my intelligence. *(Danae and Acrisius laugh, Danae jumps up and offers her father her picnic jug.)*

ACRISIUS. No, you know I'm not fond of wine.

DANAE. But I made this one myself!

ACRISIUS. A King cannot live in constant headache, and you should not either. Spending your days with goats and grapes—this will not make you a pleasant wife.

DANAE. It makes me a pleasant daughter.

ACRISIUS. Yes, my heart. *(The King sighs.)*

DANAE. Are you traveling again?

ACRISIUS. Our ships leave this afternoon.

DANAE. Will you be gone long?

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ACRISIUS. Not this time.

DANAE. (*Jokingly*) So, my future husband lives close?

ACRISIUS. I am looking for a very particular kind of man.

DANAE. Yes, a man who desires a woman's feet to smell of grapes.

ACRISIUS. You deserve the very best.

DANAE. Where are you going? Most of your trips are weeks at least.

What kingdom is so close? (*Acrisius does not respond.*) Can I come with you?

ACRISIUS. You do not fare well at sea.

DANAE. But I would fare well to know this mysterious prince that will at last bring our kingdom an heir.

ACRISIUS. That is not—I am seeking the best for you.

DANAE. What if the best for me is here, in my fields with my goats, with my friend?

ACRISIUS. Your friend? Or your maid?

DANAE. Dolius is my dearest friend.

ACRISIUS. She is also your maid. (*A beat.*)

DANAE. I just wonder— if—

ACRISIUS. Yes?

DANAE. I wonder if I had a brother...would you care at all if I was married.

ACRISIUS. I would. And I would care that he was a good man, from a good kingdom that would bring you many blessings. And love. I would like you to be loved.

DANAE. Oh. (*Another beat. Acrisius takes Danae's hand.*)

ACRISIUS. Are you at peace then, my heart? Will you be alright the days I am gone?

DANAE. Yes. (*Danae and Acrisius embrace. The sun begins to settle lower in the sky.*)

DANAE. You're leaving soon then?

ACRISIUS. I was heading for the ship now—

DANAE. Race you to the port! (*Danae runs off with The Old King leaping behind her, laughing as they race towards the ships.*)

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SCENE 3

The forest of fog returns, and Pythia with it. She speaks to us.

PYTHIA. She does not know the winds her father takes to reach me. How he crawls to untangle the web he weaves himself. Poor King, how he will change...sickness permeates the palace. A most wicked rain will fall. AHAAAA! Here he comes. *(Acrisius approaches from the fog.)*

PYTHIA. Why are you here old man?

ACRISIUS. Many nights and mornings I have been drawn here to your earthly opening. But I am sure you know this well.

PYTHIA. I know what you crave. Itty... bitty... baby.

ACRISIUS. Why do you mock me witch?

PYTHIA. Your claws are scratching for knowledge, but knowing will be your end.

ACRISIUS. *(Forcefully)* Will I have an heir?

PYTHIA. To know...you know what you must do.

(Pythia beckons Acrisius to join her deeper in the fog.)

ACRISIUS. Will this end me?

PYTHIA. There are no two ways about it.

ACRISIUS. My life. My line.

(Pythia circles the King, whispering in his ear.)

PYTHIA. Rats. Snakes. Porridge. Pom— E— Gran— It
Seeeeedssss.

ACRISIUS. *(Swiping Pythia away)* Demon Woman!

PYTHIA. Make your choice King of Argos—to know, or to keep your heart?

ACRISIUS. My heart?

PYTHIA. Yes fool! If you come with me now your life hereafter brings fear each waking moment, you will never be this man again.

ACRISIUS. But tonight, I will not die?

PYTHIA. You may live all your years, but only half alive.

ACRISIUS. Madness?

PYTHIA. Beyond.

ACRISIUS. *(Under his breath)* Torture, treason. Exile?!

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PYTHIA. CHOOSE. Old. Man. (*Pythia offers Acrisius her hand. The King hesitates and reaches out shakily. He looks into the mist, then back towards his kingdom. Sharply he takes Pythia's hand. Both are engulfed by fog.*)

(*The palace interior is again illuminated, Danae sits with her maid DOLIUS, in Danae's bed chamber.*)

DANAE. Do you think that I am good?

DOLIUS. (*Jokingly*) I'm not sure I know you well enough to know yet. (*The girls laugh, Danae swipes her handkerchief at Dolius.*)

DANAE. Dolius! Truly I am asking.

DOLIUS. Why? (*Still playing with Danae.*) Are you worried you are evil?

DANAE. Dolius! I am...I am uncertain. I have developed a belief that all people are born with a truth in their heart—some good and some evil. If you are born evil, you may work harder to be good. But if you are born good then goodness simply flows from you.

DOLIUS. And you want to be good?

DANAE. Yes.

DOLIUS. Is it hard for you to be good?

DANAE. I don't know. Sometimes it is hard, like giving the best bread and olives to my father, or saving all the goat cheese for breakfast. But other times it is easy, like bringing figs back for us to share at night.

DOLIUS. Are you hungry? (*The girls laugh again.*) What about me then, am I good?

DANAE. (*Mocking a High-lady voice*) Don't forget you were my birthday gift Dolius. A servant has no morals.

DOLIUS. (*Playing along*) Yes, I mustn't forget, thank you for the welcome reminder, my dearest Mistress of Argos. (*Danae pokes at Dolius's side and the girls laugh again.*) (*Their laughter ends, a beat.*)

DANAE. You are goodness Dolius, truly.

DOLIUS. Who else do you believe was born good then?

DANAE. Mother was. She spent her life hoping to make father's wish come true.

DOLIUS. Poisoning yourself to give a son to a King should not be something you consider good.

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DANAE. She was good! She believed in the Kingdom, in its future, in an heir.

DOLIUS. You could be the heir of Argos.

DANAE. That is not—Dolius, dear, you know—my point is she was good, and she was a good mother to me. To be a mother at all is goodness.

DOLIUS. Being a mother seems like wound after wound.

DANAE. I must be a mother. However, I don't know anything about men.

DOLIUS. I only know the stable boys—and to stay away from them.

DANAE. Is it painful?

DOLIUS. Yes. *(Danae looks as if she might sob.)*

DANAE. Will you come with me? Wherever I am to be sent?

DOLIUS. Other palaces may have two or even three women to serve you.

DANAE. I don't want them.

DOLIUS. You must ask your father. *(A beat.)* What about him, the King? Do you think he was born good?

DANAE. I think my father has to work hard to be good. And I worry maybe I am like that too. *(Dolius is quiet, she takes Danae's hand and gives her palm a kiss. They fade away to fog.)*

(Acrisius and Pythia move slowly, Acrisius clearly shaken.)

ACRISIUS. ...I must return.

PYTHIA. Ah, but such a gift requires payment.

ACRISIUS. That was no gift.

PYTHIA. Even so.

ACRISIUS. I have nothing for you, witch. I will be going.

(Suddenly a pig rushes past, wearing a tunic with the symbol of Argos. The pig approaches Acrisius and nuzzles his leg, before spotting a bug and chasing it away into the fog.)

PYTHIA. How will you return? With no men to pull your ship?

ACRISIUS. *(Putting it together)* That was Lynceus! My men...what have you done?

PYTHIA. All will be no matter after I receive payment.

(Acrisius removes coins from his pockets.)

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ACRISIUS. I have gold, here is gold. Let us go!

PYTHIA. What good is gold, old man?

ACRISIUS. (*Panicking.*) What do you want? You have already taken my life!

PYTHIA. Something more precious to you than gold. (*Acrisius is lost, he thinks for a moment, and then from a carefully kept pouch he removes the wishing stone Danae had given him those years ago. He holds out the glowing stone to Pythia, who takes it and inspects it.*)

PYTHIA. You will keep her?

ACRISIUS. Of course.

PYTHIA. You will contain her?

ACRISIUS. I will do what I must.

PYTHIA. Be gone then. (*Pythia waves her arm through the air, magic coming with it. The fog moves now like a tornado, blowing leaves and branches of the forest. Acrisius fights the wind to escape, while Pythia vanishes into the fog.*)

(*The three Gorgon sisters return, giggling as they herd more palace dressed pigs out of the forest. Medusa stops, hearing a sound in the wind. She sings.*)

MEDUSA. She'll wait like I did for the rain, though she doesn't know it's coming. Storms are fits of raging men, their tantrums are the drumming.

STHENO. Still there are pools within a woman, that lay silent, that flow still.

EURYALE. And men who try to reach them, lose their fingers, for the thrill.

MEDUSA. Sorrow isn't careful, rarely is it kind, And joy that's born from wickedness, leaves a bitter taste behind.

STHENO and EURYALE. Good bread is always salty. Good fish are hard to find. You'll ache for all the trouble when the cheese all turns to rind. (*The sisters disappear.*) (*The fog bleeds again into Danae's chamber where she sits with Dolius.*)

DANAE. What do you think he will look like?

DOLIUS. I don't know, some princes are ugly.

DANAE. Dolius!

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DOLIUS. It doesn't matter, even pretty ones smell foul, or chew too loudly, or treat the horses cruelly.

DANAE. I take it back you are not good.

DOLIUS. Danae would you rather that I lie?

DANAE. No.

DOLIUS. Is a husband something you want?

DANAE. I must have a husband.

DOLIUS. Because you want to?

DANAE. Because I must, Dolius!

DOLIUS. But you do not...want to. *(Very timidly and slowly Dolius traces her finger down the length of Danae's arm.)*

DOLIUS. I don't think you have ever, or will ever, desire a husband. And if you did—*(Danae stops Dolius by kissing her hard on the lips. Dolius pulls away, surprised but not shocked. They look at each other as if they could touch all the newness between them. They smile. They laugh. Slowly they move towards each other and tentatively kiss again.)*

SCENE 4

Lights come up on the palace halls, Danae runs through them. Stopping guards along the way.

DANAE. Father! Father!?! *(Danae stops a palace guard.)*

DANAE. Is my father back? I heard ships made port!

(The guard ignores Danae and moves past her quickly. This is unusual and she calls after him.)

DANAE. I need to speak with him! *(Danae continues to run through the halls, searching for The King. The palace priest, Chryses, moves down the hall towards Danae with dark hooded soldiers behind him. Danae rushes towards the priest still yelling.)*

DANAE. Chryses! I need to speak to my father! I need to tell him—
(As Danae reaches the priest, the soldiers march in front of him and gather Danae up. They begin to drag her towards stairs that lead below the palace.)

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DANAE. Chryses? CHRYSES! Tell them to stop! Where is father? Let me GO! CHRYSES!! *(The priest remains silent and gives the soldiers a nod to take Danae down the staircase. Danae continues to scream and demand to be freed. As they are about to descend the staircase Acrisius enters. Danae looks relieved.)*

DANAE. FATHER! I'm here, father! *(The King looks on, silent. He nods to the priest, and they turn to go. Danae shrieks in defeat.)*

DANAE. FATHER!! FATHER! *(Great and terrible sounds of thunder engulf the stage into darkness.)*

SCENE 5

With a match, a candle is illuminated. Danae sits in a small room, no bigger than a closet with a mat to lay on. The walls, floor, and ceiling of which are covered in bronze that flickers and glows with the candlelight. Doliu blows out the match and sits on the floor next to Danae. Doliu wraps her arms around Danae and holds her like this for a moment.

DANAE. I'm glad you are here.

DOLIUS. Yes.

DANAE. What has happened?

DOLIUS. I will tell you what I know, but we must speak quietly.

DANAE. Why?

DOLIUS. I will come to that.

(Danae settles in as Doliu searches for the right words.)

DOLIUS. When your father returned from his trip, he ordered that you be brought to this chamber, which is to remain locked, night and day.

(Danae attempts to scream or cry but Doliu covers her mouth gently.)

DOLIUS. You are to remain here. For your...safety.

DANAE. Safety?

DOLIUS. As I understand it.

DANAE. There are no windows! There is no light or— what will I—?

DOLIUS. I know.

DANAE. I need to speak with him.

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DOLIUS. He will not speak with you.

DANAE. Why? —How could he? —I don't understand! Get me out!
Help me!

DOLIUS. If I leave this chamber with you, there is a guard waiting to kill me right outside. And you will be returned here, where you will spend your days alone.

DANAE. Only you. No one else?

DOLIUS. *(Attempting a joke.)* I am at your service.

DANAE. Dolius, please! There must be—

DOLIUS. There is not.

DANAE. Then, why? I must know why.

DOLIUS. What I know is that only I may enter your chamber, and that men cannot even walk outside its corridor.

DANAE. That is strange.

DOLIUS. Yes, and...

DANAE. And?

DOLIUS. Above us is...I think if you are quiet enough you can hear his footsteps. *(The girls press their ears to the ceiling of the room as the upper stage is illuminated. Acrisius stands pacing, clutching a goblet of wine. Danae realizes that this is why they must be quiet, she looks at Dolius, pleading.)*

DOLIUS. I will be here. We will spend our days together.

DANAE. Will you come every day?

DOLIUS. Always. *(They share a kiss.)*

DANAE. I now believe differently about goodness.

DOLIUS. You do?

DANAE. Yes. I believe you are the only goodness. *(Dolius presses her forehead into Danae's. They sit for a moment in silence.)*

DOLIUS. I must go, but I'll be back for breakfast.

DANAE. Bring figs! *(Dolius nods and exits the small door at the side of the chamber. Danae stands again and looks up at the ceiling. Danae presses her ear to the top of the room and listens for footsteps. Overhead The King has stopped his pacing. He too has leaned with his ear to the floor. Suddenly Danae's eyes open wide.)*

DANAE. I can hear you breathing.

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(The King is surprised he can hear her voice.)

DANAE. Can you hear me? I'm breathing too. I'm still alive down here!
(Danae now breaks into a small sob. Acrisius pulls his head away from the floor.)

DANAE. Father, I need you. *(The King quietly gets up and moves to a table to pour himself more wine. He sinks into his throne; silent tears pour from his eyes. He speaks quietly enough that Danae cannot hear.)*

ACRISIUS. I am here, my heart. I am here. *(Lights fade on Acrisius's chamber, Danae remains illuminated. She tosses and turns on her mat. She lays on the cool bronze floor. Restless, Danae scratches at the floor with her nails. After this fitfulness, she notices her clawed marks remain on the floor. An idea grows in her mind. Sitting up, she removes a pin from her hair and begins to sketch with it on the wall of the room.)*

SCENE 6

A fourth of the walls of Danae's room are now covered with her artwork. Drawings of goats, horses, maps of Argos, and portraits of Dolius are scattered across the walls. Danae lays on her mat, tossing a ball up at the ceiling and catching it again. Dolius enters, concealing something under her shawl.

DOLIUS. Quickly! Come here!

DANAE. Dolius—?

(From out of Dolius's shawl spills a small black puppy, who runs to Danae and sniffs quietly at her feet. Danae is elated.)

DANAE. Dolius! Oh, he is perfect.

DOLIUS. I knew you would like him.

DANAE. How did you—?

DOLIUS. Old Sal had her litter last week. He's the quietest of the bunch.

DANAE. You are a marvel. *(Danae hugs and kisses Dolius.)*

DOLIUS. I thought you could use more company than just me.

DANAE. Thank you.

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DOLIUS. What's his name then?

DANAE. I think I will call him Argos.

DOLIUS. Argos the dog of Argos. Perfect.

DANAE. But he must not stay trapped here like me.

DOLIUS. They won't keep him in the fields, didn't you notice? (*Danae looks closer at Argos, and realizes he is missing one of his back legs.*)

DANAE. I suppose if I am doing him a service...

DOLIUS. He cannot herd. You'll have to live goat-less together.

DANAE. It is so hard. (*Danae and Dolius laugh.*)

DOLIUS. He can be trained too, something for you to do besides scratch at your walls like a mad person.

DANAE. Would you do any better?

DOLIUS. I'm sorry.

DANAE. Any news?

DOLIUS. No one sees him. He stays in his chamber; the priest takes him wine.

DANAE. Wine?

DOLIUS. You probably know more than most.

(*Dolius gestures up at the ceiling.*)

DANAE. He says nothing. I sometimes think I hear him sobbing, then I believe it is in my head.

DOLIUS. Maybe he no longer wants you to be married.

DANAE. That is clear enough.

DOLIUS. It could be good—

DANAE. If I was not shut inside a box!

DOLIUS. I know. I have to go, I'm missing the wash-up.

DANAE. I'm sorry I kept you—I—

DOLIUS. Do not worry. (*Dolius kisses Danae gently.*)

DANAE. Thank you, he is the best gift.

DOLIUS. Goodnight. (*Dolius exits and Danae lays on her mat, Argos snuggles up beside her. Above them the King is illuminated, asleep with a jug of wine in his hand. Danae falls to sleep. Thunder sounds. Argos whimpers as the thunder grows louder, Danae wakes.*)

DANAE. It's alright Argos. (*Argos cuddles closer to Danae; they are both jolted by another loud bolt of thunder. From the ceiling of the*

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bronze room a small drip of golden rain falls, Danae looks at the glowing drop on the floor. She touches it. She burns her hand.)

DANAE. Ow! ...fire is falling from the sky. *(Another bolt of thunder. Danae shivers scared, Argos continues to whimper and runs to a corner of the small room. More drops fall, they seem to stick to Danae who screams out as they burn.)*

DANAE. FATHER! *(The King shudders awake. He grips his throne. More thunder.)*

DANAE. FATHER! I AM BURNING!

ACRISIUS. *(Quietly and drunkenly)* A clever attempt at escape. *(The drops continue to fall more heavily until Danae is covered in fire. Thunder and lightning shudder the bronze room.)*

DANAE. I AM BURNING! FATHER HELP ME! IT IS INSIDE ME NOW! *(Acrisius pours his wine straight from the jug to his lips. The wine overflows his mouth and pours down his body. Danae still screams, the fiery rain engulfing her.)*

DANAE. FATHER!

(Danae collapses, as the final bolt of thunder erupts. Acrisius collapses. Suddenly the rain is gone. Danae lies shuddering on the floor. Argos stumbles over to Danae and nestles himself in the nape of her neck.)
(At last, Doliuss enters. Danae reaches for Doliuss, weeping. Doliuss holds her.)

DOLIUS. What has happened?

(Danae continues to wail and scream, but her body holds no wounds. Doliuss pulls Danae's face up to look at her, in her eyes she sees a fear that all women know. Doliuss holds Danae tightly drawing her close, patting the screams out of her until Danae stifles into a soft sob.)

DOLIUS. Shhh, Shhh. There, there you are.

(Danae lays in a pool in Doliuss's lap, she looks up at Doliuss.)

DOLIUS. You will be alright.

DANAE. No.

DOLIUS. Danae, I am sorry to ask this, how did he get in—?

(Danae shakes her head "no" violently and begins to sob again. Doliuss takes hold of her once more.)

DOLIUS. Shhh, no, it is alright. I've got you.

ORACLE

(Danae pulls away from Dolius. Danae turns to face the wall and slowly slides her hand down her drawings, at first gently, but then her fingers begin to claw, leaving marks across a sketch of Dolius's profile.)

DOLIUS. Danae, please.

DANAE. Please, what? Please be good? Please be quiet? I am. I am and I have been and now I am full of nothing but ash!

DOLIUS. I know, I know, come here.

DANAE. You are the only one who ever sees me.

DOLIUS. I know, I am so sorry for it. *(Danae falls back into Dolius's arms, the waves of rage inside her crashing and then settling against Dolius's tender shores. Suddenly Danae reaches up to Dolius's face, grabs her and kisses her hard. Dolius pulls away.)*

DOLIUS. Danae, you don't need—

DANAE. I do. I need you. *(Danae pulls Dolius in for another kiss. Dolius gives in for a moment and then pulls away in worry.)*

DANAE. Please.

DOLIUS. I don't know if right now is—

DANAE. Please. Please. Take it away.

DOLIUS. I can't.

DANAE. Try. Please.

(Dolius is unsure but slowly begins to kiss Danae again. Dolius lays Danae down and slowly kisses down her body. As Dolius reaches Danae's hips they lock eyes. Danae nods, and Dolius quickly lifts Danae's skirt and dives under. Danae begins to moan and breathe in pleasure as Dolius continues. Danae's satisfaction increases and builds as warmth washes over her. Suddenly Danae sits up, Dolius pulls away and looks at her confused. Danae places a hand on her lower stomach.)

DANAE. Oh! *(Swiftly Danae grabs Dolius's hand and places it at the same spot on her stomach. Danae and Dolius share a look of confusion and terror, maybe even excitement. Dolius grabs Danae and holds her tightly. They fade away to fog.)*

(Back in the forest the Gorgon sisters return with their song.)

MEDUSA. What makes a girl a woman? To be touched? To be loved?

STHENO. What makes a woman good? Send her a child, from above.

EURYALE. What makes a child grow?

ORACLE

MEDUSA. Avarice?

STHENO. Sin?

MEDUSA, STHENO and EURYALE. Did we lock her up? Or did we let him in?

STHENO and EURYALE. What makes a belly full? Often chicken, often pie.

MEDUSA. But a baby does it best, and exits in an aching—goodbye.
(The world of fog fades.)

SCENE 7

We return to Danae's bronze box. The walls are now covered with drawings. Danae sits with her back to the audience, training Argos.

DANAE. Stand!

(Argos stands up on his one hind leg. Danae offers him a treat.)

DANAE. Jump! *(Still standing on his back leg, Argos does a jump in the air. Danae laughs and offers him another treat.)*

DANAE. Dance!

(Argos remains hopping but moves in a little spin around himself. Danae laughs and gives him a pet. Dolius enters, carrying a basket. As Danae turns to face Dolius, her profile is revealed to the audience—specifically Danae's very large, and very pregnant belly.)

DANAE. Oh good! You found them?

DOLIUS. Yes, I've got everything—and this!

(Dolius hands Danae a small but thick stick of wood.)

DANAE. What is this for?

DOLIUS. To keep you quiet.

DANAE. What? *(Dolius demonstrates by placing the stick lengthwise in her mouth and biting down on it.)*

DOLIUS. See?

DANAE. Anything for him. *(She motions to her belly.)*

DOLIUS. You seem very sure about him being a him.

DANAE. I just know.

ORACLE

DOLIUS. Here is the tea, don't drink it until midnight. It should start to work tomorrow morning. I've got to be here.

DANAE. I know.

DOLIUS. Then I'll take him straight away to the stables where I am sure Elena is ready to rip all of that stuffing out of her dress.

DANAE. Bless her.

DOLIUS. This was The King's dream for so long... You should not be giving birth to the heir of Argos in a broom closet.

DANAE. He will not live as the heir.

DOLIUS. I know, I know. But he will be.

DANAE. Dolius.

DOLIUS. I'm sorry.

DANAE. Thank you. For all you've done.

DOLIUS. Well, I love you.

DANAE. Well, I love you too. And it is wonderful to know love. In this terrible box. *(They laugh.)*

DOLIUS. Now rest, I'll be back for the morning, and don't forget to take the tea right at—

DANAE. Midnight. I know.

(Danae lays down on her mat as Dolius exits. Danae looks up at the ceiling, she wonders about her father for the first time in a long time. She stands, she places her ear to the ceiling but can hear nothing. She holds her hand up to touch the top of the room. She sighs.)

(Suddenly a look flashes across Danae's face. Pain, and then terror.)

DANAE. No. *(Another flash of pain.)* Dolius! Oh no. *(Danae reaches to feel her dilation. She has progressed at an inhuman rate.)* Oh—Dolius! Oh no. *(Danae grabs the stick and places it in her mouth. The lights fade out on the bronze room, and up on The King's chamber. Acrisius's chamber is scattered with wine jugs. He paces the floor, wine in one hand, rubbing the sides of his temples with the other.)*

ACRISIUS. *(Mumbled, and chant-like)* My life. My line. My life. My line. My life. My— *(From below the loud squeal of a newborn baby is heard. Acrisius jumps, and runs out of the chamber, wine goblet crashing to the floor. All fades dark and to the sound of waves.)*

ORACLE

(A small flicker of light, Danae is illuminated, clutching baby PERSEUS. They are held in a coffin-like box, upright in the middle of the dark stage. The sounds of waves grow louder and cause the light to flicker, until a large wave knocks the light out.) (Darkness.)

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