

BY ZEUS! OLYMPUS' NEXT TOP HERO

By Lavinia Roberts

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A One Act Comedy

by Lavinia Roberts

SYNOPSIS: Various ancient Greek heroes and heroines compete on the reality show *Olympus' Next Top Hero*. Hosted by sun god Apollo, stage managed by goddess of wisdom Athena, and judged by huntress Artemis, lord of the dead Hades, and queen of the gods Hera, mortals and immortals alike compete to be *Olympus' Next Top Hero*! The judges don't really believe that Perseus has the head of Medusa in his sack and he can't vindicate himself without turning the entire audience to stone. The Furies scare away hero Theseus. Hercules has little time to discuss his Heroic deeds as he is chased by his adoring fans. The Muses think that they should win, because what could be more heroic than inspiring the arts? In the end, it seems that perhaps the stage manager, goddess of wisdom, Athena, might be the unsung hero behind every great Greek hero.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(11-22 females, 3-4 males, 0-5 either, 0-10 extras)

APOLLO (m).....	Host. God of music, prophecy, poetry, and healing. <i>(75 lines)</i>
ATHENA (f).....	Goddess of wisdom. And a highly efficient stage manager. <i>(35 lines)</i>
ARTEMIS (f).....	Judge. Goddess of the hunt. <i>(33 lines)</i>
HADES (m).....	Judge. Ruler of the Underworld, disgruntled and overworked. <i>(28 lines)</i>
HERA (f).....	Judge. Queen of the gods. <i>(49 lines)</i>
IRIS (f).....	Messenger goddess, Hera's personal assistant. <i>(14 lines)</i>
ATLANTA (f).....	Runner and star athlete. Always on the go. <i>(6 lines)</i>
PENTHESILEA (f).....	Amazon warrior. <i>(5 lines)</i>

HIPPOLYTA (f).....	Hippolyta is a queen of the Amazons. (5 lines)
ANTIOPE (f).....	Amazon, easily bored. (4 lines)
ANDROMACHE (f).....	Amazon, looking for a fight. (7 lines)
CLETE (f).....	Amazon, fearsome warrior. (4 lines)
APHRODITE (f).....	Aeneas mother; coming in on his behalf. (9 lines)
MEDEA (f).....	Jason's ex-girlfriend. (5 lines)
PERSEUS (m).....	A valiant hero. (9 lines)
TISIPHONE (f).....	Fury of avenging murder. (7 lines)
MEGAERA (f).....	Fury, very jealous. (4 lines)
ALECTO (f).....	Fury, always angry. (5 lines)
HERCULES (m).....	Hero. Best-selling author and super-strong guy. (4 lines)
FAN 1 (m/f).....	The leader of the crazed Hercules's fans. (9 lines)
FAN 2 (m/f).....	Knows pretty much everything about Hercules. (3 lines)
FAN 3 (m/f).....	Just trying to get Hercules's autograph. (6 lines)
FAN 4 (m/f).....	Is way too excited. (7 lines)
FAN 5 (m/f).....	Knows way too much about Hercules. (8 lines)
CALLIOPE (f).....	Muse of epic poetry. (4 lines)
CLIO (f).....	Muse of history. (4 lines)
EUTERPE (f).....	Muse of music, song, and lyric poetry. (6 lines)
MELPOMENE (f).....	Muse of tragedy Melpomene. (5 lines)
TERPSICHORE (f).....	Muse of dance. (5 lines)
THALIA (f).....	Muse of comedy. (9 lines)
CIRCE (f).....	Witch. A caterer. (4 lines)
EXTRAS (m/f).....	Optional. Amazons, Fans, or 3 Muses. (Non-Speaking)

CAST DOUBLING: The roles of HERA, APOLLO, ATHENA, HADES, IRIS, and ARTEMIS, cannot be double cast. The rest of the characters can be double cast. For example, the actresses who play the AMAZONS could also play APHRODITE, THE FURIES, FANS, and/or THE MUSES. The actor playing PERSUAS could also play HERCULES.

DURATION: 35 minutes.

SETTING: A TV studio in Mount Olympus.

TIME: Ancient Greece, a time of mythical monsters, powerful deities with big personalities, and heroes.

SET

The set for this production is pretty simple. Set up the stage with a host stand and a row of three stools diagonally on one side of the stage. These stools are where the judges will sit. You can always embellish the set. Examples; a glittery banner or poster on that says *Olympus' Next Top Hero* or Grecian columns.

PROPS

- ☐ Clipboard (ATHENA)
- ☐ Hera's Large Purse – Contains: perfume, lip gloss, nail file, compact mirror, peacock fan, hand lotion, and breath mints. (IRIS)
- ☐ Bag Containing Medusa's Head. [You can have a basketball or other head-sized object.] (PERSUAS)
- ☐ Cell Phone (HADES)
- ☐ Book (HERCULES)
- ☐ Cue Cards – optional (APOLLO)
- ☐ Hercules Merchandise [posters, books, signs] (FANS)
- ☐ Cards with the Roman Numerals: IV, X (ARTEMIS)
- ☐ Cards with the Roman Numerals: 0, VI, X (HERA)
- ☐ Cards with the Roman Numerals: III, IV, VI, X (HADES)

COSTUMES

APOLLO – Dashing and dapper; preferably gold. He is a sun god after all.

As he is the god of music and poetry, perhaps he is dressed like a rockstar.

ATHENA – A total nerd; a tweed suit, glasses, a pocket protector, or other geeky attire.

ARTEMIS – Hunting camo or attired with hard-core hiking gear. Could have bow and arrow.

HADES – A dark, preferably black business suit.

HERA – An elegant evening gown of royal blue or purple; try to incorporate peacock feathers, if you can. A tiara or other showy jewelry.

IRIS – Very rainbow. She's a rainbow goddess.

ATLANTA – Sweatbands, running shoes and athletic clothes.

AMAZONS – Army cameo, punks, or as biker babes.

APHRODITE – A fashionable red or pink dress.

CIRCE – Fashionable witch garb, evil looking enchantress dress with a witches' hat.

MEDEA – Another fashionable, elegant and evil looking gown. Could have a handkerchief to dramatically dab her eyes.

PERSEUS – Athletic shorts and shirt.

FURIES – Evil witches; dark robes or dresses.

HERCULES – Athletic shorts and shirts. Lion skin if possible.

FANS – I love Hercules t-shirts, baseball caps, buttons, etc. They are also nature spirits so you also can play that up when creating their costumes and doing their make-up. Maybe a few garlands made from fake flowers or floral print clothing, etc.

CALLIOPE – A Byronic-looking blouse and pants. She's a poet.

CLIO – Very bookish. Glasses, cardigan, tweed skirt. Anything that says frumpy librarian. Could carry a book.

EUTERPE – Like a rockstar. Try and match her costume to how she sings. (Ex. if she sings like a country singer, have her dress like one. Sings like Elvis? Dress like the king.)

MELPOMENE – Beret and black turtleneck for this drama queen.

TERPSICHORE – A tutu or other dancing garb.

THALIA – Like a stand-up comic or a clown.

PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGING: Make sure the characters are in a straight line or diagonal line, their bodies turned towards the audience at all times. Contestants can stand next to the host on the other side of the stage. Feel free to have some characters enter and exit from the audience.

Feel free to make the scenes where Hercules is being chased by the Fans a comedic moment. They can make a big show of it looking like they are running by lightly jogging and flailing their arms and moving their knees higher than they normally do when running.

ACTING: These characters have big personalities. Encourage actors to make big acting choices.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Feel free to contact the playwright if you have any questions about the production, have a funny anecdote (*we love those*), quirky photographs of the performance (*we love those, too*), or just need emotional support (*we understand*). Most importantly, have fun! This is a fun show, with the potential for wacky costumes and big acting choices! Break a leg!

AT RISE: *APOLLO is at the host stand.*

APOLLO: Gods and goddesses, naiads and dryads, satyrs and centaurs, demi-gods and gorgons, welcome to tonight's show, *Olympus' Next Top Hero*, the reality show where Greek heros and heroines compete to be Olympus' next top hero. We're filming live from Mount Olympus, home of the gods. I'm your host, Apollo, god of music, poetry, healing, and prophecy. And as the god of prophecy, I can predict, that we have a great lineup of heroes for you tonight! We will certainly hear tales of daring feats, epic battles with deadly monsters, and perilous voyages. But first, let's introduce our judges. Athena!

ATHENA: *(Enters, holding a clipboard.)* Hey, Apollo.

APOLLO: The judges ready?

ATHENA: Yes, they are standing by.

APOLLO: You're the best stage manager a god could ask for! And certainly the most overqualified, being the goddess of wisdom and all.

ATHENA: Always glad to assist. *(Exits.)*

APOLLO: She's the goddess of the Hunt. She's a woodland wild child. All the single ladies, let's give it up for my twin sis, the stealthy, the strong, the lovely lunar goddess, and athletic archer, Artemis. Let's give the goddess a round of applause folks!

ARTEMIS: *(Enters.)* This better be fast! I was in the middle of tracking a stag!

APOLLO: Well, we'll get your back to the woods as soon as possible.

ARTEMIS: Good. *(Sits down on a stool.)*

APOLLO: Now, it's time for our next judge. He's the god of riches from the earth, but he has a much darker, less glittery side. Let's give a warm round of applause to the Lord of Darkness, the god of the dead, ruler of the Underworld, let's clap those hands for Hades. Hades, come on out!

HADES: *(Enters, on his cell phone.)* Yes. Persephone. Yes, the boulder is supposed to roll back down again after he pushed it up to the top of the hill. Yes, it is futile and backbreaking work. Uh huh. Uh huh. Well, it's excruciating torment for all eternity, dearest. He's in Tartarus after all. It's not a day at the chariot races, honey. Well, you don't have to jog through Tartarus. Just keep your route

to Elysian Fields. Uh, huh Uh, huh. Persephone? Sweetie? By Zeus! Getting cell phone reception to the Underworld is the worst!

APOLLO: Great to see you. Glad you could join us.

HADES: Thank Zeus, not me. Lord lightning bolts told me that I would be judging tonight. Not a please or a would you mind terribly. Just another thankless, unpaid miserable job! Why not give it to good old Hades? Not like he is trying to run an entire Underworld. You know how many people die a day? Over 200,000. How many boats do I have to get these 200,000 souls across the river Styx? One. That's right. One. Is it mechanized you asked? No! A ferryman! That's right! One ferryman. And that old skeleton, Charon, is nothing but a pile of sass and bones. Not to mention Cerberus. Who has to clean up all that giant dog poo? Provide kibbles and bits to those three heads two times a day? Good old Hades. That's who!

APOLLO: Yes, well, have a seat please, Hades...

HADES sits down on a stool.

APOLLO: And now for our final judge. This malicious warmonger has an overwhelming, insatiable desire for battle. He is destructive, man-slaughtering, and thirsty for blood. This warrior is always armed and ready to rumble. Please clap those hands for the one, the only Ares! God of war! Let's hear that applause folks.

HERA enters. ATHENA enters following behind HERA.

ATHENA: I tried to talk to her, Apollo...

HERA: Good evening!

APOLLO: Hera? Your majesty! What are you doing here?

HERA: Well, there was a competition for *Olympus' Next Top Hero*, so I just thought I might stop by and do a little judging...

APOLLO: But Ares...he's the god of war...a true warrior.

ARTEMIS: You? A judge? I'm a judge because of my skill as a tracker, as well as, my prowess as an archer.

HADES: I rule over Elysian Fields, where heroes and heroines go when they die, so I know a thing or two about what it means to be a hero.

ARTEMIS: What makes you qualified to judge a heroes' competition?

You are the goddess of marriage.

HERA: Who's the queen of the gods?

ATHENA: Yes, well, please have a seat!

APOLLO: Welcome!

ARTEMIS: My, you are looking very elegant tonight!

HADES: Have you lost weight? That hairdo is so slimming.

HERA: You think?

HADES: A vision of loveliness!

ARTEMIS: Who wants to hunt when they can bask in such radiance!

HERA sits down on a stool. IRIS enters carrying a large purse.

HERA: This is my personal assistant. Iris. She'll be assisting me. Nail file.

IRIS takes nail file out of the purse and hands it to HERA, who starts filing.

APOLLO: I thought Iris created rainbows and was a messenger goddess?

IRIS: I still create rainbows and deliver messages. But I am more of a fashion consultant, life coach – publicist these days. I help Hera with her Twitter [or current social media site] handle.

APOLLO: Hera is on Twitter [or current social media site]?

IRIS: Get with the times. Everyone who is someone is on Twitter [or current social media site].

ARTEMIS: I'm not on Twitter [or current social media site].

IRIS: Like I said, everyone who is someone is on Twitter [or current social media site].

HADES: I only have three followers on Twitter [or current social media site]. And they are the three Fates.

IRIS: Well, I can definitely try and help you revamp your image. Starting with the wardrobe. This whole somber, austere color palette has to go. Less black, more vibrant color.

ATHENA: You can give Hades a fashion consultation later. Apollo, is it time to introduce our first contestant?

APOLLO nods.

ATHENA: I'll tell her to standby. *(Exits.)*

APOLLO: She's a world class athlete and hunter. Raised by a she-bear, she was just as fearsome as her adoptive mother. This princess enjoys competing in athletic events and spending time in nature.

ARTEMIS: Sounds like my kind of gal.

APOLLO: Let's give it up for Atlanta!

ATLANTA enters jogging. She jogs in place.

APOLLO: So Atlanta, I understand you are quite the athlete?

ATLANTA: That's right! I've won a quite a few wrestling competitions.

HERA: What interests do you have?

ATLANTA: Running. Archery. Wrestling. *(Starts doing jumping jacks.)*

APOLLO: So, you training for something in particular?

ATLANTA: Well, I decreed that anyone who could outrun me, I'll marry—so have to stay on top of my game. *(Does some push-ups.)*

APOLLO: I see.

ATLANTA: Hey - I usually give them a head start of half the distance of the race. And I wear heavy armour while I run. It's not my fault these slow pokes keep trying to get my hand in marriage!

ARTEMIS: Exactly!

APOLLO: Well, why should you be the winner of *Olympus' Next Top Hero*?

ATLANTA: *(Does a few jumping jacks, throwing a few punches in place or kickboxing moves, before jogging in place again.)* I can out hunt anyone. I've defeated evil centaurs. I'm fearsome in battle. I'm a wrestling champion. I'm the fastest mortal alive.

APOLLO: Well, sounds like you are quite a heroine.

IRIS: She could use a fashion consultation. To spruce up her brand.

ARTEMIS: She has her priorities straight. Hunting, being a star athlete.

ATLANTA: Look, I gotta run! I need to do some serious training. I have another race this afternoon. With some chump named

Melanon. He's going to need the help of a god or goddess to defeat me, that's for sure!

APOLLO: Well, let's give a round of applause for our contestant, Atlanta.

ATLANTA waves goodbye and exits jogging.

HERA: Iris. Perfume.

IRIS takes nail file from HERA. IRIS puts it away in the purse and gets out perfume and hands perfume to HERA. HERA pretends to spray herself with perfume. She hands it back to IRIS, she puts it away in the purse. ATHENA enters.

APOLLO: Alright judges, on a scale of one to ten what do you give Atlanta?

ARTEMIS: *(Holds up X card.)* Perfect 10! She's a huntress, with a love of nature. My kind of heroine!

APOLLO: What do you say Lord of Darkness?

HADES: She's a great athlete, but what has she done to serve others and help those in need? I'm giving Atlanta a 3. *(Holds up III card.)*

APOLLO: A perfect 10 and a 3? What do you say Hera?

HERA: I like her strength, stamina, and superhuman speed, but she hasn't really been on any dangerous voyages, or defeated that many monsters. *(Holds up VI card.)* I'll give her a six. She has the makings of a real heroine, but needs more heroic deeds under her belt for a higher score.

ATHENA: Apollo, ready for the next contestant? Or should I say contestants. They insisted on entering the competition together.

APOLLO: Send them this way! These ladies live for battle! They are fearsome, fearless, and daughters of the god of war himself, Ares. Let's give it up for Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, and her sister Penthesilea, along with her band of Amazon sisters.

AMAZONS enters.

HADES: Ladies, this is *Olympus' New Top Hero*, not heroes.

PENTHESILEA: Amazons stick together, isn't that right, sisters?

Other AMAZONS nod in agreement.

ANDROMACHE: *(To particular audience member.)* Hey! What are you looking at!?

CLETE: He's not worth it, Andromache.

ANDROMACHE: Yeah, you better look away!

IRIS: That's an amazing girdle you're wearing Hippolyta. If you don't mind me asking, where did you get it? It totally looks designer.

HIPPOLYTA: Ares, the god of war, gave it to me.

APOLLO: Welcome to *Olympus' Next Top Hero*!

ANTIOPE: Let's make this fast! I want to go practice archery.

ARTEMIS: Tell me about it!

HERA: Tell us a little about yourself. What are your hobbies?

PENTHESILEA: Well, I think I can speak for the group when I say we love horseback riding.

Other AMAZONS nod in agreement.

ANTIOPE: Fishing. Hunting. Mounted archery.

ANDROMACHE: Yeah, it doesn't get any better than horseback riding and archery!

HIPPOLYTA: Practicing with my long spear.

PENTHESILEA: I'm more of a short javelin girl myself, but I've been branching out. Recently, I've been using a battle axe.

ANDROMACHE: Shining my bronze circular shield. Practicing with my club.

CLETE: I enjoy feasting, athletic contests, and long walks on the beach. What?

HERA: Tell us more about your heroic deeds?

PENTHESILEA: We are cunning trackers.

ARTEMIS: Excellent!

HIPPOLYTA: We are victorious on the battlefield.

ANDROMACHE: Hey, you! Yes, you! You have a problem? I am not warning you again.

CLETE: Don't pay attention to him, Andromache.

HADES: Why should you be Olympus' next top hero?

PENTHESILEA: We're strong, fierce – loyal.

HIPPOLYTA: We're fearsome fighters. We have fought valiantly in various battles.

CLETE: We have outsmarted those who have attempted to capture us.

ANDROMACHE: We are feared by all. *(To audience member.)* You hear that? Yes, you! Don't pretend you don't know who you are!

ANTIOPE: Are we almost done with this competition? I'm ready for a really long horseback ride.

APOLLO: Thank you, my wonderful warrior friends. Now the judges will deliberate.

ANTIOPE: Does this mean we can go?

HIPPOLYTA: Come, my brave band of sisters.

ALL AMAZONS exit stage, except for ANDROMACHE.

ANDROMACHE: *(To audience member.)* After the show. Watch your back! *(Exits.)*

APOLLO: Alright judges, so what are you going to award the Amazons?

ARTEMIS: I love them. They are fierce, fearless females. I'm going to have to give them a perfect 10. *(Holds up X card.)*

APOLLO: Alright Lord of the Dead, what are you going to give this clan of warrior women?

HADES: Well, I liked how sisterly they were to each other. They treated each other like siblings should. They didn't say, I'll be the Lord of the Sky, Poseidon gets the ocean, and you brother – you get the Underworld. That's right. You get to hang out all day in complete darkness with dead people.

APOLLO: Yes, well, what score are you going to give them?

HADES: These are powerful warriors, but I needed to hear more about their daring exploits. How have they made the world of the living a better place? I'm going to have to go with a 6. *(Holds up VI card.)*

APOLLO: And you, Hera?

HERA: Well, I loved these ladies. They are fashionable, fierce, and fabulous. But I'm with Hades on this. I need to hear more tales of how they helped others. I'm going to have to give them a 6 too. *(Holds up VI card.)*

APOLLO: Alright, so the Amazons are in the lead with a score 22, and Atlanta in second place with a score of 20. Now, let's welcome our next contestant.

APHRODITE enters. ATHENA enters following APHRODITE.

ATHENA: Look, you aren't scheduled on the line up! You can't come on stage!

APHRODITE: Excuse me! Am I interrupting anything?

ATHENA: Yes. The show. Obviously. Please leave or I will have to ask the Furies to escort you off the stage. And believe me. You don't want to get on the wrong side of those ladies.

APOLLO: Why, Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty!

APHRODITE: Apollo! Darling!

APOLLO: Aphrodite! How lovely to see you!

ATHENA: So I take it that I am not supposed to call the Furies?

APOLLO: Call the Furies? Certainly not! Really, Athena!

ATHENA: Whatever! (*Exits.*)

HERA: What is she doing here?

APHRODITE: Is this *Olympus' Next Top Hero*?

APOLLO: Why as a matter of fact, yes, yes it is. I am the host.

HERA: Sorry, Aphrodite. It's not *Olympus' Next Top Airhead*.

APHRODITE: You aren't still upset over that little apple incident are you, Hera? I can't help the fact that Paris, chose me as the most beautiful out of all the goddesses. I am the goddess of love and beauty after all.

ARTEMIS: As I remember, that little apple incident caused the Trojan War. Nice going ladies.

APHRODITE: Actually, speaking of the Trojan War, I was hoping I could talk about my son, Aeneas. He is quite the hero.

HERA: Yeah, because when the going gets tough in battle, mommy was always there to bail Aeneas out.

APHRODITE: He survived an encounter with Achilles.

HERA: Yeah, because you swooped in to protect him.

APHRODITE: Aeneas is brave, handsome, loyal, an excellent strategem. Hector took a lot of credit for the battles, that Aeneas helped win.

HERA: Aka mommy helped win. Iris, can I have my fan? I can hardly stay awake.

IRIS takes fan out of the purse and hands it to HERA. HERA pretends to yawn and fans herself.

APHRODITE: He is really a lovely young man.

APOLLO: I'm sure he is, Aphrodite.

APHRODITE: He couldn't be here. On a voyage. You know, hero stuff. Just thought I would pop in and fill you in on him. Well, I better be on my way!

APHRODITE blows a kiss and exits. HERA hands IRIS the fan back. IRIS puts the fan away in the purse or fans HERA for a while until HERA motions for IRIS to stop.

APOLLO: Well judges, what score do we give this Aeneas? Sounds like an excellent candidate for *Olympus' Next Top Hero*.

ARTEMIS: (Holds up IV card.) A four. What?

APOLLO: Only a 4?

ARTEMIS: Sounds like just another warrior prince to me.

APOLLO: Hades?

HADES: Again, not that impressed. Not a fan of the Trojan War. A 4.
(Holds up IV card.)

APOLLO: I can't believe it! A 4, really? Hera, surely you have a score that reflects the bravery, intelligence, and courage of Aeneas.

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