

# Saving Persephone

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## Cast of characters and necessary notes

### The nymphs

#### **Alseids** (Names TBC)

##### *Speaking roles:*

Ally

Alicia

Astrid

#### **Dryads**

##### *Speaking roles:*

Karya (hazelnut tree)

Morea (Mulberry tree)

Sykei (fig tree)

##### *Non-speaking role:*

Ampelos (vines)

Balanos (oak)

### **Hesperides**

##### *Speaking roles:*

Aegle

Erytheia

Hesperia

### **Nereids:**

##### *Speaking roles:*

Thetis

Psamathe

Galatea

##### *Non-speaking roles:*

Amphitrite

### **Oreads**

##### *Speaking roles:*

Echo (can only repeat what others say)

Kyllene

Pitys

##### *Non-speaking roles:*

Cynosura

Oenone

### **Pleiades**

##### *Speaking roles:*

Maia (eldest)

Merope (youngest)

Electra

Alcyone

##### *Non-speaking roles:*

Taygete

Asterope

Celaeno

**Chorus**

One

(Chorus member **One** – will always have the script on stage with him. He can use it to prompt actors should the need arise.)

Two

Three

**Demeter**

**Hades**

**Persephone**

**Hermes**

**Ladon**

Five to seven controllers

**The Underworld 'set'**

Roughly 9 performers

## Ode to Thalia, the Greek Muse of Comedy

### Act One Scene i

*Curtains open to reveal nymphs frolicking in the woods (anywhere in the world.)*

*The nymphs seem to be in the middle of a game of Hide and Go Seek. The effect of the woods is created by green light and shadows of leaves and trees.*

*We hear the voices of the other nymphs laughing etc. We see one nymph at a time appearing in different parts of the stage – lit by a follow spot lit on and off at different spots on the stage. A voice backstage still counting...*

**Karya:** twenty seven...twenty six...twenty five...

*The following is spoken over Karya softly counting down.  
All the nymphs trickle onto stage. Specifically, Thetis, Psamathe, Echo, Kyllene, Ally and Alicia, Galatea, Morea and Sykei SL who are trying to find places to hide.*

**Thetis:** This is stupid. We've been playing this for the last two hundred years. I'm bored already!

**Psamathe:** Me too.

**Echo:** Me too!

**Kyllene:** Me three!

**Alicia:** Me four!

**Galatea:** Me five!

**Sykei:** Me –

**Thetis:** We get it!

**Kyllene:** I know, let's go into town and sneak through someone's window...and play Nintendo!

**Ally:** We can't do that! We –

**Morea:** Come on Thetis, it's fun!

**Echo:** It's fun!

**Thetis:** Fun, would be going to scare a sailor or two!

**Galatea:** Oh yes! But let's not scare them. Let's take them home. Oh sailors are gorgeous!

**Alicia:** Galatea you're going to start giving us nymphs a bad reputation.

**Morea:** Start? Frankly, scaring the wits out of sailors is something I've never understood about you Nereids. I'd prefer to stay here anyway.

*(Whispering and giggling between the nymphs.)*

**Psamathe and Kyllene:** Near her tree!

**Galatea:** 'Suppose that's where the expression 'stick in the mud' came from!

*The other nymphs laugh.*

**Morea:** I get it. 'Cos I'm a TREE nymph right? Stick in the mud? Clever.

**All:** Oh come on we're just playing. We love you Morea.

**Karya:** Fourteen...thirteen...twelve...

**Thetis:** We had better go and hide. Come on Morea.

*Thetis, Morea, Ally, Alicia, Echo, Kyllene and Pitys exit.*

**Galatea:** I do love Morea but sometimes she can be so...boring!

**Echo:** Boring!

**Sykei:** She's just different. We can't all be Nereids.

**Galatea:** No, unfortunately.

*Psamathe laughs.*

**Sykei:** What's that supposed to mean?

**Galatea:** Well, we all know that every nymph has something to do with water, the giving life force. Some just have more to do with water than others.

**Sykei:** And based on that you assume the Nereids to be the best?

**Psamathe:** Of course!

**Galatea:** It defies explanation.

**Karya:** (*Offstage*) Ready or not here I come!

**Sykei:** What do you mean every nymph has something to do with water?

**Psamathe:** Alseids are grove nymphs. A grove needs water to survive. Oreads are mountain nymphs. Mountains need water to prosper. Dryads are tree nymphs. We all know what trees need in order to survive. And Nereids are sea or water nymphs – pure water.

**Sykei:** So Nereids are the best?

**Galatea:** It's not our fault.

**Sykei:** Well, what about the other nymphs. There over fifty types of nymphs. Are you better than all of them? The Hesperides and even the Pleiades?

**Psamathe:** They're not exactly like us.

**Galatea:** They're different types of nymphs.

**Sykei:** Exactly.

**Echo:** Exactly!

**Sykei:** (*Getting irritated with Echo.*) **Echo!**

*Echo walks away to the side.*

**Psamathe:** We're not being arrogant. We just take pride in being Nereids.

**Sykei:** Which is honourable, but we are sisters. Aren't we? *Pause.*

**Galatea:** We can't stand around in the open like this it's not very challenging for Karya. Come on!

*Galatea, Psamathe exit.*

*As they exit Astrid, Cynosura, Balanos, Kyllene and Pitys enter.*

**Astrid:** What was all that about?

**Sykei:** I don't understand it. Hundreds of years ago we all used to be such great friends. Now look at us.

**Pitys:** We are still great friends.

**Sykei:** Well then our relationship is strained.

**Kyllene:** Yes, it has. But you know who's to blame of course.

*Pause. Sykei looks perplexed.*

**Kyllene:** Humans.

**Sykei:** Ok, I'm not the biggest fan of them at the best of times but I don't think you can blame them for this one.

**Pitys:** Of course you can. We have so much to fear now that the humans have completely lost respect for us. It's bound to make things a little tense.

**Kyllene:** Let's face it. All we are these days is names in a dusty book.

**Pitys:** Or some poorly written play.

**Karya:** *Off.* Okay. I give up. How you guys have managed to find new hiding places is beyond me.

**Sykei:** We had better go hide.

*Enter Morea, Alicia, Thetis and Galatea.*

**Thetis:** Can we pleeeeeeaaase play something else.

**Pitys:** Okay then. So what do you want to do?

**Alicia:** I heard some travellers getting lost, let's go scare them.

**Galatea:** No. Let's go find some sailors.

**Sykei:** Okay, what's it going to be? Sailors or travellers? Morea?

**Morea:** Oh. I don't really feel like doing anything. You guys go.

**Alicia:** Come on Morea, your tree will be fine. Let's get away for a bit. See what's happening. It'll be exciting.

**Morea:** You guys don't understand. You Nereids, you can go wherever you like! The ocean is vast. But all I have...is my tree.

*Karya enters.*

**Karya:** Why aren't you guys hiding...*(Her voice trails off when she sees what she has interrupted.)*

**Sykei:** That's not all you have Morea.

**Morea:** I know. I have you guys.

**Thetis:** Your sisters love you Morea. You'll never be alone.

**Galatea:** We're also here for you.

**Morea:** I know, I just worry.

**Kyllene:** About what? Your tree? Your tree is beautiful. And strong. Has it got any Mulberries yet?

**Morea:** Not yet. I don't just worry about my tree. But about all trees. About you. About the other Oreads. About the Alseids and the Nereids.

**Sykei:** That's silly. There is a natural order. You know that.

**Alicia:** Nothing can happen to your tree Morea. Or us. We're safe.

**Karya:** Exactly. Now stop stressing and let's carry on playing! Where was I...oh well. Fifty, forty nine, forty eight...

*The nymphs scurry and hide.*

*Morea slowly exits offstage. Lights dim.*

**Scene ii**

*Lights up on Persephone packing a large suitcase. She will continue to do this during the course of the next conversation. Strange things can go into the case such as a rubber duck, a spanner, a lamp etc.*

*Persephone is pale. Her long dark hair hangs loosely around her. She seems tired.*

*Hades is not what you would expect a God to look like. He is skinny and pale. He to looks tired. He wears glasses and seems to be a bit of a nerd.*

**Persephone:** *Singing.* All my bags are packed; I'm ready to go...*Humming.*

Honey bunch! Did you remember to contact the exterminator? Those roaches were back again last night!

**Hades:** Snookums, those 'roaches' work for me, remember?

**Persephone:** Argh. Oh yes. *Sigh.* I'll be so glad to get out of here for a while. My tan has faded you know.

**Hades:** So use some of that instant stuff.

**Persephone:** It smells. Ok, now. Have you taken your vitamins? I've put all your aggression pills, acid reflux and ...anaemia pills in your Monday to Sunday case. Don't get them mixed up. You know what happened last time.

*While Persephone is talking away Hades is sulking, watching her.*

**Hades:** *Whining.* I sill don't know why you have to go.

**Persephone:** *Absentmindedly.* Don't be silly, of course you do. Where's my Cyanide?

**Hades:** Take mine. *He withdraws a big, dark bottle from his cloak.*

*Persephone takes it. As the bottle is so big she struggles to get it into the case, but eventually manages.*

**Hades:** *Pause.* Maybe I should come with you.

**Persephone:** *Quickly.* No honey. You're needed down here.

**Hades:** (*Whining.*) But six months is a long time! What am I going to do?

**Persephone:** You'll do the same thing you always do. Because that is what you are good at! You're my dark man.

**Hades:** But... (*whining*) I'm going to be so lonely without you.

**Persephone:** Honey, you're whining again. Remember what Dr Phil... (*Trying to remember*) Phil...Philaminacus said about trying to be a strong God.

**Hades:** *Sulking.* I am a strong God.

**Persephone:** *Moving over to her husband.* My little baklava. *Stroking his hair.* It won't be that long. I'm just quickly going up to help Mom take care of a couple of things. Don't you want Spring to come? Hmmm...? Don't you want the humans to survive?

*Hades gives her a strange look.*

Don't be like that. *She gets up and puts on her jacket.*

Well you don't have a choice, you'll just have to get used to it.

*Persephone exits. Lights fade to reveal a follow spot on Hades.*

**Hades:** Be a big, strong God hey? I'll show you just how strong I can be.

*Slow fade to blackout.*

### **Chorus scene: Intro**

*Chorus One, Two and Three are all present on stage. Two is leafing through what appears to be the script for this play.*

**Two:** That's weird!

**One:** *Pacing.* I know! There was something strange in the way Hades said that? Did you notice?

**Two:** I'm not talking about that wimp. I'm talking about my role. Do you know that I don't even have a name! I'm number Two! Chorus number Two!

**One:** We're all chorus numbers.

**Two:** I didn't spend five years studying just to be a chorus member!

*Three has just spotted the audience. Embarrassed he is trying to get One's attention.*

**Three:** *About to speak.*

**One:** Two! Can't you see something's not right? I'm worried. Can't you just stop thinking about yourself for two minutes?

*Three nudges One again.*

**One:** You only seem to care which chorus number you are! Two! You are number two!

*Three nudges One hard.*

**One:** What is it?

*Three points to the audience.*

*Three is terrified. As if he was in a horror movie he points to the audience.*

**One:** *Talking to the audience.* Oh my goodness ladies and gentlemen. I do apologise. Things are a little chaotic up here. Forgive us for arriving late.

**Two:** *To One.* And for ignoring you.

**One:** *To the audience.* And for ignoring you.

**Two:** *To One.* And for arguing.

**One:** *To the audience.* And for arguing.

**Two:** *To One.* And me for being a moron.

**One:** *To the audience.* And for – *turns to Two who smiles mischievously.*

Allow us to introduce ourselves. We are the chorus. We are here for you. If you have any questions during the course of the production then we would be the ones to see. We're the Spark Notes. You might say that we are the most vital members of the cast.

*Three opens his mouth to speak -*

**Two:** But not so vital as to get NAMES!!

**One:** Please forgive Two. Child star actor. This over here is Three.

*Three welcomes the opportunity to finally speak, as he opens his mouth -*

**Two:** He didn't even study drama!

**One:** Two what is your problem? Let's just sort it out right now.

*Three exasperated shrugs his shoulders and exits.*

**Two:** My PROBLEM is that I have by far the most stage experience and talent here but alas –

**One:** This isn't a Shakespeare tragedy.

**Two:** - but I am only number TWO!

**One:** Is that all that's troubling you? The fact that you're number Two?

*Three enters once again playing with a Yo Yo.*

**Two:** *A little quietly.* Maybe.

**One:** Fine. *One takes out a pen from his/her pocket, walks over to **Two** and writes **ONE** at the top of the script.*

*Three continues to play with his Yo Yo. While playing the Yo Yo knocks his chin.*

**One:** There. Now you're One. Happy?

**Two (now on known as One):** *Rather embarrassed by this move.* Yes. *Pause.* Thank you.

**Three** *looks between **One** and **Two**. He seems very confused. He turns to the previous **One (now Two)** and holds up a finger to **One**.*

**Two:** No Three. I'm now Two. *Pause.* *Two turns his attention back to the audience.*

*Three quickly runs to join him in addressing the audience. Anyhow, as I was saying...*

**Two** *stops abruptly and turns to **One**. Unless you want to...he gestures to the audience.*

**One:** No, no. You're doing great there Two. Carry on. In fact, I think I'm going to have me a little nap. **One** *lies down and closes his eyes.* Shout if you need me.

**Three** *looks relieved that **One** is not joining him. He takes a deep breath preparing to speak. When **Two** interrupts him.*

**Two:** As I was saying. **Three** walks away to continue playing with his Yo Yo. We are the chorus and it is our job, passed down from generations and generations before us to help you. We comment on the action. Clear up any confusion there might be. The story is pretty straight forward. The lines between good and evil can blur a bit but other than that there shouldn't be a problem.

I'm afraid we arrived at the beginning of a sad moment in the story. I am just as sad to announce that this will not be the last sad moment tonight. For in fact, there are a number of sad moments. But these sad moments should, technically work themselves out....and there should not be any more sad moments after that. Well, of course I can't guarantee that, for life is always full of sad moments. But it is these sad moments that made us stronger. And –

**One:** They get it! Let the story continue.

**Two:** Right. Well, we'll be here if you need us for anything. Uh, in case they didn't say it at the beginning...cellphones off during the performance please. Here we go.

*The chorus stays on stage for the duration of the play watching the action unless otherwise stated. Three continues to play with his Yo Yo.*

### Scene iii

*Persephone is tied to the chair of forgetfulness.*

**Persephone:** Hades, honey. This is a little ridiculous don't you think? I know you're a big, strong god. You're my big, strong god. Who are you trying to prove it to? You don't have to prove it to me.

**Hades:** *Very satisfied with what he has done. Part of the following monologue is delivered to himself, to the audience and to Persephone.*

*To himself.* Everyone. I am going to prove it to everyone. I refuse to be seen as a weakling any longer!

*To Persephone.* I am a GOD!

**Persephone:** I know!

**Hades:** *To Persephone.* A STRONG god!

**Persephone:** I know!

**Hades:** *To Persephone:* A BIG, strong god. *Silence. Hades turns to Persephone.*

**Persephone:** Really?

**Hades:** *To Persephone.* Fine, but I AM strong!

**Persephone:** I never doubted you for a second love.

**Hades:** *To himself.* Yes, but everyone else did. I used to be feared.

When I grabbed you from that meadow that day, none of the nymphs did anything. Why? They were scared!

Even the mighty Helios was scared. Your mother had to beg him to tell her something! The mortals feared every breath I took. They closed their eyes at night, longing to see the light of the next day. THAT is the fear that I invoked!

Even the mighty Zeus feared what I could do. No one admitted it. No one dared to. But I knew. I knew his power. What he is capable of. But instead, he let me have you!

**Persephone:** Only for a time dear. For a portion of the year. That is the deal.

**Hades:** *To Persephone:* But you were mine! That was the FEAR I invoked.

*Persephone sighs and rolls her eyes. Hades continues his tirade to himself.*

I am not going to fade into the darkness again. Ever since that silly Heracles left here alive I have not been able to create the same fear. I was weak. Grew soft.

Not anymore. I will show the world what the mighty Hades can do! I will put fear in the heart of the mortal and immortal world!

Horror.

Dread.

Panic.

Terror.

Trepidation.

Apprehension.

Detention.

**Persephone:** *Sigh.* Exasperation.

**Hades:** What?

**Persephone:** Nothing. So what are you planning on doing sweetums? This is not the best way to get on Mom's good side. Don't you remember anything that happened last time? Mom was so upset that she refused to do any of the work up there. Water dried up. Trees and crops died. Who's going to watch that the mortals don't cut down and kill all the trees? They don't recycle enough yet, you know this!

**Hades:** Yes...you're right...I do know all this.

*Persephone finally realises what her husband is capable of. A look of terror clouds her face. Hades sees this and smiles.*

*Fade to blackout.*

#### **Scene iv**

*Lights up to reveal the same nymphs frolicking in the woods.*

*The nymphs seem to be in the middle of another game of Hide and Go Seek.*

*The scene appears very similar to scene i. We hear the voices of the other nymphs laughing etc as they enter left on stage. A voice backstage still counting...*

**Karya:** twenty seven...twenty six...twenty five...

*The following is spoken over Karya softly counting down.*

**Thetis:** I can't believe it. How did we get roped into playing this again!

**Psamathe:** What happened to the sailors?

**Echo:** I can't believe it.

**Sykei:** Leave her alone guys.

**Ally:** Come on, before Karya goes looking again and we haven't hidden.

*The nymphs quickly scurry around trying to find a place to hide.*

**Karya:** Ready or not this time, here I come!!

*Giggles and the sound of scurrying. Suddenly an eerie scream is heard.*

*Spot up SR to reveal **Galatea** standing before a dead Dryad, **Sykei**. **Galatea** is shocked and stands before the nymph horrified. Leaves are around the **Sykei** and they still seem to still be falling and floating onto her.*

*The other nymphs suddenly appear around **Galatea**.*

**Morea:** Sykei.

*Blackout.*

### **Scene v**

*Lights up to reveal the nymphs in their natural 'habitats'. The Nereids are in the shallow end of the pool/lake. The Alseids are sitting on rocks etc. The Dryads are either sitting in their trees or hugging them. The only nymphs missing are the Oreads.*

*Morea is resting against her trees stroking a leaf found on Sykei. Silence.*

*The nymphs seem to be doing their own thing. All are in a state of mourning.*

**Karya:** *Just noticing.* Where are all the Oreads?

**Psamathe:** They went home to see if they could see anything.

**Astrid:** Let's go ask Helios! He sees everything! Remember? He even saw when what's-his-name abducted Persephone. He could –

**Psamathe:** We did. *Pause.* He didn't see anything.

**Astrid:** Oh.

**Thetis:** Morea...it's going to be okay.

**Galatea:** Yeah, maybe...maybe she gave permission. Did you see an offering or anything? Maybe...

**Morea:** An offering? Since when do mortals bring us Dryads offerings anymore? If she had given permission then WHY did she *scream* like that? That scream. That piercing scream. She wasn't even fifty yet. She was just a baby. It's not fair.

*All exit except **Morea** and **Thetis**. Silence as **Thetis** watches **Morea**.*

**Thetis:** *Walking towards **Morea**.* There was once a boy named Deracs. He loved playing outdoors, exploring new things and new places. There was never any distance too great for him. He would set out early in the morning and travel until sunset. Deracs loved travelling and discovering almost as much as he loved his parents. One day, tragedy struck. Deracs parents drowned at sea when their boat hit a rock. He had never met grief before but got to know him well in the days following the tragedy.

**Morea:** Why are you telling me this?

**Thetis:** *Continuing.* Deracs never went travelling again. In fact, the thought of dying the same way his parents did terrified him so much that he never left his cave. He started out at the mouth of the cave shortly after his parent's death. But night after night Deracs was alone and haunted by his parent's death and he found himself huddling deeper and deeper inside the cave. Until one day, Deracs crawled into the narrowest, deepest and darkest part of the cave where he died of suffocation. While trying to avoid the dangers of life Deracs ignored the fact that not living life is as dangerous

*Pause.*

**Morea:** I can't believe that happened.

**Thetis:** It didn't. I made it up. Deracs is 'scared' backwards. I just wanted you to think about what could happen when you miss out on life.

**Morea:** *Exasperated.* What you all don't seem to realise is that I'm fine the way I am. I don't want to scare sailors or travellers. I am happy here!

**Thetis:** We're not asking you to scare sailors. We just don't want you to miss out on the world. On life. That's all.

**Morea:** Lucky for you all, it's none of your concern.

*Pause.*

*Suddenly another eerie, distant scream is heard. All the nymphs except **Morea** look up, confused and frightened.*

**Morea:** I can still hear her screaming.

**Thetis:** No...no, I heard that too.

*Morea looks up terrified.*

*Kyllene enters SR.*

**Kyllene:** Balanos is dead. Another Dryad has died.

*Pause.*

Some of the other Oreads have gone to see Demeter. She'll tell us what's going on.

Blackout.

### Scene vi

*Lights up SL. The Oreads, **Echo**, **Oenone**, **Pitys** and **Cynosura** approach a door which opens onto a very pink room.*

***Demeter** is a middle aged, plump woman. Her hair is in curlers and she wears a pink twin set. She is running around the room cleaning.*

***Cynosura** knocks on the door.*

**Cynosura (Cyn):** Demeter, may we come in.

**Demeter:** You can come in girls but I'm afraid I'm much too busy to help you right now. Too busy. Just too busy.

*Demeter hasn't even looked up from her cleaning.*

**Pitys:** What are you doing?

**Demeter:** Spring cleaning. Trying to clean. Months of dust.

I'm a little late. My daughter Persephone is coming to visit. I haven't seen her in about six months. Can you believe it!?

*She stops suddenly.*

*Come to think of it.*

*She looks at her watch.*

*She's a little late.*

*She resumes cleaning.*

Ag, probably taking her time climbing all those stairs. (*She laughs.*) So nice of you to visit. It's always a lonely time for me without my Perse.

**Cyn:** Demeter, we haven't come just for a social visit.

**Pitys:** Something's happened.

**Demeter:** Stains. Darn Dionysus and his wine.

**Cyn:** Two Dryads are dead.

*Demeter does not seem to have heard and she resumes cleaning.*

**Echo:** Two Dryads are dead!

*Demeter stops cleaning and slowly looks up at the Oreads.  
Brief blackout.*

*Lights up to reveal the Oreads sitting together and Demeter looking grief stricken in a chair.*

**Demeter:** *In a daze.* No offerings you say?

**Pitys:** No.

**Cyn:** Nothing at all.

**Oenone:** What could it be Demeter?

**Demeter:** It could be anything dearies. But if it was the mortals we would know. And they would know. Believe me, they would know. We've increased the karmic backfire to 20% per offense.

**Cyn:** Maybe we should inform Zeus.

**Demeter:** No, Hera hasn't been well lately and this would just throw him over the edge – metaphorically speaking.

**Pitys:** Demeter, you have to do something. This can't continue.

*Demeter awakens from her daze as she catches sight of the clock.  
Where is my daughter!? She's hours late.  
Demeter whips out a cellphone and dials a number.*

**Demeter:** *Surprised to hear Hade's voice.* Hades! Hades where is Perse? *Pause.* I'm fine thank you. *Pause.* Yes, I'll give you the recipe. Hades do you know where my daughter is? *Pause. Shocked.* Hades. How could you?

*Brief Blackout.*

*Lights up.*

*Demeter and the Oreads are seated in the same position as earlier. Demeter is sobbing quietly.*

**Demeter:** *Wistfully.* It was many many moons ago. My Persephone was young and innocent. And beautiful. She was loved by everyone. Everyone wanted her. Especially Hades, that Villain! She was so light, so bright. He thought she would lift the darkness of the Underworld. He didn't care that she would suffer. That her spirit would darken. That she would become Queen of the Underworld and would be feared by all. Do you know that I've heard people actually using her name in a curse! My Persephone! In a curse.

Anyway, she was out playing one day when Hades saw her and apparently grabbed her and took her down into the Underworld with him. I blame myself. I should never have left her that day.

**Pitys:** You could never have known.

**Demeter:** A mother should always know. Anyway, when Helios eventually told me what had happened I begged Zeus to do something. I think he only did something eventually because he just wanted things to grow again. She breathes life into dying things you see. Well, we both do. We're a team.

Zeus made a deal with Hades that he could only have her for about six months of the year. For the other six she could come back up.

And now Hades...has broken his promise. The deal is off. He's not letting her go. He's keeping her captive.

*Pause.*

**Cyn:** Demeter. Could this explain the deaths of the Dryads?

**Demeter:** Yes. That could very well explain what is happening. And I'm afraid, if Persephone never returns to the light, all of you...could die.

**Pitys:** Well, you have to do something Demeter! You can't let this happen. Your daughter needs you.

*Demeter seems to be falling into a pit of depression. She puts her slippers on, takes out her rollers and puts a blanket around herself.*

**Demeter:** I can't help. I can't help anyone.

**Pitys:** Demeter! Don't go all melancholy on us now! We need you!

**Cyn:** Demeter!

**Pitys:** She can't help us. No one can.

**Echo:** No one can.

*Pause.*

**Cyn:** Well, then we'll just have to help ourselves.

*They are about to exit.*

**Demeter:** Before you go. *Pause.* *They look at her expectantly.* Do any of you have any ice-cream?

*Blackout.*

### **Chorus: The deal between Zeus & Hades**

*Lights up to reveal the chorus looking very worried. **Two** is paging through a thick book. **Three** is trying to help. **One** merely watches.*

**One:** I don't understand. What pact is she talking about?

**Two:** Persephone would have been allowed to leave the underworld. If...

**One:** If...?

**Two:** If she hadn't eaten.

*One looks perplexed.*

**Two:** For a Greek chorus member you don't know much. *Sighs.* If you eat anything in the underworld you are "doomed" to spend eternity there. And Persephone ate Pomegranate seeds.

**One:** That was silly. Was she that hungry?

**Two:** Well no one seems to remember whether she ate them willingly or if Hades tricked her.

**One:** Hades isn't that clever.

**Two:** Anyway. So while Zeus had promised Persephone to his brother, Demeter wouldn't have it. She didn't want her daughter to leave her.

**One:** Wait! Persephone was supposed to marry some other guy?

**Two:** Twit. Hades is the guy. Hades is Zeus's brother.

**One:** Whoa! So how did the deal come about?

**Two:** Well, as Demeter explained earlier, nothing grew while Persephone was down there. Demeter was too depressed to make anything grow and anyway she needed her daughter – the goddess of rebirth – to help. Eventually Zeus grew desperate and struck a deal with Hades where she could live with him and her mother during the year. A half and half sort of thing.

**One:** You would think Hades would have loved that. No wife for a couple of months. Every man's dream.

**Two:** You still don't get it. It's not about Persephone. It's about Hades. Persephone leaving every year just reminds him that he didn't get what he wanted. That Zeus overpowered him. *Pause.* He wants people to know that they can't walk over him.

**One:** That's silly. People walk over him everyday! *One laughs at his silly joke. Two rolls his eyes.*

*blackout.*

**Scene vii**

*The underworld*

*Persephone is still tied to the chair. Hades is pacing back and forth.*

**Persephone:** Now what?

**Hades:** What do you mean?

**Persephone:** I mean now you have me here. Tied up. So now what? Are you just going to leave me tied up? What have you got up your sleeves? Besides spiders?

*Hades does not seem to have thought about the next step.*

**Hades:** Why does there have to be a next step? This could just be a ... post-modern play. No real big ending.

**Persephone:** No good. People will want a refund. Hades, you want to be seen as big and strong right? Well, you've managed to tie me up, well done for that. But I I'm not sure if I'd change the history books just yet. You have to really prove that you're the biggest and the strongest.

**Hades:** How?

**Persephone:** Well, I don't know. Make a wager. Strike another deal. Put up a challenge?

**Hades:** A challenge! I like that! Do you think I could win the challenge though?

**Persephone:** Of course you could my love.

**Hades:** I'll do it! But...what kind of challenge? *Getting excited:* Survivor? The Amazing Race? IDOLS!?!?

**Persephone:** *Giving him a strange look but deciding to continue.* Uh, well...you could say something like: you give anyone until the next sunset to rescue me or you keep me down here for ever.

**Hades:** But I was going to do that anyway.

**Persephone:** Yes, but they don't know that. Then at least you appear as the God who beat everyone.

**Hades:** You're right. I'll do it! I'll send word out about the challenge immediately!

*Hades exits while muttering:* Now should I use e-mail, sms, Mxit, Facebook, post – no too outdated...

**Persephone:** *To herself.* Whew. Now at least I stand some kind of chance.

*Blackout.*

### Scene viii

*Lights up. Morea, centre stage is trying to build a wall around her tree. The task is laborious. Karya enters.*

**Karya:** Morea! Good news. We've just heard that Hades has initiated a challenge.

**Morea:** This is good news?

**Karya:** Of course it is. At least we've heard from the underworld. We know that she is alright. Come on, we're going to see the Pleiades to give us a bit of guidance.

*Morea has not stopped building the wall.*

Aren't you happy? *Pause.* Morea! Can't you stop what it is you're doing for two minutes? What are you doing?

**Morea:** I'm building a wall.

**Karya:** But... Stop it. *Morea continues.* Morea stop it! *Grabbing Morea into a hug.* Stop it!

*Morea sobs into Karya's shoulder.*

You can't block out the world. Remember what happened to Deracs?

**Morea:** Thetis told me she made up that story.

**Karya:** She did. But I'm not making up this one. There once lived this beautiful Dryad. She was like no other. She was warm and compassionate, fair and loyal. She lived in these parts in fact.

**Morea:** What happened?

**Karya:** She was in a situation quite similar to the one you're in now. She was scared. Nervous as to what could happen to her and her friends. To her tree.

**Morea:** What did she do?

**Karya:** One night she went to sleep and had the most horrible dream. She dreamt that her friends were in great danger. She saw them being locked in a cage that was hanging over a large precipice and the chord the cage was suspended from was chaffing. They were trapped. In her dream she could see herself standing nearby. The rope to reel them in was in front of her. But something was twisting around her legs, restricting her movements. She wanted to move, to help her friends but she couldn't get to them. She twisted and turned but no matter what she did she could not free herself. She watched as the chord snapped and the cage with her friends slowly plummeted. She woke up before the cage hit the ground.

**Morea:** How awful. I wonder what she had eaten before bed.

**Karya:** From that moment on she lived a full life, exploring new places and seeing new things. The love of her friends was stronger than her fear.

**Morea:** But Karya you don't understand. If anything should happen...

**Karya:** I understand because that Dryad was me. Yes, if you come with us there is a risk that something will happen. But if you stay here you live with the certainty that nothing will happen and that we will all die.

We have to try and do something Morea. All our lives are at risk. Do it for Sykei. Do it in her memory. She would have done the same for you.

**Morea:** *Pause. Drying her eyes.* Right, what's the plan?

**Karya:** We're going to go and find out how we can help. So, like I said, we're going to go see the Pleiades.

**Morea:** How are we going to get there?

**Karya:** By water of course.

***Karya** gives **Morea** a sly smile and starts to exit. **Morea** walks to her tree, kisses it and turns to follow **Karya** off.*

*Lights fade down. Blue lights fade up. Projector screen reflects a water effect on the stage making the stage appear as if in water.*

*As they exit the chorus enters.*

### **Chorus – interval**

*The chorus walks centre stage. **Three** remains where he was doing sit ups.*

**Two:** Well ladies and gentlemen; we have reached our half way mark. No one can claim that it was without action.

**One:** I just can't believe Hades! What an idiot. You can see who wears the pants in that relationship. So wait let's recap 'cos I'm a little confused. Hades went back on the deal he made with Zeus all those years ago. Right?

**Two:** Right. So now, Demeter who's upset about this refuses to do anything. Zeus is trying to look after his wife Hera.

**One:** Oh yes, isn't Hera like the earth goddess of something? Who's sick right?

**Two:** Yes. Meanwhile the nymphs being energetic young things want to see if they can help.

**One:** I don't understand why the Dryads died though. What has that got to with it?

**Two:** Don't you listen? Because the deal was broken and Persephone can't initiate spring there can't be any new growth. This is throwing off the balance of nature. This imbalance is causing the Dryad's trees to die. And you remember that when a Dryad's tree dies the Dryad dies to?

**One:** Yeah okay. I seem to be following. So what now?

**Two:** Interval.

**One:** Oh, okay.

**Two:** Ladies and gentlemen –

**One:** Oh please let me try.

*Two gestures for One to proceed.*

Ladies and gentlemen there will now be a twenty minute interval for you to drink or eat something, stretch and uh, do all the things that you need to ummmm do. We will be here for the first ten minutes should you have any questions about the characters, the plot or Greek theatre. Enjoy and we'll see you in twenty minutes. House light please! *He claps his hands twice.*

*House light up.*  
*INTERVAL*

**END OF ACT ONE.**

## **Act Two**

**Chorus: Welcome back**

*The chorus walks on centre stage. Three is eating a chocolate.*

**One:** Three, where did you get that from?

*Three shrugs his shoulders.*

Get rid of it. We want to start.

*Three jumps off the stage and gives the remainder of the chocolate to an audience member.*

Right. So, welcome back ladies and gentlemen. Hope you did everything that you...ummmm, needed to do including phoning a friend and telling them about this really cool play they need to come and watch.

*Three motions to Two to remind the audience to switch off their cellphone.*

**Two:** Ah yes, please make sure you switched your cellphone off again. Before we left we recapped what had happened in the first act. We had a couple of interesting questions during the interval and I just thought we should discuss some of them briefly before we meet up with the rest of the nymphs.

One question we were asked is why Hades is being seen as the villain again. He was the villain in Hercules that Disney movie and now he is a villain again. As an aside Heracles is the Greek name for Hercules which is his Roman name. Yes, Hades is being slightly type-cast but I suppose that is what you get for being God of the Dead.

**One:** We would just like to remind the audience that this play is a work of fiction and any similarity to persons or things living or dead is purely coincidental.

**Two:** The second question we were asked was “Isn’t Hades Persephone’s uncle?”

This is true. Hades and Zeus were brothers. Their sister is in fact Demeter, mother of Persephone. Persephone’s father is Zeus. So, yes, brother and sister conceived a child. I suppose the reason being for this –

*Two is interrupted by the nymphs arriving on stage. As they enter Two stops to look at them. Thetis appears first on stage. We can only see some of the other nymphs behind her still slightly in the wings.*

**Thetis:** Oh, sorry. We thought you were finished.

**Two:** No, not a problem we were just wrapping up. Come in, come in.

**Thetis:** I think we’ll give our entrance another try.

**Two:** Sure, no problem.

*Chorus exits offstage.*

*Lights dim*

### **Scene i**

*The lights have dimmed to almost blackout. The UV light has switched on to reveal seven fairly large stars on the backdrop. The nymphs enter. Lights fade up gently but not quite yet to full. The effect should resemble dawn.*

*The nymphs look around briefly. They seem confused.*

**Ally:** Where are they?

*The nymphs whisper among themselves questioning. The atmosphere can be described as somewhat creepy.*

**Kyllene:** Aren't they supposed to be here? This is the direction Poseidon sent us in right?

**Morea:** *Looking upstage at the backdrop.* They're still sleeping. Look, up there. There they are still shining.

**Alicia:** They're so beautiful!

*The others agree.*

**Pitys:** Why can't we be stars?

**Morea:** Have an insane man after you and maybe Zeus will turn you into stars to!  
*Two from offstage.*

**Two:** Sorry. Think we need a Sparknote here. *To Morea.* Do you mind?

**Morea:** Not at all. Please.

*Two climbs onto stage carrying 'Greek Mythology for Dummies'.*

Okay so just to briefly clarify what Morea was talking about. So, as many of you already know, the Pleiades are seven sisters – they're also nymphs. Now, nymphs, as a rule, are extremely beautiful, alluring and they attracted many a mortal and immortal and the Pleiades are definitely no exception. I believe they'll make that a bit clearer a little later.

*urning to One.* Yes?

**One:** *Looking up at Two.* He is looking at the script for reassurance. Yes.

**Two:** Yes. So the Pleiades sisters were attractive to many. But Orion the huntsman found the Pleiades to be so attractive that if it had been the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the Pleiades would have taken out a restraining order. He was so infatuated with the sisters that eventually Zeus had to step in and raise the girls to the heavens and turn them into

stars, literally, in order to escape Orion. When Orion eventually died Zeus raised him up the heavens as a star constellation as well but you will note he is always some distance away from the Pleiades – forever longing for them but never reaching them.

*Two joins the rest of the chorus.*

**Galatea:** Kind of sad really.

**Nymphs:** Yeah.

**Ally:** That's men for you.

**Astrid:** Look. Here they come!

*The lights fade up which make the affect of the stars disappear [fluorescent paint need not be the only manner in which to create the stars]. As the lights fade up they reveal the seven Pleiades upstage.*

*The Pleiades walk downstage to join the other nymphs.*

**Maia:** You are welcome here, sisters.

*The rest of the Pleiades offer their greetings.*

Sit. You must be tired from your journey. Allow us to introduce ourselves. I am Maia, the eldest.

**Merope:** I am Merope, the youngest.

**Electra:** I am Electra.

**Alcyone:** I am Alcyone.

**Taygete:** Taygete.

**Asterope:** Asterope.

**Celaeno:** And I am Celaeno.

**Pitys:** We are pleased to meet you. We are the Oreads, my name is Pitys. This is Echo, Cynosura, Oenone and this is Kyllene.

**Ally:** We are the Alseids.

**Thetis:** We are the Nereids. This is Psamathe, Galatea and Amphitrite and I am Thetis.

**Morea:** We are the Dryads. I am Morea, this is Karya, Ampelos and Balanos. There were more of us but...

**Thetis:** Maia, I don't know if you have heard.

**Maia:** Heard what?

**Karya:** About Persephone. Hades is keeping her captive.

**Maia:** That would explain why Spring is late.

**Astrid:** Yes.

**Maia:** Why have you come to us?

**Morea:** We want to try and rescue Persephone, but we're not sure how.

**Thetis:** We were hoping you could help guide us. Tell us what to do.

**Maia:** I'm afraid you have been misinformed. We are nymphs just like you. Why would you think we could help?

**Karya:** Because you are stars. You guide people's ways and you are teachers.

**Alcyone:** We can only make the path clearer for mortals, that is all. And we cannot teach those who do not want to learn.

**Kyllene:** We want to learn.

**Echo:** We want to learn.

**Merope:** But we have nothing to teach you. *Pause.*

**Morea:** Does that mean you can't help us?

**Electra:** Of course we can. We can try. If you help us.

**Kyllene:** What can we help you with?

**Merope:** Help us help you.

**Maia:** Ladies, I believe this conversation is getting slightly, technical. We cannot tell you what you should do. We can only make suggestions. We would also like to help. So perhaps together we can help each other. Now, what exactly has happened?

**Thetis:** Hades has not let Persephone rise and is keeping her captive.

**Pitys:** He will let Persephone go if someone can rescue her by the next sunset.

**Psamathe:** That's all we know.

**Echo:** That's all we know.

**Merope:** Okay. Sounds simple enough.

**Alicia:** Excuse me?

**Merope:** Well, we just need to get her out of there.

**Astrid:** Yea, ummmm. Not sure when last you were in The Underworld but it isn't that easy.

**Electra:** True. But we've got Greek Gods and heroes on our side. We'll just get one of them to help us.

**Morea:** It's no good. None of the Greek Gods can actually enter Hades and he won't listen to reason.

**Alcyone:** Well, what happened last time?

**Psamathe:** Zeus sent Hermes to tell Hades to let Persephone go.

**Maia:** Hermes is my son, I'll make him go.

**Galatea:** You have a son? Yes, Zeus is his father.

**Electra:** We all have children. I have two sons with Zeus.

**Merope:** I had kids with Sisyphus.

**Alcyone:** I had quite a few with Poseidon.

**Taygete:** I had a son with Zeus.

**Asterope:** I had a child with Atlas.

