

MARCY AND THE FORBIDDEN TEMPLE

by Andy Gaus

Characters:

Marcy Jones

Marcy's Mother

Princess Alceste

Prince Lysander

King Cyanax

Priestess Blagastra

Commander Thnesko

Mr. Fenstermaker

Place: Nantucket

Time: March 5–7, 1970

Scene 1

(Marcy and her Mother are discovered in Marcy's room early morning. Marcy is collecting books, papers, and scientific instruments to go to school.)

MOTHER

They say it's going to be perfect clamming weather this afternoon—cloudy but not too cold. Do you want to go clamming if it doesn't rain?

MARCY

(Absently.) Unh-hunh. (Grunted affirmative.) Let me see: tables, textbook, solutions to problems...

MOTHER

So you would like to go clamming? We certainly won't be able to do it tomorrow when all the thousands of people arrive on the island.

MARCY

Unh-hunh. (Still absent.)

MOTHER

We could catch some clams and some mussels, and maybe you could even find a minute to tell me how you're doing these days.

MARCY

Unh-hunh.

MOTHER

Also, I'm going to send you out in a rowboat to fight with the great white whale, so be sure to come straight home from school.

MARCY

OK.

MOTHER

Marcy! What did I just say?

MARCY

To come right home from school?

MOTHER

It's been like this all week. You don't hear anything I say.

MARCY

What did you say?

MOTHER

I asked if you wanted to go clamming this afternoon.

MARCY

Oh no, I can't. I have to go to the scientific supply house right after school and get some exposed film and some cardboard to make a reflecting camera. Otherwise it isn't safe to view the eclipse.

MOTHER

Eclipse, eclipse!

MARCY

Well, it is just two days now.

MOTHER

I can't wait for it to be over. The Nantucket Times says there's going to be three thousand people here on Saturday, and that means at least 2,500 hippies camping out on Cisco Beach. Can you imagine what the place will look like when they leave?

MARCY

Mother, you should be proud that people are coming from all over the world to see something special here on Nantucket. Besides, all the tourists will be good for the economy here.

MOTHER

Humph! You know what they say about people who come to Nantucket for a day-trip: they come with a five-dollar bill and a dirty shirt and they don't change either one.

MARCY

Mother, that's terrible!

MOTHER

During the summertime I can accept it: summer belongs to the off-islanders. But the other nine months are for us, and I hate to give up even a single day.

MARCY

Even for a total solar eclipse?

MOTHER

How long is this eclipse going to last anyway? A few hours?

MARCY

The sun will only be completely dark for two minutes, six seconds. But in those two minutes you can observe the sun in a way that is impossible when the sun is shining. It's your one chance to get a really good look.

MOTHER

Is that really all you've been thinking about for the past three weeks? I wonder sometimes. It seems like you've been on another planet.

MARCY

But it's important to me. I can go clamming another day, but I can see a total eclipse of the sun maybe only once in my lifetime. (Sings.)

Hey Mister Sun, stop shining just once for me.

Hey Mister Sun, stop shining just once for me.

Every blessed day

You shine that way,

So bright and so high:

I never dared to look you in the eye.

If you would shut your eyes I could look behind,

And maybe I could even learn to read your mind.

Or is it some kind of secret,

Something you don't want me to see?

Hey Mister Sun, stop shining ust once,

Forget your silver lining just once,

Hey Mister Sun, stop shining just once for me.

MOTHER

Hey Marcy Jones, stop spinning just once for me,

Hey Marcy Jones, stop spinning just once for me.

What can I do?

I can't get through

To even say Hi.

I start to speak as you go streaking by.

When will there be a phase when you have more time

So you could maybe sit and say what's on, what's on your mind now?

Or is it some kind of secret,

Something you don't want me to see?

Hey Marcy Jones, stop spinning just once,

MARCY

Hey Mister Sun, stop shining just once,

MARCY

MOTHER

Hey Mister Sun,

Hey Marcy Jones,

Stop shining just once for me!

Stop spinning just once for me!

MOTHER

I guess you win, kid. Maybe we can go clamming after the eclipse. What's this?

(Indicates sextant.) Something to find the stars with?

MARCY

It's a sextant. It's to take sightings on the stars and map their locations in the sky. Also to navigate by, and to determine where you are on the surface of the earth.

MOTHER

So have you figured out if you're in Massachusetts yet?

MARCY

I already know that, Mother. But if I were in Africa, I'd know just as well, if I had this along.

MOTHER

You really know how to use it?

MARCY

Of course. This part stays level, you move this part to line it up with a certain star, and you read off the angle on the scale here.

MOTHER

(Impressed.) Hm!

MARCY

Now let me ask you something. What's that door? Does it lead anywhere?

MOTHER

Gee, I don't even know if it opens. We never used that door.

MARCY

It's funny. I was just looking at it this morning and realizing that I never tried to open it either.

MOTHER

There could be a little closet space, or another door... There might even be a secret passageway, because this house was originally built by Quakers, and they used to hide slaves who were running away to Canada.

MARCY

A secret passageway would be neat! Now I'll really have to open it.

MOTHER

Frankly, I wish you wouldn't. There might be missing floorboards on the other side, and you could break your leg or even fall through to the floor below. Or there could be broken glass, or boards with exposed nails.

MARCY

Or maybe time warps, or laser beams.

MOTHER

I see you've been reading some more of your beautiful science fiction. (Picks out paperback from among Marcy's textbooks and opens it to bookmark.)

MARCY

Mother, science fiction isn't garbage, and it doesn't always turn out to be just fiction either. When H.G. Wells and Jules Verne wrote stories about sending a man to the moon, it was fiction, but today it's the truth.

MOTHER

So you think there's no difference between truth and fiction.

MARCY

That's not what I said.

MOTHER

Well, you're going to be late for school pretty soon, and that's no fiction. (Puts book face down still open.)

MARCY

I'll be out the door in a minute, Mother. I just need to make sure I have all my materials. Mr. Fenstermaker is showing us how to view and measure the eclipse today, and I want to be ready.

MOTHER

I'll get out of your way. By the way, your lunch is waiting downstairs. (Exit.)

MARCY

Thanks, Mother. (Picks up books and reads.) "It was only a matter of time now. The creature was howling like a wounded wolf and beating its tentacles wildly against the door. So she aimed her laser coolly and precisely at the doorway as, with a sudden yank, she pulled the door open." (Comes to.) What time is it? (Looks at her watch.) Oh, that's nice! My watch is stopped. (Flips on radio.)

RADIO

WZZZ on-the-spot radio time is 7:53 on this Thursday morning, March 5, 1970.

MARCY

"She pulled the door open..." (On a sudden impulse she removes dresser blocking door.)

RADIO

We'll have the weather for you in a minute, but first this message.

MARCY

(Opens door, steps through it, and vanishes with a cry of surprise.) WHAAAT?

RADIO

Are you tired of pickles with no pizzazz? Do your parties poop because the pickles were too piddling? You should pick up a pack of Peter Parker's Pickles! Peter Parker's Pickles are packed in paprika to pack the punch that pickle people prefer. So put pep in your party and peep in the pantry for the new pint pack of Peter Par— (Lights down.)

Scene 2

(As lights come up, Marcy is coming cautiously out the same doorway she went in, except that the scene has changed from her bedroom to a forest clearing, and the bedroom door has become the doorway of the Forbidden Temple, shaped like the mouth of a whale. The inscription over the doorway says “OTHERWISE...” Beside the temple doorway grows the Sacred Plant.)

MARCY

What is this? (Smells the fragrance of the plant in the air.) Something smells good. (Turns round and sees plant, also inscription.) Otherwise what? (Goes to plant and looks at it more closely, touching it gently. Princess Alceste has entered behind her. She is horrified.)

ALCESTE

Watch out! Don't pick it! Who are you? What are you doing here?

MARCY

My name is Marcy. I wasn't going to pick it, I was just looking at it.

ALCESTE

Don't you know better than to touch the Sacred Oliphorus? (Sarcastically.) Do you come from Otherwise? (Looks more closely.) Where do you come from? Is that what they wear where you come from?

MARCY

I come from Nantucket.

ALCESTE

Where's Nantucket?

MARCY

Well... I guess it's on the other side of that door. (Indicates temple.)

ALCESTE

(Her eyes widen.) What do you mean? Were you inside the temple?

MARCY

Yes.

ALCESTE

How long were you in there? When did you go in?

MARCY

I never really went into the temple, I just came out.

ALCESTE

You really do come from Otherwise! Are you—are you—the Whale Goddess? Did Blagastra call you down upon me?

MARCY

No, I'm not a goddess at all, I'm a girl. What's Otherwise! And who's Blagastra?

ALCESTE

(Searches Marcy's face.) You really don't know?

MARCY

No.

ALCESTE

(Points to inscription.) This is the temple of Otherwise, the Forbidden Temple. Not even Blagastra herself goes in there, and she's the Priestess of the Forbidden Temple. But you have come out alive. You must have some strange power.

MARCY

What would happen to you if you went in?

ALCESTE

I don't know. No one here has ever gone in there and come out alive, so we cannot tell. Sometimes a dog or a cat goes in.

MARCY

And what happens?

ALCESTE

Either it comes right back out, or you never see it again. And when you're a child, they say things to you like "You'd better eat your turnips, or Otherwise..." and they point towards here. But no one ever says what Otherwise is really like. Is it really so terrible?

MARCY

Well, I don't call it Otherwise, I call it Nantucket.

ALCESTE

(Thoughtfully.) Nan-tuck-et.

MARCY

And it isn't terrible there, it's beautiful.

ALCESTE

Are people free there? Do they live in peace? Or is it like here, always fighting with the Ilians?

MARCY

Who are the Ilians? Your enemies?

ALCESTE

They always have been. Even before we came over.

MARCY

Came over from where?

ALCESTE

From over there. (She points "east.") We came from over there, they came from over there ("west").

MARCY

Why are you enemies?

ALCESTE

The legend says that the Ilians started it.

MARCY

Ilians, eh? Funny, sounds a little like the Iliad or something.

ALCESTE

Well then you do know the legend! Are you sure you're not a goddess? Then you must know how long ago, long before we came over here, the Ilians came over in their ships and carried off an Argive princess.

MARCY

Argive?

ALCESTE

(Surprised again that Marcy has trouble with this detail.) That's us: the Argives. But the way it is now, they just do something to us and we do something back. Last week a band of them came in and stole ten of our cattle. So my father told Commander Thnesko to ride out and burn down three of their houses, and that's just what he did.

MARCY

That's terrible!

ALCESTE

That's what goes on here all the time. My father will never stop the raiding and the plundering.

MARCY

Who is your father?

ALCESTE

My father is King Cyanax, and I am Princess Alceste.

MARCY

What about the Ilians? Don't any of them want peace?

ALCESTE

Well... (Lowers her eyes.) I think...Lysander does.

MARCY

Lysander?

ALCESTE

Shhh! Promise you won't tell anyone.

MARCY

I promise.

ALCESTE

Lysander is the Prince of the Ilians. I was afraid you were coming to spy on us.

MARCY

No, I want to help you if I can. How do you know he wants peace?

ALCESTE

He has told me—many times—when we were alone.

MARCY

And you believe him?

ALCESTE

I believe him, and I love him, and I want to be with him forever. But this is the only place we can meet, because no one ever comes here— (Lysander is heard offstage.) It's Lysander!

MARCY

I'll leave you alone. (She withdraws and hides as Lysander enters.)

ALCESTE

Lysander!

LYSANDER

Alceste! (They embrace.)

ALCESTE

Lysander, a goddess just appeared to me and offered us her help... (Notices his expression.) Lysander! What's wrong?

LYSANDER

Alceste, I can't go on any more.

ALCESTE

(Afraid.) What do you mean?

LYSANDER

How can I lead the expeditions against the Argives when the Argives are you? (She has no answer.) You know, before I met you, they used to call me "the Ilian wolf" because I was so ready to ride out against the Argives. I wanted to destroy all your people and take them captive. My father used to say, "Son, I have been a king, but you will be an emperor someday when the Argives have been conquered." And that was my dream too. But now I don't want to be an emperor. I just want you.

ALCESTE

(Touched.) Lysander!

LYSANDER

Alceste, things have gotten worse.

ALCESTE

What happened?

LYSANDER

This morning my father called me into his council chambers. "Son," he said, "what's this I hear about you? People tell me you don't want to fight anymore. They say the Ilian Wolf is only a puppydog. Why do they say that?" I said, I don't know. "Well," he said, "they won't say it after tomorrow."

ALCESTE

Tomorrow?

LYSANDER

That's what I said: Tomorrow? And he said, "Yes; tomorrow morning at dawn you will lead the assembled forces of our kingdom straight to the Argive palace and bring back the king, his daughter, and the members of his court in chains. (Alceste gasps.) Then let him see if he can burn down our houses and get away with it. My son," he said, "we have waited long enough for the hour of our glory. Now we must seize it."

ALCESTE

Oh! (Pause while she takes it all in.)

LYSANDER

So tonight you must meet me here, and we must escape to someplace so far away that no one knows an Ilian from an Argive. Will you meet me here, Alceste?

ALCESTE

I'll be here as soon as the moon rises.

LYSANDER

That's my Alceste! A friend of mine is bringing a boat for us to escape in. Hopefully we'll be on shore by morning. And then we'll never be separated again. (They kiss.
Lysander sings:)

Arise, my love,
Before the night has fled the western skies.
My love, arise and fly
Before the dawn, before the day,
Arise my love and fly,
Arise and fly away.

LYSANDER AND ALCESTE

Arise my lover,
Before the night is over:
The road shall be our freedom
With the war hounds on our trail.
Arise my lover,

Leave father and leave mother:
 The road shall be our kingdom
 If our palace is a jail.

We will pray the gods to show their kindness,
 As we move on, as we move on.
 We must not stop to look behind us,
 Before the dawn,
 When they awake to find us gone.

Arise my lover,
 Our fate can be no other:
 Tomorrow I have lost you
 If tonight we do not fly.
 So rise my lover,
 And come with me forever.
 For life is not worth living
 Without you by my side.
 So rise my lover,
 And come with me forever.
 For life is not worth living
 Without you by my side.
 Life is not worth living
 Without you by my side.
 For life is not worth living
 Without you by my side.

ALCESTE

Till tonight! (He throws her another kiss and is gone. Marcy reappears.) I am not afraid! I
 will meet him here tonight and we will always be together!

MARCY

He's very handsome. Do you think you can slip away?

ALCESTE

Yes. My bedroom window is low enough that I can jump to the ground. If only my lantern doesn't go out along the way!

MARCY

I'll bring you a lighter!

ALCESTE

What's a lighter?

MARCY

It's a sort of little fire that you can keep with you and kindle up whenever you want. So if your lantern goes out, you can just light it again!

ALCESTE

That's wonderful! You must be a magician then! Where is this lighter?

MARCY

Well, it's...at home. And to tell you the truth, I don't even know if I can get back there myself. But if I can, I'll get it and bring it.

ALCESTE

(Looking over Marcy's shoulder.) They're coming. I don't want them to see you. (Marcy hides. Enter King Cyanax with Commander Thnesko and Priestess Blagastra.)

KING

My daughter! Safe at last! (Runs and grapples her to him with a great show of emotion.)
Dear daughter, if you knew what a mortal danger you have just escaped, you would clearly see how foolish you are to go wandering around in these godforsaken parts all alone.

ALCESTE

I like it here, and I can take care of myself.

KING

Young lady, Commander Thnesko here assures me that not only have Ilians been seen in the area, but the very worst of the lot, the one they call the Ilian Wolf.

ALCESTE

He's not a wolf at all.

KING

What?

ALCESTE

Why, I heard some people say he was only a puppydog.

KING

(Snorts approval.) Well, I think you're right there. But even a dog can be dangerous. I shudder to think what might have happened to you.

THNESKO

I shudder to think what's going to happen to him when we get ahold of him—which won't take long. One of our scouts sighted him less than fifteen minutes ago, so he's around here. He won't escape. Even if he gets back to the Ilian Palace, that won't help him for long, will it, Your Majesty?

KING

No, indeed it won't, not with a man like Thnesko on the job, and certainly not after tomorrow!

ALCESTE

Tomorrow?

KING

Yes, tomorrow. Tell her what happened this morning, Blagastra.

BLAGASTRA

As I was burning the Sacred Blubber and offering a tuna to the Whale Goddess, the flames began to burn bright gold and shot ten feet into the air. That is the omen of

BLAGASTRA, THNESKO AND KING

Victory!

KING

We have waited long enough for the hour of our glory. Now is the time to seize it.

ALCESTE

What do you mean?

KING

I mean that if we don't catch the Ilian Wolf today—as I fully expect we will—(a look to Thnesko) then tomorrow at dawn we march with the assembled forces of the kingdom straight against the Ilian Palace and we bring back him and his father in chains. Then they'll see if they can steal our cattle and get away with it!

ALCESTE

Wouldn't it be enough if you just made them pay you for the cattle?

THNESKO

Young girl, you don't know Ilians. They'd steal the thong from your sandals if you give them a chance.

KING

But you're not gonna give them a chance tomorrow, are you, Thnesko?

THNESKO

No way. (Sings.)

Dirtball Ilians,
Scuzzy little villyuns,
Better say your prayers real soon.
Pray your little gods to keep you
From a touch of my harpoon.

Dirtball Ilians,
Dropping by the zillions,
Creeping off to lick your wounds.
Lucky you if you can luck them,
After a touch of my harpoon.

Ilians crawling into battle,
Low and scuzzy and cheap.
Are we going to let our cattle
Be stolen by a herd of sheep?

Dirtball Ilians,
 Scuzzy little villyuns,
 Welcome to the day of doom.
 Wait till you feel
 The kiss of steel,
 The touch,

KING AND BLAGASTRA

The touch,

THNESKO

(Spoken.) (It won't hurt much!) (Sung.)

The touch of my harpoon!

KING

Bravo, Thnesko. Now, in the meantime, my first thought, as always, is for your security. Accordingly, so that you can sleep more safely at night, I have sealed your bedroom window shut with wires of steel so that no one can get in—or out. (Looks at her.) Likewise, from now on Blagastra will accompany you on all your little walks. I'm sure you'll find her a most instructive and agreeable companion. (Blagastra smiles butterscotch.) Now if you'll excuse us, Thnesko and I must get back to headquarters. (Tenderly.) Dear child, don't look troubled now. This is going to be the hour of the Argive triumph, and the triumph will be yours.

ALCESTE

No it won't.

KING

Oh, but it will. My daughter, I have been a king, but you shall be an empress. (He and Thnesko start to leave.)

ALCESTE

I don't want to be an empress. (King looks dark. Blagastra jumps in to head off a confrontation.)

BLAGASTRA

Come dear, back to the palace! We'll have a lovely stroll about the palace grounds and you can say your forbiddens.

KING

What did you say, young lady?

BLAGASTRA

(Still trying hard.) Let's sing the Whale Hymn as we go: (Sings.)

All hail, all hail, the Great White Whale,

(Alceste and the King glare at each other. Then Alceste joins the song, and finally so does the King.)

Mistress of the sea,
From your more majestic scale
Look kindly down on me.
Give us oil to light our lamps,
Fill our every need.
Teach us to be truly big
In thought and word and deed.

For Otherwise, as we well know,
You'll crush us in your jaws,
And take a just revenge upon
The fool who broke your laws.

All hail, all hail, the Great White Whale,
Teach us to love thee,
That we may follow in thy trail
For all eternity!

Scene 3

(Mr. Fenstermaker is teaching class. Marcy sits opposite him, ostensibly part of a class that includes the audience, the stage manager, and Lysander and Alceste disguised as students.)

FENSTERMAKER

(To the audience.) How many of you have heard of Albert Einstein?

(Everybody presumably raises their hands, but Marcy is lost in her thoughts.)

FENSTERMAKER

Well, everyone but Marcy, apparently.

MARCY

Hunh?

FENSTERMAKER

Albert Einstein? You've heard of him?

MARCY

Oh, yeah.

FENSTERMAKER

Then it's unanimous. Does someone know what his famous theory is called? ("Relativity.") That's right. But did you know his theories were proved during a total eclipse of the sun? Well, they were, and one of the things that was proved is that space and time are not always regular and even. They have shapes of their own, and certain things can cause them to change their shape. No doubt about it.

OTHER STUDENT

What does it mean for space to change shape? How can it change its shape if there's nothing there?

FENSTERMAKER

But there is something there and it does change shape. For instance, in the presence of a large star (sponge ball) the surrounding space (pulls at a network of threads) is drawn toward it. So the star ends up at the bottom of a kind of space-valley. Hm, looks a bit like a trampoline, doesn't it? And a passing beam of light (rolls a marble over the thread-mesh) can start to fall into the valley and come out caterwampus at a different angle. That was what they did during the eclipse. They found that beams of light passing the sun were bending in towards the sun as if they were falling towards it. Marcy?

MARCY

Did you say that time could change shape too?

FENSTERMAKER

No doubt about it. Both time and space can change shape in various ways. We know that there are holes in space, called black holes. (He drops marble through hole in mesh. It rolls onto the floor and he retrieves it.) There may be holes in time as well. In fact, that's something that I and other researchers are investigating right now: whether it's possible to locate a hole in time and shoot either a light beam or a stream of electrons through it so as to get a picture of what's on the other side.

MARCY

Mr. Fenstermaker, do you think...a person...could go through a hole in time?

FENSTERMAKER

There's no limit to what's possible, because there's no limit between space and time.
(Sings.)

Space and time, space and time.

Space and time, space and time.

Hard to define,

To say where is the line,

You can't just post a sign: "Warning:

You're leaving space and you're entering time."

The two are intertwined.

Time and space, time and space.
 Time and space, time and space.
 Things have no place fixed in place,
 No home base;
 We just hurtle through space
 As we turtle our way through our time,
 Our little space of time.

And we are not the candle,
 We are just the flame,
 Eating all the air up
 And sputtering our name.

Time and space, space and time.
 Time and space, space and time.
 Try to combine the two sides of your mind.
 You just might cross the line
 As the first one to prove
 There's a new way to move
 Through the tube of your space and your time.
 Time and space and time,
 Time and space and time,
 And time!

(Brrring!) But we have no more time! So tomorrow we'll talk more about the eclipse.
 Marcy, could you stay behind for a minute? (The other students leave.)

FENSTERMAKER

(Lights a cigarette on a Bunsen burner.) Marcy, I'll tell you a secret. Between classes I
 like to sneak a quick cigarette. Now will you tell me a secret? What's wrong?

MARCY

Oh, I'm OK.

FENSTERMAKER

Well, you're OK, but every other day of the year you're like this—(imitates her as bright-eyed and bushytailed)—all eager to hear about astronomy. And now, two days before an eclipse, you look like this—(imitates her looking weirded out)—and it's like your mind is in another world.

MARCY

Mr. Fenstermaker, my mind is in another world.

FENSTERMAKER

What does that mean?

MARCY

I don't know how to explain.

FENSTERMAKER

Try.

MARCY

Promise me one thing.

FENSTERMAKER

That I won't tell anyone?

MARCY

That you won't tell me I'm crazy.

FENSTERMAKER

I don't think you're crazy, Marcy.

MARCY

But you haven't heard my story.

FENSTERMAKER

I know that! I'm waiting! Tell me!

MARCY

OK. This morning, as I was getting ready for school, I walked through a door in my bedroom, and all of a sudden I was in a completely different world. No more bedroom, no more house—I was coming out the doorway of a temple into a forest clearing, and there were people there I'd never seen before.

FENSTERMAKER

Marcy, could you have dreamt any of this? That may sound foolish, but people do sometimes get confused between dreaming and waking.

MARCY

No, it wasn't a dream at all. I was wide awake.

FENSTERMAKER

Had you been reading anything, like maybe one of your science fiction books that had a plot like that?

MARCY

Mr. Fenstermaker, I read a lot of science fiction books, but I think I know the difference between sitting in my bedroom reading a book and standing in the middle of a forest clearing.

FENSTERMAKER

No doubt about it. Marcy, forgive me for asking one more thing: There couldn't have been any pills or medications or other substances—

MARCY

No, nothing like that. I swear it.

FENSTERMAKER

Don't swear! (Puts his hands over his ears.) I believe you. So how did you get back? The same way?

MARCY

I went back through the temple door and I was in my bedroom again.

FENSTERMAKER

How long had you been there?

MARCY

That's another strange thing. With everything that happened, it seemed like at least half an hour. But when I got back it was the same time as when I left.

FENSTERMAKER

Are you sure of that?

MARCY

I heard them announce the time on the radio.

FENSTERMAKER

Of course, the real question is, where were you?

MARCY

I'll say! Where in the world was I? Was I even in the world? (Pause.) Mr. Fenstermaker, do you think I'm crazy?

FENSTERMAKER

No, I don't think you're crazy. I've been crazy long enough myself to know the signs, and you're not like me at all. Besides, all new discoveries seem crazy, and you might be on the track of just the discovery I've been looking for myself. Maybe you really did go through a hole in space or time.

MARCY

Does that mean I could have gone anywhere?

FENSTERMAKER

Alpha Centauri or Newark, New Jersey.

MARCY

And it could have been yesterday or a million years ago?

FENSTERMAKER

You got it.

MARCY

Gee, that's a help. Now I don't know where it was and I don't know when it was.

FENSTERMAKER

Well, that's science for you. Tell me more about this place. Maybe we can pick up a clue.

MARCY

You know, it kind of seemed like ancient Greece or something: I came out of a temple doorway, and there was a priestess, and there was a princess named Alceste and a prince named Lysander, and they called themselves Argives and Ilians.

FENSTERMAKER

That does kind of sound like Greece, but a few names and a temple doorway isn't enough proof. Lots of names sound alike, and the same names are often found in very different times and places, like Sid Caesar and Julius Caesar. So that doesn't even prove you're on Earth.

MARCY

Oh, I almost forgot! (Pulls out plant sample and gives it to him.) I picked this there. They called it the Sacred Something-or-other.

FENSTERMAKER

(His eyes gleam.) Hmmm! I'm not a biologist myself, but it certainly looks like a plant from here on Earth, doesn't it? Maybe this will be the proof we need. I'll show it to Mr. Roper, and if he doesn't know what it is, I'll call someone at MIT. (Marcy looks worried.) I won't tell them who gave it to me.

MARCY

What if they can't identify it? Is there any other way I could know where I was?

FENSTERMAKER

Not without going back there, and I couldn't advise you to do that. Whatever made the space-time continuum shift behind your bedroom door could make it shift away again and leave you with no way to get back. Or you could go through the door and find nothing on the other side, and you could literally be stranded in no place in no time.

MARCY

I've got to go back there and find out. I couldn't stop now!

FENSTERMAKER

(Pause.) I can't tell you what to do, Marcy. I don't know if you should risk it. But if you did find out, it would be a once-in-a-lifetime discovery, no doubt about it.

MARCY

(Distracted.) Wirecutters!

FENSTERMAKER

What did you say? Wirecutters?

MARCY

Excuse me, I was thinking of something else. If I do go back, how can I find out what time and place it is?

FENSTERMAKER

You should know that, Marcy. You're an astronomer. Start with the stars. If the planet you're on has day and night, wait till nightfall and look up. If the stars look completely higglety-pigglety and you can't pick out any of the usual constellations, then you're in another part of the universe completely. But if you do recognize the constellations, you can navigate by them, just like here on Earth, and take sightings on them to calculate where you are.

MARCY

But how do I find out where I am in time?

FENSTERMAKER

You can tell that from the stars too. The constellations slowly change shape over time, and that means you can determine the time-period from the shape. We could do that on our school computer, I'm sure. So just take sightings on as many stars as you recognize, as well as any moons or large asteroids that you may see. Bring back the data and we'll have the answer in no time.

MARCY

You're sure that will work?

FENSTERMAKER

It's the only thing I am sure of. The stars never lie.

MARCY

Mr. Fenstermaker, thank you!

FENSTERMAKER

Good luck, Marcy, and take care. (She exits.)

(The voices of Marcy and Marcy's Mother are heard backstage.)

MARCY

Hi, Mom, I'm home.

MOTHER

Hello darling. There's chocolate chip cookies in the kitchen.

MARCY

The cookies can wait, Mom. I'm going upstairs and take a nap for a while.

MOTHER

Did you say “the cookies can wait”? That’s a new one.

MARCY

There’s a first time for everything, Mom. (Sound of radio switching on.)

RADIO

The National Safety Institute says be careful about viewing the eclipse. Don’t look at the sun at all except through two layers of exposed photographic film, and then only for very brief looks. Smoked glass and ordinary dark glasses are not sufficient protection...

Scene 4

(Strangeland. Just after sunset. Enter Alceste, running, carrying a large clump of greenery she has picked, looking fearfully behind her. Marcy comes out the Temple door as Alceste is looking the other way.)

MARCY

Alceste! (She starts.)

ALCESTE

Oh Marcy! I hoped you'd come—

MARCY

(Interrupting because she knows there's no time.) Here's the lighter so you can relight your lantern! Just press here and the flame comes out. (She demonstrates.) Be careful. And these are wirecutters so you can get your bedroom window open. Here, take the handles. (Alceste does so. Marcy puts a piece of wire between the jaws.) Squeeze the handles together. (She does so, cutting the wire.) You got it.

BLAGASTRA

(Offstage.) Alceste! (Marcy hides. Alceste conceals the lighter and the wirecutters in her greenery. BLAGASTRA enters.)

ALCESTE

BLAGASTRA! I've been looking all over for you!

BLAGASTRA

What do you mean, you've been looking for me? Why did you slip away from me in the first place?

ALCESTE

Slip away? Why, I was saying my Forbiddens and I couldn't remember whether it was forbidden to put honey in your milk or milk in your honey and I turned to ask you and you were gone.

BLAGASTRA

Young lady, that doesn't explain what you were doing all the way out here!

ALCESTE

Well, I couldn't find you anywhere, and all I could think was maybe you'd been called away by your duties at the Temple. And sure enough, here you are! So which is it?

BLAGASTRA

Which what? What are you talking about?

ALCESTE

I mean, is it honey in your milk, or milk in your honey?

BLAGASTRA

(Through clenched teeth.) Honey...in...your...milk.

ALCESTE

And then what's the next one?

BLAGASTRA

(Likewise through clenched teeth.) It is forbidden to stay out after sunset!

ALCESTE

It is forbidden to stay out after sunset... (BLAGASTRA hustles her off. MARCY comes out of hiding, takes out her sextant, sets up a tripod, takes out her pen and her notebook, and prepares to survey the stars. It gets darker and the stars are seen on the ceiling. MARCY spends what seems like a long time looking at one star and then another, muttering things like "Sirius, 22 degrees 8 minutes" and "Cassiopeia, 74 degrees, 23 minutes," making a lot of notes in her book. Time passes and it gets darker. LYSANDER appears and looks at MARCY uncertainly in the darkness.)

LYSANDER

Alceste?

MARCY

No, but I am a friend of Alceste's.

LYSANDER

Who are you? (Sees sextant.) What's that? (Draws sword.)

MARCY

My name is Marcy, and this is for measuring the stars.

LYSANDER

Measuring the stars? Where did you come from? What are you doing here?

MARCY

I came from the temple, and I wanted to help Alceste escape with you.

LYSANDER

Are you the goddess that appeared to her?

MARCY

Well, that's what she thinks— (As she despairs of explaining, Alceste arrives.)

ALCESTE

Lysander!

LYSANDER

Alceste!

ALCESTE

Lysander, I think they're on my trail already. Where's the boat?

LYSANDER

Alceste, it never showed up. I don't know what to do. We can't get far on foot, and there's no place on the island (Marcy reacts to the word "island") where we won't get discovered by one side or the other.

ALCESTE

Lysander, if it comes down to it, I am ready to go through the temple doorway with you.

LYSANDER

The temple doorway? Alceste!

ALCESTE

I mean it! Maybe we will reach the World of the Gods, the place she called Nantucket. Or maybe we will cease to exist, but I'd rather cease to exist with you than live on without you.

LYSANDER

What are you saying? (A harpoon flies across the stage, narrowly missing Lysander. Then the King, Thnesko and Blagastra appear. A chase ensues. The King and Thnesko overpower Lysander while Blagastra subdues Alceste.)

KING

(Notices Marcy.) Who's that? Somebody get her! (But nobody can. Marcy runs toward the Temple.) She's going into the Temple!

MARCY

(Standing in temple doorway.) But I'll be back!

KING

Blagastra, get her! (Blagastra goes near, but is afraid. Marcy toys with her, withdrawing farther into the doorway as Blagastra comes close.)

MARCY

I'll be back, Alceste! (Disappears into Temple.)

THNESKO

Who was that? Is she an Ilian priestess?

ALCESTE

No! She's a goddess! (King and Blagastra ignore her remark.)

BLAGASTRA

I don't know who she is, but let's wait her a while. She may come out soon—if she comes out at all.

THNESKO

Maybe she'll come back in time for the execution. (He starts to lead Lysander away.)

ALCESTE

She'll come back. You'll see!

(Lights down. The radio is heard, a choral arrangement of "Stairway to the Stars." Lights slowly up on Marcy's room. Marcy is looking out a window. The same stars are visible as before.)

MARCY

Gee, they don't look different. (She takes her sextant and her notebook in hand again as the lights go down.)

RADIO

So if you want to improve your tennis game, always look at the ball and try to hit it with your racket. This has been another tip from the pros on the Tennis Court, brought to you on WZZZ on-the-spot radio every Tuesday and Friday at 7:23 a.m. and 2:47 p.m.

Scene 5

(Mr. Fenstermaker's classroom the next day, during lunch. Fenstermaker is on the phone. He has a tray of food on his desk.)

FENSTERMAKER

No appetite, can't sleep, eyes glazed over all the time? I think I know the symptoms, Mrs. Jones. It's called Eclipse Fever. All astronomers get it. It may be catching but it's only temporary. I assure you Marcy is still very alert in the classroom, and her sextant hand is as steady as ever. But I'll keep an eye on her for you. Thanks for calling, Mrs. Jones. Goodbye. (Marcy has entered during this conversation, bringing her lunch, also on a tray.) Marcy! Did you go back? (She nods.) Mr. Roper couldn't identify your plant, so I sent it to MIT; Saul Gutierrez is going to look at it, and he's a specialist in rare plants, including prehistoric ones, so he—(Phone rings.) Hello, Professor Gutierrez! One of my students gave it to me! Are you all right, Professor Gutierrez, you sound—three hundred A.D.? Well, well! Yes, of course, I'll try to get hold of her right away and call you back the very minute I find something. Goodbye, I'll talk with you soon. (Hangs up.) Well, now we have a lot more proof than a few names and a temple doorway. The reason Professor Gutierrez was shouting in my ear is that that little plant you gave me has been extinct since 300 A.D. Before that it was fairly common in Greece and parts of Asia Minor; they called it the Oliphorus.

MARCY

That's what she called it! The Oliphorus!

FENSTERMAKER

Well! You see! Anyway, that means you probably were in Greece or pretty near there, and it must have been before 300 A.D. Nooo doubt about it. (Marcy only looks more and more perplexed.) But you went back and took measurements, right? (Marcy nods, still perplexed.) So do you have the data here? I think the school computer is free—

MARCY

I don't need the computer.

FENSTERMAKER

You mean you already did all the calculations?

MARCY

There's nothing to calculate. And I wasn't in Greece. And the time wasn't 300 A.D.

FENSTERMAKER

Why do you say that?

MARCY

The stars I saw in the other place were exactly like the stars outside my bedroom window. So was the phase and position of the moon and the direction where the sun had set. I brought along a compass and it pointed to the same place where the polestar had said north should be.

FENSTERMAKER

But did you actually take sightings on the stars with a sextant? (Uses a banana.)

MARCY

Yes, lots of them, and they all matched perfectly with the sky outside my window. There wasn't a degree or a minute or a second's difference and I checked all the measurements three times. So it wasn't any other place or any other time, it was here, and now. (Fenstermaker is amazed.)

FENSTERMAKER

I don't know what to say.

MARCY

Didn't you say the stars never lie?

FENSTERMAKER

(Throws up his hands.) That's what I said! You heard me!

MARCY

And isn't it true that if all the stars and the sun and the moon are in the same positions, it must be the same place and the same time?

FENSTERMAKER

That's right. They never go back exactly the way they were before. I believe you, Marcy. it's just that this forest clearing you told me about can't really be exactly where your house is (crushes a sandwich against a glass) at the same time your house is there or otherwise you're saying that— (Notices change in Marcy's expression.) Why are you looking at me as if you'd seen a ghost?

MARCY

That's what they called here. They called it Otherwise.

FENSTERMAKER

What do you mean?

MARCY

When I told Alceste I came from the temple she said "You must come from Otherwise!" She meant here. And they called the temple the Temple of Otherwise.

FENSTERMAKER

Would you believe, I think I'm beginning to understand?

MARCY

You are?

FENSTERMAKER

Well, yes. "Otherwise" means "if things turn out a different way." So an Otherwise world would be a world where things turn out differently. Maybe this other world is the same time and place but a different set of possibilities.

MARCY

What does that mean?

FENSTERMAKER

I mean, maybe it's still Nantucket, and it's still 1970, but it's Otherwise because history turned out a different way.

MARCY

But history only turns out one way, and once something happens, that's how it is.

FENSTERMAKER

Many people don't think so. Some people have theorized that for everything that could have happened (pulls down one section of banana peel), there is another world where it did (pulls down another)—that there is another world where Germany won the Second World War (another), or President Kennedy survived his attempted assassination (another)—in short, that history branches off, and our world is only one of the branches.

MARCY

So if history had turned out otherwise Nantucket might be full of people calling themselves Argives and Ilians? I wonder where those names come from.

FENSTERMAKER

That I found out. (Pulls down roller map.) Argives was another name for the Greeks, and the Ilians were the Trojans. They had a war about 800 B.C. which Homer talks about in the Iliad.

MARCY

Alceste said something about how long ago the Ilians came over in their ships and carried off an Argive princess.

FENSTERMAKER

That's right. That was Helen of Troy, the all-time beauty queen, and that's what started the Trojan War. Maybe in this plane of possibility the Trojan War was never resolved, and the descendants of both sides colonized the New World. (Indicates on the map.)

MARCY

I guess that makes sense. But what I don't understand is, if in the place where I was, everything was different because it turned out different, why were the stars the same? Couldn't they have been different too?

FENSTERMAKER

No. None of our human scudderings and mutterings ever affects the stars. They follow their course no matter what happens—or might have happened. That's the beauty of the stars. Really, that's what a star is.

MARCY

What do you mean? What is a star?

FENSTERMAKER (sings)

A flameball of enormous size
 That burns so hot it liquefies
 And swings through its appointed skies,
 Observing from afar.
 And everything we fear or prize
 Is like a dustspeck in its eyes.
 People might think otherwise,
 But that's the way things are.
 They have no need of alibis,

No subterfuge, and no disguise.
 They give a light that never lies,
 Cause you can trust a star.
 And even when, through other skies,
 They twinkle down on other lives,
 How could they be otherwise,
 Otherwise than they are?

FENSTERMAKER AND MARCY

How could they be otherwise,
 Otherwise than they are?

MARCY

Mr. Fenstermaker... (Hugs him. Brrring! Marcy and Fenstermaker start to clean up their lunch.)

FENSTERMAKER

Take care, Marcy. And remember what I said: the passageway between the worlds could close again. To tell the truth, now that you've made your discovery, I hope you aren't planning to go back there any more, not if you don't have to.

MARCY

All right. I promise I won't go back...if I don't really have to.

FENSTERMAKER

So I'll see you tomorrow to watch the eclipse?

MARCY

Of course. I wouldn't miss it for the world—any world. (Lights down.)

RADIO

This is Bill Reeder reporting from Nantucket. This normally quiet island is reeling under an expected influx of some three thousand eclipse watchers. The Nantucket Ferry is sold out, and private planes are arriving at the rate of one every two minutes. They come from all over the world: scientists with their instruments and students with guitars and sleeping bags, setting up their tents for a chilly night on the beach...

Scene 6

(Strangeland. Early morning the following day. Lysander is tied up. Thnesko is guarding him and Alceste. King and Blagastra are making plans for Lysander's execution.)

KING

(To Thnesko.) So when everybody has a glass of champagne and a slice of blubbercake, I'll introduce Blagastra, who will read the invocation. And then I'll give the signal and you can (smile) let 'er rip. But now: what about the music?

BLAGASTRA

You know, the last execution we had, the music was terrible! Such poor taste! And they didn't even play it well!

KING

You're absolutely right! Why don't we both go speak to the Royal Composer right now? It's just absurd to have an occasion like this and then throw it away because the music isn't right!

BLAGASTRA

I hear trumpets and bassoons myself...

KING

That would be good for the procession coming in. Then, how about a rising figure on the flutes as Thnesko raises his sword and a kettledrum roll when the head falls off?

BLAGASTRA

Wonderful! Just goes to show, music is too important to be left to composers.

KING

Yeah, but try telling that to Melodorus. I swear, it's easier to command mighty armies than to get him to do what I want sometimes.

THNESKO

But he has to do what you want! He's under your command!

KING

You know that and I know that, but does he know that? And his attitude! I mean, I'm the king, and he treats me like dirt...

BLAGASTRA

That's terrible!

KING

I just wish sometimes I could shake him by the collar and make him see! (Sings.)

Dear Royal Composer,
 Come down now off your ivory tower.
 You think you're such a la-de-da composer.
 But can you write a real good first-act closer?
 Dear Royal Composer,
 We just don't like that modern style.
 I need to hear that old-time execution sound.
 So give me that da-da-da-da-da
 When he raises his axe to strike
 And give me that rrrrrrrrrrum
 When the head rolls on the ground.

Dear Royal Composer,
 Come be the hero of the hour,
 And write a little jig that we can dance to.
 Been so long since we have had a chance to
 KICK out the jams,

BLAGASTRA

CUT up the rug,

KING

HANG down our hair,

THNESKO

Swing the cat-o'-nine-tails, eight to the bar.

KING

Dear Royal Composer,
 We know you got it in your power
 To come and set those big brass bands a-playing
 A tune to really start those bodies (urp) swaying.
 Dear Royal Composer,

It isn't easy being king.
 And music seems to bring me back around.
 So give me that—
 And give me that—
 I want to hear that old-time execution—

BLAGASTRA

Jeepers how long has it been since I heard that

KING, BLAGASTRA AND THNESKO

Good-time execution—?

THNESKO

A-one, two, three, four,
 I wanna kill a little more.

KING, BLAGASTRA AND THNESKO

Good time execution sound!

(They go off. Marcy appears at the Temple Door. Alceste sees her but Thnesko doesn't. Marcy moves behind Thnesko and looks at Alceste as if to signal her.)

ALCESTE

Look! An Ilian! (As Thnesko starts forward, Marcy pushes him from behind and Alceste trips him from in front. Thnesko falls and is knocked unconscious. Marcy starts to untie Lysander.)

MARCY

You don't still have those wirecutters, do you, Alceste?

ALCESTE

No. I left them in my room. But I have the lighter. (Takes it from her pocket.)

MARCY

(Still struggling with Lysander's bonds.) If it comes down to that, I could burn a hole in these ropes. It'd hurt, but I could make it quick.

ALCESTE

If they've gone to the palace, we still have a little while.

MARCY

I'll try for a few more minutes, and then if I have to, I'll use the lighter. (Consults her watch.) Oh, and I'm going to miss the eclipse too. But that's okay, this is more important.

ALCESTE

What's an eclipse?

MARCY

Wait a minute! No, I'm not! I'm not going to miss it!

ALCESTE

(To Lysander.) What's an eclipse?

LYSANDER

I don't know. (King and Blagatra suddenly return.)

KING

Oh Thnesko—Thnesko!

BLAGASTRA

It's her! (She marches over to Marcy. Alceste is motioning to Marcy to flee, but Marcy refuses. Blagatra takes hold of Marcy while King rouses Thnesko.)

KING

Thnesko, old man! (Thnesko comes to, moaning a little.) He could have been killed!

Well, well! My dear Ilian sorceress!

MARCY

I'm not an Ilian sorceress! My name is Marcy!

KING

You won't need a name much longer! (Ties her.) And as for you, my darling daughter— (Blagatra takes hold of Alceste and King ties her too.) I hate to do this, but I simply have to know where you are at all times, and it appears that this is the only way! (Thnesko has stumbled to his feet.) And now if you'll be all right, I'd like to go see if the Royal Baker has the tarts ready.

THNESKO

Uh, could you bring me a blueberry?

BLAGASTRA

Strawberry. (King exits.)

BLAGASTRA

Thnesko! Are you all right?

THNESKO

Perfectly fine, my dear Blagastra.

BLAGASTRA

Oh, I was so afraid this terrible witch (indicates Marcy) had hurt you! And such a fine figure of a man! Oh Thnesko, so many times I've seen you marching off to war and I've thought, How lucky the Argives are to have such a handsome hero to fight for what is forbidden!

THNESKO

Aw shucks, Blagastra. I never was one for a lot of fancy words, but even a fightin' man gets, you know...feelings sometimes. And sometimes when I see you conducting your ceremonies, looking so pure and so fine in your shining white robes, I get to thinking, Well, gee, this is what I'm fighting for! And I won't let those dirtball Ilians take it away!

BLAGASTRA

Brave Thnesko!

THNESKO

Blagastra! (They have moved away from the prisoners during this conversation to have a little more privacy.)

MARCY

Alceste, did you say you didn't know what an eclipse is?

ALCESTE

No; what is it?

MARCY

Have you ever heard of the sun going dark in the middle of the day?

ALCESTE

The sun going dark? Why, no, not even Blagastra in her wildest oracles has ever told of such a thing. Can it be?

MARCY

Yes, in fact it's just about to be. But keep quiet. Thnesko!

THNESKO

(Looks up enraged.) And what do you want? Aren't we paying enough attention to you? You getting bored? Maybe I should show you a few tricks! (He gestures with his harpoon in Marcy's direction.)

MARCY

I want you to untie me now.

THNESKO

You want me to untie you! Aw (for Blagastra's benefit), the poor little thing doesn't like being all tied up! Oh, is that all?

MARCY

No, that's not all. I want you to marry Alceste and Lysander.

THNESKO

(Barely restraining his merriment, he calls Blagastra over and nudges Marcy.) Tell her what you told me.

MARCY

I want you to marry Alceste and Lysander. (Thnesko and Blagastra burst out in great whoops of laughter.)

THNESKO

Oh, this is too good to keep to ourselves! Don't you think the king should hear this, especially since it kind of (broadly) concerns him?

BLAGASTRA

Oh, yes indeed. His Majesty must be summoned at once! But don't worry, he's not far away, I'll just fetch him—

MARCY

I can't wait long. (More whoops from Thnesko and Blagastra.)

THNESKO

Why, of course not! Why, you probably have a very important appointment in just a few minutes!

MARCY

No, but in a few minutes I'll have to darken the sky.

BLAGASTRA

Darken the sky! My, my, my!

MARCY

Yes. I'm going to take the sun away. (Whoop, whoop!)

BLAGASTRA

Well then, I'll certainly go tell the king, though it's hard to tear myself away... (Exits laughing.)

THNESKO

Anything else you'd like, young lady? Just speak up!

MARCY

I've already finished.

THNESKO

I certainly hope the King comes back. Do you think the sun can stay in the sky just a few minutes longer?

MARCY

Not much longer, no. (King comes back with Blagastra.)

KING

(Goes over to Marcy and "shakes" her tied hand.) Ah, you're the young mistress of the heavens, I presume! Blagastra has told me so much about you! I believe she also said something about Alceste and Lysander...

MARCY

I want you to marry them.

KING

Why I think that's just a smashing idea.

THNESKO

Ripping, I should say. (Fondles his harpoon.)

KING

But for that we should have a nice sunny day, and at the moment it seems a bit overcast...

MARCY

Darker than usual, you mean?

KING

No, not darker, just a little cloudier.

ALCESTE

There's no clouds in the sky, father.

KING

(Sneaks a glance at the sky as if he wasn't looking.) Shut up!

BLAGASTRA

It is just a bit dim.

KING

You be quiet too! It's just...atmospheric conditions.

MARCY

Wait a few minutes.

KING

Now I think we've let this young lady play with our imaginations long enough. What do you say, Thnesko? Maybe we shouldn't wait to have the executions. Maybe we should have them right now, before—

MARCY

Before it gets completely dark?

KING

I did not say that. I meant, before we get completely carried away.

BLAGASTRA

(Screams.) Look at the sun! There's a piece gone!

KING

(Looks.) You witch! What have you done?

MARCY

I already told you.

KING

What are you waiting for, Thnesko? Do your duty?

MARCY

If you kill me, how can I bring it back?

KING

Blagastra, can't you do anything? Can't you chant some spells or something?

BLAGASTRA

I don't know any spells for this. It's a new occasion. (It gets very dark. Stars become visible.)

KING

Well, you've got to try something.

BLAGASTRA

Well, OK: MIGHTY MIGHTY APHRODITE,
NEPTUNE, ZEUS AND PLUTO TOO,
DO THIS DEED I ASK OF YOU.

KING

(After a pause.) Does it have a time delay on it?

BLAGASTRA

(Ruefully.) That was the one I used to part the waves at Salmydessus. Must have used it up.

MARCY

If you want me to bring back the sun, untie my hands. (Long, dark pause. Then King motions to Thnesko to untie Marcy.)

THNESKO

But Your Majesty—

KING

Untie her! (Thnesko unties Marcy's hands.) Now what have you done with the sun?

MARCY

Here it is! (She ignites the cigarette lighter. Thnesko lunges for it and burns his hand.)
Back!

THNESKO

Ow!

MARCY

Do you not see that you are trying to kill an immortal goddess? (Alceste is overjoyed.)

ALCESTE

Oh, I knew it!

MARCY

My name is Marcy. Down on your knees, mortals, and worship me. (The King falls down immediately, and Blagastra does when she sees the King doing it. Thnesko has to be coaxed a little with the lighter but he finally falls on his knees too.) Now untie Alceste and Lysander. (Thnesko gets up and unties them.) Now marry them.

KING

Divine goddess, have pity on me. I'll let this hoodlum go. But you can't ask me to marry those two—

MARCY

Why not?

KING

It isn't just a personal matter. It affects my whole government.

MARCY

That's right. You won't be able to fight the Ilians any more. You'll have to make peace with them.

KING

Are you going to run my whole country now?

MARCY

No marriage, no sun.

KING

All right then, they can be married as soon as I can make arrangements—

MARCY

Right here and right now, or I leave and I take the sun with me. (She starts to leave.)

KING

Wait, all right you win. Say the words, Blagastra.

BLAGASTRA

But, but—

KING

Say it.

BLAGASTRA

(Trembling.) "By the walls and halls of the Sacred Temple, by the roots and shoots of the Ancient Oliphorus, by the stones and bones of Argive land and all that is most holy and forbidden, I now pronounce you man and wife."

(It starts to get lighter. Stars are no longer visible.)

KING

Where's the rest of it?

MARCY

It takes a while for the sun to go, and it takes a while for it to come back. In the meantime, you (the King) go tell the Royal Composer to write a wedding march for the happy couple. You (Blagastra) go prepare the wedding feast. And you (Thnesko) will go personally as an envoy to the Ilian King to invite him to our banquet!

THNESKO

I can't do that!

MARCY

Remember: I am the goddess, and I can take the sun away again.

KING

What must we do to worship you?

MARCY

Build a new temple and call it the Temple of Peace, and worship there.

BLAGASTRA

Peace? I don't think I know how to do a ceremony like that.

MARCY

You'd better learn.

THNESKO

Oorggh...this is terrible...oorggh...I don't believe this...oorggh (and the like).

(King, Blagastra and Thnesko go off.)

LYSANDER

(Falls on his knees.) Mistress of the sun, I will always worship you.

MARCY

Don't worship me. I'm not a goddess.

ALCESTE

But you said—

MARCY

That was for your father's benefit. I'm a human person like you, and I'm not the mistress of the sun either.

LYSANDER

But you just took the sun out of the sky.

MARCY

No I didn't. I didn't make anything happen. I just knew in advance that it was going to happen.

ALCESTE

So you are a prophet.

MARCY

No, I'm an astronomer.

LYSANDER

What's that?

MARCY

A person who studies the movements of the stars.

LYSANDER

Then what did make the sun go dark like that?

MARCY

It does that every one in a long long while when the moon gets in front of it. But that's our secret.

ALCESTE

Marcy, will you stay and live with us? Anything we have in either of our kingdoms will be yours.

MARCY

I can't, Alceste. My home is in Otherwise. My mother's there, and my house, and there's a school I go to, and my friends are waiting for me. You might say I'm Otherwise engaged.

ALCESTE

What's it like there? You never told us.

MARCY

You know something? It's an island, much like this one. (Sings.)

You have to wake up to a new day Nantucket,
 You have to wake up when the gulls start to cry.
 They flap and they screech and they make such a racket,
 They startle the sun as the sun shimmers by,
 Slowly refilling the sky.

You have to get up to a new day Nantucket,
 You have to go hear what the sea has to say
 As you stalk through the fog with a shovel and bucket,
 Digging fast for the clams so they don't get away,
 A regular Nantucket day.

Once long ago here, the harbor was crawling
 With whalers and whaleboats and seafaring men.
 Now in the summer the tourists come calling
 And buy ivory carvings to give to their friends.

I have to get back to the shores of Nantucket.
 The houses are old there but each day is new.
 A dot on the ocean, the world in my pocket,
 The houses, the family, the friends that I knew:
 Nantucket, Nantucket, I'm coming to you.

ALCESTE

Will we ever see you again?

MARCY

I don't think so.

ALCESTE

Here, take this. (Takes off a necklace she is wearing.) The beads are made of oliphorus root. Just something to remember us by.

MARCY

It's beautiful, and I'll always remember you. (Kisses her.) Goodbye, Alceste. (Shakes hands with Lysander.) Goodbye, Lysander.

LYSANDER AND ALCESTE

Goodbye, Marcy. (She goes through the temple doorway.)

RADIO

Well, for those of you lucky enough to be in the Nantucket area, it was a beautiful eclipse with perfect viewing conditions. Scientists who studied the event assure us that it will add much to our knowledge of the workings of that heavenly body. Now in just one minute, we'll have news and sports with John Winchester...

Scene 7

(Marcy's bedroom, later that day.)

MOTHER

Well, did you have a good eclipse? Were you able to do the research you wanted?

MARCY

It was even better than I hoped, and I found out all sorts of things.

MOTHER

Wonderful. Does that mean you're going to start acting like a halfway normal person again?

MARCY

Well...maybe halfway. But I'll still be busy. I have some new discoveries to write up.

MOTHER

Discoveries or science fiction?

MARCY

Whatever you want to call them, Mother.

MOTHER

(Notices that furniture has been moved away from door.) Oh, so did you get the door open? What's behind it?

MARCY

Oh...there...isn't really anything there.

MOTHER

What do you mean there "isn't really anything?" There must be something. Let me see.

MARCY

No, there's nothing. Please don't open it.

MOTHER

If there's nothing there, why don't you want me to open it?

MARCY

Uh...

MOTHER

Something's been getting into you lately and I don't think it's just the eclipse. You're hiding something from me. Now let me see what's behind that door. (She opens it and finds a blank wall.) There really isn't anything there! It's just a blank wall. Why were you so anxious for me not to open the door when there's nothing behind it?

MARCY

I was...just afraid in case there might have been.

MOTHER

That's ridiculous! Why worry about what might have been?

MARCY

You're right, Mother. There's no use worrying about what might have been.

END