

---

# Athena and Arachne



I'm a really good weaver. The *best*, in point of fact. In the *world*. In the *history* of the world.

Not that I'm *boasting* or anything. For one thing, it's just a *proven fact*. I, Arachne, took on the goddess of weaving and I *wiped the floor* with her.

For another thing, *I never boast*. Not any more. Something a bit... *drastic*... happened to me the last time I did.

Not that I'm complaining. I'm still weaving, aren't I? Just as brilliantly as ever I did. *That's* all that matters.

Just look at the loveliness of all those threads *I've* fastened together to make one shining whole!

Yes, *weaving*, that's the thing. You won't mind if I bustle away spin-spin-spinning while I tell you exactly how I ended up in this... *interesting condition*? You're clearly *dying* to know...

---

\* \* \* \* \*

Well, there I was, the young maiden Arachne, *unsurpassed*. Combing out snagged and thistle-like wool. Spinning smooth wool into yarn on my spindle. Dying yarn with woad or yarrow or indigo. Interlacing all the bright yarns on my loom until they formed one fabulous cloth.

From a king's tapestry to a kid's mittens, *all* my work was vivid. Original. *Perfect*, every single thread of it.

Had my own workshop by the time I was fourteen. Not that I cared about the money I was raking in. Just about seeing the miracle of fabric grow under my hands.

*Legions* of admirers flooding in by the time I was sixteen.

Never-ending *chorus* of admiration from all and sundry. Not that I listened to a word they said as I sat whistling at my work.

But it was funny, them hustling and jostling each other to get close to me. Wrestling and scheming and *begging* to get a cloak or even just a hanky...

I couldn't have woven a less-than-splendid bit of cloth if my life depended on it.

---

Alright, so *perhaps* it all went to my head a *bit*. Perhaps I indulged in a certain amount of well-earned boasting. Maybe... just maybe... I said something along the lines of ‘Even the goddess Athena can’t weave as well as me!’

Well, she *can’t*.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes, of course I should have realised who the nasty old woman was. When she bustled into my workshop and let rip about ‘respect for the gods’ of all things!

Of course I didn’t listen to a word – I was wrestling with a new bedspread of lime-green and ochre zig-zags.

At last I suggested that the old bat might like to take her belly-aching elsewhere. That was when she threw off her plain cloak, shed the grey hair and wrinkles... and proclaimed herself to be *the Goddess Athena!*

Oops.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Arachne,’ says the goddess, all stern and scary, ‘have you got anything you’d like to say to me?’

‘Not really, Your Majesty,’ I say, fairly politely. ‘I’m

---

just hastening to finish this lovely bedspread.’

‘So sorry to interrupt,’ says the goddess, bristling. ‘But do you not wish to offer an apology for the reckless untruths you have been spreading?’

‘Uh?’ I say. (I was distracted – the whole lime-green-and-ochre thing wasn’t working out as well as planned.)

‘Grovel to me, you worm of a mortal!’ screeches Athena. ‘Beg pardon on your KNEES for claiming to be a greater weaver than me! ME, the Goddess of Wisdom and the Arts! That’s ALL the arts INCLUDING WEAVING, you puffed-up creature!’

‘Oh... yeah...’ I say, absently, as I think about giving the bedspread a shocking-pink-and-black border. ‘Er, no offence, but hey, I *am* the better weaver so what’s the big deal? I mean, just look at that cloak of yours! If you’re going for boring old grey it should at least have a bit of a sheen to it. Perhaps some silver threads –’

‘RIGHT! That DOES it!’ spits Athena. ‘Prove your boasts, or may Hades, God of the Underworld, have mercy on your soul for I shall not!’

So I merrily accept a weaving contest, completely failing to notice the chasm gaping beneath my feet...

---

\* \* \* \* \*

So... we get to work. Sad to say, the goddess cheats a bit. Conjures up a golden loom out of thin air. Works *impossibly* fast on it. Has *endless* amounts of thread in the most *wonderful* colours. And undoes *all* her little mistakes with one wave of her skinny fingers.

In no time, the scheming old crow produces a wall-hanging of *stunning splendour*, showing each and every one of the gods living it up on Mount Olympus.

Bad luck, Goddess Athena! I, Arachne, produce a wall-hanging that's *way* better than yours!

Where *her* colours glare, *my* colours... glow.

Where *her* characters have smug, simpering looks, my characters have, well... *character*.

Where *her* fabric is smooth as silk, *mine* is soft as clouds!

Where *her* wall-hanging is huge, *mine* is... *flipping enormous!*

Okay, so maybe it was a bit lacking in tact to take 'The Loves Of Those Cheatin' Gods' as the subject of my great tapestry. But hey... what's Athena's

---

problem? She hasn't even GOT a husband to cheat on her!

As I sit back blowing on my aching fingers, my victory is so clear that even the goddess can't deny it.

What she *can* do, of course, is rip my great work into shreds and turn me into a spider.

\* \* \* \* \*

No, really, I don't mind being a spider *at all*.

Or an 'arachnid' as we've started to be called, thanks to me! (Arachne... arachnid... geddit? Oh, never mind.)

I mean, just look at how many more limbs I have to weave my works of art with!

*Six extra, wonderfully flexible legs!*

And take a peek at my clusters of eyes! No chance of missing a flaw in any of my designs *now!*

And my daughters! I've got *hundreds* of 'em already! Learning at spinning-school so much faster than any pathetic *human* child could!

And look! I can produce my own thread! Strong as steel, soft as silk! With no need to chop the wool off the backs of any silly, smelly sheep!

---

And, okay, so I can't dye my thread any more. But did any of my most techni-coloured creations ever look as dazzling as a spider's web? Covered in dew that shines like *diamonds* as the rays of the rising sun hit its fragile pattern?

Nope, haven't shed *one single tear* about becoming an arachnid.

Okay, so *technically speaking* spiders can't cry, but that's not the *point*.

The point is...

... Oh, I don't *know* what the hell the point is.

Leave me alone, why don't you? Leave this goddess-cursed ugly hairy spider to spin her pointless webs in peace.