

# The Odyssey

*Based on the classic story by Homer  
Adapted by Steven Fogell*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Here is a classic tale of courage, determination, and love. Journey back to a time when the gods and goddesses determined the daily fate of the world and all the humans upon it. In this tale we meet Odysseus as he returns to his beloved home of Ithaca. Soon he is sent by the goddess Athena to fight in the Trojan War and undergoes a journey that takes him much further – and much longer – than ever expected.

Odysseus's path home from the battle is detained and crossed by many gods and goddesses, and the often dangerous creatures they have created such as the Cyclops, the six-headed Scylla, and the evil sorceress Circe.

Ultimately, Odysseus's adventure lasts 20 long years. The god Hermes says it sends a message to the mortals about the power of the gods, while Athena says the message is about the power of war. Finally Aphrodite says it sends greatest message of all ... the message of love.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

- Sc. 1: The gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus.
- Sc. 2: Odysseus's family in Ithaca.
- Sc. 3: Helen becomes Queen of Sparta.
- Sc. 4: Odysseus leaves for war.
- Sc. 5: The defeat of Troy.
- Sc. 6: Years later, sailing home.
- Sc. 7: Weeks later, the island of Cyclops.
- Sc. 8: Back in Ithaca, suitors confront Penelope.
- Sc. 9: In the cave on the island of Cyclops.

### **ACT II**

- Sc. 1: On the boat at sea, so close to home, yet so far.
- Sc. 2: The island of Circe.
- Sc. 3: Three Sirens tempt Odysseus and crew.
- Sc. 4: Seven years later, on an island with Calypso.
- Sc. 5: Odysseus arrives home to fight the final battle.

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(Large, flexible cast. See next page for doubling options.)*

#### GODS/ GODDESSES

AEOLUS: God, ruler of all the storm winds.

APOLLO: God, ruler of the sun.

POSEIDON: God, ruler of the sea.

THETIS: Goddess, sea nymph, mother of Achilles.

HERMES: Messenger of the gods.

APHRODITE: Goddess of love.

HADES: God, ruler of the underworld.

ZEUS: King of gods.

ATHENA: Daughter of Zeus, goddess of war.

#### ITHACA PEOPLE

EURYKLEIA: (*Yur-a-clee-a.*) Servant of Odysseus.

PENELOPE: Odysseus' wife.

ANTICLUS: (*Ant-a-kl-us.*) Odysseus' mother.

YOUNG TELEMACHUS: (*Tell-a-mass-cus.*) Son of Odysseus.

OLDER TELEMACHUS: Son of Odysseus and Penelope.

ODYSSEUS: Main character, is at sea and trying to get home.

LAERTES: (*Lair-a-tees.*) Ghost, Odysseus's father.

#### TROJAN WAR PLAYERS

HELEN: Reason the Trojan war is being fought.

PARIS: Trojan.

KING MENELAUS: (*Men-a-loss.*) Sparta King.

PALAMEDES: (*Pal-a-me-dees.*) King's friend.

AGAMEMNON: (*Ag-a-mem-non.*) Spartan warrior.

ACHILLES: (*Augh-kill-ees.*) Spartan warrior.

LAOCOON: (*La-coon.*) Soothsayer, predictor of future.

HECTOR: Trojan warrior.

AENEAS: (*A-knee-us.*) Trojan warrior.

#### ODYSSEUS'S MEN

ANTILOUS (*Ant-a-loss.*)

POLITES (*Poll-e-tees.*)

EURYLOCHOS (*Ear-a-locus.*)

ANTIPHUS (*Ant-a-fuss.*)

ODYSSEUS' MEN (Continued.)

PERIMIDES (*Pear-a-me-dees.*)

MENPHEUS (*Mem-fuss.*)

THATICLES (*That-a-klees.*)

4 GOATS

INVADERS

EURYMACHUS (*Your-a-mack-us.*)

MELANTHIUS (*Mel-and-the-us.*)

EUMAEUS (*U-may-us.*)

ORSILICUS (*Or-sill-a-cuss.*)

MYSTICS

CYCLOPS: Giant, with a single eye in the middle of his forehead.

ANIMALS: Wolves, lions, bears, etc.

CIRCE: (*Seer-see.*) Sorceress.

CALYPSO: A sea nymph.

SIRENS

MAI: (*May.*) Siren.

PHAY: (*Fay.*) Siren.

KUL: (*Cool.*) Siren.

SCYLLA: (*Sill-a.*) Six-headed sea monster.

**Possibilities for doubling:**

King Menelaus can double with animal on island

Palamedes can double with Cyclops

Paris can double with Orsilicus

Agamemnon can double with Eurymachus

Achilles can double with Melanthius

Laocoon can double with Eumaeus

Hector can double with animal on island

Aeneas can double with animal on island

Mai can double with Circe

Phay can double with animal on island

Kul can double with animal on island

Helen of Troy can double with Calypso

**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: Mount Olympus where ATHENA, ZEUS, AEOLUS, POSEIDON, HERMES, APHRODITE, THETIS, and HADES are meeting.)*

AEOLUS: No! I will not be a part of this! It is insane!

POSEIDON: I agree with Aeolus, this cannot be! I am much too busy to be a part of such madness!

THETIS: Please do not do this! Please do not make my son a part of this plan! Achilles has served you well, great Zeus! Why make him part of this?

HERMES: Why would you want such a thing? Why would you bring such a tiding of bad deed to so many? What is to gain?

APHRODITE: I understand the power that love can bring, but you must admit this is extreme, even for you! Why has your heart turned so dark?

HADES: Yes, Zeus, I ask the same as Aphrodite: Why does your heart turn so black? You seem to be getting into my line of work. Think how many will die from this plan! I will be kept so busy, for so long!

ZEUS: Silence! *(Thunder.)* How dare you compare me to you, Hades! I created you and can destroy you where you stand! I am Zeus! This is my plan of fate, and you will do as I command! Do you understand? *(Pause.)* I said, do you understand?!

ALL: Yes. Yes, great Zeus.

ZEUS: That is better. Athena, you have been very quiet today. What do you think of the plans I have for these mere mortals?

ATHENA: If it is your will, I obey. Who am I to question? I see how this war will change all of time. I respect your decision and will do my part, as best as my power will allow.

ZEUS: You all can take a lesson from Athena. She understands the importance of my decisions and would never question them. Now, I expect each of you to do my will as planned; you will regret any mistakes you make.

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ZEUS: *(Continued.)* Each of you must report to me the outcome of your accomplishments. I will be watching all of you, especially you, Hades!

HADES: Me? Why me? Don't I always come through as planned? My devastation would have it no other way!

ZEUS: Listen to me, Hades. No lives lost that are not as I have seen lost!

HADES: Of course, Zeus, of course. I may bring death, but I'm not a glutton!

ZEUS: Why do you look at me as thus, Aphrodite?

APHRODITE: Because I know what is behind all this. I know what your daughter has done and --

ZEUS: Quiet! There shall be no talk of any of this, do you hear me? Especially of my daughter! Now, Aeolus, can I expect your winds to follow my wishes?

AEOLUS: They shall blow as strong and hard as any you have ever witnessed.

ZEUS: And Poseidon and Thetis, can I expect your seas and ocean to do the bidding they must?

POSEIDON: As usual and with honor.

THETIS: I will act as long as my heart will allow.

ZEUS: Let us hope, Thetis, that your heart is enough. Now Hermes, it starts with you. Send a message to my daughter in Troy that what she has done will change history forever! Make her understand that all that shall proceed is to be blamed on her and her choices!

HERMES: Yes, great Zeus! Aeolus, give me a strong tailwind to make my journey even swifter!

AEOLUS: It is done! *(HE gestures, WIND SOUND is heard, HERMES exits.)*

ZEUS: Now, Athena, I leave this battle to you. Pick your players and let my greatest story begin!

ATHENA: I shall begin this battle in Troy, but I will bring ones from Greece to fight in it! I shall bring the best warrior I know to this place. I shall bring my beloved Odysseus from Ithaca. He shall be our finest player in this battle. He will gain new strength and title. As for the battle itself, it shall be remembered forever as the Trojan War! *(BLACKOUT)*

**End of Scene**

**Scene 2**

*(AT RISE: In Ithaca. EURYKLEIA, PENELOPE, YOUNG TELEMACHUS, and ANTICLUS are present.)*

EURYKLEIA: *(Runs in.)* Where is he? Where is he hiding?

PENELOPE: What has he done now?

EURYKLEIA: That son of yours has knocked over the tub of olives the villagers spent all day picking!

PENELOPE: Oh no! Were you watching him?

EURYKLEIA: I do not have eyes in the back of my head to watch him when he seems to be in three places at once!

ANTICLUS: *(Laughing.)* The energy of my grandchild makes me exhausted just hearing about it.

PENELOPE: Eurykleia, I did not mean any insult to your care-taking, but he is at that age, and he is the son of Odysseus.

EURYKLEIA: Being the son of anyone does not give you the pleasure of being a brat!

ANTICLUS: Watch your tongue, good woman. That boy will one day be your master!

PENELOPE: Let me find him and talk to him about his manners and his spirit.

EURYKLEIA: I do not mean to sound so harsh, but I am tired and need to rest.

PENELOPE: Rest then. I will find Telemachus and tend to him.

EURYKLEIA: Thank you, ma'am, thank you. *(Reaches into her pocket for handkerchief and pulls out frog.)* Aughhhhh!

ANTICLUS: Enough of this screaming. It is just a frog!

PENELOPE: And I think I know how it got in that pocket!

EURYKLEIA: I ... I ... need air, and a nap, and a cold rag, and a ... drink!

*(SHE exit; PENELOPE and ANTICLUS laugh.)*

ANTICLUS: That son of yours will be the death of that woman!

PENELOPE: I must talk with his father about this behavior.

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ANTICLUS: Rubbish! He is as a young tiger. He needs to roam and explore. A little mischief makes for greater character, you'll see. You should have seen Odysseus as this age! Took three such nurses just for him to reach the age of five! *(Reaches into basket of sewing and pulls out a snake. She gasps.)*

PENELOPE: Be still, Mother. Don't startle it! It may strike!

TELEMACHUS: *(Enters.)* Oh! There you are, you silly snake! *(Takes snake from ANTICLUS.)* I thought I had lost you! Hello, Mother, hello, Nana!

PENELOPE: Telemachus, that snake is poisonous!

TELEMACHUS: Not if you don't anger him. He likes me!

ANTICLUS: Oh, Telemachus, you almost lost your nana!

PENELOPE: Apologize immediately, young man!

TELEMACHUS: I am sorry; I don't know how he got in there!

ANTICLUS: It is all right, my boy! *(Hugs HIM.)* I know I am alive now!

PENELOPE: Telemachus, your nurse is beside herself from all your antics today! What has gotten into you?

TELEMACHUS: Father is coming home today!

PENELOPE: What? No, he will be away for a very long time.

TELEMACHUS: But she told me he is coming home!

ANTICLUS: Who told you, child? Eurykleia?

TELEMACHUS: No, the beautiful warrior woman who appeared to me on the hill.

ANTICLUS: *(Whispers.)* Athena ....

PENELOPE: What did she tell you ... exactly?

TELEMACHUS: That Father's ship is in the bay and he will be seen soon over the horizon. She also told me to spend as much time with him as I could, before he ....

PENELOPE: Before he ... what?

ODYSSEUS: *(Enters.)* Before he takes a very long, well-deserved sleep!

PENELOPE: Odysseus!

TELEMACHUS: Father! *(Runs to HIM.)*

ANTICLUS: My son is home!

ODYSSEUS: I never will get over returning to the beauty of Ithaca. The land and the women! *(Hugs PENELOPE.)*



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PENELOPE: But how did you get here so soon? A messenger was sent that you still were at battle.

ODYSSEUS: The great wing god Eurus of the east winds did put a mighty force to my sail! My ship traveled at speeds like I have never seen. Alas, I am here, safe and sound!

TELEMACHUS: Can we go hunting, Father? Will you teach me to catch lions? Can we go out on your ship? When will you show me how to sail? Can we go swimming in the deep sea? What did you bring me?

ODYSSEUS: How you have grown in height and mouth! Yes, we can do all those things! I am home for a very long time! And yes, I brought you something. Go fetch it. It is on the shore wrapped in a skin.

TELEMACHUS: Oh boy! What is it? What is it? *(Exits.)*

ANTICLUS: Ithaca has missed you, my child. I have missed you. *(Hugs HIM.)* You look more like your father each time you come home.

ODYSSEUS: I wish he could have met Telemachus. He is my greatest pride and joy!

ANTICLUS: He sees him, my son. He sees.

ODYSSEUS: My beautiful Penelope, how are you?

PENELOPE: Ithaca is not the same without you. It sleeps and waits patiently. But now it can awake and rejoice!

*(TELEMACHUS returns with wrapped gift.)*

TELEMACHUS: What is it, Father?

ODYSSEUS: Open it.

TELEMACHUS: It's a bow! It is so beautiful and big!

ODYSSEUS: I fought and won my last battle with this bow! And when you are big enough, I will show you how to string it. Then it will be yours!

TELEMACHUS: Can we go hunt with it now? Let's go catch a tiger or a lion!

PENELOPE: Telemachus, your father must rest and eat. There is time for all that hunting another day!

*(EURYKLEIA enters.)*

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EURYKLEIA: Oh great master, you are home! It is good to see you!

ODYSSEUS: You as well. My son looks in great health, thank you for that!

EURYKLEIA: Oh, of course sir. No problem at all. He is a gift of the gods!

TELEMACHUS: Eurykleia, let's go hunt for wild game for Father! He is hungry and needs to eat. Come on!

EURYKLEIA: Wild game?! Of course ... of course, how fun. Telemachus, lead the way!

*(THEY exit, OTHERS laugh.)*

ODYSSEUS: Find me and wake me in 6 hours. I need to walk and nap in my homeland!

PENELOPE: Of course, my love. *(SHE exits with ANTICLUS.)*

ODYSSEUS: This country land is beautiful. I will never leave it again.

*(ODYSSEUS lies down; the SPIRIT of his father appears.)*

LAERTES: Odysseus! Wake up, my son!

ODYSSEUS: Father? Is that you?

LAERTES: Yes. I have come to tell you how proud I am of you. You have grown into a great man!

ODYSSEUS: Father, where are you? Are you at peace?

LAERTES: Yes, my son, I was. But things are happening. Things that will change the future of your happiness.

ODYSSEUS: What kind of things?

LAERTES: The gods are restless and have such plans for so many fates.

ODYSSEUS: My family, will they be harmed?

LAERTES: You must be strong, my son, you must be prepared.

ODYSSEUS: Is it my death, or a battle, illness...? Please tell me, Father, please!

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LAERTES: I will be in your heart forever more. I am so proud of you. Please take care of your mother and let her know how much I miss her. Telemachus looks so much like you, you should be very proud. Goodbye, my son! *(Exits.)*

ODYSSEUS: Father, wait! Father! Was he really here? I need sleep. I must rest and regain my sanity.

*(HE lies down. ATHENA appears.)*

ATHENA: Odysseus ... Odysseus ... wake up. Wake up, my brave warrior.

ODYSSEUS: Athena ... is it you?

ATHENA: Yes, Odysseus, I am here. You must wake and hear my words. They are words of war and the future.

ODYSSEUS: I just returned from battle. It is time for me to grow old, and watch my children and the children after them. I am King of Ithaca, and this is where I need to be.

ATHENA: No, Odysseus, you are wrong. There is a greater plan for you. One planned by the gods themselves. Let me tell you of your future. The story begins here with us ....

**End of Scene**

**Scene 3**

*(AT RISE: Lights up on ZEUS on elevated platform.)*

ZEUS: Here is my beautiful daughter, Helen. All that gaze upon her shall want her for their own. She must be wed to a king. I will give her hand to the King of Sparta, Menelaus.

*(HELEN enters.)*

HELEN: Father, I know you are here. I can sense you in this room. Thank you, Father, for all you have done for me growing up. I am ready for my destiny to be complete.

ZEUS: Oh great Helen, you are more beautiful than your mother, and more kind than the dove of peace. I have great plans for you. Plans that will put you in the history books! You shall become a queen!

HELEN: To be the daughter of Zeus is the greatest honor I can imagine. To be queen is only second to that.

ZEUS: Look to the east. It is there that a city of Sparta awaits.  
*(Begins to exit.)*

HELEN: Sparta? I have never heard of this place. And who shall I wed that will make me a queen?

ZEUS: You, my greatest treasure, shall marry the King of Sparta, Menelaus.

HELEN: But I do not know him.

ZEUS: It is my wish and you shall obey! *(Exits.)*

HELEN: Father! Father, you cannot make me ... I love another.

*(PARIS enters.)*

PARIS: Helen! You are here!

HELEN: Paris, you cannot come here. My father will forbid it.

PARIS: I love you, Helen. Come away with me.

HELEN: Please, Paris, you must go. I do not want any harm to come to you. If my father wants me to wed, then I must.

PARIS: Helen ....

HELEN: Go, Paris. If you love me, you will listen to me.

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*(LIGHTS dim, then up on ATHENA.)*

ATHENA: Helen did go on and marry the King Menelaus. All was well and all was as Zeus planned ... until ....

*(LIGHTS up on KING MENELAUS, HELEN, and PALAMEDES.)*

KING MENELAUS: Helen, on this day I give to you the city of Sparta! You are my wife and my queen!

PALAMEDES: Why do you not smile, Queen Helen? You have all of Sparta at your feet. You should be happy at such an honor!

HELEN: I am happy, dear Palamedes. I cannot gather my feeling at this time.

KING MENELAUS: Leave her be, Palamedes. Helen is young. She will one day know what the crown can do for a woman of Sparta.

*(LIGHTS dim, then up on APHRODITE.)*

APHRODITE: Helen did find out the price of the crown. Her love given to her by me, the goddess Aphrodite, overpowered her conscience and soon dear Helen did not care about her father's wishes. Her love for Paris from Troy was stronger than her honor.

*(LIGHTS up on HELEN.)*

HELEN: I am so sorry, Father, I cannot play this role any longer!

*(PARIS enters.)*

PARIS: Helen, come with me. We will flee this place and live happily together in Troy.

HELEN: I love you, Paris, and I will follow you anywhere.

*(THEY exit. LIGHTS dim, then up on ATHENA.)*

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ATHENA: So from this moment the times had changed forever. King Menelaus, became enraged upon learning what his new queen had done.

*(LIGHTS up on KING.)*

KING: *(Screams.)* How dare her! We will seize this city of Troy! She will come back to me if I have to destroy every Trojan in Greece!

PALEMEDES: My king, we will need strong and clever men to fight such a battle!

KING: I will prey to the goddess Athena for such power! She will bring unto me the men of such a deed!

PALAMEDES: *(Whispers.)* All this for a woman? *(BLACKOUT)*

**End of Scene**

**Scene 4**

*(AT RISE: LIGHTS up on ATHENA and ODYSSEUS.)*

ATHENA: So, Odysseus, this is where you come into the story.

ODYSSEUS: Why do you bring me into this, Athena?

ATHENA: Because you are the warrior needed for such a battle. You have the strength and wisdom to bring Troy to its knees.

ODYSSEUS: I don't need this position; I have Ithaca and my family.

ATHENA: Come with me, Odysseus, and I shall make your name one spoken for generations upon generations.

ODYSSEUS: I have no need for such fame and glory.

ATHENA: But history has such a need!

ODYSSEUS: How long will I be gone? Gone from my homeland?

ATHENA: Time has no meaning on the fields of battle.

ODYSSEUS: Let me say goodbye to my family, and I will leave for Troy. *(Exits.)*

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ATHENA: The following day King Menelaus, and his servant Palamedes came to Ithaca to escort Odysseus to Troy.

*(LIGHTS up on ODYSSEUS, MENELAUS, and PALAMEDES.)*

KING: Odysseus, we are here to order you to Troy, to bring back my beloved Helen.

ODYSSEUS: But what if she does not want to return?

PALAMEDES: That is no concern of yours, Odysseus. You are being asked by the king. You need no other information.

ODYSSEUS: I am getting old and feeble. Find a younger man.

PALAMEDES: Odysseus! How dare you ....

KING: Enough, Palamedes! Odysseus, I have asked the goddess Athena whom to send on such a mission. She spoke your name to me.

ODYSSEUS: I know, I know. I will miss Ithaca. I have only just returned.

PALAMEDES: You shall be back again, after defeating Troy.

KING: The faster you end this battle, the faster I will again have my Helen, and you your homeland.

ODYSSEUS: One man against an entire city?

KING: We shall gather the strongest men the gods have created to fight with you!

PALAMEDES: Come now, we must go!

*(THEY exit. ATHENA returns.)*

ATHENA: King Menelaus did gather the strongest men. Joining our fair Odysseus was the powerful Agamemnon, brother of King Menelaus, and the legendary Achilles. Achilles was mothered by the sea nymph, Thetis. As a child he was held by his heel and dipped into sacred water to protect him from harm. Laocoon was a soothsayer, and made predictions of what was to be.

*(Enter AGAMEMNON, ACHILLES, ODYSSEUS, and LAOCOON.)*

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