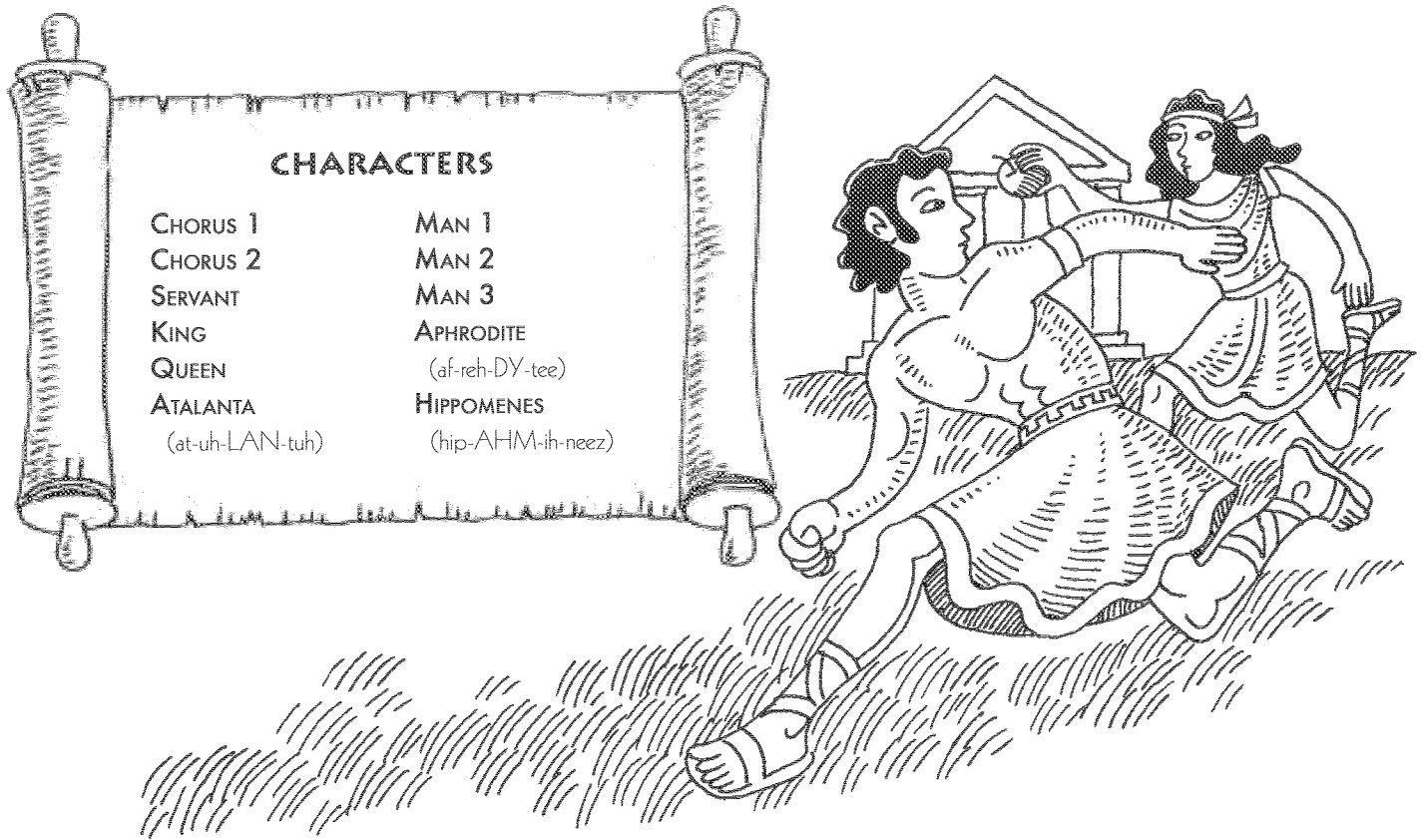


# ATALANTA AND THE GREAT RACE



**CHORUS 1:** *(Like a sports announcer)* Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for another great race! Atalanta will race against Hippomenes.

**CHORUS 2:** If Hippomenes wins, he will get to marry Atalanta. And if Atalanta wins, well, that's another ending. And not a pleasant one for Hippomenes, if you know what we mean.

**CHORUS 1:** What? You don't know the story of Atalanta and the great race?

**CHORUS 2:** Well, let's start from the beginning, shall we?

**CHORUS 1:** It all started when a baby was born to the King of Arcadia.

**SERVANT:** Your highness, the baby has been born.

**KING:** And is it a son? My greatest wish?

**SERVANT:** No, your highness. It is a girl child.

**KING:** A girl? I only want a son. The child must be taken away. Bring me to my wife.

**QUEEN:** (*Cooing to baby*) Hello, sweet little girl. Hello. I will name you Atalanta.

**KING:** Give the baby to the servant.

**QUEEN:** Why?

**KING:** He must take her away to a mountaintop. Her fate will be up to the gods. A girl can give me nothing. I want a son!

**QUEEN:** But you can't do that!

**KING:** I can . . . I will.

**CHORUS 2:** The servant took the baby away as ordered.

**CHORUS 1:** But Atalanta did not perish on the mountain.

**CHORUS 2:** She was found by a mother bear who had two cubs.

**CHORUS 1:** The bear raised Atalanta as though she too were one of her cubs.

**CHORUS 2:** Atalanta grew strong in the forest. She learned to climb the tallest trees from her brothers, the cubs.

**CHORUS 1:** She learned to find food by following the mother bear.

**CHORUS 2:** But most of all, Atalanta learned to run faster than the wind by racing with the deer of the forest.

**ATALANTA:** I love my forest home. But I'm curious about the village below. I think I'll take a trip down there.

**CHORUS 1:** Atalanta entered the village and walked around. Soon the people began to notice her.

**MAN 1:** Hey, check out the new girl!

**MAN 2:** She's beautiful!

**MAN 3:** I'd give anything to marry her!

**CHORUS 2:** Even your life?

**MEN:** Huh?

**CHORUS 1:** You'll see.

**CHORUS 2:** Word got to the king about the strange new girl.

**KING:** A girl who lives on the mountain?

**SERVANT:** Yes. It is said she was raised by a family of bears.

**KING:** That must be Atalanta, my long-lost daughter! Bring her to me for I must apologize for what I did.

**CHORUS 1:** The servant brought Atalanta to the king.

**ATALANTA:** You wanted to see me?

**KING:** Yes. For you are my daughter, and I beg your forgiveness for leaving you on the mountain.

**ATALANTA:** Why should I forgive you?

**KING:** I am old. I am alone now. My poor wife has died, and we had no more children. Please, I beg of you.

**ATALANTA:** Oh, all right. But you must promise that there will be no hunting in the forest, for the animals are my real family.

**KING:** Done. Thank you. And now, as princess, you must be wed.

**ATALANTA:** Wed? I want no man!

**KING:** But a princess must have a husband!

**ATALANTA:** I will wed on one condition. Whoever can beat me in a race will become my husband. But whoever loses will die.

**KING:** Ouch. That's harsh.

**ATALANTA:** You left me on a mountain when I was a baby, and you're saying I'm harsh?

**KING:** Touché! (*too-SHAY*)

**CHORUS 2:** So many men jumped at the chance to race Atalanta, even though they knew the terrible risk.

**CHORUS 1:** (*As announcer*) And now, the first runner will try to beat Atalanta.

**CHORUS 2:** On your marks, get set, go!

**CHORUS 1:** Atalanta wins easily.

**MAN 2:** (*To Man 1*) Oooh. Tough luck, chum.

**CHORUS 2:** And now, for the second race. On your marks, get set, go!

**CHORUS 1:** Again, Atalanta wins without effort.

**MAN 3:** (*To Man 2*) Bye-bye, now!

**CHORUS 2:** Next victim . . . er, racer. On your marks, get set, go!

**CHORUS 1:** Surprise, surprise . . . Atalanta wins again.

**MAN 3:** Yikes!

**ATALANTA:** (*To King*) You see, father, I will not marry, for no man can beat me.

**CHORUS 2:** The King shakes his head sadly as he and Atalanta head back to the palace.

**CHORUS 1:** Meanwhile, Hippomenes, a handsome mortal, and Aphrodite, the goddess of love, were cooking up a scheme.

**HIPPOMENES:** Atalanta is so beautiful and smart. I must win her hand. But she is too fast a runner for me to beat.

**APHRODITE:** Hippomenes, I like you. And I love to see mortals in love and married. I have a plan to make you win. (*Handing three apples to Hippomenes*) Take these golden apples. Three times during the race, throw them in front of Atalanta. She will stop to pick them up, and you will win.

**HIPPOMENES:** But what if she doesn't pick them up?

**APHRODITE:** Would the goddess of love steer you wrong? Trust me, she will be unable to resist them!

**HIPPOMENES:** Thank you, Aphrodite! I'll do it!

**CHORUS 2:** As Hippomenes gets ready for the race, Atalanta is having second thoughts.

**ATALANTA:** I won't do it!

**KING:** But why not? Are you afraid you'll lose?

**ATALANTA:** No. I am afraid I'll win. And Hippomenes is such a good man. Cute, too.

**KING:** A deal's a deal. You will race.

**CHORUS 1:** Hippomenes double checks to make sure the golden apples are hidden in his tunic. He and Atalanta line up to race.

**CHORUS 2:** On your marks, get set, go!

**CHORUS 1:** (*As announcer*) The two runners are neck and neck. But look! Atalanta is pulling ahead.

**CHORUS 2:** (*As announcer*) What's this? Hippomenes has thrown a golden apple in front of Atalanta. She's stopping to pick it up! She looks like she's under a spell!

**ATALANTA:** Oooh!

**CHORUS 1:** Hippomenes is speeding ahead!

**CHORUS 2:** But wait! Here comes Atalanta again. She's in the lead!

**CHORUS 1:** Another golden apple is thrown.

**ATALANTA:** (*Like a zombie*) Shiny!

**CHORUS 2:** And Hippomenes is back in the lead!

**ATALANTA:** (*Snapping out of the trance*) Those darned apples are so beautiful. I can't resist them! But I must win.

**CHORUS 1:** Atalanta is in the lead once again. She is sure to win.

**HIPPOMENES:** (*To Atalanta*) One last apple and the chance to save my life and win your love!

**CHORUS 2:** There goes another apple. And there goes Atalanta again.

**ATALANTA:** (*Back in a trance*) Pretty apple!

**CHORUS 1:** And the winner is . . . Hippomenes!

**HIPPOMENES:** Atalanta, will you marry me?

**ATALANTA:** (*Back to normal*) I will.

**CHORUS 2:** The King places Atalanta's hand in Hippomenes's, and they are wed.

**CHORUS 1:** So that's where the story ends, right?

**CHORUS 2:** Wrong! You see, the two lovers forgot to thank Aphrodite for her help. They were turned into lions, but they still lived and loved happily ever after.

**ATALANTA AND  
HIPPOMENES:** ROAR!

**APHRODITE:** (*To audience*) Don't mess with the goddess of love!

**THE END**

## Glossary

**highness:** a title of honor for royalty

**fate:** the force that some people believe controls events and decides what happens to people

**perish:** to die, or to be destroyed

**condition:** something that is needed before another thing can happen or be allowed

**harsh:** cruel or rough

**touché:** used to acknowledge a point well made by an opponent in an argument

**chum:** a friend, buddy, or pal

**mortal:** a human being

**scheme:** a plan or plot for doing something

**steer:** to guide or to direct

**tunic:** a loose, sleeveless garment

**trance:** a conscious state in which you are not fully aware of what is happening around you

