

# REVENGE OF THE SEA GOD

by Neil Rathmell

Stories from Homer's Odyssey  
dramatised for performance by young people

## CAST

in order of appearance

Sailors

Odysseus

Lotus Eaters

Sheep

Poseidon

Hermes

Zeus

Circe

Ghosts

Teiresias

Athene

## SCENE 1

**Sound of the sea.**

**Sailors 1-19 enter one by one and take up position on board ship until they have created a still picture of Odysseus's ship at sea.**

**Enter Odysseus, when the picture is complete. He walks among the Sailors, speaking quietly.**

**ODYSSEUS**

Thalassa! Thalassa! Thalassa! Thalassa! Thalassa!

**One by one, the Sailors respond by bringing the still picture to life and repeating the word *thalassa* (the Greek word for 'sea') until the stage is full of movement and sound.**

**Suddenly, the movement stops and there is a brief silence.**

**SAILORS 1-19**

**Crescendo**

The sea! *The sea!* THE SEA!

**Pause**

**SAILORS 1-10**

Odysseus sailed across the sea from Troy.

**SAILORS 11-19**

A crafty captain and a skilful crew.

**SAILORS 7-13**

After the victory, sailing for home.

**SAILORS 1-6**

Beneath the waves the sea god saw them go.

**SAILORS 14-19**

He saw them riding on the sea-saw swell.

**SAILORS 4-9**

Poseidon, sea god, saw the ships go by.

**SAILOR 11-16**

Odysseus and his men just saw the sea.

**Cast make a new picture of sailors looking disconsolately out to sea. Odysseus studies a chart.**

**SAILOR 1** How much longer?

**SAILOR 2** We've been at sea for weeks!

**SAILOR 3** And no sign of land.

**SAILOR 4** No sign of land.

**Sailors 1-19 all sigh. Odysseus continues to study the chart.**

**SAILOR 1** Perhaps he's read the charts wrong.

**SAILOR 2** Odysseus?

**SAILOR 3** He might have.

**SAILOR 2** Not him! Not Odysseus!

**SAILOR 1** Why not?

**SAILOR 2** He led us to victory at Troy, didn't he?

**SAILOR 1** Ah, but that was on land, wasn't it? Now we're at sea.

**SAILOR 3** You can say that again!

**SAILOR 2** Odysseus knows everything there is to know about the sea.

**SAILOR 1** Perhaps he did once. But after all those years on land, he might have forgotten.

**SAILOR 2** Never!

**SAILOR 1** He might have.

**SAILOR 4** **Pointing and shouting in excitement.**

Look!

**SAILOR 3** What?

**SAILOR 4** Land!

**SAILOR 1** Land?

**SAILOR 2** What did I tell you?

**SAILORS 1-19** **A single shout.**

Land!

**Odysseus rolls up his chart and shouts commands to the crew.**

**ODYSSEUS** Prepare to land!

**Sailors spring into action, following Odysseus's commands.**

Lower the sails! Man the oars! Look-outs to your posts!  
Helmsmen hold steady! Make fast! Stow the provisions!  
Bowmen stand ready! Prepare to land!

**Sailors freeze in new positions.**

And so we arrived in the land of the lotus eaters.

**Sailors move quickly into new positions to create a new still picture, sitting in groups, eating and drinking.**

When everyone was rested, I picked out three of my best men to go inland to find out, if they could, where we were and what sort of people lived here.

**All stand and face the audience. Odysseus points to Sailors 5-7 in turn. As he does so, each steps forward and salutes Odysseus. All three then walk out. The rest resume their original positions.**

A day went by but my men did not return. So I picked out the three next best men to follow them.

**All stand again. Odysseus points to Sailors 8-10 and each steps forward and salutes as before. They walk out and the rest resume their original positions.**

Another day went by and still they did not return. So I picked out three more men to go after the six who had already gone.

**All stand again. Odysseus points to Sailors 11-13 and each steps forward and salutes as before. They walk out and the rest resume their original positions.**

Another day went by and still no one returned, neither the three who had gone first, nor the second three who had gone in search of the first three, nor the third three who had gone in search of the second three who had gone in search of the first three. The situation was becoming numerically challenging, so before I ran out of men – and fingers – I decided to go myself and see what had become of them. I ordered the rest of my crew to go back to the ship and prepare to sail at a moment's notice, just in case.

**All those left on stage go out quickly, leaving Odysseus alone.**

## SCENE 2

**Sound of the sea.**

**ODYSSEUS**

I left just as the sun was rising and walked inland, following the trail left by the nine who had gone before. I left at daybreak and by evening I had found them, but what I found was not what I was expecting.

**Enter Sailors 5-7.**

**SAILORS 5-7**

We were the best.  
That's why he chose us.  
Three of the best  
Of the men of Odysseus.  
We were the best.  
There was no one to beat us.  
Till the men of the island  
Came out to meet us  
And asked us to eat  
Of the flower of the lotus.

**Enter the Lotus Eaters.**

**LOTUS EATERS**

Men of Odysseus!  
Men of war!  
Eat of the lotus!  
Fight no more!

**SAILORS 5-7**

The fruit looked harmless.  
The people smiled at us.  
We were the first  
Of the men of Odysseus  
To eat of the fruit  
Of the flower of the lotus.

**LOTUS EATERS**

Men of Odysseus,  
Lay down your arms.  
We ask you to sit with us.  
We mean you no harm.

**Sailors 5-7 sit down with the Lotus Eaters. Enter Sailors 8-10.**

**SAILORS 8-10**

We were the next best.  
That's why he chose us  
To follow the best  
Of the men of Odysseus  
And save them from harm  
And bring them back with us.  
But when we saw them  
They just smiled at us.

**SAILORS 5-7**

Come, friends, and join us  
And eat of the fruit  
Of the flower of the lotus.

**SAILORS 8-10**

The men of the island  
Stood up to greet us.

**LOTUS EATERS**

Men of Odysseus!  
Travel no more!  
Stay here and share with us  
The fruit of the lotus.

**Sailors 8-10 sit down with Sailors 5-7 and the Lotus Eaters. Enter Sailors 11-13.**

**SAILORS 11-13**

We were the next best.  
Not as good as the first.  
But still not the worst  
Of the men of Odysseus.  
The best of the rest of us.  
It could have been worse.  
Our captain trusted us  
To find all the others  
And bring them back with us.  
But when we saw them  
They just smiled.

**SAILORS 5-10**

All six of us.

**SAILORS 11-13**

We weren't the best.  
So we joined the rest,  
Forgetting Odysseus.

**SAILORS 5-10**

Odysseus? Odysseus?

**LOTUS EATERS**

**Standing and leading Sailors 11-13 to join the others.**

Come and sit with us!  
Come and eat with us!  
Forget this Odysseus!

**SAILORS 11-13**

So we sat where they sat us  
And we ate of the lotus.  
And soon we'd forgotten  
Our captain, Odysseus.

**Sailors 11-13 join the others, sitting with the Lotus Eaters. Odysseus steps forward and speaks to them, but they behave as if they can't see or hear him.**

**ODYSSEUS**

Forget your captain? Forget me? Forget Odysseus?

**The Lotus Eaters stand between Odysseus and the Sailors.**

**LOTUS EATERS**

Odysseus! Odysseus!  
He's come for his men!  
His best nine men!  
They can't hear you, Odysseus!  
They're ours now, Odysseus!  
They belong to us!  
Belong to us!  
They belong to the lotus!  
The lotus! The lotus!  
Belong to the lotus!  
They're oblivious to you,  
Odysseus!  
Oblivious!  
Oblivious!

**ODYSSEUS**

**Pushing the Lotus Eaters aside, angrily.**

Out of my way!

**The Lotus Eaters stand aside, calmly, and Odysseus confronts his men.**

Back to the ship!

**Pause. The Sailors ignore him.**

Do you hear me? I order you to return to the ship.

**Pause. The Sailors continue to ignore him. Odysseus is baffled. The Lotus Eaters come closer again.**

**LOTUS EATERS** There's nothing you can do, Odysseus.  
You might as well join us.

**ODYSSEUS** What?

**LOTUS EATERS** Join us! Join us!  
Eat of the lotus!  
Join us, Odysseus!

**ODYSSEUS** No!

**LOTUS EATERS** Join us! Join us!  
The lotus! The lotus!  
Odysseus! Odysseus!

**ODYSSEUS** No!

**LOTUS EATERS** Oblivious! Oblivious!

**ODYSSEUS** No!

**LOTUS EATERS** The lotus! The lotus!

**ODYSSEUS** No! *No!* NO!

**Silence. The Lotus Eaters watch as Odysseus begins to mime running in slow motion.**

I ran, back to the ship, and called to the rest of the crew, who were ready on board, as I had told them.

**He stops and puts his hands to his mouth as he shouts.**

Throw me a rope!

**He mimes catching a rope and winding it round his arm.**

I caught the rope and turned and ran back to my men and the Lotus Eaters who held them in their sway.

**LOTUS EATERS** Us? It is not we who hold them. They hold themselves.

**ODYSSEUS** They are your captives!

**LOTUS EATERS** Willing captives!

**ODYSSEUS** Your prisoners!

**LOTUS EATERS** Prisoners?

**Odysseus mimes unwinding the rope and begins, in mime, to tie the Sailors together in a line. Sailors are drawn into a tight group, linking arms.**

Where are their chains? Where are their fetters?

**ODYSSEUS** In their minds! In their souls!

**LOTUS EATERS** We set them free. You tie them down.

**SAILORS** They set us free! They set us free!

**ODYSSEUS** **Goes on tying them together, in mime.**

Don't listen to them!

**SAILORS** Why are you doing this to us?

**LOTUS EATERS** You see? They want to stay! We gave them freedom! What do you offer them?

**ODYSSEUS** Life! Dignity! Freedom!

**LOTUS EATERS** Is that why you're tying them together?

**SAILORS** Leave us here! We're happy! This is all we want!

**ODYSSEUS** No! You're coming with me!

**SAILORS** Please! Please don't take us away! Please! Please!

**ODYSSEUS**                    **Finishes roping the Sailors together and starts to pull them after him.**

You're coming...

**SAILORS**                    **Trying to resist.**

Please!

**ODYSSEUS**                    ...with me!

**He pulls the rope, in mime, and the Sailors are dragged unwillingly across the stage.**

**LOTUS EATERS**                Why so cruel, Odysseus? Why so cruel?

**ODYSSEUS**                    Cruel?

**LOTUS EATERS**                Why won't you leave them? You have other men to help you sail your ship.

**ODYSSEUS**                    **Turns to face the Lotus Eaters.**

Yes, I have other men.

**LOTUS EATERS**                Then why won't you leave them here?

**ODYSSEUS**                    Because they only have themselves.

**Pause. Odysseus turns away, then suddenly turns back and shouts angrily at the Lotus Eaters.**

Now go!

**The Lotus Eaters are scared and run away.**

I dragged them, now my unwilling prisoners, down to the shore, where my ship was ready and waiting.

**He puts his hand to his mouth and calls to the rest of the crew.**

Help me get them on board!

**Sailors 1-4 enter and take hold of Sailors 5-13. Odysseus stands back and shouts his orders. The nine sailors are dragged reluctantly onto the ship. Sailors 1-4 tie them down in mime, responding to Odysseus's orders.**

Hold onto them! Don't let them go! Tie them down if you have to! Prepare to sail!

**Enter Sailors 14-19. They take up position, ready to row. Sailors 1-4 respond to Odysseus's orders, 1-2 hoisting sail and 3-4 hauling on a rope.**

Man the oars! Hoist the sails! Weigh anchor! All on board? Then pull for the open sea!

**On Odysseus's command, Sailors 14-19 pull on their oars, Sailors 1-2 stand by the sail, Sailor 3 takes up position as look-out and Sailor 4 holds the tiller. The whole cast, including Odysseus, chant in time with the action of rowing.**

**ALL**

Thalassa! Thalassa! Thalassa!