

PERSEPHONE: Cast of Characters*

(7f, 8m, flexible Greek Chorus with ability to double)

Demeter [f] –goddess of grain and harvest, Persephone’s mother

Persephone [f]- goddess of spring and new growth

Artemis [f]– goddess of the moon, hunt.

Athena [f] –goddess of wisdom and war known more for her role as judge, diplomat, and mediator than for actually fighting in battle. Her decisions were renowned for their fairness and compassion.

Aphrodite [f]– goddess of beauty. She and PERSEPHONE are oil and water.

Rhea [f]-goddess of the earth, Demeter’s mother

Hera [f] –queen of the gods

Hades [m] – god of the underworld

Zeus [m] – king of the gods, father of Persephone [can be miked offstage]

Helios [m] - god of the sun

Ascalaphus [m] – orchard keeper in Hades

Hermes [m] – messenger of the gods, son of Zeus

Orpheus [m] – a musically gifted mortal

Ares [m] – god of war

Eros [m] – god of love, son of Aphrodite

Artemis BD – Body double for Artemis

Aphrodite BD- body double for Aphrodite

Athena BD- body double for Athena

Eurydice [f]– Orpheus’ dead wife

Greek Chorus

Ossa- leader of chorus

**Most parts can be doubled by members of the chorus*

PRODUCTION NOTES

There are scores of versions of what happened in the story of Persephone, the Goddess of Spring. Each offers among other things, an explanation of how the seasons came into being. In those versions, Hades is portrayed as the brooding beast who plots with Zeus to steal the beautiful and innocent, goddess from her mother so he can have her for his queen. But what if Hades isn't that way at all? What if he sees beyond her beauty and innocence and falls in love with Persephone because of her strength, wisdom and compassion, which he knows would truly qualify her to share his throne. And doesn't Persephone have a say in all of this? Perhaps she decides to go and is not abducted at all. Perhaps she sees an opportunity to escape her hum drum goddess life and wishes to travel into Hades to discover its secrets for herself. Perhaps she is even attracted to Hades, the man. Maybe she picks the fateful flower which sends her to the underworld simply because, she can.

PERSEPHONE! is a new telling of the Persephone story through the eyes of Persephone herself. It is a coming of age story of adolescent rebellion. It raises questions, offers explanations, brings new dimension to the characters and gives unique significance to events in the story. PERSEPHONE! asks you to look beyond the black and white letters on the page and experience the incredible power of the larger than life gods and goddesses of Greek mythology.

About Hades and the underworld:

The underworld should not exclusively be seen as a place where life ends. It may also represent our deepest fears and desires – that self within us that holds our own powerful images and truths. A place that can be alluring and frightening. A place that is not evil – just strong, ever-present and deep. It may be thought of as a place within where we can digest our experiences and turn them into personal transformation.

List of musical numbers for PERSEPHONE

Don't Blame Me.....	Artemis, Athena, Aphrodite /CHORUS
Should I Pick This Flower?.....	Persephone
The Risk/ Eurydice.....	Orpheus, Hades /CHORUS
Where Are You My Persephone?.....	Demeter / CHORUS
Child You Will Fly.....	Persephone/ Demeter
Six Above and Six Below.....	ALL

The Set

Unit demarcating areas for Mt Olympus, a general area for the Underworld and the meadow.

Costuming

This can go in any direction that the designer's imagination takes. . Traditional garb, jeans and informal contemporary, business dressy, stylized comic book. ANYTHING. We went with a darker set and vivid, almost neon togas. This worked very well and gave the show a classic yet contemporary feel.

ACT I

INTRODUCTION

[Lights up on the CHORUS.]

CHORUS

No one wants him at their door
 He's dark as guilt and sad as shame
 Whom gods and also mortals dread
 And go to lengths not to speak his name
 But we must do so to tell the story
 Of his love for a budding goddess girl
 Persephone is what she's called
 He's Hades King of the Underworld

In many versions of what happened, or so the story goes
 He abducts her from a meadow from right under mother's nose
 Persephone, weak and helpless, the goddess of new life
 Hades, brooding, heartless, cunning steals her for his wife

He takes her to his whispering world of sadness, grief and chill
 In what's described as a heinous act against the lady's will
 But we are here to tell you that's it's not that black and white
 That choices made and moments shared brings other things to light.

We submit tonight to you a slightly different version
 With questions as our currency we take this slight diversion
 This myth of lovers, mothers, daughters--take from it what you can
 We start with simple secrets, sheer denial and a plan.

[Spot fades on CHORUS.]

ACT I SCENE 1

Mt. Olympus. Spot hits a small vibrant living tree down stage. Music begins. The light expands slowly or pans to reveal ZEUS, HERA, RHEA, HERMES, HELIOS, EROS, ARES, ATHENA, APHRODITE and ARTEMIS. These are the immortal beings who inhabit the ancient stories; the well-known gods and goddesses of Greek mythology. The CHORUS of the GODS stands off to one side of the stage.

DEMETER

[In a flowered shawl, wearing colors of the season, which these days, is always spring. She carries a bright handbag of flowers, which holds staffs of wheat. Her blond hair is just a bit disheveled.]

Impossible! She was there one minute and gone in a flash. Not even a flash. Just poof, no Persephone. And I heard nothing. Not even a leaf was disturbed. I turn my head for

a moment and my daughter vanishes from the earth. Didn't anyone see anything?
[Silence.] What is this? Are you gods or are you cowards? *[Silence.]*

CHORUS

**No one's talking, lips are sealed
 What happened in that sunny field
 Was seen by none ---Or was there one
 Whose chariot brings the light of sun?**

DEMETER

Helios! Of course. You must have seen it all. You see everything.

[She pulls him out from the crowd and puts him on the spot.]

HELIOS

[Nervously, hiding something.] I saw something, but the light was fading. I saw --
 silhouettes.

DEMETER

Helios, you're the seeing eye of gods and men. Do you think I am stupid?

HELIOS

[Reluctantly.]
 Ok, ok. I saw them plant a flower.

DEMETER

What flower?

HELIOS

I believe it was a narcissus.

DEMETER

A narcissus? Her favorite. And then what?

HELIOS

Then they drank some ambrosia together and smashed their goblets on the rocks.

DEMETER

Who?

HELIOS

As I said, it was getting dark.

DEMETER

[Grabs him.] Who was it?

HELIOS

One was Hades and the other of them looked a little like-- Zeus.

CHORUS

**Zeus gave orders, Hades smiled
The king of gods and lord of gloom
They met and planted in the twilight
A flower of one hundred blooms**

DEMETER

Zeus? Persephone's father?

ZEUS

[To DEMETER] Demmy I can explain.

DEMETER

Don't Demmy me! What have you done?

CHORUS

**A deal was struck, a match was made.
The king of gods and lord of gloom
They planted underneath the tree.
The flower of one hundred blooms**

DEMETER

Okay so you planted her favorite flower because....because you knew she'd pick it and then...

ZEUS

[To CHORUS] Shh! Listen if you stop now, I've got a some extra meat....

CHORUS

**A deal was struck, a trap was laid
She picked the flower-- the earth gave way
A deal was struck, the play was played
A fatal match was this way made**

DEMETER

Fatal match? [Realization.] You gave our daughter to Hades?

CHORUS

He said that she was radiant.

DEMETER

No!

CHORUS

He said he needed her.

HELIOS

[Hands over ears.] Stop!

CHORUS

He said he wanted her

DEMETER

But she wasn't his to take!

HELIOS

She could do worse than to marry such a strong and powerful god, you know. He owns all the diamonds, gold and platinum in the earth. He's stinking rich.

ZEUS

He's the God of Death, Demmy, he's lonely.

DEMETER

Persephone is the goddess of spring and new life. That's not what I'd call a perfect match.

HELIOS

Opposites attract. Isn't that what they always say?

DEMETER

Shut up, Helios.

CHORUS

**He said she would bring beauty to his days
Just like flowers on a grave.**

DEMETER

Hades wouldn't know beauty if he fell over it.

ZEUS

He chose Persephone, didn't he?

DEMETER

He *stole* Persephone.

ZEUS

But he couldn't exactly just come up here and ask her out. You would have said "no".

DEMETER

Darn right!

ZEUS

But you don't have to worry, at least she's safe.

DEMETER

Safe?

CHORUS

**No one leaves the shadow land
The gates are guarded
The rivers protect.
No one leaves the shadow land
There is no future, there is no pain.
There is no future, there is no pain.**

ZEUS

See? No future no pain. What could be safer?

DEMETER

Persephone was taken against her will!

APHRODITE

How do you know it was against her will? How do you know she didn't want to go?

DEMETER

[Demeter turns to her slowly.] Aphrodite, how dare you? You were right there at that moment. Weren't you?

APHRODITE

So? I didn't see anything.

DEMETER

Too busy weaving crocuses into your hair.

APHRODITE

They were irises. I don't do crocuses.

DEMETER

Artemis, where were your arrows? Athena, how could you just stand there? What kind of friends are you?

ARTEMIS

No! It wasn't -- I- we- tried to...but

DEMETER

Tried? We're goddesses! We don't have to try, we just do it.

APHRODITE

So, you're a goddess. Why haven't you brought her back yet?

DEMETER

Because I can't, ok? Something's blocking it. It's like she's been cut off completely.

HELIOS

I told you all I saw. There is no more.

DEMETER

Someone had better come forward. If I don't find my daughter you will all be sorry.

[There is a scuffling. ARTEMIS, APHRODITE and ATHENA are arguing. APHRODITE pushes ARTEMIS forward. Music intro begins. PERSEPHONE enters. ARTEMIS, ATHENA and APHRODITE wander downstage and the girls begin together picking flowers and putting them in their baskets.]

ARTEMIS

It was an incredible day. We were all in the meadow laughing, talking and picking the most beautiful flowers... *[ARTEMIS sings.]*

Sun so bright I could hardly see anything
Beautiful day how could anything go wrong
Where are you going, P? I called
But she was gone, gone gone

ATHENA and APHRODITE

Gone, gone gone.

[The following is mimed as it happens. HADES enters and stands off to the side behind the upstage tree, near the narcissus, observing.]

[ARTEMIS pushes APHRODITE and ATHENA out.]

APHRODITE

Don't blame me-- I had nothing to do with it

ATHENA

Maybe I heard something I can't say more

APHRODITE

Something lurking in the woods

ATHENA

I can't be sure

APHRODITE

A wild boar...

PERSEPHONE

[Seeing the narcissus several feet away and moving toward it.]

Arty, come look. A narcissus! I've never seen one in this meadow before.

[During the following ARES enters. APHRODITE wanders forward flirting with ARES. PERSEPHONE wanders off near the tree where the narcissus grows. She does not see HADES. APHRODITE and ARES enter into intense discussion.]

ALL GODS

We all have our weaknesses
We all break the rules
We blurt things out
Which can be kind of cruel

Every girl does things she shouldn't have done

But goddesses do them bigger than anyone --

APHRODITE

No, I won't do it! Do it yourself!

[She slaps ARES. ARES exits.]

[Music changes to a dreamy feel. An imaginary stag leaps across the visions of ARTEMIS and ATHENA. They are captivated and track it. EROS enters unobserved. APHRODITE latches on to EROS, whispering to him.]

ARTEMIS and ATHENA

Then distracted by a sight
I turned away
An ivory stag crashed through the wood
And I was hypnotized.
He was beautiful.

[Below lyrics sung in parts overlap as indicated in score.]

APHRODITE *[To ARES]*

He is beautiful...

DEMETER and HADES and ARES

[To PERSEPHONE.] She's so beautiful.

PERSEPHONE

[To HADES] What a beautiful flower, isn't it?

[The above scene freezes. Music goes rhythmic. ARTEMIS draws her bow and shoots in the direction of the stag. APHRODITE touches EROS who shoots his arrow in the direction of HADES and runs off. HADES sinks to his knees holding his chest.]

APHRODITE

Don't blame me—I'm so not her bodyguard
Don't talk to strangers-what can I say?
She's your daughter you keep track of her
Or pray-

ALL GODS

Pray, pray, pray... *[Repeated.]*

[Music becomes dissonant and crescendos. Rumbling begins and crescendos. Music stops. PERSEPHONE reaches out. Perhaps she is reaching for the flower, or perhaps to help HADES up. HADES reaches for her. The rumbling is at its loudest as PERSEPHONE and HADES disappear.]

DEMETER

[Called out.] Persephone!

ALL GODS

We all have our weaknesses
 We all break the rules
 We blurt things out
 That can be kind of cruel
 We try to apologize but can't turn it 'round
 When you're immortal, you never live it down
 You never live it down
 You never ---live it ---down

[Song ends. Lights go out on all but the CHORUS.]

CHORUS

**Too late. Too late, she took the bait
 Or did she, we're not sure,
 A ruthless god --a helpless goddess
 'til proven guilty both are pure**

**Aphrodite, Ares, Eros,
 Arrows flying through the trees
 What were those gods doing there?
 And what drove Hades to his knees?**

**And did she struggle or consent
 Beyond the shadow of a doubt?
 Watch more closely now and listen
 For the truth is sure to out.**

[Lights out.]

ACT I SCENE 3

Three days earlier, the Earth. A sunny clearing near a wood, the fateful day of the disappearance. PERSEPHONE and DEMETER enter. PERSEPHONE drags behind, a little dreamy and perhaps a little depressed. CHORUS stands by.

DEMETER

Look at those hyacinths. Did you notice? That's a new color this year. Yes, yes, yes. And those roses have almost doubled in size.

PERSEPHONE

Looks great, mom. You always do great Hyacinths. Maybe someday I can--

DEMETER

And see in that field at how thick that wheat is growing? It should be a hefty crop this year. Abundance- everywhere I look. Hunger will be all but banished here on earth if I keep this up. I believe I outdid myself again this year, don't' you think?

PERSEPHONE

Yep, you are the best, mom. All the mortals say so.

DEMETER

Oh, but you too, my little goddess! You're the one who wakes up the seeds, and coaxes the young shoots from the ground. I just finish it all off. If not for you none of it would be-- Oh, Persephone, I adore you. And what a team we make. Isn't this just the best job in the world?

PERSEPHONE

[Not as enthusiastic.] Uh-huh. We get to be out in the sun in a beautiful place, always together weaving flowers in our hair and making beautiful things grow.

DEMETER

And don't forget, we're immortal, so we get to do this forever and ever.

PERSEPHONE

Forever and ever. Mom, do you ever get tired? You know doing the same thing day in and day out?

DEMETER

Just the opposite. I am energized by doing what I do. I love when every day is a fruitful productive day. Don't you?

PERSEPHONE

Maybe not as much as you appear to.

DEMETER

Honey, you seem a little moody. Goddesses aren't usually moody, like mortal women, poor things. All those strange cycles. It's a wonder they get anything done on earth. It's good to be a goddess, don't you think?

PERSPEHONE

Sure. I just wonder if I will be as good at all this as you are.

DEMETER

Of course you will. What's gotten into you? *[Beat]* Oh, I know what it is. You're going to become a full-fledged goddess in a few of weeks.

PERSEPHONE

I know.

DEMETER

And inherit all of your full-fledged 'goddess of spring' powers. Oh, if I could tell you what those powers do for your skin, hair and that Olympic metabolism? Whew! But you'll soon see for yourself. You know, I've maintained a size 27 waist for the past 3000 years? All except when I was pregnant with you of course. But then I was even more radiant because I had you inside me. *[Beat.]* I'm sorry, baby, what were we talking about?

PERSEPHONE

We were talking about me. *My* new powers? *My* mood swings?

DEMETER

Right. Of course it's no surprise that you're a little off, Persephone. You're about to move into a new phase of life. Glorious 'Goddess'hood. Then you'll find a mate and become a mother yourself. It's normal to be a little apprehensive as you grow up. But don't you ever forget, you'll always be my baby, no matter what. Oh, Seph, you have a magnificent future ahead. I can see it all.

PERSEPHONE

But I can't. I can't see it.

DEMETER

[Hugs her.] You will, my love. Only full-fledged goddesses can see the future.

PERSEPHONE

Mom? The other day I saw one of those spirits again.

DEMETER

Oh, honey.

PERSPEHONE

She was really kind of beautiful. She wore a gray wispy gown and she had no voice. She whispered.

DEMETER

I told you, Seph, they're just souls who are lost. They won't hurt you.

PERSEPHONE

But who takes care of them?

DEMETER

They eventually find their way down to the underworld.

PERSEPHONE

But, Mom, I talked to her. She was young and scared and didn't seem to know where to go. I wanted to show her.

DEMETER

Show her what?

PERSEPHONE

The entrance to the underworld.

DEMETER

[Firmly.] Persephone, the only business you have under the ground is with seeds. We bring life out of the ground. Not the other way around. There are others who see to the dead.

PERSEPHONE

But --

DEMETER

It is not our concern. We belong up here, in the sunshine. Understand?

[ENTER APHRODITE, ATHENA and ARTEMIS holding baskets full of exquisite flowers.]

Now, put aside the doom and gloom. We are the goddesses of the spring.

ATHENA

Look at them all! Daffodils, snapdragons, even orchids!

APHRODITE

I like the irises. They look so good with my hair, don't they?

ARTEMIS

Beauty is everywhere you look. This meadow is magical.

DEMETER

[Admonishing.] Magical? Uh uh uh...

ARTEMIS

Sorry. It isn't magical at all. We bow to Demeter and Persephone, goddesses of eternal growth in thanks for these exquisite blooms.

DEMETER

Much better. Now I'm off to check on my orchards. See if you can cheer this one up while I'm gone. It's too beautiful for her to be so bleak.

[She EXITS. The three begin picking flowers.]

ARTEMIS

What's wrong, P?

PERSEPHONE

[Venting.] It's just that everything's always the same. She's always so happy, so

beautiful, so perfect, so-

APHRODITE

So full of herself.

PERSEPHONE

And the weather is always the same. Sunny, sunnier or less sunny. And everyday I coax the little seeds through the dirt and give them buds. But she has the power to make them bloom. She helps them achieve their full potential. Gods and mortals write songs about her. Did you know that when my mother walks sometimes plants sprout up in her footprints?

ARTEMIS

Really? Awesome.

PERSEPHONE

Yeah, right. And when I walk, I walk in her long long shadow.

APHRODITE

Oh, you're such a a downer, Seph. You have to snap out of it. Hey, I think I saw that cute god, Ares a little while ago in the woods. Let's go find him.

ATHENA

Shut up, Aphrodite.

ARTEMIS

Hey don't you get your full powers soon? You'll be able to press 25 tons and fly around the whole universe in 1.3 seconds...I love doing that.

ATHENA

And see the future and become invisible and-

PERSEPHONE

I saw those lost spirits wandering around the other day. One spoke to me.

APHRODITE

Oh, not the 'dead people' thing again.

ATHENA

Persephone, we all see them. We can see everything but we can only pay attention to the things in harmony with our powers. Otherwise we'd go crazy.

PERSEPHONE

I keep wondering what it must be like for them. I think about it a lot.

ATHENA and ARTEMIS

You do?

APHRODITE

The best thing to do is ignore them. They're dead. You're immortal. Get a grip.

[As in scene one ARTEMIS and ATHENA are captivated by the offstage stag. HADES enters and stands near the narcissus, observing PERSEPHONE. ARES enters. APHRODITE sees him and walks over to him, talking and flirting.]

ARTEMIS

[Her eyes follow STAG'S progress. ATHENA watches too.]

Look at that stag, he's so powerful.

ATHENA

And so beautiful.

APHRODITE

[To ARES.]

I'm free this afternoon. The girls won't mind.

PERSEPHONE

[Seeing the narcissus several feet away and moving toward it.]

Arty, come look. A narcissus! I've never seen one in this meadow before.

APHRODITE

[Slaps ARES.]

No, I won't do it! I'm not her personal messenger. Tell her yourself!

[ARES exits. APHRODITE drifts away towards one side of the set where she finds EROS with his bow. She begins whispering to him.]

ARTEMIS

Wait. Where are you going, P?

PERSEPHONE

Over there. that flower is so beautiful, it makes me feel better. Like I'm going to be all right.

[She gets close to the flower. HADES is there.]

HADES

You look all right to me now.

PERSEPHONE

You look like one of those spirits. I'm not supposed to be seeing you or hearing you so don't waste your time. You're dead, I'm immortal.

HADES

What a coincidence. I am immortal as well.

PERSEPHONE

No, you're not. You're dead. You're a lost soul.

HADES

Lost soul, undoubtedly. But I'm definitely not dead.

ARTEMIS

Look, a wild boar. It's going after our stag!

ATHENA

Stop him, Artemis. Our stag is too beautiful to die.

CHORUS

She spots her quarry and draws her bow.

Takes aim and lets her arrow go.

[They make a thwang sound]

It finds its mark, the boar goes down

The ivory stag is free.

And now the song of another's bowstring

The god of love takes aim and fires

[APHRODITE touches his shoulder and EROS raises his bow and shoots. Chorus makes another thwang sound.]

Eros exits running, running

Hades falls to his knees.

[The scene fades and spot focuses us on the following.]

HADES

[Grabbing his heart going to his knees.]

Ow!

PERSEPHONE

[She moves closer to him.]

Are you all right?

HADES

Yeah. I'm ok.

PERSEPHONE

Is that an arrow sticking out of your chest?

HADES

Oh, yeah. *[Pulls it out and sits on a rock nearby.]* Guess your girlfriend's not such a great shot.

PERSEPHONE

[Taking the arrow.] Artemis never misses. This isn't her arrow, her arrows are green. This one is golden. *[She stows the arrow away in her clothing.]*

HADES

Like your hair.

PERSEPHONE

Oh, I didn't know.

Know what?

HADES

That dead spirits flirt.

PERSEPHONE

I told you I'm immortal. If I were dead I would not have noticed your beauty.

HADES

You are flirting with me.

PERSEPHONE

Shamelessly. Did you want to pick this flower for your basket?

HADES

[Sits.] I was thinking about it. It's the most stunning flower in this meadow, perhaps the most exquisite I've ever seen.

PERSEPHONE

Without a doubt.

HADES
[Looking at her]

But if I take it from the earth, it will die.

PERSEPHONE

Yes. And then?

HADES

And then, nothing. It will be gone forever.

PERSEPHONE

No, it won't be. Just gone from here.

HADES

What do you mean?

PERSEPHONE

It will cease to exist here, but it will go somewhere.

HADES

Are you talking about the underworld?

PERSEPHONE

Beauty there is in short supply.

HADES

[She stands.] You're Hades.

PERSEPHONE

HADES

Yes. Are you afraid?

PERSEPHONE

Yes. What's it like?

HADES

The underworld is magnificent. *[Beat.]* Truly magnificent. There is no-where like it.

PERSEPHONE

I've wondered.

HADES

Then pick the flower.

PERSEPHONE

Why?

HADES

Because then you won't have to wonder any longer. You'd know everything.

PERSEPHONE

I need to get back to my mother.

HADES

Why? So you can walk in her long shadow for the next thousand years?

PERSEPHONE

But--

HADES

You strike me as a girl who is looking for something different. What it would be like not to have to follow in your mother's footsteps? To have something that was all your own? Something extraordinary?

PERSEPHONE

I don't know.

HADES

Pick the flower, Persephone, and you will see a world you've never imagined.

PERSEPHONE

But I have imagined. And it frightens me.

HADES

Fear is fleeting. But regret never dies.

PERSEPHONE

I don't know...

HADES

Pick the flower. You won't regret it.

[Lights fade on the scene as spot comes up on PERSEPHONE and the narcissus.]

SONG: Should I Pick This Flower

PERSEPHONE

*Maybe I just need a new dress
Something tight fitting and short
Maybe I need to go sailing
And stop at some alien port*

*Jump on a horse and ride bareback
Holding on tight to his mane
Maybe I just crave a party
Maybe I just need some rain*

*Sunset sunrise
Forever spring
But my heart cries
For songs I have yet to sing*

*Why do my friends seem so shallow?
Why does the day seem so long?
Why do I lie awake staring?
Why don't I want to belong?*

*Waiting, holding
Something about to break through
Here unfolding
It's scary what I want to do*

*Darkness danger
But I'm not a kid anymore
Handsome stranger*

*Should I pick this flower?
Should I pick this flower?*

*Maybe I'll try to ignore this
Hammer inside of my chest
Or maybe I'll stop waging war with
The others who say they know best*

*Darkness danger
But I'm not a kid anymore
Handsome stranger*

*Should I pick this flower?
Should I pick this flower?
Should I pick this flower...?*

[Lights come up again on the scene. She reaches for the flower. HADES' hand then slowly covers hers, guiding it toward the narcissus. She does not resist as they together pick the flower. Rumbling begins increases then fades as the final chord of the song sounds. Lights are extinguished, but for the CHORUS.]

CHORUS

**Did she struggle? It doesn't seem so.
Did she consent? Well, that we don't know.
Was she curious? Or bored?
Or was she deceived?
Was she warned of the danger?
What can we believe when a father makes plans
With the underworld king
To give up his daughter, the goddess of spring.**

Perusal Copying Prohibited

ACT I Scene 4

Hades, a couple of days later. PERSEPHONE is in the throne room, pacing, unhappy, restless. The two thrones sit side by side, one of ebony and one of white marble.. ASCALAPHUS enters with a tray.

PERSEPHONE

Go away. I'm not eating.

ASCALAPHUS

I know, you've said. But you should have a little something. Tonight is a big night, you know.

PERSEPHONE

Every day is the same down here. Mold, darkness, chill. Those sad whispering sounds at all hours of the day and night.

ASCALAPHUS

The voices of the dead.

PERSEPHONE

[Shivering.] I miss my mother. I need the sun. This place is worse than my worst nightmare. I want to go home.

ASCALAPHUS

[Offers the plate.] Have a couple of pomegranate seeds. They're low in fat, high in vitamin C. The dead love them.

PERSEPHONE

[Knocks the plate away.] Why would I eat anything you offered me? You work for the Head of the Dead.

ASCALAPHUS

He's not a bad guy, really. A bit gloomy perhaps, but that's to be expected. Come on, have one.

PERSEPHONE

He's a liar. He told me it was wonderful down here.

[HADES enters.]

HADES

I believe I said magnificent. *[Beat.]* Truly magnificent. Still on a hunger strike?

ASCALAPHUS

As you can see, the floor has had three square meals today, master.

HADES

She'll eat when she gets hungry enough. That will be all, Ascalaphus.

[ASCALAPHUS bows and exits.]

PERSEPHONE

He's trying to force me to eat.

HADES

He's just doing what he thinks his master wants.

PERSEPHONE

You want to force me to eat?

HADES

No, I never want to force you to do anything.

PERSEPHONE

I don't want to be here. Let me go back. Please.

HADES

I can't.

PERSEPHONE

I want to go home.

HADES

But we're about to tour my kingdom.

PERSEPHONE

[Tantrum.] I don't want to. I want to go home. I want to go home!

HADES

Tantrums are for little girls, not goddess queens, Persephone.

PERSEPHONE

My mom is going to find out about this and really blow her top. She has a temper you know. She uses it sparingly but if she is provoked as I am sure she is now, she will do something terrible. She will. And then there's dad. He's the king of the gods, you know. He's the head of the head of the dead.

HADES

Come on, let's take a walk.

PERSEPHONE

No thank you, I'd rather not.

HADES

Please, I have to talk to you.

PERSEPHONE

Maybe later, I don't feel like it right now. If I wanted to walk, I would go walking. I'll walk when I am good and--

Persephone, WALK.

HADES

[They begin walking.]

PERSEPHONE

I'm sure they've missed me by now. Someone will be sent after me.

HADES

I can't keep this secret anymore. I need to be honest with you. Your father knows you're here. He helped me arrange this whole thing. You are here because he and I planned it.

PERSEPHONE

You're lying! Why would my father-?

HADES

I am not proud of how it all went down, so to speak, but it's done. And I am helpless to change it.

PERSEPHONE

Why?

HADES

Because-- I can't eat, I can't sleep. I can't even do my job. Persephone, you haunt my days and nights. I have done nothing for months imagining what it will be like here with you as my queen.

PERSEPHONE

What?

HADES

I want you to be my queen. Will you?

PERSEPHONE

Stay down here? With you and all this--

HADES

I own the entire underground. The gold the silver the diamonds. You'd have half of everything.

PERSEPHONE

You want me to marry you?

HADES

Yes. Desperately. And we would rule together. Equally. *[He pulls out a scepter? Crown? offers it to her, puts it on...]*

PERSEPHONE

I never want to force you. That's what you said, isn't it? What do you call this? Go find someone else. *[She gives it back.]*

HADES

There is no one else. Persephone—I love--

PERSEPHONE

No, no. What about Athena? She's single. Or Artemis? I'm sure there are tons of goddesses who would --die to be your queen.

HADES

You are wise, intuitive, connected to the earth. The only one I've met strong enough to bridge the land of the living with the land of the dead. And you're beautiful too. There is no other goddess.

PERSEPHONE

But you had to plot with my father to get me. Isn't that somewhat pathetic?

HADES

If I came up and asked you, would you have just gone with me?

PERSEPHONE

Doubt it.

HADES

But you did pick that narcissus.

PERSEPHONE

I was just curious. I didn't know I'd end up as queen of the freaking dead!

HADES

But now that you're here, give it a chance. I think you'd like it.

PERSEPHONE

Well, I don't like it here. At all. There's no sun or air. I want to go home. *[Beautiful singing is heard from off. ORPHEUS: Eurydice! Eurydice!]* What's that?

HADES

I don't know. I've never heard anything like it down here.

ORPHEUS

Eurydice! Eurydice!

PERSEPHONE

Of course you haven't. It's beautiful.

[ORPHEUS enters. The CHORUS follows him in and assembles nearby.]

PERSEPHONE

You have the voice of an angel.

ORPHEUS

Thank you.

PERSEPHONE

Who is Eurydice? What happened to her?

ORPHEUS

I am Orpheus. Eurydice was my beloved. She was bitten by a poisonous snake and died on our wedding day.

PERSPHONE

Oh. That's awful.

CHORUS

**Married and widowed on the same day
Orpheus comes to the land of the dead
Risking his life for his fallen beloved
He walks where the living would never dare tread.
A throat that was golden, a voice of pure silver
It stopped when Eurydice died
He searched everywhere and discovered a gateway
To Hades to reclaim his bride.**

HADES

Orpheus, am I to understand that you have entered Hades illegally?

ORPHEUS

Yes, I am still alive. I have journeyed here to the underworld to beg you to give Eurydice back her life. She was taken from me too soon.

HADES

Her thread of life was cut. That was her destiny. I can interfere with the fates only with good reason. They are a tough bunch.

PERSEPHONE

[Aside to HADES.] Really? You have the power to bring people back to life?

HADES

[To PERSEPHONE.] Only in extreme and exceptional circumstances.

PERSEPHONE

Wow.

HADES

Orpheus, I don't understand. How did you get into the underworld without actually dying?

ORPHEUS

I sang.

HADES

You sang?

CHORUS

He sang and the three-headed guard dog lay down
He sang and the ferryman paddled him over the Styx
When Orpheus sings
The rocks, of all things, can shed tears
When Orpheus sings
The fruit in the orchard appears
A soldier will lay down his sword
He can quell a gathering horde
The heart will take wing
It's magic when Orpheus sings.

ORPHEUS

I am prepared to sing for Eurydice's life. It is the best thing I can offer.

HADES

That's impossible. Once the gates of the underworld are breached by a living mortal, he can never return to life again.

[Eurydice steps out from the chorus trying to call him.]

EURYDICE

[It is a whisper.] Orpheus! Orpheus!

ORPHEUS

Eurydice! *[He kneels in front of HADES and PERSEPHONE.]* Oh, Hades, sir, please release her. I can't live on earth without her.

HADES

Well, you won't have to now. By entering here, Orpheus, you have given up your life. You will spend eternity here with her in the underworld. That is the best I can offer.

ORPHEUS

[Moves toward EURYDICE.] We were supposed to have a boy and a girl. We were going to build a house by the sea and grow old together. We can't do that down here.

HADES

I am sorry. I have no choice.

PERSEPHONE

The powerful king of the underworld has no choice? That's gutless.

[HADES takes PERSEPHONE aside as ORPHEUS and EURYDICE go off to another side hand in hand, talking, trying to get enough of one another before he has to be sent back.]

HADES

Look. If I give in to this mortal, he'll go back above and tell everybody Hades is a pushover. That I let him cheat death and then I'll really look like a coward. And they'd be right.

PERSEPHONE

Are you cowardly or just compassionate?

HADES

My arrangement with Zeus to get you down here was cowardly.

PERSEPHONE

Yes. It was.

HADES

I was afraid you wouldn't give me the time of day.

PERSEPHONE

So in a way, if you think about it, going through with it was kind of brave. Stupid, but brave. Same with Orpheus risking his life to come down here.

HADES

That was stupid.

PERSEPHONE

But he did it for love just like you.

HADES

So according to you that makes him brave.

PERSEPHONE

Both. Love makes people do things that are stupid and brave.

HADES

And how about you? I told you what would happen if you picked that flower. And now here you are.

PERSEPHONE

Well, that was just stupid.

HADES

No, you must like me, or you wouldn't have picked it. I think you are falling a little bit in love with me even as we speak.

PERSEPHONE

Ok. Now what you just said-- that was really stupid.

HADES

But so risky, it was brave.

PERSEPHONE

You're delusional.

HADES

So love makes you brave and stupid and delusional.

PERSEPHONE

If you were really in love you would cut Orpheus a break.

HADES

I've never released anyone back to the land of the living. I'd be laughed at. Death has a certain reputation to maintain you know.

PERSEPHONE

That girl wasn't meant to die and you know it, her life was just beginning. The fates just made a mistake.

HADES

[Laughing.] Wow, you are a firecracker. I'd like to see you go and tell them that.

PERSEPHONE

I want you to let Eurydice go. For me.

HADES

I can't.

PERSEPHONE

You're afraid.

HADES

Yes.

PERSEPHONE

Fear is fleeting, but regret never dies. *[HADES turns from her.]* Ever since I arrived, you've been claiming you're in love with me. What are you willing to risk for that love? How important to you am I, Hades? Enough to do what Orpheus did?

[HADES moves into his own spot, sings. PERSEPHONE joins EURYDICE and ORPHEUS, talking to them. She soothes and counsils them.]

HADES

*Look at her
Stand up for him
Eyes a blazing
Then those eyes
See right through me.
She's amazing.*

*Sparks of light dance off and trail her
How can I compare?
I am night- as dark as failure
Who am I to dare?*

*We are as
Joy is to grieving,
Stone is to linen
I am blind*

*She leads me on like
Something forbidden*

Would I give it all to have her
How do I begin?
Wish I knew what I was doing
Could I be like him?

[HADES looks over at ORPHEUS who sings the verse below.]

ORPHEUS

Eurydice
Come back to me
Eurydice come home.
Eurydice
Come set me free
Eurydice come home.

[HADES and PERSEPHONE are visibly moved. PERSEPHONE comes downstage and the following dialogue is underscored.]

PERSEPHONE

It's excruciating, isn't it? Sad and beautiful.

HADES

Yes. I—I am unable to deny it.

PERSEPHONE

So?

HADES

So, I will give them back their lives.

PERSEPHONE

Whatever happens?

HADES

Yes, whatever happens.

PERSEPHONE

Don't worry, your reputation is safe with me.

[ORPHEUS and HADES sing together.]

HADES and ORPHEUS

Doesn't matter where she comes from
Don't care where she's been
I just know I couldn't live
--In a world that she's not in.

[HADES sings the above once again as ORPHEUS sings below.]

ORPHEUS

Eurydice
Come back to me
Eurydice come home.
Eurydice
Come set me free
Eurydice come home.

HADES

[Spoken.] Orpheus, you have won back your life and the life of Eurydice. She will be waiting for you at the mouth of the river Styx. The ferryman Charon will give you instructions and take you back from there. Good luck, Orpheus.

ORPHEUS

[Bows and takes her hand.] Oh, thank you, thank you Hades. *[To PERSEPHONE.]* And you are? --I'm so sorry. I thought Hades was the only one down here.

HADES

This is the goddess Persephone. She's --new here.

PERSEPHONE

But I believe I'm getting the hang of things.

ORPHEUS

Well, thank you. Thank you both so much.

[He exits.]

PERSEPHONE

Wow. Now that was really, really...

HADES

...magnificent? *[HADES again offers her the crown/ scepter etc. which she puts on /accepts.]*

PERSEPHONE

Yes, it was. Truly. Magnificent.

[PERSEPHONE reaches out for HADES who comes and takes her hand and they exit as the royal king and queen that they are.]

CHORUS

***Orpheus gave up his life to claim his lover's kiss
Even Hades could not deny the bravery in this
Mortal man or mighty god, the lesson's hard to miss
If you don't want to lose the girl you must take the risk
If you don't want to lose the love you must take the risk
If you don't want to lose it all you must take the risk.
Take the risk.***

[Lights out.]

ACT I Scene 5

Mt. Olympus, 4 months later. The gods at dinner.

HERMES

[ENTERING with a small plate of meat.] Ok, gods. Dinner!

[All crowd around.]

EROS

Eight chops? This can't be all. I skipped lunch.

ARES

It's Thursday. We usually get twenty times this much on Thursdays. What is going on?

ZEUS

I don't know, but six lamb chops for twenty gods? How many is that a piece?

HERA

Exactly point three chops per person.

ARES

That's barely a mouthful.

EROS

Wait a minute. I thought you said there were eight chops?

ZEUS

You don't expect the king of the gods to get the same amount as the rest of you. I get at least two of them.

HERA

Over my dead body. I am the queen of the gods.

EROS

So, I am the god of love, without me, what would we have?

HERA

A lot less trouble.

ARES

And what about me, the God of War?

HERMES

No one is more important the messenger of the gods. I went down to earth and brought the meat, remember?

[A scuffle begins over the lamb chops. DEMETER enters observing the fray.]

DEMETER

Well—well-- well. Now you see what happens when I look the other way just like you

did. Only when I do it crops and flowers wither, grain goes to seed, and cattle and mortals die.

ZEUS

What does she mean?

RHEA

Demeter, you must stop this. You are exterminating humankind.

ZEUS

What do you mean?

DEMETER

You have the power to stop this, because you started it. You all stood by and left me to deal with Hades' abduction of my daughter. No one has answered my cries for help. You have left me on my own. So, I've decided to leave the earth on its own. Perhaps you've noticed that I have not lifted a finger to encourage it lately. Perhaps you've noticed that I have begun to kill it off wheat field by wheat field.

RHEA

Demeter, you were never been a spiteful child. Zeus was just trying to help Hades out. He's such a pathetic creature. Doesn't he deserve some happiness?

DEMETER

Oh, please, mother. Persephone is taken from me without so much as a word and not one of you has moved a muscle to help me. Did you really think there wouldn't be consequences?

RHEA

But why punish the earth?

DEMETER

It's the only way I can get to you, isn't it?

ZEUS

What do mean?

DEMETER

Think about it. Dead earth, dead crops. Dead crops no food. No food, no animals or mortals. No animals or mortals, no sacrifices to us.

ZEUS

So it's because of you that we aren't getting our usual quota of sacrificial lamb?

DEMETER

Bingo.

ZEUS

That's --ungodesslike!

RHEA

Please, Demeter. You can't go through with this.

DEMETER

Mortals have been starving by the hundreds down on earth and now you're upset because you aren't getting your lamb chops! Let me tell you something. In a month, maybe two, your legs of lamb will be nothing but a memory. You will all be living the lives of vegetarians. Or maybe even vegans!

ALL

No!

ZEUS

In the name of Zeus, I forbid you to do this!

DEMETER

Too late. It has begun.

RHEA

And you would defy your own mother's wishes?

DEMETER

Oh, yes, mother. When it comes to my love for my daughter? In a heartbeat.

[She raises her arms. A wind roars. Lights dim on all but DEMETER. The players onstage join the chorus which is dimly lit. During the following she slowly transforms herself from the beautiful nurturing vibrant goddess into the grief stricken and vengeful being that she will become. Her hair, a blonde wig is removed and replaced with a dark shade; her dress is replaced by some-thing more form fitting, black. She appears cold, hard, and relentless. At the song's/scene's conclusion she lights her torch holds it up in defiance.]

DEMETER

*I've flown around the earth and the skies and the seas
Questioned all the rivers the stones and the trees
Even the sun has disappointed me
Where in the world is Persephone?*

*I've asked all the mountains and the birds and the bees
From the chaff in the fields to the dust on the breeze
Everything short of falling on my knees
Where oh where is Persephone?*

*I'm a force of nature at the ready
Throw my anger like a machete
Here a tornado, there a tsunami—
I won't answer when you call for mommy...*

[CHORUS singing: Mommy, Mommy...!]

DEMETER: *[Spoken.]* Persephone? Persephone, is that you? *[Silence then song*

continues.]

*Poof a little drought that nobody will predict
Now a flood, perfect storm: all the pain I can inflict
I wouldn't trust me when I feel this ticked
Where are you my Persephone?*

*So I dare you-nothing could be sweeter
Come underestimate the rage of Demeter
You're gonna suffer one way or another
Lose to the goddess or worse, the grieving mother...*

[She or the CHORUS lights the torch.]

*Farewell to the earth it will all start to freeze
Watch the light flicker out as it dies in degrees
'Till I get an answer to my desperate pleas...
I'll carry a torch for Persephone
Where are you my Persephone?*

[She raises the torch and throws a searching look toward the horizon. Lights out.]

CHORUS

**If sorrow was a place it would be here
No blades of green on the ground
No flowers bloom no gardens flower
Golden meadows turned to brown**

**Earth is motherless, an orphan child
Killing frosts and withered blight
Her sadness has become a season
Death for death and life for life**

**Death becomes a kind of journey
Love becomes a kind of grief
And rage inside the goddess burns
So Zeus sends Hermes underneath.**

[Lights out.]