

PERSEPHONE
(a new myth for a hotter world)

CHARACTERS:

(4W/2M or 8W/6M+ with optional ensemble)

PERSEPHONE, the girl.

DEMETER, the mother.

JANE, the sacrifice.

HADES, the husband.

(Male doubling track)

PENITENT, the first time the world dies

FATHER, of a baby

ZEUS, the god in charge

AARON, a man in a suit with a plan

MAN, suffering from the heat and drought

(Woman doubling track)

PRIESTESS, of Demeter's temple

MOTHER, of a baby

WOMAN, selling water in the drought

(above roles can be played by two actors (1M/1W). OR by many different actors who also appear throughout the play as needed for crowd scenes)

TIME

From the beginning of time to the not distant future.

SETTING

Hades, Olympus and all points in-between.

List of Acts & Scenes

Act 1

1. The Last Day of Spring
2. The Lost Summer
3. In the Dark
4. What it is to Fail
5. Six and Six
6. Summer's Return

Act 2

1. In the Balance
2. After a Good Long Time of Happy Here and There
3. Deep Reserves Dispense Reservations
4. In Our Sleeping
5. Homecoming
6. All the Devils are Here
7. Endless Summer

ACT ONE

1. THE LAST DAY OF SPRING

*DEMETER and PERSEPHONE in separate,
equally dreamy, lush, locations.*

DEMETER

My daughter.

PERSEPHONE

My mother.

DEMETER

My darling. My ever youthful self outside myself.

PERSEPHONE

Doesn't let me do anything.

DEMETER

Born at the beginning and continuing through an end that never comes.

A continuous circle of contiguous lives in a world that loves us.

In a world that needs us.

The wheat is in the fields.

The rain just so, the sun just so, the world just so.

Persephone! Persephone! They are gathering! They want to see you!

PERSEPHONE

I snuck away from her once.

I went walking down by the edge of the island where the caves peak through to the dark center of the earth. They say that Hades lives there. They say he watches the world from there and I peeked. I crept right up to the edge of that cave and I peeked inside and I swear I felt a cold breath crawl right down my spine. I swear I felt a lock of my hair twist around an invisible finger. I swear I felt the press of lips against my breastbone - here. I ran. I ran back to mother and I thought she would see. I thought she would see that I was new, that I was changed but she didn't see a thing. She only sighed and said, how lovely, how lovely my girl is, and she dragged me to some festival or another. Endless festivals. And I, I kept feeling that press of lips, cold - just - there.

DEMETER

Persephone.

*A shift and mother and daughter are together.
Surrounded by a festival.*

DEMETER

Smile dear. Let them see you.

PERSEPHONE

Why?

DEMETER

Because you are beautiful. Because you are the flower that never seeds.

PERSEPHONE

Always?

DEMETER

Always.

PERSEPHONE

What if I -

DEMETER

No.

PERSEPHONE

Or if I -

DEMETER

No. You are the girl. You are the sprouting sprouts, the budding buds, the blooming blooms.

PERSEPHONE

But -

DEMETER

Oh look!

PERSEPHONE

She's so young.

DEMETER

She's perfect.

PERSEPHONE

How can you tell?

DEMETER

She looks just like you.

PERSEPHONE

Poor girl.

DEMETER

Poor? Hardly. She'll be young forever. With you forever.

PERSEPHONE

Uh-huh.

JANE, a girl, walks to the center of the stage. Her back is to the audience.

PRIESTESS stands behind her.

She raises up her arms. PRIESTESS slices her neck. She crumples. Red blood pours from her.

The crowd descends and spreads the blood across the stage. This is a festival.

DEMETER goes to the girl. Lifts her up out of the blood. Brings her to PERSEPHONE.

PERSEPHONE

Hi.

JANE

Hi.

PERSEPHONE

You're stuck with me now.

JANE

Forever?

PERSEPHONE

Uh-huh. Forever blooming bud sprouts.

JANE

Oh!

JANE weeps and throws herself on PERSEPHONE.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

PERSEPHONE

Thank her.

DEMETER

Stop that crying dear. You're with us now. Go. Enjoy. Go on. Show her the lovely world Persephone.

PERSEPHONE

Come on -

JANE

Jane.

PERSEPHONE

Jane.

JANE

As you wish. I am forever and a day devoted to you.

PERSEPHONE

I know. You and the rest. And I am yours and everyone else's forever.

JANE

May I?

PERSEPHONE reaches out her hand. JANE kisses it.

DEMETER

Go. Enjoy. I will attend to the festival.

A shift.

PERSEPHONE and JANE are clambering over rocks.

JANE

This is a haunted place.

PERSEPHONE

No place is haunted. All the places are my mother's places.

JANE

Not this one.

PERSEPHONE

Yes. All. And if its haunted she's the haunter, her or hers. Anyways. I've been here before.

JANE

Alone?

PERSEPHONE

Tons of times.

JANE

Not me. I wouldn't ever come here alone. The air is cold and it feels like there are eyes on us.

PERSEPHONE

No.

JANE

You don't feel that?

PERSEPHONE

Not this time.

JANE

It's horrible.

PERSEPHONE

You were just murdered in front of everybody. That seems horrible.

JANE

I was not.

PERSEPHONE

That woman sliced your neck. Your family licked your blood from the stones.

JANE

That priestess set me free to be resurrected by your mother's eternal breath like the fields are resurrected after the harvest by her kisses like the world is kept lush by your footsteps -

PERSEPHONE

What about your life before?

JANE

What life?

PERSEPHONE

As a girl.

JANE

I think I was good at mushrooming.

PERSEPHONE

At what?

JANE

Finding mushrooms? Sometimes they were just so glad I was good at something and they said thank you and they took what I found and then I grew up and they said stay in the house! You're not allowed in the woods! You have to stay pure for the day when you become eternal. And so I was very bored. Being pure.

PERSEPHONE

I'm sorry.

JANE

It's fine. Fine! Now I serve you. It's the best.

PERSEPHONE

Really?

JANE

Better than crawling on my knees cleaning the temple floor. Better than chewing the un-hulled wheat to honor your mother. Better than waiting to grow old and be stuck in the back with the rest of the crones.

PERSEPHONE

But if you could -

JANE

Shh. I couldn't. Never could. Let's go someplace pretty. Please? There must be someplace prettier than this. Let me braid your hair with flowers and paint your toes with kisses.

PERSEPHONE

That would tickle.

JANE

Uh-huh.

PERSEPHONE

Hah! Okay - okay - just - just before we go - a peek into the caves.

JANE

No. They're cursed. They're tunnels to a nowhere world -

PERSEPHONE

It's okay - I peeked before. And something kissed me.

JANE

No.

PERSEPHONE

Uh-huh.

JANE

Where?

PERSEPHONE

Just here.

JANE

What?

PERSEPHONE

Lips.

JANE

Who?

PERSEPHONE

I don't know.

JANE

You don't know?

PERSEPHONE

I have a guess -

JANE

Who?

PERSEPHONE

I don't know.

JANE

You do. You do! Tell me! Tell me!

PERSEPHONE

Hades.

JANE gasps.

JANE

No!

PERSEPHONE

Probably not.

JANE

No!

PERSEPHONE

He's a king.

JANE

Did you tell your mother?

PERSEPHONE

No -

JANE

We have to tell. What if he's watching us now? She'd be furious.

PERSEPHONE

Calm down. It's fine. And anyway - I liked it.

No. JANE

I did. PERSEPHONE

Let's go. Let's go now. JANE

I'm just going to - PERSEPHONE

PERSEPHONE peeks into the darkness of an endless cave.

Persephone! JANE

It's fine. It's cold. Like the temple floor - PERSEPHONE

PERSEPHONE drifts further in.

You're too far. JANE

Like the dew on the grass before the sun, after the moon. PERSEPHONE

Stop - stop - JANE

JANE reaches out for PERSEPHONE but she is gone.

Persephone? Persephone! PERSEPHONE! JANE

JANE peers into the dark. She is swallowed up as well.

SILENCE

2. THE LOST SUMMER

Harsh, cold light fills the stage.

Silhouettes of farmers tilling un-tillable fields.

PRIESTESS wrapped up in scraps of fabric against the cold tends to an altar lit by a barely flickering candle.

Several people lean against the altar. Hungry, hoping for food.

PRIESTESS feeds them from a bowl. A small scoop each of a sad paste. They are grateful. They eat carefully.

PENITENT enters. As meanly dressed as the rest.

PENITENT

You sacrificed a dirty tribute. YOU selected a wicked vessel of filth and disease to honor our mother, to honor the source of all life and now. Now we reap the harvest of that soiled vermin.

PRIESTESS

Would you like a bowl -

Reaches out a bowl to him. He swats it away. The hungry crowd scurries to retrieve it.

PENITENT

No! We must suffer. We must suffer for our sins. I live on the memory of bread. No food will pass my lips until Demeter forgives us and returns.

PRIESTESS

The girl was unblemished.

PENITENT

Liar. Her blood was putrid. Her blood infected the earth. It seeped into the soil and made rancid the seeds. Instead of tender shoots they erupted into boils and sores. They erupted into spouts of puss.

PRIESTESS

No. Demeter would not allow.

PENITENT

Demeter has allowed. Demeter has abandoned us and we, filthy, ungrateful children that we are, we deserve the brutal nothing that is the world without her.

PENITENT pulls a whip from his clothes. He reveals his back and proceeds to flail himself.

DEMETER enters. She is unrecognizable, cloaked in rags and despair, disappears into the crowd.

PRIESTESS

Stop.

PENITENT

We deserve all pain and all privation.

Beats himself.

PRIESTESS

Stop.

PENITENT

We deserve to starve. To eat our own arms. To gnaw the dirt. To suck the rocks.

Beats himself.

PRIESTESS

Please -

PENITENT

To burn our hearts to ash. To become bone.

Beats himself.

PRIESTESS

This doesn't help. This -

PENITENT collapses under his own blows.

The crowd drags him into the temple.

PRIESTESS returns to tending the flickering flame.

DEMETER remains.

PRIESTESS

The people are in in despair.

DEMETER

Yes.

PRIESTESS

They lose hope and then -

DEMETER

Fear.

PRIESTESS

Yes.

DEMETER

My daughter is gone.

PRIESTESS

The losses are unbearable.

DEMETER

I must find her.

PRIESTESS

There, there. We do what we can. We endure.

DEMETER stares at the flame.

DEMETER

How?

PRIESTESS

By helping each other.

DEMETER

Help me find her.

PRIESTESS

I'm sorry. I can't bring her back, but there's a family I know. They have a baby and the mother cannot care for him - perhaps you could help them? Perhaps that would help you?

DEMETER

A baby?

PRIESTESS

Just a wee thing. Sick. He needs to nurse -

DEMETER

Where?

PRIESTESS

Down the road.

DEMETER is up and moving away.

DEMETER

I will find him.

PRIESTESS

Let me - let me take you - let me introduce you - wait! They won't just let a stranger - slow down!

PRIESTESS runs after DEMETER.

The flame flickers out.

3. IN THE DARK

SILENCE.

A pale light on PERSEPHONE.

Hello?
PERSEPHONE

HADES watches her from afar.

Hello? Anyone there -
PERSEPHONE

Sorry.
HADES

Who?
PERSEPHONE

Sorry. I -
HADES

Who's there?
PERSEPHONE

I'm sorry. I borrowed you from above - I - I couldn't resist.
HADES

Resist what?
PERSEPHONE

You.
HADES

Me?
PERSEPHONE

Just - you leaned in. To my cave. I thought you wanted -
HADES

I did.
PERSEPHONE

HADES

You did?

PERSEPHONE

Come out?

HADES

Soon. Are you hungry?

PERSEPHONE

Is it always cold here?

HADES

Yes.

PERSEPHONE

Damp?

HADES

I hadn't noticed.

PERSEPHONE

My mother will wonder where I am -

HADES

Your mother has had you for all of your life. Do you think your mother gets to keep you forever?
Or do you think that maybe you could spend your life with who you choose?

PERSEPHONE

I don't want her to miss me.

HADES

That can't be helped. Here. Eat. What do you like?

PERSEPHONE

Not hungry. Can I see you?

HADES

I watch you surrounded by softness. By moss and grass and blooms. You chose to walk by the
rocks though, you chose to come near my cave -

PERSEPHONE

I was drawn towards -

HADES

You felt me pulling you. You felt my eyes on you and my eyes are powerful.

PERSEPHONE

I was curious.

HADES

I couldn't stop staring at you - the light step, the spring smile, the flickering hair - here.

PERSEPHONE

Am I dead? Did you -

HADES

No. No. I wouldn't harm a speck of your skin. A fleck of your hair.

PERSEPHONE

But I am underneath -

HADES reveals himself.

HADES

My kingdom. Welcome. There are many parts and I am honored to receive you into this one.
This one-

A flick of his hand and a lush couch, a bear skin rug, an impossibly soft blanket emerge and PERSEPHONE is wrapped in the luxury of this.

HADES sidles up next to her.

It's not so bad. Let me feed you.

Food comes. A feast presented on endless trays.

A bay scallop poached in the sea water left behind after a storm?

PERSEPHONE

Mmm - I shouldn't.

HADES

A pear blossom painstakingly filled with the tongues of a murder of crows?

PERSEPHONE

Ahh - I couldn't.

HADES

The heart of a snake simmered in blood red wine and served on a bed of young grass hand-harvested by my very own children.

PERSEPHONE

You have children?

HADES

Some. Adopted, fostered, birthed. I'm a king.

PERSEPHONE

I see.

HADES

and I'm very old.

PERSEPHONE

You don't seem so old.

HADES

Thank you. Ah - here. Simple. A pomegranate. A simple red seed.

HADES presents her with a pomegranate off of a tray.

She accepts.

PERSEPHONE

Do I bite it?

HADES

No! Hah - here.

He opens it with his hands. Juice runs down his arms.

PERSEPHONE

Juicy.

HADES

Very. Take a seed.

PERSEPHONE does. Carefully plucking one seed and placing it on her tongue.

PERSEPHONE

It pops.

HADES

Mmm. Another?

PERSEPHONE

Yes.

HADES

Another.

He feeds her.

PERSEPHONE

Um-hmmm.

HADES

Another?

PERSEPHONE

Delicious.

HADES offers her the fruit, she buries her face in it - eating out the seeds gluttonously. Juice runs down her face.

HADES

Good?

PERSEPHONE

Oh! I'm a mess. I ruined your couch - your blanket- I'm sorry. I'm sorry - let me - let me clean up.

HADES

It's fine.

PERSEPHONE

I don't know what came over me - delicious - I wanted more - I'm sorry - is there a stream? A servant who can wash me.

HADES

Let me.

He gently wipes her cheek.

PERSEPHONE

Oh no. I can -

HADES

Please.

PERSEPHONE

Really - I'll just -

HADES

Sticky.

HADES leans over and licks her cheek.

PERSEPHONE

Oh.

HADES

If you don't mind?

PERSEPHONE

Oh - no. I don't mind.

HADES

Good.

HADES returns to his task with care, precision and determination.

PERSEPHONE

Oh. Oh- I - Yes.

LIGHTS OUT

4. WHAT IT IS TO FAIL

DEMETER soothes a baby. They are next to a roaring fire.

DEMETER

There now, there. They know nothing. You will grow and you will grow strong on my milk and you will be muscle and mind and you will rise to great heights in the world and then you will fall ill, you will be struck down, you will be stolen by death, you will be slaughtered in battle, stabbed by a rival, eaten by savages. No. This will not happen to you. I will not lose another child to the vagaries of this world. I will sanctify you. I am a god and I will cook you and eat you and re-birth you eternal. Would you like to live forever you little wee one? You little oochie coo?

DEMETER leans the baby over the flames. The baby screams.

There there now - don't cry - don't cry - all will be done in an instant -

MOTHER and FATHER come bursting into the room.

MOTHER

Oh my gods!

FATHER

What are you doing?

MOTHER snatches the baby out of DEMETER's hands. Extinguishing the flames from the blankets.

MOTHER

Shhh. Shhh -

FATHER

You mad woman Go! Get out!

DEMETER rises, revealing her true form. She is magnificent and terrible and they are in awe.

DEMETER

No mad woman. I am a god. I would have devoured his precious soul and given him a place in the stars. I would -

MOTHER

You would do this for him and let the whole world starve?

FATHER

Ignore our pleas? Our prayers?

MOTHER

And save our son?

FATHER

Free him from this and no one else?

MOTHER

You must be so troubled.

DEMETER

I -

MOTHER

You must be in such pain.

DEMETER

I -

DEMETER diminishes bit by bit.

MOTHER

Sit. Here. Drink.

She offers water.

DEMETER

I - my daughter - my daughter is gone.

MOTHER

Your daughter?

DEMETER

She is the light and she is gone.

MOTHER

You've looked?

DEMETER

What do you think I've been doing? Why do you think the world is in ruin? The crops withered before they've bloomed? You think I sit on my hands and do nothing? I've walked the length and breadth of my world. She is nowhere and my heart is broken.

FATHER

And we must suffer?

DEMETER

You will feel my pain.

FATHER

Don't give up.

MOTHER

For our sakes. For the baby's sake. For your own.

FATHER

For your daughter.

MOTHER

We pray for you.

DEMETER

You have my blessings. Empty as they are.

DEMETER turns and her cloaks fly out and erase the hearth and home and leave her alone under the endless stars.

JANE approaches DEMETER. She carries a headpiece of ribbons and flowers that PERSEPHONE dropped.

DEMETER does not notice her.

DEMETER

I am daughterless.
I cannot mother the earth.
How can I mother without a child? Why would I?
My love is gone.
The world will spin. The skies will change. The oceans heave and recede.
The earth though will lie dormant, will wither without my loving hand.

JANE

Um -

DEMETER

Let them suffer with me. Let us suffer together and long for spring -

JANE

Um - D - De - Demeter?

DEMETER

Who dares disturb me?!

What's that in your hand? My dear one's ribbons? Where did you find this? You - You are the one she was with!

*DEMETER charges at JANE. Lifts her off the ground.
Terrifies the poor girl.*

JANE

Hades! Hades took her!

DEMETER

And you let him?

JANE

He's a god?

DEMETER

You should have thrown yourself at him, gone in her place.

JANE

He didn't notice me. She's prettier.

DEMETER

What did he do? Did he tie her up? Bind her to him? Torture her?

JANE

Not exactly -

DEMETER

What then? Transform himself into a furry bunny and deceive her?

JANE

No.

DEMETER

Explain you stupid girl. Explain!

JANE

He just -

DEMETER

WHAT?!

JANE

He just - saw her and she - she leaned in and -

DEMETER

And he snatched her. Wicked god of worms. Filthy god of festering fungi - ACH! Come with me.

DEMETER pulls JANE by the ear and the stage is transformed to Mt. Olympus.

JANE

Ouch.

DEMETER

Quiet.

JANE

You're hurting me.

DEMETER

How did you get out?

JANE

Where?

DEMETER

Of Hades?

JANE

Oh.

DEMETER

No one just leaves.

JANE

I um -

DEMETER

What? You tell me now and tell me true because in a minute Zeus and everybody who's anybody is going to come down off this mountain and I better have the story straight.

JANE breaks into tears.

DEMETER

Stop it.

JANE

Sorry.

DEMETER

Now.

JANE

I'm trying.

DEMETER

Just. Tell me. I need to know everything.

JANE

Well. Um. So we were down at the caves and Persephone wanted to get closer and she did and I said 'don't!' and she said 'I must' and she leaned forwards and then - poof - she was gone and there was nothing in her place and I went to see and I leaned forward but there was no 'poof' for me instead I just kept leaning forward into the cold darkness and the darkness was like no darkness I've ever seen. Not even when they slit my throat. It was the coldest dark and I kept leaning forward until I was in the cave alone in the dark and it was silent and there was nothing and I started to cry.

DEMETER

You cry a lot.

JANE

I know. I'm sorry.

DEMETER

Go on.

JANE

So I was crying and a wave from the ocean washed through the cave and just over my feet and deep into the darkness and when the wave was gone Persephone's ribbons were left so I picked it up and I came to find you but you weren't here so I went looking for you and then I heard about that little baby that you tried to cook?

DEMETER

He's fine.

JANE

Still.

DEMETER

ZEUS!

ZEUS is pulled in on a chaise lounge by a pair of strapping young men.

ZEUS

Sister. Wife. In what role are you bothering me now?

DEMETER

Our brother has stolen our daughter.

ZEUS

Jesus.

DEMETER

He did not court her. He did not speak to me. He simply swiped her off the face of the earth.

ZEUS

Are you sure?

DEMETER

This girl is witness. He kidnapped her.

ZEUS

Well. Let's consider something - would you have let her go?

DEMETER

No!

ZEUS

So, really that was his best bet.

DEMETER

Don't act like this is fine. This is not fine.

ZEUS

And still. He is a king. King of the underworld, yes, but still a king. It's not so bad at the end of the day. Most of us marry someone from around here -

DEMETER

Don't give me that. He has transgressed all laws.

ZEUS

Dear. We have no laws.

DEMETER

I demand her return immediately. I demand my daughter be restored to her rightful place by my side. I demand Hades be punished for what he has done!

ZEUS

Fine. Fine. Fine. Hades? Can you come up here please?

HADES enters looking like a man who has just spent a very happy weekend in bed.

HADES

What is it - Ah. Demeter.

ZEUS

You know why she's here?

HADES

Demeter. Mother. I - I should have told you. We were planning to tell you but we got carried away with the -

DEMETER

WE! You have stolen what is most precious -

HADES

Not stolen - I couldn't. Your daughter is beyond me - it's love. I think you'll see we have a bond that over time you will -

DEMETER

SHUT UP. SHUT UP. Zeus. Make him.

ZEUS

You need to give Persephone back.

HADES

What if she doesn't want to go?

DEMETER

Do not insult me dirt god. Cold king of corpses.

ZEUS

Stop.

Hades, you must return her. Unless - did she eat anything?

HADES

Some.

ZEUS

What?

HADES

Um - Well - Pomegranate, to start and then oysters, we enjoyed some of those and then I made her a steak cooked just so -she thought she wouldn't care for it but then she did - and we shared some strawberry ice cream that some poor dairy maids who died in a terrible cow accident whipped up -

ZEUS

That's enough. Demeter. She can't leave -

DEMETER

Don't tell me that! I will raze the earth. I will send dust storms like Poseidon sends hurricanes. I will assure that nothing lives until my daughter is returned to me.

ZEUS

Fine. FINE. Six months with you. Six months with you.

DEMETER

Six months? But -

HADES

You should really ask Persephone what she wants -

ZEUS

Out. The both of you. Out of my realm and into yours. This is the way it is.

ZEUS is pulled away by his men.

*DEMETER storms out knocking HADES on her way.
HADES quickly exits in the opposite direction.*

JANE is left alone holding PERSEPHONE's headpiece.

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS UP

JANE is still there. She seems surprised to be back in the light.

BLACK OUT.

LIGHTS UP

JANE is still there. She's trying to exit, pauses in the light.

JANE

What?

Light becomes a soft golden glow around her. This is HADES, disembodied.

JANE

What? Oh. Um. Zeus?

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

No.

The glow pulses warmer.

JANE

I really need to be getting back to - Demeter is expecting me.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Oh no, she's not. She barely knows that you're gone.

JANE

But. Still. It's my job -

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

It is?

JANE

She needs me to help with -

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

With what dear?

JANE

Persephone?

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

You don't want to be around when that goes down. Stay - are you chilled?

JANE

No. Oh - Oh. That's perfect.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

I think you were over-looked there. You're very helpful. You were very conscientious.

JANE

I try to be.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

You would never have leaned into a cave. Put yourself in danger.

JANE

Oh no. I told her to stop.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Exactly. And she should have. But. There's no accounting for some people. They just follow their whims.

JANE

And the rest of us are stuck. Fixing it.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Awww. Poor Jane. Jane? What would you like? What would make you happy?

JANE

Me?

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

You.

JANE

Um -

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Anything. You will be made happy today. Anything.

JANE

I never thought of it.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Never?

JANE

No. I - no one ever asked me.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Let's correct that. What would you like most of all?

JANE

Oh a puppy.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

A puppy?

JANE

Yes! A puppy! A floppy eared soft nosed warm breathed puppy.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Most people go for something more - substantial.

JANE

It's what I want. It's what I want most of all and then it will always be with me and I won't be so lonely and when people yell at me or ignore me then I can just hold onto my little puppy and play with it and all will be well.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Fine. A puppy.

A puppy appears in JANE's arms. It is adorable. It also has three heads.

JANE

Awwwww. Thank you!

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Now. I need you to do something for me.

JANE

What? I'll name him Trio.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

A good name. I need you to do just a small thing for me.

JANE

Oh. Figures.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Don't be difficult.

JANE

Right. Smile and do it. Same as everything else.

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Well if you don't want the puppy -

JANE

I want him! I love him!

A TRULY LOVELY VOICE

Good. Now. Listen.

The golden light envelopes her.

BLACK OUT

5. SIX and SIX

A rolling green hill. DEMETER waits, seen in silhouette.

PERSEPHONE and HADES enter in a regal chariot pulled by men with horse masks.

PERSEPHONE

So bright.

HADES

You'll adjust.

PERSEPHONE

I don't see why we can't just have a surprise at home.

HADES

We can't.

PERSEPHONE

I was in the middle of re-decorating -

HADES

It will wait.

PERSEPHONE

Ohh - what is the surprise? Tell me!

HADES

You'll know soon.

PERSEPHONE

I don't see why you need to be so secret about everything. And you're so serious. You don't need to be so serious. It's a surprise. It should be exciting.

HADES

Yes.

PERSEPHONE

You're worried I won't like it. I'll like it. I like what we've done so far -

HADES

Good. Now. We're here.

DEMETER has come down to meet them.

PERSEPHONE

Mother?

DEMETER

Come down from there. Come to me.

PERSEPHONE

This is the surprise?

HADES

Surprise.

DEMETER

He's not allowed to keep you. Come to me - oh my dear girl how I've missed you.

DEMETER approaches her daughter to help her down from the chariot.

PERSEPHONE

Why didn't you tell me?

HADES

Go on. Visit your mother. She's missed you.

DEMETER

Dearest are you hurt? If he has injured you in the slightest I will -

PERSEPHONE

I'm fine. I'm fine mother - you look - you look like you haven't slept - like you haven't bathed.

DEMETER

I've been at my end. I've been wrecked with grief but now you're here -

PERSEPHONE disembarks the chariot. Goes to her mother.

DEMETER embraces her.

In my arms. Oh dear girl I thought I'd lost you. I thought you were gone forever.

PERSEPHONE

I'm fine. I'm fine - I just -

DEMETER bundles PERSEPHONE in her arms.

DEMETER

You can go now.

HADES

Persephone -

DEMETER

NOW!

HADES

Dearest - the months will drag but I will have you in my arms again soon.

PERSEPHONE

What? No. Wait -

DEMETER

GO!

HADES is carried away by the chariot.

HADES

Six months dearest!

PERSEPHONE

Come back! Don't leave me!

Let go of me!

PERSEPHONE shakes free from her mother.

DEMETER

Darling. Darling shhh. You're home now. You're home with me and all is right in the world. Look - the flowers are opening their blooms just to see you - the grass is shooting tendrils - the world is alive again.

PERSEPHONE

But he's -

DEMETER

He's gone back to the hell he came from.

PERSEPHONE

I didn't want him to leave -

DEMETER

Shhhh. Shhh. It's over now. It's over. Now you are here and look - the bluebells!

PERSEPHONE

Oh!

DEMETER

For you. It's all for you.

PERSEPHONE

It's so - bright.

DEMETER

You've been in the darkness.

PERSEPHONE

It was like nothing I'd ever known.

DEMETER

Shhh. Don't think of it. Let the sun erase it from your mind.

PERSEPHONE

I felt different there. I felt strong.

DEMETER

No. You were a prisoner of a dark old man, but now - now - I've set you free. I've set you free and you are here and the people are so happy. Look - just look -

PERSEPHONE

A festival.

DEMETER

For you.

PERSEPHONE

Ohhh.

DEMETER

And garlands.

Nymphs come bearing garlands.

PERSEPHONE

Ahhh - they're beautiful.

DEMETER

And honey - and coconut fluff and rainwater and rose petals.

PERSEPHONE

Mmmm. I'd forgotten.

DEMETER

I know. I know. Dear one. You're home now. Let's celebrate with drums and dancing.

PERSEPHONE

I've missed you mother.

DEMETER

Oh - I was a misery without you. Frozen heart and parched tongue.

PERSEPHONE

And now?

DEMETER

Spring returns.

MOTHER and DAUGHTER embrace

JANE enters with TRIO (who has already grown to an unreasonable size)

DEMETER

Jane!

PERSEPHONE

Maid!

DEMETER

What is that thing with you?

PERSEPHONE

I'm going to need my spring garments laid out - flowers collected for my hair. Everything white and just gold - not rich gold but new gold - the first flush of gold. This is my resurrection right mother?

DEMETER

This is the re-birth of the world.

JANE

Of course. Will Hades be coming too?

PERSEPHONE

Hades.

JANE

Your husband/

DEMETER (*pulling JANE aside*)

Never say that name near her.

JANE

But -

PERSEPHONE

What?

DEMETER

That name is gone from her mind. Do not bring it up again.

PERSEPHONE

Hurry! They're waiting - can you hear them? Can you hear the dancing?

PERSEPHONE is drawn away by the music.

DEMETER

Jane. Cater to my daughter's desires, her every whim a gift! - and get rid of that beast. Persephone! We'll emerge from the mountain with the first beams of sunlight -

DEMETER exits.

JANE pets TRIO.

JANE

Before they slit my throat I longed for the festivals. The dancing. The city stopping everything to celebrate. They said that when I joined the sacrificed I would become a part of it eternally but eternally it's not very interesting. There's more work now and it's not the kind I like with all the talking and bossing around. Awwww. Trio. What about you? What about you little puppy?

TRIO licks her face. Knocking her over.

Food? You need food?

TRIO pants yes.

I fed you - you need more you greedy puppy?

TRIO takes off on the hunt.

JANE

Come back! Come back puppy! Come back!

JANE follows. Stopped by HADES.

HADES

Your puppy won't come back -

JANE

He will. He's very good.

HADES

He won't unless I tell him to -

JANE

but -

HADES

And I'll tell him to if you'll do what you promised you would do.

JANE

I'm trying -

HADES

Say my name to her. Keep saying my name to her. Feed her pomegranate and meat. Whisper in her ear while stroking her collar bone just so. Remind her in all ways.

JANE

Demeter won't let me -

HADES

I DO NOT CARE WHAT DEMETER WANTS -

JANE *terrified*

Sorry. Sorry -

HADES

Shhh. No. I'm sorry. I am sorry. I-

JANE

I'll tell her I'll tell her whatever you want.

HADES

Argh no just - I just want her to know I am here. Waiting for her -

JANE

Okay.

HADES

Stop trembling.

JANE

Sorry.

HADES

Trio! Trio!

TRIO comes bounding back. Mouth bloodied from the hunt.

HADES cleans him up a bit.

HADES

Here - your puppy.

JANE

Trio!

HADES

Now. Would you please - just - every once in a while, speak kindly of me to her. To remind her - because I think of her every moment of every day.

JANE

Okay. Aren't you a cutie wootie snuggly wuggly bear where did you go? Wheredidyougo?

HADES

Because I do love her.

JANE

Uh-Huh.

HADES

And I'm not a bad guy.

JANE

Okay.

HADES

Okay. Don't forget.

JANE

I won't.

HADES

Good. Good. Thank you.

HADES disappears.

JANE

Awwww what did you get into? Did you go digging?

What's this? What's this on your little mouth? Ewwww - Blood?

LIGHTS OUT

6. SUMMER'S RETURN

PERSEPHONE and JANE lay out under the sun. Their feet dangle in a stream. Tall icy glasses with fruit arranged on the top within arms reach.

TRIO lazes in the hot sun nearby.

PERSEPHONE

It's hot.

JANE

Uh-huh.

PERSEPHONE

For months.

JANE

Uh-huh.

PERSEPHONE

barely a breeze.

JANE

not a breeze.

PERSEPHONE

Or a sprinkle of rain. A sprinkle of rain would be nice.

A thunderstorm.	JANE
Even a thunderstorm.	PERSEPHONE
Trio hates thunderstorms.	JANE
Who?	PERSEPHONE
Trio?	JANE
That beast?	PERSEPHONE
Puppy.	JANE
Huh. IT's HOT!	PERSEPHONE
I know where it's cool.	JANE
Where -	PERSEPHONE
Down by the sea. The caves -	JANE
Hmmmmmm	PERSEPHONE
You can feel the chill breath of the earth on your skin.	JANE
Relief.	PERSEPHONE

JANE

Uh-huh.

DEMETER enters with a pitcher.

DEMETER

Lemonade?

PERSEPHONE

Oh, yes please.

DEMETER

Blooming beautiful girl. What would you like today? The fawns are gathered on the hillsides, their mothers wish for you to bless them. There is wheat in the field, barley on the stem, the farmers want to praise you -

PERSEPHONE

For what?

DEMETER

For the harvest? For the sweet babies? For the new life.

PERSEPHONE yawns.

PERSEPHONE

Right right right. What happens next?

DEMETER

Next?

PERSEPHONE

Is it - is it this forever?

DEMETER

Warm days, thriving world, rich feasts and devoted praise - Persephone darling, you are the dearest of the dear. They daren't even speak your name - you are the girl. The girl of the world.

PERSEPHONE

But -

DEMETER

You. They adore you - as I adore you - look at you. Let me dress you!

DEMETER claps her hands. A procession of dresses appear, each one more delicate and beautiful than the last.

PERSEPHONE

I remember a dress with fur on the collar. With silky dear fur he said was mink -

JANE

Who said?

DEMETER

We don't wear fur -

PERSEPHONE

Velvet? There was heavy red velvet, it felt like wearing a quilt - a divine and tailored quilt - I was ten feet tall - I was a queen -

DEMETER

Velvet is too heavy for summer.

PERSEPHONE

It wasn't summer - it was -

DEMETER

No. There is nothing else.

PERSEPHONE

There must be something else -

DEMETER

There are festivals

PERSEPHONE

The harvest!

DEMETER

Yes.

PERSEPHONE

And after that?

DEMETER

After?

PERSEPHONE

After they take the fruit off the vines? After they collect the grains? After they take the best of me?

DEMETER

Well -

PERSEPHONE

Where do I go?

DEMETER

You sleep. You simply sleep.

PERSEPHONE

I die?

JANE

No - No - you have a second home -

PERSEPHONE

But -

DEMETER

You will come back to me and it will be as if nothing happened.

PERSEPHONE

But something happens.

JANE

You won't be alone -

DEMETER

Nothing. Nothing but a long sleep with pleasant dreams my dear.

The sun is setting on the summer scene. A chill seeps into the air. Leaves trail across the stage.

TRIO perks up.

JANE

He's coming.

PERSEPHONE

Who?

DEMETER

No one. No one. Come daughter. The harvest awaits and tomorrow is ages away, today we are here and you are with me and all is as it should be.

DEMETER and PERSEPHONE exit. PERSEPHONE leaves her robe behind. JANE follows with TRIO.

HADES appears.

HADES

All summer I have been shut out of her mind. And now a cold breath hits the neck.

Persephone. My queen. Remember how you loved me? Remember how we danced? How you discovered what was underneath your own self while you rolled underneath the earth with me? Come. Come soon. You will come soon.

PERSEPHONE runs back on to retrieve her wrap.

HADES

Cold?

PERSEPHONE

Yes. Suddenly.

HADES

It will happen like that.

PERSEPHONE

What will?

HADES

Change.

PERSEPHONE

Nothing changes.

HADES

Everything does -

PERSEPHONE

I don't age.

HADES

But you change.

PERSEPHONE

Eternal. Eternal spring. My mother says -

HADES

mmm. You change. You grow. You did-

HADES approaches her slowly and most gently and carefully places his hand on her breastbone.

PERSEPHONE

What's that?

HADES

My hand.

The air is changing around them.

PERSEPHONE

I remember a cave -

HADES

You wanted to see what was inside.

PERSEPHONE

I leaned in to the darkness.

HADES

And you found me.

HADES engulfs her in his cloak and they disappear.

Cold and silence fills the stage.

DEMETER enters

DEMETER

There are moments when we lose everything that's ever mattered to us
and our brothers and our cousins and our mothers
pat us on the shoulder and say,
'its just terrible,'
and 'I'm so sorry,'
and 'there's nothing you could've done.'

There are moments when your heart goes out the door without you and you're left gasping,
blood pooling at your feet with no power to pulse life back through your veins
and a well-meaning friend will hold your hand
and squeeze
and let you know that you're not alone.

These are the comforts of mortals
Coping with the vagaries of gods.

I am no mortal.

BLACKOUT

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

1. IN THE BALANCE

JANE sleeps at a desk over-flowing with plans and papers. She is professionally, if awkwardly, dressed in a style from the 1940s

DEMETER enters with hands full of documents. She is haggard and unkempt.

DEMETER

Jane! Jane!

JANE

What?

DEMETER

You need to explain this to me - what is this?

JANE

This? This is drills.

DEMETER

Wake up. Tell me.

JANE

Drills that go deep. That crack the earth. Thousands of little tiny cracks that are flooded with water - tons and tons of water, an ocean of water, and that pushes out the power.

DEMETER

And Hades will be -

JANE

Gone. Probably. Hydraulic Fracturing. It's amazing. Before we were just getting to the easy stuff. That disturbed things down there but not in a permanent way - or so we thought.

DEMETER

Bringing spring.

JANE

Sooner every year.

DEMETER

Still, no festivals.

JANE

They don't even notice you now.

DEMETER

They'll remember. When Persephone is back -

JANE

Maybe - but, if we do this - if you give your power to this - if it works - it will be worse than the first time. That was cold, starvation. This will be eternal summer.

DEMETER

Like before he stole her -

JANE

No. No. Not like that. This will be unrestrained heat, rising seas, storms -

DEMETER

But she'll be here. And everything is new with her. They don't care for me anymore - but her. Her new, spring beauty will remind them -

JANE

But she's not only that now -

DEMETER

She will be. You say they want the power this drill thing unearths?

JANE

Yes. They do. Very much.

DEMETER

Of course they do. Why wouldn't they? They can see what she brings. To be fed, to be warm, to have more and more and more and now we can make it happen. You people, clever little beings.

JANE

We've had some time.

DEMETER

And look what you've done with it. There may not be festivals, not sacrifices and feasts, but there is money.

JANE

There is money.

DEMETER

Yes. Money, and if that's what matters now then that is how we will persist-

JANE

Maybe Zeus had the right idea.

DEMETER

Pah! He gave up. Proclaiming himself omniscient? Omnipotent? Hah! He's transformed himself into a frail ubiquity -

JANE

I don't think he'd share that view -

DEMETER

Petty fool. He likes to watch the mono-theists fight over him - as if he is the only God. Arrogant ass.

JANE

Still.

DEMETER

No, I am done with his meager compromise. I will have my daughter back. I will sign. I will pay. I will toss the last scraps of my divinity to whatever outfit can build these drills and pull Hades apart and return Persephone to me. To us.

JANE

But - Demeter. The world still needs you -

DEMETER

Look around you Jane. There is no place for me. This world has grown past being thankful for the harvest, being grateful for my gifts. And yet, here I am. I am not gone. I am still longing, still craving, still missing my child.

JANE

But Demeter, remember, that longing gives way to spring when she returns. Etched deep into the memory of this world -

DEMETER

And now forgotten. And now these clever people can bring her back to me. This will set her free from that prison forever.

JANE

It's not a prison to her.

DEMETER

Set it up Jane.

JANE

It will leave you powerless.

DEMETER

Now.

JANE

You've never been powerless. You don't know what it's like.

DEMETER

Imagine - Persephone here - praised again - the eternal, cherished girl - spotless and pure - with us forever. That's all that I wish for.

JANE

We could hope for more -

DEMETER

Everything will be glorious! And Jane, oh dear Jane I can't do it without you.

DEMETER clasps JANE tightly.

2. AFTER A GOOD LONG TIME OF HAPPY HERE AND THERE

A fifties looking steak-house.

Organ renditions of Beatles songs.

HADES and PERSEPHONE have martinis. Hades smokes a cigar.

PERSEPHONE

I didn't imagine this.

HADES

Nobody imagines what they get. Nobody. Trust me.

PERSEPHONE

I mean when we met. When you stole me.

HADES

Stole you? I never -

PERSEPHONE

Stole. Came right out of the ground and swiped me.

HADES

You smiled.

PERSEPHONE

I was surprised!

HADES

You giggled coyly.

PERSEPHONE

You had a nice chariot.

HADES

Heh. I do don't I?

PERSEPHONE

Turns out nice other things too.

HADES

Don't make me blush.

PERSEPHONE

I'm just saying. I couldn't have imagined that it would work out this well.

HADES

Now if we could just convince your mother.

PERSEPHONE

She's fine.

HADES

She's not. It's been an age and a bit and she's still not.

PERSEPHONE

If she'd just come see the babies -

HADES

Nothing's stopping her.

PERSEPHONE

She'll never come here.

HADES

And those months you're away from me - they feel longer and longer -

PERSEPHONE

You enjoy it. Don't lie.

HADES

Enjoy it? Hardly. Moping the halls. I'm in here most nights. Chewing a steak dreaming of you.

PERSEPHONE

When I'm away and I am in the world and everything is lush and warm, sometimes I breathe in fast, to make the air cold on my tongue and I know you wait for me.

HADES

Always.

PERSEPHONE

And I need you.

Raises her glass.

To my dearest who reminds me that it is the dark that makes the light.

HADES

To my dearest who brings the light into our darkness.

They toast.

PERSEPHONE

She'll get over it.

HADES

You could talk to her -

PERSEPHONE

She gets so upset.

HADES

That's no reason to avoid -

PERSEPHONE

Smell that?

HADES

Mmmmm. Steak.

PERSEPHONE

You bring the best things to me.

HADES

You should have all of it and more.

PERSEPHONE

I know this isn't perfect.

HADES

It's perfect now. It's perfect when you return. I am eternal. I am patient.

PERSEPHONE

I know.

HADES

As long as you return -

PERSEPHONE

I always will.

They kiss.

3. DEEP RESERVES DISPENSE RESERVATIONS

An office tower high over the city. DEMETER in a pant suit in front of a white board pacing. While her clothes are modern and professional, vaguely 70s/80s, her hair and appearance reveal something more primal.

AARON, a man in a suit with a plan, leans into the deal.

JANE takes notes, her clothes are also updated.

AARON

This is all to the good. An excellent outlook. Energy. Profit.

DEMETER

Summer forever.

AARON

Well we don't know that that would be the outcome.

JANE

Like I said. That'll be the outcome.

AARON

There is conflicting science. There is no way to predict every eventuality. But we know there is a need, there is a need for fuel and there is a market. That is confirmed.

JANE

Whatever you need to tell yourself.

DEMETER

You will wring him dry.

AARON

Him?

JANE

Hades.

DEMETER

He won't be able to fight this.

AARON

No. No one owns this. There's no one who can claim rights - legal has assured me of that -

JANE

That's not what she's talking about.

AARON

Ah. Okay - well, this venture will fuel the future. You will be at the center of innovation. Demeter Inc.

DEMETER

The future will be beautiful.

AARON

I have no doubt.

DEMETER

Sweet boy. Do you feel the air? It's cold today. Colorless.

AARON

I didn't notice.

DEMETER

Of course not. There's nothing for you in that bleak landscape. Look out there - look. You see any leaves?

AARON

I see - buildings.

DEMETER

Exactly. Buildings. Concrete and glass to defend against the misery of winter. You know if it were warm all year long? If the harvest lasted all year long - you wouldn't need to cower in these caves. When my baby is home - everything is soft sweet air. Everything is growth and lushness. Everything is easy. People will have their days for leisure, for singing, for dancing. There will be festivals -

JANE

We don't know that -

DEMETER

For my daughter? What else could there be?

AARON

Ah - Ms. Demeter?

DEMETER

What?

AARON

They are arriving.

DEMETER

And everything is in place?

AARON

If you're willing to commit -

JANE

Demeter please. Think it through -

AARON

They are counting on you.

DEMETER

Yes. Together we can reap an eternal harvest, we can bring my girl out of the darkness and into the eternal summer - you clever clever humans.

A long line of men and women in grey suits, carrying briefcases file in and take their seats at the conference table.

They open their briefcases simultaneously and take out blue files that they open at the same time.

DEMETER signs away her power and they thrive.

JANE helps DEMETER home.

4. IN OUR SLEEPING

Music. Low and slow.

A Bed. Rich deep colors.

PERSEPHONE and HADES sleeping.

A legion of yellow hardhats. An army of equipment invades.

PERSEPHONE is pulled away by her feet, she fights to hold onto HADES as their bodies are stretched away from one another.

PERSEPHONE

What is happening?

HADES

I don't know.

PERSEPHONE

Hades?

HADES

Hold on to me, just hold on.

PERSEPHONE

Stop this! Stop! Who are you? What are you -

HADES

You cannot harm us. Stop. STOP! Persephone -

PERSEPHONE

I can't -

HADES

Hold my hand.

PERSEPHONE

My children!

HADES

Hold on -

PERSEPHONE

What is happening? STOP STOP STOP!!!!

They are pulled farther and farther apart the single point of contact between their clasped hands finally giving way under the pull that tears them from their bed.

The sound of machinery drowns out the music.

PERSEPHONE is gone.

HADES is alone.

HADES

PERSEPHONE!!!!!!!

The machinery demolishes everything.

5. HOMECOMING

A glorious sun drenched space.

PERSEPHONE stands shell-shocked.

JANE enters. An air of exhausted professionalism. She flops on the couch.

PERSEPHONE

Jane?

JANE

Your mother wants to know if you'd prefer lemon chai or persimmon bay leaf tea?

PERSEPHONE

Where is she?

JANE

She's coming. Tired. Avocado chips? Soaked almonds? Really we can get anything. If you want. What do you want?

PERSEPHONE

Nothing - I - What's happened to you?

JANE

Work. Lots of work the past hundred years. Lots of developments. You're so oblivious.

PERSEPHONE

I am not.

JANE

You are. You'd go off with him, leave me with your mother. For centuries she just moped, perked up when you returned. It wasn't until the last hundred years things got crazy. Maybe gods don't age - but they change. Ferment? They get batty. You have to overthrow them at some point. Move on - or maybe they just re-appear in a new guise. Your mother's canny though, even in this sad era. She's got herself declared a corporation and now it's all work work work.

PERSEPHONE

What did she do? Why isn't she here? What happened to Hades?

JANE

I hope you can forget him.

PERSEPHONE

No, I go back to him. I always go back. When the leaves flush red, when the air turns chill.

JANE

Things are different.

PERSEPHONE

No. Never. That can't change -

JANE

Persephone. Listen. Geology. Rocks. Fossil fuels. The extraction of energy from the earth. This stuff is powerful. It's been years we've been studying it and now - you notice how bright everything is?

PERSEPHONE

Sure?

JANE

How warm?

PERSEPHONE

It's always warm when I'm here.

JANE

Honey. It's not your time to be here. You're usually tucked away underground now. We used to shiver through these months. Sit by the fire. Eat canned peaches.

PERSEPHONE

Canned?

JANE

It's fine. There's Christmas. Used to be a cozy, snowy holiday. That was nice. But - your mother's changed things. At first you were spending 7 or 8 months instead of the 6 up here.

PERSEPHONE

I'd been feeling rumblings.

JANE

That's us!

PERSEPHONE

He told me not to worry.

JANE

You shouldn't worry. You shouldn't worry now.

PERSEPHONE

I need to get back to him.

JANE

You can't.

PERSEPHONE

You don't know that.

JANE

I'm sorry. I do. I know a lot now. Turns out science suited me. Surprise! Brains in my head!

PERSEPHONE

Where's that dog?

JANE

Dead. He was attacking everyone. Out of control. Hated the noise of the present day.

PERSEPHONE

So you -

JANE

It was painless. And for the best. It got harder and harder to get outside - so hot. Storms then drought. And the fires this year -

PERSEPHONE

This is -

JANE

Horrible. No festivals now. In fact they'd be happy if you left. Disappeared back underground. Allowed some relief from the stifling atmosphere.

PERSEPHONE

I didn't choose this.

JANE

No, but, you know. Your mom.

PERSEPHONE

She did all of this?

JANE

Of course not. People had a lot to do with it. They love the easy life. All that is simple and at hand. Sunshine and blue skies. They love that, living like gods, careless and irreproachable.

PERSEPHONE

This is not right - I have to find Hades - I have to stop this - Mother!

JANE

She's coming. But be gentle with her - she's - she's not herself. Here she is -

JANE goes to help DEMETER.

DEMETER enters in a bathrobe. Diminished. Frail.

DEMETER

Oh my beauty.

PERSEPHONE

Mother?

DEMETER

Look at you, oh I have missed you. I have longed for you and here -

PERSEPHONE

What have you done?

DEMETER

I've brought you back. He can't get to you now.

PERSEPHONE

This is wrong -

DEMETER

Sweet heart. You're with me. Everything is as it should be.

PERSEPHONE

I want my husband. I want my children.

DEMETER

My dearest, my heart - you'll soon -

PERSEPHONE

Bring them back to me now.

JANE

She can't.

PERSEPHONE

What? No. She can do anything.

DEMETER

Shh, shh my girl. Here. Now, you will rest, you will enjoy the sun. You get so pale down there. You've got no color - no spark.

PERSEPHONE

I could say the same about you -

DEMETER

Ah - me. You, you will bring me back to myself.

PERSEPHONE

Mother, you're not well -

DEMETER

No, no I'm not. I haven't been for a while. Jane helps, don't you Jane. I couldn't have done it without her. And all those busy people. She's so good with the busy people.

JANE

You should sit. Here - sit with your mother. She needs you.

JANE eases DEMETER into a chair.

PERSEPHONE

Mommy?

DEMETER holds tightly to PERSEPHONE.

DEMETER

Oh my girl. The people want so much, and they are so excited to have whatever it is that they want. And they will love you, the young, sweet heart of you - you returned - the girl. Oh, look at her Jane. She's perfect.

JANE

Of course.

PERSEPHONE

I am more than -

DEMETER

No.

PERSEPHONE

But I am more, now I am more - I travel between -

DEMETER

Shhhhh - We have created a generative world of power and light and heat so that you and I can be together again, the rich soil and the harvest, the bee and the bud -

PERSEPHONE

I didn't ask for this.

DEMETER

You didn't need to ask.

PERSEPHONE

I didn't want to -

DEMETER

Didn't want? Didn't want what? To be eternally you? To be where you belong? We don't choose who were are. We are made and we serve. You are the ever youthful blessing of the world. You are the beacon of all that is pure and good and untouched by death.

PERSEPHONE

But - I have become more than -

DEMETER

No. No. You are the spring, not the consort of death. Oh - I know. I know - you thought there would be festivals. You're disappointed. We're all disappointed. There should be celebrations -

DEMETER struggles to stand.

JANE assists her.

JANE

Careful now.

PERSEPHONE

Mother this is -

DEMETER

We will make the festivals. Jane help me - we'll bring her dancers, delicacies, children to crown her - dresses. New dresses - you love dresses! Just - just wait. And breathe. And stay present. And forget him - cold, rot death has no place here - see how bright it is?

PERSEPHONE

Jane?

JANE

I'll take care of her. Just wait, okay? And forget him. Like before. Please? It would make her so happy. If you were just her girl again.

DEMETER exits, helped by JANE.

PERSEPHONE paces the room.

PERSEPHONE

Forget him? Forget the cool cave's kiss, the dark night's turning? Hades -

*PERSEPHONE breathes in sharply to feel the cold air.
Closes her eyes.*

My Hades. My love.

I am not her girl, not the world's, not eternally one thing or another. I will find the cave again. I will bring you back my love.

PERSEPHONE exits.

6. ALL THE DEVILS ARE HERE

JANE walks with purpose and style down an infinite hallway.

A disgusting man. Foul and miserable blocks her. This is HADES. He is unrecognizable.

JANE curls up her nose and tries to avoid him.

HADES stops her.

Where is she?

HADES

You can't be here.

JANE

What have you done?

HADES

Get out of my way.

JANE

Stolen her. From my home.

HADES

SECURITY!

JANE

And I am nothing?

HADES

Let go of me.

JANE

As if the rot is not the root?

HADES

You don't belong here.

JANE

HADES

You killed him.

JANE

What?

HADES

I gave you a puppy.

JANE

Trio?

HADES

To help me. You held a bit of my world in your arms. And you -

JANE

He was a menace.

HADES

And now you are.

JANE

Hardly.

HADES

Help me.

JANE

Why? What did you ever do for me? You threatened and bribed. You scared me. You took my friend and left me with her mad mother. You didn't notice me except when I could help you. Even now. You're pathetic. You're disgusting. Broken. Homeless.

HADES

I am.

JANE

Forgotten.

HADES

No.

JANE

No one cries out for you.

HADES

She does.

JANE

She'll forget. Death? Rot? Who wants that?

HADES

They will.

JANE

Pah. We'll figure it out. Brainy beings people are. Figuring it out. Defying you and your creepy worm hole.

HADES

You've changed.

JANE

Uh huh. Demeter believed in me. She listens. She appreciates what I can do.

HADES

You work all the time?

JANE

Yes.

HADES

When will you stop?

JANE

When we've figured out the next batch of problems - the system is a bit - tenuous I know -and now there's all these people just wandering. Hopeless. Like you -

HADES

What will become of them?

JANE

They need more - money, housing, something - so I am working -

HADES

You ever just want to rest?

JANE

It's not that easy. It's never been that easy.

HADES

No. Not easy.

JANE

There's always pain and suffering.

HADES

Yes

JANE

Should I just accept that? Sometimes I do - just do what Demeter says - get what she wants. But other times -

HADES

What?

JANE

Other times I wish she'd see what she's doing. I wish she'd take a step back and see the damage -

HADES

Jane.

JANE

What?

HADES

Do you remember mushrooming?

JANE

Hah - yes.

HADES

Mushrooms need cool forests, rotting trees -

JANE

I could be barefoot. I could feel them growing underneath me after the rains -

HADES

They shouldn't have killed you. Shouldn't have stuck you in the back. Shouldn't have forced you to be pure.

JANE

I could find the best ones. The shady sides of the logs. No one asked me what I knew.

HADES

They should have.

JANE

I only did what she wanted.

HADES

She wanted something perfect.

JANE

Nothing grows now.

HADES

I know.

JANE

Can you change this?

HADES

No.

HADES takes her hand.

JANE

Can I?

HADES

Clever creature, look at what you've done so far.

JANE

What do you need?

HADES

My love with me.

7. ENDLESS SUMMER

A city park. Picnic table.

MAN laying on the table.

WOMAN selling water & ice.

MAN

It is so hot so mind-melting hot I hate this. I remember snow and sleet and freezing rain and this sweaty monkey balls stank air is toxic shit. This is awful. Am I right? I said, 'Am I Right?' Rich suckers sitting in their air conditioned rooms all I get is exhaust. All I get is the heat from your cooling. Suckers. Don't you know you're making it worse! You're burning up the sky you id-jit turds!

WOMAN

Ice water. Twenty dollars. Ice chips. 5 bucks a shard.

MAN

What the hell? That is money. That is real money. Used to be the water came out of the pipes clear cool and sweet. Before that it was in the streams. Now you have it? Highway robbery. Give me an ice chip.

WOMAN

5 bucks a shard.

MAN

I'm not giving you 5. Give me a shard. Give me a bucket.

WOMAN

Gotta pay for it.

MAN

You see anybody out here?

WOMAN

It's for sale. The water is for sale. You pay.

MAN

No.

WOMAN

There are rules. The price is high but the water is good. I don't sell sewer water. You can get sewer water for cheap. They sell that too. This is good water.

MAN

Hand it over.

WOMAN

No

MAN

Now.

MAN goes to grab the water. WOMAN pretends to have a gun in her pocket that she points at him.

WOMAN

Five dollars a shard. 20 for a quart.

MAN

You gonna shoot me?

WOMAN

You gonna rob me?

MAN

Lady I'm thirsty. I been sitting out here all day all night and there's nothing good. There's sweat and stink.

WOMAN

Uh-huh.

MAN

Could you put the gun down?

WOMAN

Not till you leave.

Where am I gonna go?
MAN

Don't know. Don't care.
WOMAN

Figures. What the heck.
MAN

MAN swipes a jug of water and runs.

Stop! Stop!
WOMAN

I knew they wouldn't let you have a real gun.
MAN

MAN swipes a couple more jugs.

WOMAN jumps on him, knocks him down.

They fight.

Two people come and swipe the water and ice while MAN and WOMAN fight. Exit unseen.

PERSEPHONE enters just as the fight is winding down.

Get off me.
WOMAN

Give me the water.
MAN

Thief! You're nothing but a thief!
WOMAN

Gouger. Water should be free.
MAN

But it isn't! It isn't free!
WOMAN

WOMAN gets the upper hand. Pushes him off her. Jumps out of his way.

WOMAN

It's not falling from the sky. It's not fresh from the streams. It takes work to make this clean now. It takes desalination plants and evaporating systems and you don't get to just lay around and expect it to fall into your mouth.

MAN

Used to.

WOMAN

Plenty of things used to. Used to be people in the park not just old stink bums.

MAN

Your water's gone.

WOMAN

What?

MAN

Your water? From your cart? Gone.

WOMAN

What the - NO!!

WOMAN flops down defeated.

MAN

Here.

MAN offers her a swig from a bottle he stashed during the fight.

WOMAN takes it.

WOMAN

Thanks.

What are you looking at?

PERSEPHONE
You can see me?

WOMAN
Seen crazier then you. Quit staring.

PERSEPHONE
Sorry. I -

MAN
There's not enough for you.

PERSEPHONE
Oh. No. Thank you. I'm fine.

WOMAN
Did you see who stole my product?

PERSEPHONE
Children.

WOMAN
Clothes? Distinguishing marks? Anything I can tell security?

PERSEPHONE
Oh. No. They looked dirty.

WOMAN
Hah! Everyone looks dirty.

PERSEPHONE
Everyone?

MAN
Not the ones we don't see. Not the ones who live in the hamster trails of climate controlled buildings? The ones who never come out into the sun.

WOMAN
Like you.

MAN
Like you.

Bright today. WOMAN

Bright every day. MAN

You got anything stronger. WOMAN

Rot gut wine. MAN

Well I love me a bit of rot gut wine on a bad day. WOMAN

Only days to drink it. MAN

They share some rot gut wine.

Are there good days? PERSEPHONE

Sure. MAN

When? WOMAN

When it rains. MAN

Hasn't rained for a year honey. WOMAN

But remember when it did? When the sweet water fell from the sky - even the inside dwellers came out to taste. MAN

The kids on my block got the runs from drinking out of the drainpipes. WOMAN

MAN

But before it hit the ground. That was nice.

WOMAN

Sure. For a moment.

PERSEPHONE

I'm Persephone.

MAN

Okay. Wine?

PERSEPHONE

No thanks.

WOMAN

Candy girl what are you doing here?

PERSEPHONE

Persephone? Demeter's daughter?

MAN

Demeter?

WOMAN

That's a company.

MAN

That's some energy outfit.

WOMAN

They're huge.

MAN

You work for them?

WOMAN

They'd probably pay to get you back.

MAN

They'd probably pay through the nose.

WOMAN

Enough for clean water.

MAN

Enough to get a permanent place inside.

WOMAN

Enough for a one way ticket to the good life.

MAN

Now. Go slow now.

MAN and WOMAN stand up and circle PERSEPHONE.

PERSEPHONE

Hey. Now. Whoa - you don't understand.

MAN swipes to her. She moves.

PERSEPHONE

Hands off! You can't just swipe me!

WOMAN grabs at her shoulders. She ducks.

WOMAN

And why not? You made of glass?

MAN

You made of spun sugar and puffed rice?

PERSEPHONE

NO -

WOMAN

You think you just glide through things all butterfly and lace?

MAN

Girl - you're nothing but a meal ticket to us.

WOMAN

And we haven't been eating good for years.

Hah! I ate a shoe yesterday.

MAN

You didn't.

WOMAN

Leather insole dipped in old puddle water.

MAN

Hope you boiled it.

WOMAN

Just dried it in the sun. Concentrates the nutrients.

MAN

Leave me alone!

PERSEPHONE

Come with us.

WOMAN

Your mother's got money?

MAN

She's Demeter.

PERSEPHONE

You want her attention?

MAN

No! I want my husband.

PERSEPHONE

Aww, boo hoo hoo spoiled little rich girl lost her sugar daddy husband.

WOMAN

My mother stole him.

PERSEPHONE

What's she doing with him?

MAN

Don't ask. WOMAN

Stop it. PERSEPHONE

What? MAN

Threatening me. PERSEPHONE

Are we threatening? WOMAN

Don't know how we can be. MAN

It's not like we have anything. WOMAN

Your kind saw to that. MAN

My kind? PERSEPHONE

MAN pulls out a knife. They circle her.

Rich kind. MAN

Powerful kind WOMAN

You don't know. PERSEPHONE

What's there to know? WOMAN

PERSEPHONE

So much.

MAN

There's heat and there's suffering. There's survival and wondering why our parents had us.

WOMAN

Why our parents let this happen.

PERSEPHONE

My parent let this happen.

MAN

No.

PERSEPHONE

Because of me.

MAN

And what are you?

PERSEPHONE

I am -

WOMAN

A pretty little nothing.

PERSEPHONE

I am -

MAN

Just a girl.

PERSEPHONE

I am -

MAN

A means to an end.

PERSEPHONE

I am the clean new spring that emerges from the earth when the sun tilts and washes away the winter.

I am the sweet days that run up to summer.

I am the soil the seeds are planted in.
I am the dew that softens the frozen earth.
I am the one who leaves
and when I am gone my husband loves me every day that it is cold and frozen
and his love fills me up again so that I can re-emerge at the turning of the globe and spread the
spring again.

*Lights grow brighter and brighter the world spins
differently.*

JANE and HADES enter.

JANE

Leave her alone.

HADES

Persephone!

PERSEPHONE

You've come back for me.

HADES

I'm trying.

MAN

Back off - this little ball of crazy is ours.

MAN and WOMAN continue to menace PERSEPHONE.

JANE stands between them.

JANE

Make them stop.

HADES

I can't. I can't do anything here.

DEMETER enters, frail and desperate.

DEMETER

There you are. Come, back with me.

PERSEPHONE

Why can they see me? Why do they hate me?

JANE

They're hungry. They can't live here like this.

PERSEPHONE

Hades? Take me home?

HADES

My only home is with you.

WOMAN (*to JANE*)

Back off lady.

MAN

We were here first.

DEMETER

Your home is with me. I have made us a tower in the sky and you will bring the world back to itself.

PERSEPHONE

They're trying to steal me.

DEMETER

Like he stole you -

JANE

Persephone - remember when they killed me? They sliced my throat? They thought they could kill a pretty girl and make it all okay?

PERSEPHONE

They were wrong.

JANE

They were wrong. They wanted to control the ending but there is always a beginning stuck inside.

HADES

Come back to me. Come back to the earth and you will make me whole again -

DEMETER

No. No - don't leave me alone here in this broken world -

PERSEPHONE

But mother I am the world and the world is me and you are the world and the world is you and this want to control it for ever and always is killing you.

DEMETER

But if you stayed -

PERSEPHONE

Then what? What? We fight them off everyday while they struggle for breath?

MAN

We want to live.

WOMAN

To drink and breathe and we'll do what we need to do to get it.

HADES

Come quickly.

PERSEPHONE

Jane?

JANE

Me?

PERSEPHONE

This world needs death deep in its kingdom, needs the harvest green on the vine, needs humanity caring for humanity - we are nothing without you and your kind.

Look at you - you - brains in your head. Use them.

JANE

Give me the knife.

WOMAN

You going to help us?

MAN

What's she going to do?

PERSEPHONE

Give it to her. Here, you can hold my hands.

JANE takes the knife. The MAN and WOMAN hold PERSEPHONE's hands on either side.

DEMETER

My girl -

PERSEPHONE

You went beyond yourself mother. You took them all beyond themselves. There is no way to keep me. I am an always shifting thing. I am an endless cycle. I am a birth and a death and a re-birth. I am my own and endless self. Now Jane -

JANE

Are you sure?

PERSEPHONE

Certainty has no place here. There is no spring like mine returning. Let me be released to be with my love. Let them bring me back with the festivals, with the stories they choose to tell - or not.

Let this be an ending.

PERSEPHONE opens her neck to JANE. JANE slices it open and blood runs like a river over the earth.

Blood seeps deep into the ground. The sunlight dims.

The air grows cold.

PERSEPHONE is gone. HADES and DEMETER are gone.

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP.

JANE

Hello?

It starts to rain. JANE looks up. MAN and WOMAN look up.

Ahhh -

PERSEPHONE (*voice*)

Life is no life without pain.

Life is no life without death.

Remember this and weep. Remember this and rejoice.

Remember this and tend your world and the world will let you stay.

One by one people enter as PERSEPHONE speaks. Necks thrown back, eyes on the sky. The rain stops.

A harsh and brightening sun.

JANE looks at them.

The light comes up harsh on the stage and the seats.

JANE looks at the audience.

BLACKOUT

END of PLAY