Latin Myth Homework on Arachne

The beginning

Hello. My name is Arachne. This is the story of dedication, punishment and defiance. I’ll start from the beginning, back when I was still human.

The visitor in the morning

I was weaving a beautiful tapestry.

Images of staggering beauty.

Images of terrible menace.

Images that were both beautiful and terrifying. I had stood back to admire it, when I heard a knock at the door. There was an old lady, leaning on a walking stick, barely supporting herself. I let her in, and prepared her a meal. She didn’t introduce herself to me. I didn’t care. I poured her wine, and served her meat. She ate and drank, yet kept her cold, grey eyes fixated on my tapestry.

She looked like she had once been beautiful, but old age had taken its toll. Her eyes were grey and hostile, and the wrinkles around her eyes definitely weren’t smile lines.

‘Hmm… very nice. The gods have clearly bestowed you with great gifts. You should thank them while the day is young.’

I didn’t want to offend the old lady, but I don’t owe my skill to the gods. It’s not a gift. I spent hours upon hours working away, a slave to the loom.

‘I do not mean to offend you, but I strongly disagree. I didn’t wake up this blessed morning with the skill of weaving at my fingertips.’

The old lady shone with unhuman light, and the wrinkles faded from her face. I forced myself to look away, look away before I burned into ashes. When the supernova light had died, a tall woman, with a cascade of long dark hair and a bronze tipped spear stood before me.

‘Athena,’ I said.

‘Arachne,’ the goddess replied.

‘Why have you come to my humble cottage, my lady,’ I asked her.

‘You should be paying me tribute. All of your skills, all of your tapestries, are gifts from me.’

‘With all due respect, my lady, I don’t owe anything to you,’ I replied. The confidence in my voice shocked me. I was standing before Athena, goddess of wisdom, battle, daughter of Zeus almighty.

‘Insolent mortal. Do you not understand that I could banish you to the realm of Hades right now? All I must do is utter few words, and Thanatos will come and take your hand, and lead you into the land of the Dead. Do you really think you can weave better than Athena herself?’ the goddess challenged. She had her chin up high, but I saw the uncertainty in her steely grey eyes.

I’d show her.

‘Yes. Yes, I am.

Her eyes shone bright. She raised her hand… and let it fall back by her side.

‘Very well then, tomorrow. At midday. I’ll be here, and we’ll see who the better weaver is, insolent mortal.’

With a flash of light, she was gone.

The competition

It was midday.

I had my thread ready.

Athena sat next to me, her head held high. She thought she was going to win. Stuck-up goddess. I’d show her.

‘Begin!’

I lost track of what I was doing, my hands moved by themselves, pulling the thread, capturing the light at the perfect angles. We worked all day, not pausing for food or drink, both of us desperate to prove the better weaver.

What if I won? What would she do to me? How could I stop her?

‘Hands by your side!’ the disembodied voice declared. I let my hands drop by my side.

We stepped back to admire our work.

Athena’s was beautiful, breath- taking, flawless. There were scenes of Prometheus, chained to his rock, of Orpheus, looking back as his wife disappeared forever, scenes of sentencing Tantalus to the fields of Punishment, with the fruit tree over his head, and the pool of water at his feet. The message was clear. The gods rule supreme.

I looked at mine.

The skill didn’t match Athena’s, but it was more human. More emotion. I wanted to stare at if forever, yet look away at the same time. The light was captured perfectly, and the thread shone silver.

It was clear.

I had won.

I turned to face Athena, whose face was red with rage. She glared at me, and I could feel my body shrinking. My hair shrivelled away into nothingness, and my eyes multiplied. I suddenly had eight legs instead of two.

‘I believe I have won, insolent mortal.’ Athena smiled a cold grin, colder than the ice and snow of Khione, daughter of Boreas, and disappeared.

The Weaver’s revenge.

I was in the corner of my house.

Thinking about what once was mine.

Screw Athena. She couldn’t stop me. She gave me this weak, puny, helpless body. Doesn’t mean I can’t weave. I heard someone enter my house. The old lady. She looked around and she spotted my tapestry. It glistened in the morning light. She cursed, and fled my house, but then stopped.

‘Now,’ I whispered, ‘I will have my revenge.’

The from the corner of the cottage seethed dark, tiny insect. Some as big as a loaf of bread, others as small as a full stop on a page. They blanketed the walls, suffocating the house. Athena yelped, and her grey eyes darted around the room, looking for an escape. The tiny, black insects had ruby red eyes, that glinted dangerously.

Athena’s PoV

Their eyes.

Oh, their eyes.

They held intelligence that no animal should possess. No living thing. They stared into my soul, reaching, probing. Leafing through my mind as if it was a child’s colouring book. I didn’t try to stop them. I didn’t have the power. Words I’d never thought I’d use. They scuttled towards me the massive ones, the tiny ones. They were one and the same thing. Like an ant’s nest. They bared their teeth, and moved aside, as one of them pushed to the front. It was slightly bigger than the rest, and clearly higher in status.

Arachne.

‘Arachne,’ I pleaded, ‘please, this is madness.’

‘No,’ her voice sounded like a swarm of bees, all talking at once, ‘this is revenge,’

The circle of spiders closed in on me,

‘Help…me,’

The scuttled into my ears and mouth. It was a gruesome sight,

‘Please,’ I choked.

And then the last of them closed in over my eyes and I stopped seeing anything at all.