**Arachne**

Athena, goddess of wisdom, was a proud and talented, young goddess. In times of peace, Athena taught Grecians about the arts. She herself was a skillful weaver and potter and always took pride in her pupils' work, as long as they respected her.

One of Athena's pupils was a maiden whose name was Arachne. Arachne was a poor, simple girl who lived in the country. Her father was a quiet man of humble birth. He dyed sheep's wool to earn money for a living. Arachne wove beautiful fabrics of delicate designs, and people began to comment to her that surely she had been taught by the goddess Athena. Arachne denied this and stated that she was certainly better than Athena and that she had learned little or nothing from Athena's teachings. She even went as far as to say that she was a better weaver than Athena !

Arachne was known to have said,"I have achieved this marvelous skill due to my own talent, hard work, and efforts."

Soon Athena heard of the boastings of Arachne and decided to speak to her. Athena disguised herself as an old woman and went before Arachne stating, "It is foolish to pretend that you are like one of the gods. You're simply a mortal who talents are paled in comparison to those of the goddess Athena."

Arachne charged back to the old lady, "If Athena doesn't like my words, then let her show her skills in a weaving contest."

Suddenly, the disguise of the old woman was removed and there stood the radiant goddess Athena standing in front of Arachne. Athena accepted the contest challenge.

As the contest began, it was clear that the beauty of both Athena's and Arachne's tapestries were lovely. However, the goddess worked more quickly and skillfully. Arachne's attitude about her work showed that she felt her weaving was more lovely, but Athena felt it was an insult to the gods. This angered Arachne especially since Athena requested an apology. Arachne refused, and Athena slapped Arachne in the face. Almost instantly Arachne felt her head begin to shrink and her nimble fingers grow into long, thin legs.

"Vain girl, since you love to weave so very much, why don't you go and spin forever." Athena had turned Arachne into a spider.

So it is said that all spiders have been punished for Arachne's boasting, since they are required to live within their own webs. Since then spiders have been called arachnids.

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413 words

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