

# LAST FLIGHT TO ITHACA

By Christina Hamlett and Jamie Dare

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ISBN: 978-1-60003-949-2

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# LAST FLIGHT TO ITHACA

*A One Act Comedy*

**By Christina Hamlett and Jamie Dare**

**SYNOPSIS:** It has been 20 years since the world-weary Ulysses last saw his beautiful wife (Penelope), their toddler son (Telemachus), and his dad (Laertes). His Christmas Eve homecoming, however, is not only thwarted by being on the stand-by list at a snow-choked airport but also trying to evade no shortage of enemies that can't afford to let him get away. On the home front, Ulysses' business interests are under threat of a hostile takeover by General Poseidon and two henchmen, Antinous and Eurymachus – both of whom have matrimonial designs on Penelope. Fortunately, our hero has a welcome assist from Athena (his travel agent) and Helen (a beautiful ticket agent) but will their intervention be enough to keep him out of the clutches of the conniving Calypso?

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(7 females, 8 males, 1-20 extras)*

HELEN (f) .....	A beautiful ticket agent. <i>(24 lines)</i>
ULYSSES (m) .....	A handsome but weary businessman. <i>(91 lines)</i>
SYLVIA (f).....	A well-dressed business traveler. <i>(7 lines)</i>
CYCLOPS (m/f) .....	A passenger with a gigantic center eye <i>(Non-Speaking)</i>
GENERAL POSEIDON (m).....	Head of airport security. <i>(34 lines)</i>
EURYCLEIA (f).....	A servant at Ulysses' home. <i>(5 lines)</i>
PENELOPE (f).....	Ulysses' faithful wife. <i>(13 lines)</i>
ATHENA (f) .....	A calm, reassuring travel agent. <i>(8 lines)</i>
TELEMACHUS (m).....	Ulysses and Penelope's college- age son. <i>(20 lines)</i>

ANTINOUS (m) .....	One of Penelope's suitors. (6 lines)
LAERTES (m) .....	Ulysses' aged father. (9lines)
EURYMACHUS (m).....	One of Penelope's suitors. (24 lines)
NAUSICAA (f).....	A princess and friend of Ulysses. (6 lines)
CALYPSO (f) .....	A colorfully flamboyant gypsy.
ATLAS (m).....	Calypso's father. (11 lines)
MAN IN AUDIENCE (m).....	(9 lines)
EXTRAS (m/f).....	Airport passengers or Carolers. (Non-Speaking)

**DURATION:** 30 minutes. 45 minutes with Christmas carols

**TIME:** Christmas Eve.

**SETTING:** An airport.

### **COSTUMES**

ULYSSES, EURYMACHUS and SYLVIA –Business suits and watches.

CYCLOPS – An overcoat and slouch hat.

HELEN – A white blouse, vest with name-tag and skirt, large, black-framed glasses.

GENERAL POSEIDON – is in a much decorated military uniform and hat.

EURYCLEIA –A black dress with a maid's cap.

PENELOPE – An at-home jumpsuit.

ATHENA – An elegant white dress.

TELEMACHUS, ANTINOUS and MAN IN AUDIENCE –Jeans and sweaters.

NAUSICAA – A trendy party dress.

CALYPSO – Is a brightly colored fashionista with large floppy hat, feather boa and dark glasses.

LAERTES –Slacks and is wearing quite possibly the world's ugliest Christmas reindeer sweater.

ATLAS –Sweats.

**NOTE:** All costumes should be modern day wear.

**PROPS**

- Carry-boards
- Books
- Cell Phones
- Newspapers
- Magazine
- Microphone
- Large monocle
- Clipboard
- Land-line phone on ticket counter
- Long scroll of paper
- Small globe
- Flyers
- Airline tickets

**DIRECTOR'S NOTE**

In this minimalist set, an airport ticket counter is downstage right. Downstage left are four plain chairs. Optional: Hanging display boards that show Arrivals, Departures and Gate Numbers. The fun “shtick” of this production is that audience members will be unaware that members of the cast are actually planted among them and will stand up to exchange lines when their corresponding cell phones ring.

**AUTHOR'S NOTE**

The choice and duration of Christmas carols is entirely up to the director. It is also crucial at the start of the performance for members of the audience to be reminded to please turn their cell phones off (this so as not to interfere with the characters' cell phones ringing on purpose as part of the plot!). As a fun idea for tickets to the production, design them as airline tickets. Put up travel posters on the walls.

**AT RISE:** *HELEN, the beautiful bespectacled ticket agent is at her station. ULYSSES, SYLVIA and CYCLOPS (who is hidden behind a newspaper) are seated downstage left. Standing in line are EURYMACHUS, CALYPSO, and assorted EXTRAS, all facing the ticket desk. With carry-boards at their feet, the waiting passengers are reading books, checking emails, doing crossword puzzles, etc. until boarding time.*

**HELEN:** *(On microphone.)* Attention, all passengers. The latest update on Flight #2131, service to Ithaca, New York. We still have no plane. Inbound flights continue to be encumbered by heavy snow and high winds. We ask for your patience and will keep you informed if and when conditions change.

*ALL PASSENGERS issue a collective groan of annoyance. An exasperated ULYSSES looks at his watch, which is observed by SYLVIA who is seated next to him with a magazine. CAROLERS in the center aisle softly start to sing It Came Upon the Midnight Clear.*

**SYLVIA:** It's totally the worst, isn't it?

**ULYSSES:** Excuse me?

**SYLVIA:** Trying to get anywhere during the holidays. Especially on Christmas Eve. *(Extends her hand.)* Sylvia. Sylvia Marchand.

**ULYSSES:** Ulysses. *(Looks at his watch again.)*

**SYLVIA:** You know, the watched clock never brings a plane. You've been checking your watch ever since you got here.

**ULYSSES:** Just impatient to get home, I guess.

**SYLVIA:** I know the feeling. I've been away from the hubby and kids for the past week. *(Laughs.)* I hope they still recognize me. *(Beat.)* How about you?

**ULYSSES:** Me? About 20 years.

**SYLVIA:** Oooh. That's rough. So is this weather something else or what? It's like Zeus himself is messing with the elements just to keep us mere mortals grounded.

**ULYSSES:** I wouldn't put it past him.

**SYLVIA:** So did you get a window-seat or an aisle?

**ULYSSES:** Actually, I'm still on standby and hoping something opens up.

**SYLVIA:** Yeah, well, good luck with that. (*Looks around.*) It looks to be a full flight.

**HELEN:** (*On microphone.*) Attention, all passengers. If anyone is missing a large prescription monocle, please report to the ticket desk.

*CYCLOPS put down his newspaper and we see for the first time that he has a large "eye" in the middle of his forehead. CYCLOPS crosses to the desk. HELEN shows him the large monocle. CYCLOPS claps his hands in glee as he takes it and exits.*

**ULYSSES:** (*To SYLVIA.*) Excuse me but I need to make a phone call and let my wife know what's going on.

*SYLVIA nods and goes back to her magazine. ULYSSES crosses downstage left just as GENERAL POSEIDON enters and crosses to HELEN.*

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** (*Sharply.*) I need to see the passenger list for Flight #2131 and I need to see it right now on-the-double. (*Snaps fingers for emphasis.*)

**HELEN:** Yes, General Poseidon.

*HELEN hands GENERAL POSEIDON a clipboard.*

**HELEN:** But there's been no change since the last time you asked.

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Don't get impertinent with me, young woman. I have it on good authority that the man I'm looking for may be planning a cunning escape aboard one of our aircraft. As Head of Security--

**HELEN:** Begging your pardon, General, but given the extreme weather conditions, it's unlikely anyone is going anywhere, anyhow, anyway, anytime soon.

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Hrrrmph!

*GENERAL POSEIDON hands the clipboard back to HELEN.*

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Keep an eagle eye out all the same. The name's Ulysses. U-L-Y-S-S-E-S. Got that?

**HELEN:** Yes, sir.

*GENERAL POSEIDON exits, angry. ULYSSES is punching in a number on his cell phone. The phone rings in the audience and is answered by EURYCLEIA.*

**EURYCLEIA:** Ulysses Residence. Eurycleia speaking.

**ULYSSES:** Eurycleia! What a sound for sore ears! I was afraid no one was home.

**EURYCLEIA:** Master Ulysses? Is it really you?

**ULYSSES:** Alive and in person. Well, actually just alive. For the moment I'm not in person because I'm stuck in a snowstorm at the airport. Listen, I've been trying to reach my wife. Do you happen to know where she is?

**EURYCLEIA:** I believe Ms. Penelope is out shopping for last minute provisions for dinner tomorrow. That strapping young son of yours is bringing some of his friends home from college and we're to have quite the full house.

**ULYSSES:** Thanks. I'll try to catch her on her cell. Oh, and Eurycleia?

**EURYCLEIA:** Yes, sir?

**ULYSSES:** Merry Christmas if I don't get home by tomorrow.

**EURYCLEIA:** Thank you, sir. We shall keep all fingers and toes crossed for your safe return.

*EURYCLEIA sits down as ULYSSES punches in another number. When the phone rings in the audience this time, it's PENELOPE who stands and answers.*

**PENELOPE:** Hello?

**ULYSSES:** Hey, sweetheart. Guess who?

**PENELOPE:** Ulysses?!

**ULYSSES:** Have you missed me?

**PENELOPE:** Madly, darling. Where are you?

**ULYSSES:** Trying to get home to my one and only.

**PENELOPE:** And not soon enough.

**ULYSSES:** What's wrong?

**PENELOPE:** What's not wrong? For starters, there's talk about a hostile corporate takeover.

**ULYSSES:** It'll be all right. Telemachus has a good head on his shoulders. And besides, he's his father's son and can follow in my footsteps.

**PENELOPE:** Yes, but you're forgetting he was just a baby when you left us. He may be doing the best he can, my love, but frankly he doesn't have much of a clue.

**ULYSSES:** Well, I'll be home soon enough to set things back on track.

**PENELOPE:** Uh... that's not the only thing.

**ULYSSES:** There's more?

**PENELOPE:** We have new neighbors on either side of us and both of them clearly have designs on me.

**ULYSSES:** Haven't you told them you're happily married?

**PENELOPE:** Time and time again but they refuse to take "no" for an answer.

**ULYSSES:** So who are these guys?

**PENELOPE:** Antinous is on the left and Eurymachus is on the right. A pair of ne'er-do-wells if ever I've seen any. To make matters worse, my own mother's been saying I should start dating again.

**ULYSSES:** Unbelievable!

**PENELOPE:** I know, right? Anyway I told her I can't start dating until I finish sewing a burial shroud for your father.

**ULYSSES:** (*Astonished.*) Dad's dead? When did that happen?

**PENELOPE:** Thankfully, not anytime soon. I'm just using the whole sewing idea as a ruse to delay things. Whatever I stitch during the day, I unstash at night. At this rate, it'll take forever.

**ULYSSES:** My clever, clever wife!

**PENELOPE:** Well, these two may be dumb as a box of rocks but I can't stall them forever. Thank goodness you're coming home.

**ULYSSES:** But not soon enough!

*As PENELOPE and ULYSSES end their call, the CAROLERS are softly singing Deck the Halls. GENERAL POSEIDON enters and presses a button on his phone. The phone rings in the audience and ANTINOUS stands and answers.*

**ANTINOUS:** Antinous speaking. And who's my dream caller today?

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** It's your worst nightmare.

*ANTINOUS snaps to.*

**ANTINOUS:** General Poseidon! Uh - I was just meaning to call you.

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** So what's the good word on Project Matrimony?

**ANTINOUS:** Major floppage, sir. Penelope won't take my gifts. She hates chocolate. Hates jewelry. Roses make her sneeze. Seriously, what is her deal?

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Her deal is, she's a majority shareholder and board member of Ulysses' company. Same for the son, Whats-his-face.

**ANTINOUS:** Telemachus, sir!

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Whatever. Redouble all efforts with Penelope. The woman must be wooed, and wooed now.

**ANTINOUS:** Well, why didn't you say so? (*Obnoxious sports cheer.*) Woooo-hoo!

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** (*Gives a death stare.*) Did I really just hear that?

**ANTINOUS:** (*Changing the subject.*) Penelope's mom likes me. Does that count?

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Get back to work, Antinous!

*GENERAL POSEIDON hangs up and crosses off, not seeing ULYSSES seated downstage left. ULYSSES pecks frantically at his phone.*

**ULYSSES:** C'mon. Pick up, pick up.

*A cell phone rings in the audience and ATHENA stands and answers.*

**ATHENA:** Athena Travel. Athena speaking.

**ULYSSES:** Athena! Thank goodness you're still at work. It's Ulysses.

**ATHENA:** Ulysses? What a nice surprise. It's been ages.

**ULYSSES:** Twenty years to be exact.

**ATHENA:** That long? Really? I guess it's true what they say that time really flies.

**ULYSSES:** But only if you're having fun which, seriously, I'm really not.

**ATHENA:** What's wrong?

**ULYSSES:** Well, for starters, I have to get out of this airport. It makes the Land of the Dead look like Disneyland.

**ATHENA:** Come now. Is it really that bad?

**ULYSSES:** The food is horrid. Sodium city. Coincidentally, water is nine dollars a bottle.

**ATHENA:** So why don't you just hop a plane?

**ULYSSES:** No can do. It's Christmas Eve and I'm stuck on standby. Listen, Athena, I'll owe you big time if you can do me a big favor and get me on this flight.

**ATHENA:** I'll see what I can do. Remember Menelaus's wife, Helen? She may be able to pull some strings.

**ULYSSES:** I thought you two stopped talking. That whole beauty pageant incident...?

**ATHENA:** So much water under the bridge. We're fine now. In the same book club, even. She's a chapter behind. Anyhoo, let me give her a call.

*ULYSSES hangs up with a sigh as the CAROLERS sing O Come All Ye Faithful. GENERAL POSEIDON enters, dialing his phone. EURYMACHUS, in line at the ticket counter, answers when his cell phone rings. (Note: GENERAL POSEIDON doesn't see him just yet).*

**EURYMACHUS:** General! Good timing. Been workin' on a new plan, get your listenin' shoes on. Ready steady? 'Kay, let's go...

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Whoa, doggie. Slow down, Eurymachus. Slow down.

**EURYMACHUS:** Can't, buddy. I'm workin' a new theory here.

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** *(Covers one of his ears, trying to hear better.)* What's all that ruckus in the background?

**EURYMACHUS:** I'm at the airport. You know how it is. So get this. I think Ulysses may be somewhere in the terminal.

*GENERAL POSEIDON is standing right behind EURYMACHUS now.*

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** I was thinking the very same thing.

**EURYMACHUS:** Wow, you sound great. Five bars? It's like we're in the same room.

*GENERAL POSEIDON smacks EURYMACHUS upside the head.*

**EURYMACHUS:** Ow. (*Rubbing his head.*) Was that necessary?

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** You'll live. And I concur. Ulysses might be at the airport trying to hop on a plane.

**EURYMACHUS:** We need to secure the perimeter. Whatever that means.

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** You take the North Concourse. I'll take the South Concourse.

**EURYMACHUS:** And I'll be in Scotland afore ye!

**GENERAL POSEIDON:** Please stop talking.

*EURYMACHUS and POSEIDON exit into the audience, scrutinizing the audience members. ULYSSES dials another number. This time the person in the audience who answers is, TELEMACHUS.*

**TELEMACHUS:** Hello?

**ULYSSES:** Telemachus. It's Dad. I'm glad I caught you.

**TELEMACHUS:** Hey, Dad! So what's this cool news Mom says about your being on the way home?

**ULYSSES:** Not yet, son. Still working on it.

**TELEMACHUS:** Well you can't get here fast enough as far as the company is concerned.

**ULYSSES:** The hostile takeover. I heard.

**TELEMACHUS:** Mom and I are holding out the best we can but it's like we've got guys coming at us from both sides.

**ULYSSES:** You do have guys coming at you from both sides. Antinous and Eurymachus.

**TELEMACHUS:** The next door neighbors? Hmmm, I thought there was something suspicious from the moment they first moved in.

**ULYSSES:** Your instincts were right. They're a couple of puppets and the head string-master is General Poseidon.

**TELEMACHUS:** Uh-oh. You two have a long history. And none of it pleasant.

**ULYSSES:** Tell me about it. Listen, if I can't make this flight, you and your mom are going to need reinforcements to hold off certain disaster.

**TELEMACHUS:** Who'd you have in mind?

**ULYSSES:** You need to call your grandfather and see if he can come in for a few days.

**TELEMACHUS:** Oh man, do I have to?

**ULYSSES:** Is that a problem?

**TELEMACHUS:** You know Grandpa Laertes hates it when he has to come off the farm.

**ULYSSES:** Tell him it's an emergency and that I said so.

**TELEMACHUS:** Yeah, but you guys haven't spoken to each other in, like, what - 20 years?

**ULYSSES:** And that was my fault? He knows as well as anybody that I was a prisoner and didn't have Internet access.

**TELEMACHUS:** Yeah but--

**ULYSSES:** No buts about it. He may be a grumpy curmudgeon but he's still got an arsenal of tricks that can help us avert a crisis.

**TELEMACHUS:** Okay fine. I'll do it. Oh by the by, I'm bringing a girl home for the holidays. Mom's really going to like her since she's totally into spinning.

**ULYSSES:** You mean like on a bike at the gym?

**TELEMACHUS:** No, I mean at a spinning wheel. Her name's Arachne and she's really brag-worthy awesome. In fact, she's in a competition against your old friend Athena next month. It's gonna be killer.

**ULYSSES:** *(Sigh.)* Oh what tangled webs we weave. Gotta go. Don't forget to call your grandfather.

*ULYSSES ends the call. TELEMACHUS promptly places a new one. When the phone rings, the grumpy curmudgeon himself - LAERTES stands up.*

**LAERTES:** You've reached Laertes. Leave me alone. *(Mimicking an answering machine.)* Beep.

**TELEMACHUS:** Hello? Telemachus here...

**LAERTES:** 'Telemarketer' where? I'm not buying anything!

*LAERTES hangs up. Puzzled, TELEMACHUS dials again.*

**LAERTES:** I said go away!

**TELEMACHUS:** Grandpa, it's me. Telemachus. Your favorite grandson. Great news, Dad's coming home.

**LAERTES:** *(Perks up.)* He is? I better put on my best suit. Oh wait, I'm wearing it.

**TELEMACHUS:** Actually, Dad won't be here right away. He's stuck at some airport and two goons are trying to take over his company. We need your help.

**LAERTES:** Eh, I'm watching "It's A Wonderful Life." Call back in two hours. Make it three. *(Scoffs.)* Commercial breaks.

**TELEMACHUS:** Three hours is too long, Gramps. The vultures are circling.

**LAERTES:** So let 'em. Like the fat lady singing, it ain't Christmas 'til I've finished my movie. Adios.

**TELEMACHUS:** Wait! What if I told you there's a family dinner?

**LAERTES:** Yawn.

**TELEMACHUS:** Followed by a movie about, um, err -- *(Gets an idea.)* Agriculture! Agriculture and trees.

**LAERTES:** *(Likes this idea.)* Fig trees?

**TELEMACHUS:** Not only that. Pear trees, too.

**LAERTES:** *(Like a kid in a candy store.)* Be there in ten!

*LAERTES hangs up as the CAROLERS stroll by, singing Jingle Bells. Downstage left, ULYSSES places a call. The phone rings in the audience and NAUSICAA answers.*

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