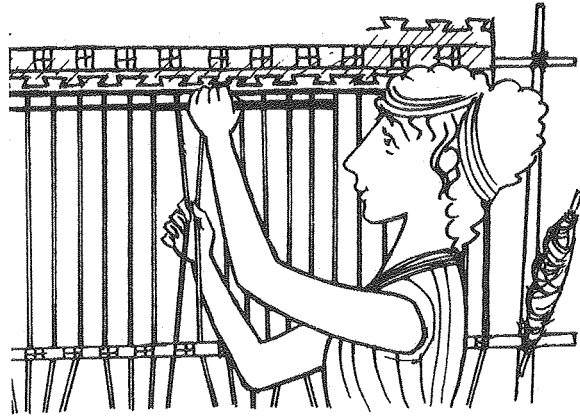


Arachne

There once lived a young country girl named Arachne, who was a very talented weaver. She had learned this craft from Athena, the goddess of wisdom and teacher of the arts of spinning, weaving, and needlework. People came from miles around to admire Arachne's work, and she soon became quite conceited. "My weaving is even more beautiful than that of the goddess Athena," she boasted to her visitors.



Hearing this, Athena was **indignant**. Disguised as an old woman, she went down to earth to scold Arachne. "Be careful," she warned. "It is wrong to compare yourself to a goddess."

"But I am a better weaver," the girl haughtily insisted. "Let Athena come, if she dares, and we'll have a competition."

With that, the old woman disappeared. In her place stood the radiant, gray-eyed goddess Athena, crowned with her golden helmet. "Let the contest begin," she said. "We'll soon see who is more skilled."

Arachne and Athena sat down at their looms and began to weave. With shimmering threads of gold and silver, Athena wove wondrous pictures of the gods in all their glory. In the corners of her tapestry, she designed scenes of the punishments of mortals who had dared to compete with the gods. "Take note, foolish girl, before it's too late," she cautioned Arachne.

But Arachne paid no attention. Her shuttle, strung with rainbow-colored thread, flew back and forth across her loom. She smiled to herself as she filled her tapestry with scenes showing the gods' weaknesses, trickery, and faults.

When Athena saw Arachne's work, she was furious. "Your weaving is indeed skillfully done, but your pictures are an insult to the gods. You will pay for your arrogance and your lack of respect," she declared angrily.

The goddess took her shuttle and ripped the girl's tapestry to pieces. Then, she sprinkled Arachne with a magical liquid. The girl's body shrank and shrank until it was no bigger than a pebble. Her **agile** fingers, which had been so clever at weaving, turned into eight thin legs. Athena had transformed Arachne into a spider. "For all your days you will weave and spin," said the goddess, "and so will your children and your children's children."

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