THREE GREEK MYTHS by Nora Louise Syran Working Title:

The Greeks Had a Thing for the Letter P: Phaeton, Prometheus & Pandora and Persephone

Phaeton and the Chariot of the Sun 24 total roles; 9-13 Males, 11-15 Females

Prometheus and Pandora 26 total roles; 8-20 Males, 6-18 Females

Persephone and the Four Seasons 22 total roles; 9-13 Males, 11-18 Females* (could be more)

GOALS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Pull the stories together with a frame narrative

Add more flexibility to casting--allow for up to 25 actors but reduce to 12? 15?

The idea is to have three plays that could be performed either by separate groups (good for schools) or by one ensemble. So I need to even out the roles/add more flexibility to casting.

The frame story could be additional actors or actors also playing roles in the plays themselves...to work out

CASTING

These plays are intended for large group casts, from 22-26 players, however casting for each play is flexible with doubling of many parts possible. They were originally written for elementary school drama students to perform before their peers and families, but could be performed by older players before a wide range of audiences.

SET and STAGING

The scenes are meant to flow easily from one to the next, with actors either entering as others exit or present on stage most of the time.

COSTUMES

It is not necessary to clothe everyone in Ancient Greek chitons and robes. Actors could be in modern dress.

FRAME STORY-PART ONE (TO DEVELOP)

Classroom. Students are seated. A teacher stands with his/her back to the audience, writing on a chalkboard.

TEACHER

The Greeks understood the human condition and their myths reflected every aspect of humanity's greed, selfishness and MATCH TERMS TO THE THREE TALES....Phaeton...

STUDENT 1 I borrowed my dad's car the other day.

STUDENT 2 But you don't have your license!

STUDENT 3

Something about bullies...friends..boasting out of insecurity... LIFE lessons...sexism, grief...

PHAETON AND THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

PROLOGUE

THREE NYMPHS

We nymphs the story of Phaeton will tell How he ascended to the heavens, but then he fell For his father's warning he did spurn and a lesson too late, he did learn.

SCENE ONE

(Four boys come running onto the stage, Phaeton first)

PHAETON

Of course I can out run you! I can run faster than Great Apollo's Golden Chariot! I am the son of the Sun.

BOY 1

(Puzzled) Son of a son...?

BOY 2

Well, we all are!

BOY 3

Our fathers are sons of their fathers. Everyone knows that!

BOY 1 We know that. But Phaeton doesn't know who his father is, does he? PHAETON (Insisting) I am the son of the Sun. BOY 1 There he goes again. BOY 2 He really makes no sense. BOY 3 Wait, son of the Sun? BOY 1 Phaeton, you really think your father is the Sun God? BOYS TOGETHER The almighty Apollo? BOY 2 Who told you this nonsense? PHAETON My mother. BOY 3 Clymene? The Nymph? Your mother is a liar. PHAETON She is not! BOY 2 Your mother is a liar! PHAETON No! BOY 1 Phaeton is a liar, then! PHAETON No! BOYS Phaeton is a liar! Phaeton is a liar! (Clymene enters and pulls her son away from his "friends." They leave, taunting him as they go.)

CLYMENE

Never mind what they say. You know the truth, that's good enough.

PHAETON

But they called me a liar! They called you a liar! Is the great god Apollo really my father?

CLYMENE

Yes, Phaeton. Apollo is your father. If you won't believe me, you'll have to go and ask him yourself. You must go east until you find the Palace of the Sun. There you will find your father, Phoebus Apollo.

SCENE TWO

(The Palace of the Sun. Hermes is conducting a tour. Zeus and Hera follow closely behind him and look curiously at the '"painting" upstage; the Earth, Poseidon, Nymphs and the Seasons stand frozen as if in mural.)

HERMES

This way, please. Everything here in the Palace of the Sun was crafted by the greatest of all craftsmen, the great god Hephaestus. Note the shining silver doors of the fours winds guarded continually by the Hours, the daughters of Time. Oh, here they come now. They're on their way to the Temple of the Sun to make ready Apollo's Golden Chariot. The moon is setting and soon the sun will rise.

> (The Hours enter and introduce themselves. Moving/Dancing. Dysis escorts a sleepy Selene the Moon.)

ANATOLIA

I am Anatolia of the Rising Sun; Guardian of the Gate of the East Wind, Euros, which blows softly, bringing in the gentle morning mists.

MESEMBRIAS

I am Mesembrias of the Midday Sun, Guardian of the Gate of the Southern Wind, Notos. Oh, warm and fiery winds of summer, spare us your humid gusts which plague the mariners at sea and the shepherds in their fields.

DYSIS

I am Dysis of the Setting Sun; Nurse to lovely Selene, the Moon. (They smile warmly at each other. Selene yawns.) I am (MORE)

CONTINUED: DYSIS (cont'd)

Guardian of the Gate of the West Wind, Zephyrus. Oh, wonderful west wind which brings the welcome warmth of spring.

ARKTOS

I am Arktos of the cool, clear stars of the night. Guardian of the Gate of the North Wind, Boreas. Oh, Winter wind, thick with clouds and sprinkled with hail, spare us your violent temper! *adapted from: Nonnus, Dionysiaca 41.263*

(The Hours and Moon exit.)

HERMES

And upon the walls, also cunningly crafted by Hephaestus, representations of the earth, the sea, the heavens, the seasons...(He indicates the "mural" upstage.) We'll need to hurry if we're to see the Chariot of the Sun; it's almost Dawn. And we must be out of the way so as not to disturb the preparations. Once Apollo places the crown upon his head and the Hours have finished harnessing the Horses, there's no stopping them! This way, Gods and Goddesses!

> (Hermes starts to lead the way off stage. The tour group follow. Annoyed, Hermes stops to answer Phaeton's question.)

PHAETON

Hello?

HERMES

Hello. You're a bit late to join the tour. Come back tomorrow, it's almost daybreak and when the sun comes up, it really heats up around here...

PHAETON

I don't want to join the tour ...

HERMES

Don't want...? Well, you can't get in without paying for a guided tour!

PHAETON

My name is Phaeton. My mother is the nymph Clymene. I want to see my father.

ZEUS

See his father? Oh no, not another one of these half-mortals claiming connections again! It's so tiring.

CONTINUED: (2)

HERA

Well, if you Gods kept to your place in Olympus and didn't keep cavorting with them, we wouldn't be pestered so often by these young boys searching for a father figure.

ZEUS

And if you Goddesses would just stop nagging us so ...

HERMES

(Interrupting the fight) If it's Apollo you're looking for, he's in the Temple of the Sun. Just there, on your right. Cover your eyes, though! That's if he'll let you see him that is!

(They leave, Hera and Zeus still bickering as they exit)

SCENE THREE

Pheobus Apollo sits upon the Chariot of the Sun. The Hours and Seasons move in concentric circles around him.

PHAETON

Hello? Uh....great and all-powerful Apollo.

APOLLO

Yes? Who's there? Don't just stand there. Careful, don't get in the way. There's no chaos here, boy. Everything in perfect order. The seasons and the hours...

ANATOLIA

"The warders of the high paths of the sun,

DYSIS

...forever circling, warders of the night and dawn,

MESEMBRIAS ...around whose mansion's everlasting doors...

ARKTOS

...from east to west they dance, from west to east,

AUTUMN

whirling the wheels of harvest-laden years,

WINTER

while rolls the endless round of winter's cold,

SPRING

and flowery spring

SUMMER

and lovely summer-tide,

AUTUMN

and heavy-clustered autumn."

From the The Fall of Troy by Quintus. Trans. A.S. Way, 1913

SCENE FOUR

PHAETON

It's...beautiful.

APOLLO

Of course it is! Like clockwork. Perfectly timed. The order of the universe depends on it. Without it, we'd have nothing but chaos. What can I do for you, boy?

PHAETON

Oh, great and powerful ...

APOLLO

Oh, yes, yes...get to the point. I don't have much time, the sun is rising...

PHAETON

My mother, Clymene, says you are my father but my friends won't believe me.

APOLLO

Clymene…yes. You are Phaeton, no? Yes, you deserve the truth. I am indeed your father. Is that all? Good? Now, be off with you.

PHAETON

How can I know for sure?

APOLLO

You'll have to take your mother's word on it. (pause) Go back to your friends and tell them you are my son.

PHAETON

If I could just prove it to them ...

APOLLO

(Hurried) Whatever you wish, I will grant you as proof you are my son.

PHAETON

(Thinking) Well, then let me drive your chariot of the sun ...for just one day! That will show them! They'll see me, for sure!! They won't ever tease me again!

APOLLO

Ah...Oh, dear. I have sworn to give you what you ask, but this I cannot give. I cannot break my oath to you, but I beg you not to ask this of me.

PHAETON

I want to drive your chariot!

APOLLO

You are not strong enough. Even I have difficulty handling the horses. They are wild and forever straining to break free!

PHAETON

I can handle horses.

APOLLO

The heavens are treacherous... the constellation, the giant bull, Taurus, even if you succeed in getting past him, there's still the Scorpion and his deadly sting! I'll give you and your mother all the riches of the world. Ask for anything else and I will give it to you!

> (Aurora and Selene the Moon come together from opposite sides of the stage; the sun is rising and the moon is setting.)

> > PHAETON

(Stamping his foot) I want to drive your chariot!

APOLLO

Oh, Zeus, hearer of men's oaths! I cannot refuse. Very well.

AURORA

Quickly now, Apollo. I have to bring in the dawn. Are you sure about this Apollo? He's just a boy.

APOLLO

I cannot break my oath to him.

AURORA

Well, you spoke rashly in making him such a promise. But it's time. (She claps her hands) Hours! Anatolia, of the dawn, throw open the purple doors of the east! I fear the light of this new day will bring no joy, no matter many roses are strewn along its path.

CONTINUED: (2)

SELENE

(Aside to Aurora, yawning) I am weary, Aurora. It is time for me to sleep...but how shall I sleep today with Apollo's chariot to be driven by a boy?

AURORA

It's no use ... we've no choice. Hours! Harness the Horses!

SELENE

They are well-fed on ambrosia and ready for their ride. Bring them forth from their stalls and set their bridles upon them. Be sure to attach the reins well. I fear for the safety of the earth, the seas and the heavens should they break free from Phaeton's grasp.

(They watch the preparations of the Chariot and the Horses by the Hours.)

APOLLO

Phaeton, son, if you will not heed my warning, listen to Spring and Autumn, the most moderate of the Seasons.

SPRING

Take good care to follow the middle path.

AUTUMN

The middle course is safest and best.

SPRING

Do not go too high, or you will burn the homes of the gods in the heavens.

AUTUMN

Do not go too low, or you will set fire to the earth and the harvest.

APOLLO

Here, this balm will protect you from the flames. Take my crown upon your head, beware the scorpion and …farewell, my son.

PHAETON

Thank you! Thank you! They'll never believe it. Me, Phaeton, driving my father's chariot of the sun across the skies!

(Three horses stand/kneel before Apollo's chariot. Phaeton climbs into the chariot looking out to the audience.)

HORSE 1

Look how scrawny he is.

CONTINUED: (3)

HORSE 2 This boy is the son of Apollo?

HORSE 3 He's definitely lighter than his father.

HORSES

We'll outrun the morning breeze!

SCENE FIVE

Zeus and Hera stand off to the side, observing Phaeton's ride.

HERA

Zeus, come here a moment, will you? You've had a call.

ZEUS

Yes, my dear, Hera?

HERA

Just look what Apollo is up to now. No sooner do we end our tour of his magnificent Palace of the Sun and he's up to no good.

ZEUS

What's he done now?

HERA He's given the reins of his chariot to that boy we saw, Phaeton, the son of Clymene. I told you...

ZEUS

He's done what?!

HERA

And look! The chariot, it has gone wild! It's rushing headlong into the Scorpion!

SCENE SIX

PHAETON Oh no. What have I done? Stop!

HORSE 1 You need to call us by our names!

PHAETON

But I don't know ...

HORSE 2

Faster! Faster!

PHAETON

Taurus! The Giant Bull!

HORSES

The Scorpion!

PHAETON

No!

SCENE SEVEN

(Scorpion-the cast- moves in a long line, twisting its way across the stage, past Phaeton and the Horses.)

SCENE EIGHT

PHAETON

I've lost the reins!

HORSE 3

Let's head up to the heavens!

HORSES 1 &2

No, down to the earth!

SCENE NINE

(The upstage "mural" comes to life)

EARTH

"O ruler of the gods, if I have deserved this treatment, and it is your will that I perish with fire, why withhold your thunderbolts? Let me at least fall by your hand. Is this the reward of my fertility, of my obedient service?" Do you not see what is happening? The clouds are beginning to smoke! The mountain tops are aflame! The fields are ablaze! Cities and countries are burning! Ovid's Metamorphoses

ATLAS

Great Zeus, do I not suffer enough already? Have I not accepted and endured your punishment well? Now with these flames here on Earth, the weight of the heavens is impossible to bear! I cannot hold up under such torment! I (MORE)

ATLAS (cont'd) won't be able to keep the heavens and the earth apart for much longer! Zeus hear us!

CALLISTO

Poseidon, hear us! The sacred streams and rivers are drying up.

(Clymene enters beside the other nymphs and stares in horror at her son in the chariot)

GALATEA

We'll have nowhere to go. Clymene, what has your son done?

CLYMENE

Oh, Zeus!? Help him!

CALLISTO He cannot breathe, the air is full of fire.

CLYMENE

Poseidon, put out the flames!

POSEIDON

Great Zeus, the nymphs call to me but I cannot save them! I try to raise my head above the waters and even I am driven back by the heat!

GALATEA

Chaos reigns once again unless Zeus can stop him!

WINTER

What will become of me? Of Winter in such a fiery world as this?

SUMMER

Am I to have no rest? Must I forever fan the eternal fires of summer?

ALL

Hear us, Zeus! If sea, earth, and heaven perish, we fall into ancient chaos!

SCENE TEN

ZEUS

Apollo! Come here and see the destruction your son is causing!

HERA

What possessed you to make such a promise to him?

ZEUS

I will have to stop him.

(He holds a thunder bolt ready. Apollo lowers his head. Everyone freezes. Blackout)

SCENE ELEVEN

(Everyone comes downstage to form the river Eridanus. They drape a long blue cloth over their forearms and speak in unison. The Nymphs sit center stage with Phaeton in their arms)

ERIDANUS

I, Eridanus, the great river, caught young Phaeton and cooled his burning frame.

NYMPHS

We nymphs buried the boy and inscribed these words upon the stone. Driver of Apollo's chariot, Phaeton Struck by Zeus's thunder, rests beneath this stone. He could not rule his father's car of fire, Yet was it much so nobly to aspire.

CURTAIN

PROMETHEUS AND PANDORA

SCENE ONE (Prometheus and Epimetheus stand before Zeus)

ZEUS

Yes, yes...do as you please. Your loyalty to me deserves some sort of reward. Pity your brother, the traitorous Titan Atlas, didn't have the same foresight to join my side. So now he's stuck standing at the western edge of the earth with the heavens on his back. Delightful. What a punishment!

(Atlas stands to the side with the weight of the heavens on his back. He looks miserable.)

EPIMETHEUS

Thank you, great Zeus. You are indeed gracious.

(Prometheus stands looking stubbornly at the ground.)

ZEUS

If making little mortal creatures will please you, then by all means. Go ahead. My, my, Prometheus, aren't you a sullen one? Doesn't it please you to see your brother, Epimetheus, so happy?

(Epimetheus nudges him. Prometheus has no respect for Zeus)

PROMETHEUS

(sarcastically) Yes, great Zeus.

ZEUS

Well... of course you should be. I am more than generous. To prove it, here are some gifts to bestow on your little creatures as well. Nothing too divine, though. Divine gifts and too much knowledge will only bring trouble. Let them stay dumb, ignorant and in time, they will... die out.

EPIMETHEUS

Die out?

ZEUS

Yes, and then you can start all over again! What a game! What fun! Creation! Well, it's not for me. After this long war with the Titans, your own kind against whom you fought so well, I have no inspiration for creation whatsoever. So, on your way; I am quite exhausted.

SCENE TWO

EPIMETHEUS

Brother, you should be a bit more respectful to the almighty Zeus. We Titans lost our war against him and he's a powerful, and vengeful.

PROMETHEUS

And so were we, once…powerful…I cannot respect a god who has so little regard for creation. He exists solely for himself and that I cannot accept.

EPIMETHEUS

Well (he looks inside the box) look at what's he's given us: Horns, Wings, Teeth...what wonderful gifts to bestow upon the creatures we will make. What will you make first?

PROMETHEUS

A human.

EPIMETHEUS

A what?

PROMETHEUS

You heard me. A human. A creature made in our image.

EPIMETHEUS

How dull. I am going to make a lion and then a giraffe and then, perhaps a griffon...or maybe even a winged-horse!

LION

(singing) I'M A LION; DON'T YOU FORGET IF YOU DO, YOU'D BETTER FRET FOR I'VE A ROAR TO FRIGHTEN EVERY SINGLE MAN (ROAR!) AND THE TEETH AND CLAWS TO DO JUST WHAT I CAN BUT I LOVE TO SIT AND TAKE CARE OF MY MANE FOR I'M A LION AND EXCEPTIONALLY VAIN.

ELEPHANT

(singing) I'M AN ELEPHANT; I DON'T FORGET. IF I DO, I START TO FRET. FOR I'VE A SKIN THAT NEEDS A BATH MOST EVERY DAY AND A NOSE THAT WORKS JUST LIKE HOSE TO SPRAY BUT I WORRY MOST ABOUT THE RATS AND MICE FOR I'M AN ELEPHANT AND THEY'RE NOT VERY NICE.

GIRAFFE

(singing) I'M A GIRAFFE, HEY UP LOOK HERE! WELL, FROM HERE THE SKY IS VERY, VERY CLEAR. FOR I HAVE A NECK THAT STRETCHES TO THE STARS AND I HAVE LONG LEGS SO I CAN RUN QUITE FAR BUT THE ONE THING THAT I WISH THAT I HAD NOT IS THIS SKIN WITH ALL THESE IRRITATING SPOTS!

> (They run about, hassling Atlas who looks like he's about to drop the heavens. The Humans enter and crouch together.)

> > ATLAS

Hey! Epimetheus, cut it out! There are creatures running all over the place. I might lose my concentration with all this noise; I might drop the heavens and then just think of what Zeus will do to me! Give me a break already! (Elephant trumpets and he juggles the heavens above him) You see!? You see! Nearly dropped it! Blasted Elephant! At least spread them out on different continents!! And leave me in peace out here on the horizon. (He notices Prometheus hard at work) What about Prometheus? What's he making? Oh, I see…it's a…

PROMETHEUS

Human.

ATLAS

What does it do? What noise does it make?

PROMETHEUS

Nothing special. Epimetheus, give me the gifts. Let me have a look.

EPIMETHEUS

(Handing him the box) Prometheus, uh...

PROMETHEUS It's empty? You used up all the gifts?

EPIMETHEUS

Well, you took so long ...

PROMETHEUS

Now I know why mother called you Hind-Sight! You cannot think ahead for one minute!

EPIMETHEUS

Well, if you had lived up to your name, you would have had the Fore-sight to see that I would use up all the gifts!

PROMETHEUS

Why you...

ATLAS

Stop it! Stop it, both of you!

(Atlas struggles to hold up the Heavens and control his brothers)

PROMETHEUS I have nothing to give them! And they will surely die out, just like Zeus said.

(The humans start to stand up slowly, new to the world around them)

HUMAN 1

It's so cold.

HUMAN 2

It's so dark.

HUMAN 3

I'm so hungry.

CONTINUED: (3)

HUMAN 4 But we haven't the teeth of a lion.

HUMAN 5

Or his skin to keep us warm.

EPIMETHEUS Well, teach 'em something, then.

PROMETHEUS

Yes, you're brilliant, Epimetheus. Really thinking now!

HUMAN 1 Our creator took pity on us. And deceiving Zeus…

HUMAN 2 ...he taught us to work with our hands...

HUMAN 3 ...woodworking, bricklaying... (They mime)

HUMAN 4 And he taught us to use our minds

HUMAN 5 How to tell the seasons by the stars (they measure the distances...)

HUMAN 1

How to count!

HUMAN 2 How to spell (impressed with himself) with an alphabet!

HUMAN 3 It's good for remembering things.

HUMANS

But we're still so cold.

PROMETHEUS It isn't enough. (Thinking) They need... FIRE!

SCENE THREE

(Hera, Apollo and Hephaestus stand around admiring the chariot of the sun)

HERA

Oco...it's so beautiful. It's the most beautiful chariot I've ever seen.

HEPHAESTUS

Why, thank you, Goddess Hera. I believe it to be my greatest work. Nothing can compare to it; not the winged sandals and helmet I made for Hermes and certainly not Eros's bow and arrows which will cause so much misery for those poor humans on the earth.

HERA

Even great Zeus's thunderbolts are nothing in comparison to this wonderful chariot, no matter how great he thinks he is. Apollo, how ever do you keep it under control? The fire, it must be dangerous. And the horses, they are so fierce looking!

APOLLO

This chariot has made more trips across the heavens than even I can count. For centuries, it has pulled the fires of the heavens across the sky bringing warmth and light to the earth below. No, it's not an easy ride and I don't council anyone to try it. My own dear son just the other day...

(Apollo breaks into tears)

HERA

Now, now...(comforting Apollo) he was half-mortal and we all know how silly mortals are. It's not your fault; he wouldn't listen to you. Ah, mortals. You should see the silly creatures Prometheus has been making. Humans. Nothing special at all about them. Just plain silly. Totally ignorant. Stupid, even. Zeus prefers them like this...then he can do what he likes with them ...

(Prometheus runs in and steals fire from the chariot)

HERA

Oh! Apollo! Hephaestus! That Titan fellow, Prometheus, just ran off with fire from the chariot! He was carrying it in a fennel plant!?

APOLLO

Well, whatever does he want it for? I certainly hope he's careful with it. It burns.

SCENE FOUR

HUMAN 1

Oh....it's so beautiful.

HUMAN 2

Oh...it's so warm!

HUMAN 3

We shall finally get some good sleep tonight.

HUMAN 4

We can melt metal with it and (thinking) and bend it and make things!

HUMAN 5

We can cook with it! I'm so tired of sushi.

(The Lion roars ... scares the humans)

HUMANS

Ah!!!

(They realize they have a weapon and wave the fire at the lion who, frightened, runs off)

LION

Meow!

HUMAN 1

We can ward off all of the scary creatures Epimetheus made with it.

HUMAN 2 Yes! They don't have it! We do!

HUMANS We have a gift above all gifts!!

> (Zeus enters looking for Prometheus. He is angry.)

> > ZEUS

Prometheus!

HUMAN 1

He's not here.

HUMAN 2

He's gone out.

human 3

But he told us to bring you a special sacrifice ...

HUMAN 4

HUMAN 5

...should you come round.

Here it is!

CONTINUED: (2)

ZEUS

Why...it looks...delicious. Cooked to perfection...you've learned quickly how to master my fire. (pauses) I'll take this juicy piece, the best one...(He eats and throws it aside) Why? It's nothing but skin and bones! What sort of disrespect is this? Your maker needs to learn something about gift giving and sacrifice! Gods on Mount Olympus, hear me! Let Prometheus sacrifice his liver over and over and over again every day for 30,000 years!

HUMANS

(Horrified) Ahh....oh no....

SCENE FIVE

(Hephaestus chains Prometheus to a rock)

HEPHAESTUS

Sorry, Prometheus. Zeus's orders. These chains will never break. I know because I forged them. No one lives for miles and miles around here and even if they did, Mount Caucasus is nearly impossible for any mortal to climb. I am afraid you are stuck here for the next 30,000 years. At least you've got your brother Atlas here holding up the heavens; he'll keep you company.

(Atlas stands off to the side, holding up the heavens)

HUMAN 1

Oh, no!

HUMAN 2

Prometheus!

human 3

Hephaestus is the greatest of all craftsmen.

HUMAN 4

Prometheus will never be able to break his bonds ...

HUMAN 5

...and set himself free from

HUMANS

Ethon the Eagle!

ETHON

Sorry, Prometheus...Zeus's orders. I don't much care for liver, really. I wish I could peck out some other part of (MORE)

ETHON (cont'd) your body every day... Come to think of it, it's as much of a punishment for me as it is for you!

SCENE SIX

(The Gods and Goddesses stand looking at Pandora).

ZEUS

There she is. Pandora. Isn't she the model of perfection?

HERA

You always have an eye for the ladies, husband. Pity they don't always have an eye for you. It's much easier to turn yourself into a shower of gold, or a snow-white swan...

APOLLO

She lives up to her name, all right. All endowed with ...

HEPHAESTUS

I broke the mould after making her. Wouldn't be wise to have too many of these walking about down there on earth. I certainly worked the clay better than Prometheus did.

APHRODITE

(jealous) Do you find her all that lovely? I don't. She lacks something... enchantment, charm.

HERA

Well, isn't that your department, Aphrodite? Give her some.

APHRODITE

Very well. I grant her every one of the three Graces: Beauty, Mirth and Good Cheer. May she make good use of them.

ATHENA

Well, she's not very lively or clever. No skills whatsoever.

HERA

That's your department Athena.

ATHENA

I bestow upon her fine manners, and skill in needlework and the weaving of webs.

APHRODITE

That's not very exciting.

ATHENA

No, but they are wise skills to possess... I am the goddess of Wisdom, after all.

APOLLO

I'll give her the gift of music.

HERMES

We can't make her too perfect. And besides, Zeus was very clear in his commands...he wants those human creatures punished. So, I grant her... an all-consuming curiosity!

GODS

Well-done!

ATHENA

Those humans won't know what's hit them.

APHRODITE

The earth will never be the same again.

SCENE SEVEN

ETHON THE EAGLE Well, Prometheus, here we go again. I'm getting quite sick of liver, to tell you the truth. Such a nasty aftertaste...

PROMETHEUS Well, it's hardly pleasant for me either...

ETHON THE EAGLE

Well, try to be positive. Look at the view! Just glorious from up here.

SCENE EIGHT

(Epimetheus and the Humans stand looking at Pandora.)

EPIMETHEUS

A gift? From Zeus?

HUMAN 1 Since when does Zeus give gifts?

HUMAN 2 I don't trust the look of her.

HUMAN 3

No, I think we should be wary of things that come in pretty packages.

EPIMETHEUS Since when have you all started thinking so much?!

HUMAN 4 Prometheus would tell you to be cautious.

HUMAN 5

Prometheus would tell you not to trust anything that comes from the Olympians.

HUMANS TOGETHER

Especially Zeus!

EPIMETHEUS

But...but...she's so....lovely.

TOGETHER

Uh, oh!

EPIMETHEUS Pandora. Is that right? Is that your name?

PANDORA

Yes.

EPIMETHEUS What is it you carry with you?

PANDORA A gift from the gods of Olympus. They told me not to open it.

HUMAN 1 That's an odd sort of gift.

HUMAN 2

Careful, Epimetheus...

HUMAN 3

It's probably a trick.

HUMAN 4 Think about your brothers and their suffering...

HUMAN 5

Zeus might be after you too ...

PANDORA It's true. He wants to punish all of you.

HUMANS

Us? What have we done?

(Reporting what she's heard)

CONTINUED: (2)

PANDORA

Stolen fire from the heavens....Insulted him with rotten meat....and you're much too smart now for his liking.

EPIMETHEUS

What's in the box?

PANDORA

I have no idea but I am so very, very curious ...

(Drawn as if in a spell to the box...she moves to open it)

HUMANS

Pandora, NO!!!!!!

(She opens it and Sorrow, Greed, Poverty and Hope come rushing onto the stage)

POVERTY

I'm a burden on your back I have need for what I lack For I am poverty. I'll destroy the bonds of home I'll follow you where're you roam For I am poverty! Ah me!

GREED

I'll steal what you have Though it's more than I need For I am Greed. I'll take all I can get But it's more that I need For I am Greed.

SORROW

I mourn today and I mourn tomorrow For I am Sorrow I weep today and I weep tomorrow For I am Sorrow And I shatter like glass Alas!

> (They frighten the Humans who experience these new troubles for the first time. Then Hope enters and orders Poverty, Greed and Sorrow off stage.)

> > HOPE

I've no love for these three While they flee, I'll stay by thee I am Hope in your despair For you alone I care.

(Hope escorts Pandora and the Humans off stage)

ΙO Hello, what's this? PROMETHEUS How did you, a cow, get up here? IO I am not a cow! ETHON Well, you certainly fooled me! IO Get away from him you mean, ugly vulture! ETHON I am not a vulture. I am an Eagle, thank you very much. ΙO Get away! Shoooo PROMETHEUS Thank you, but I'm afraid it's of no use. He has no choice. Zeus's orders. My punishment. IO Punishment, for what? PROMETHEUS Stealing fire for my humans. ΙO Zeus ... the thundering ... that's why I am what you see now. Yes, a cow. But I am not really a cow. My name is Io. PROMETHEUS Prometheus. Nice to meet you. ΤO How long is your punishment to last? PROMETHEUS 30,000 years. And yours? IO Well, I am mortal. It can't last forever. That's my consolation. 30,000 years ... that's rough.

SCENE NINE

and the Eagle)

(Io the Cow wanders near Prometheus

PROMETHEUS

Why did Zeus turn you into a cow?

IO

Well, Zeus took a fancy to me.

ETHON

He fancied you, so he turned you into a cow? That makes no sense.

IO

To hide me from his wife. He knew that even though I had no love for him, she would be so jealous of my beauty that she would hurt me. So, he turned me into what you see now, a cow. It all went wrong...

ETHON

It got worse, you mean!

ΙΟ

Yes, it got worse when Hera, knowing I was the cow in disguise, asked Zeus for me, the cow, as a birthday present....

SCENE TEN

HERA

Zeus... I'd very much like to have that cow of yours for a birthday present. I'll take good care of her. I'll have Argus watch over her night and day. Argus, with his one-hundred eyes. She'll be safe with me.

ZEUS

Yes, my dear...whatever you like. (Aside) Hermes, I want you to go down and rescue that cow as soon as you can!

HERMES

(to the audience) I disguised myself as a shepherd and played magical tunes on my flute. Argus and every one of his one hundred eyes fell asleep.

HERA

Why is Argus sleeping? Zeus! You're behind this! Where has that cow gone?

ZEUS

Please, set her free from her pain. Let me turn her back into her human form.

APOLLO

Are you sure about this? Have you spoken to the Fates? By setting Io free, in time, years and years from now, you'll be freeing Prometheus as well.

ZEUS

Yes, yes...go on what will I care in a thousand years!

SCENE ELEVEN

ΙO

So, I am forced to wander the earth as a cow...waiting until the day the gods hear my prayers. Prometheus, don't give up hope! I will remember you. Someday I will be restored to my human form and give birth to a son. And his great-greatgreat-grandson will return to rescue you in a couple of ...thousand years! Have courage! Good-bye.

SCENE TWELVE

ETHON

Well, Prometheus here we go again. You know ...?

PROMETHEUS

Please stop going on about my liver! And the view! I can't take another 10,000 years of this!!!

(Heracles enters)

HERACLES It has to be around here somewhere! Ah, Prometheus! Greetings. I've come to set you free.

PROMETHEUS

So, Io spoke the truth.

HERACLES

I'll just get rid of this flea-infested carrion eater for you...

ETHON

Eagle, if you please !! (Heracles raises his sword) Ah ...!!!

(The Eagle runs away and Heracles breaks the bonds, freeing Prometheus)

PROMETHEUS

However can I thank you ... Your name is?

HERACLES

I am Heracles! I need to get the golden apples from the garden of Herperides.

PROMETHEUS

My brother Atlas can help you there

ATLAS

Of course, I can help you. You'll just have to take the heavens on your shoulders for a short while, while I defeat the dragon which guards the entrance to the garden. Be back in moment!

HERACLES

I am not used to such weight; I need a pillow or something to ease my aching shoulders.

ATLAS

Yes, I had forgotten how light it is without the heavens on my back day and night...(rubbing his own shoulders) I am not sure I want them back.

HERACLES

Please, just hold them for second while you give me the apples...(Atlas takes the Heavens again upon his shoulders) Thanks, Atlas! Have to be going now...

(Atlas stands looking miserable, with the weight of the heavens upon his back once more. Hera, Zeus Prometheus and Epimetheus enter.)

HERA

Ha! Prometheus is free!

ZEUS

So what? My son Heracles has brought even more glory upon himself, and me!

HERA

It always has to be about you, doesn't it?

EPIMETHEUS

Well, here we are, brother. Back to where we started. Together again.

PROMETHEUS

Took us long enough to get here.

CURTAIN

Return to the frame story...

The Greeks Had a Thing for the Letter P: Phaeton, Pandora and Persephone

PERSEPHONE AND THE FOUR SEASONS

SCENE ONE

(Hermes, Apollo, Hephaestus and Ares gather around Persephone. She is unused to such attention)

HERMES Are you coming out with us today?

APOLLO We're going out to the fields, near Enna!

HEPHAESTUS

Everyone is there!

ARES that is

Everyone who is anyone, that is.

GODS TOGETHER Which of us do you want to walk you there?

HERMES

I am Hermes, I am the fastest ...

APOLLO

I am Apollo, I am the brightest ...

HEPHAESTUS

I am Hephaestus, I am the cleverest! I can make anything!

ARES

I am Ares, I am the strongest! I can beat-up anyone!

GODS TOGETHER Well, which one of us will you choose?

PERSEPHONE

Well...I...

DEMETER

You all get out of here… at once! Leave my daughter in peace. (She raises her arms in prayer to the gods) Dear Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt, keep my daughter safe from the vicious snares and traps of the Olympians!

PERSEPHONE

Mother, why can't I go out to the fields like everyone else?

DEMETER

You are not everyone else. You are a daughter of Zeus...the great thundering... (She stops herself short, as if to avoid his wrath) and as such, you are not safe. I fear Aphrodite's jealousy of you, for she can do as she likes with you... beware the gods, Persephone, they are proud and selfish and look for any opportunity to satisfy their whims.

PERSEPHONE

But you too are a goddess!

DEMETER

Yes, but I use my powers to make the earth grow, not to burn and abuse it any chance I can get. You will not go out today, or any day, not unless I am with you, to protect you.

PERSEPHONE

Yes, mother.

DEMETER

Oh, my sweet Persephone, take heart. We will go to the fields of Enna soon...We are obliged to attend the picnic of the Gods, a party to be held by the nymph Arethusa. Will this please you?

(Persephone nods in delight and they stand side by side, arms around each other, others gather, laughing, talking.)

SCENE TWO

(The Olympians stand about chatting. Arethusa enters with a tray filled with drinks.)

ARETHUSA

Welcome, everyone.

CYANE

Persephone, over here! Look, narcissus flowers....and there's more there, by the river. Come on!

(Persephone leaves her mother to collect flowers, off stage, with Cyane, a river nymph. The gods and goddesses stand around gossiping.)

ARTEMIS Well, well, well…look who didn't show! The Goddess of Love…sick with jealousy again.

APOLLO

Dear sister Artemis, you should watch your tongue or Aphrodite might...

ARTEMIS

Why, my dear brother, should I fear Aphrodite? She has no power over me.

APOLLO

No, but she can hurt those close to you. Lesser gods and mortals...Don't show too much attention to the lovely Persephone or Aphrodite may strike.

ATHENA

Yes, she's probably brooding, scheming a way to bring Zeus's attention to her, and away from his... daughter, Persephone.

APOLLO

Zeus, caring about his daughter!? Since when has he cared for you, Athena?

ATHENA

I've learned to take care of myself.

ARES

As a son of Zeus, I too have learned to take care of myself. I have no need of either of my parents, neither Zeus, my father, nor Hera, my mother. I have no need of women.

ARTEMIS

And I have no need of Men. But Aphrodite cannot live without them!

APOLLO

Shh...don't let Hephaestus hear you. No matter how she wrongs him, he cannot live without her!

ARES

No wonder! She's the goddess of love!

HEPHAESTUS and ARES (As if in a trance.) Aphrodite is the most beautiful and powerful of all the goddesses.

ARTEMIS

Great Zeus, they are all besotted with her...speaking of Zeus, how many children does he have now? What was the last count?

DEMETER

Arethusa, have you seen where my daughter went?

CONTINUED: (2)

ARETHUSA

She was just here a moment ago...Ask the river nymph, Cyane, they were picking flowers together. Cyane!

CYANE

We were over there, by the river...there! Her footprints... leading to the edge and then...nothing.

ARETHUSA

It's as if she's vanished into the air ...

CYANE

Or to the water

DEMETER

Or to the earth ...

SCENE THREE

(Aphrodite sits on her throne. The Three Graces work on her hair, nails etc. She has been watching the events at the picnic earlier..)

APHRODITE

Get off, will you! The Three Graces! Graceful as a herd of pigs! That's enough! Fools! Eros, you aimed your arrow well...We've seized the chance to extend your realm and mine, your power and mine.

EROS

How so, mother? I've shot the Lord of the Underworld, Hades, with my golden arrow...and he has fallen in love with Demeter's daughter, Persephone, and taken her down into the Underworld with him. What good for us will come of this? I've played with the emotions of so many mortals, halfmortals and gods, can't I just leave Persephone alone? Or cause her to be turned into a laurel tree like that nymph Daphne?

APHRODITE

(Irritated at his weakness.) No! My, dear Eros... (angrily) How dare Athena the Wise and Artemis the Huntress continue to insult me? How can Demeter keep up her insults...calling me selfish and proud? I will no longer be mocked...for I am Aphrodite, goddess of love! Even great Zeus needs me to carry out his plans! You see, my dear child, by holding Hades in my power, in desperate love for the daughter of Demeter, goddess of the Earth, I hold power over them all; over all of the Olympians! I will please Zeus with a suitor fit for his lovely daughter Persephone and be rid of her for good.

SCENE FOUR

(Hades has kidnapped Persephone and is bringing her down to the Underworld.)

HADES

Please stop screaming... (scratches his head in confusion) I... don't understand it, I asked your father for your hand in marriage. He agreed. It's a done deal. A matter of business, but...I find I love you!

PERSEPHONE

Love me? Abduct me from the safety of my mother's arms? You call this love? She said the gods were selfish, and she is right. How could I possibly love you? You are the King of Death!

SCENE FIVE

(The Three Graces stand behind Zeus. Apollo and Aurora plead for Zeus to rescue Persephone.)

APOLLO

You've seen what has happened to your daughter...will you do nothing but just sit there?

ZEUS

But it's a good match. He's a great god, Hades...vast dominion. Ruler and Host to Many...

APOLLO

Yes, of the Dead!

AURORA

I Aurora, every morning, see Demeter, the lady of the golden sword and glorious fruits, searching for her daughter.

APOLLO

I watch as she weeps, tears falling like the stars I bring out each evening. It cannot go on!

(Zeus exits)

APOLLO

(to Aurora) If Zeus won't tell Demeter where her daughter is and ease her grief, I will.

AURORA

Her anger is fierce, perhaps it is best for her not to know. You saw what she did to many of the nymphs who sad idly by (MORE)

AURORA (cont'd)

and did not join in the search for her daughter! She turned them into Sirens!

APOLLO

Demeter must be told. And I, author of divine messages, am the one to tell her.

SCENE SIX

(Hades is pleading with Persephone to love him)

HADES

You must understand, your father promised you to me... Please stay with me forever...It's so cold, down here alone...

PERSEPHONE

Your words, unlike this place, are warm ...but, I long for home, the blue sky, the green grass...

HADES

(He points above their heads)

There's grass here!

PERSEPHONE

(She looks up) The roots! We're in the underworld remember!

SCENE SEVEN

(Pan approaches the audience. The nymphs and Demeter enter)

PAN

(praising himself) "I sing of Pan!" (to the audience) That's "Nymph-leader, darling of the Naiads, lord of winsome me! muse when he pours forth his god-inspired siren-song, and stepping nimbly to the melody leaps down from shadowy caves, moving his all-shape body, fine dancer, fine of face. To star-eyed Olympus goes the all-tune sound, sprinkling the company of the Olympian gods with immortal muse. All the earth and sea are mixed thanks to you, dear Pan, for you are the bulwark of all!" (He sees Cyane, Arethusa and Demeter. Demeter collapses in tears.) Ah, two river nymphs and Demeter.... I will just sit here awhile and listen ... "I do so [miss] lying in a soft meadow where crocuses and sweetsmelling hyacinths bloom at random in the grass." With Persephone gone, the Earth is dying. (Greek Lyric V, Fragments 936 by Anonymous and Homeric Hymn 19)

CYANE

Demeter, you must shake off this grief. The Earth is withering and dying.

ARETHUSA

Please, Demeter. The earth is dying without your care of it. Bring yourself out of this depression. Apollo's words should bring comfort.

DEMETER

Comfort? My daughter is held hostage in the underworld...how am I to be comforted in that?

CYANE

Although she mourns for you still, she is now a Queen.

ARETHUSA

The Queen of the Underworld, but a Queen nonetheless.

CYANE

Zeus chose well for her.

DEMETER

Zeus is behind this? The thundering... (She rises up, angry) When I get my hands on him...

PAN

Uh, oh...Zeus will want to hear about this ...

SCENE EIGHT

(The Three Fates, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, stand together with a skein of red wool. Klotho spins the thread of a human life, Lakhesis determines the length of the thread, the life, and Atropos cuts the thread when the time for death has come. Demeter passes before them.)

THE THREE FATES

We three Fates the future know How the seeds will die or grow How the earth did suffer so Dying, dying as she did go The neglect of the goddess brings much woe

(Persephone and Hades pass before the Three Fates.)

We three Fates the future know How their love will die or grow (MORE)

CONTINUED: THE THREE FATES (cont'd) How the Husband Hades stayed True as was the fruit he gave

(Persephone eats the seeds of the Pomegranate) Which she was to eat and so remain As is fitting of her name "Persephone" 'twas time she came to know her plight For she was born to destroy the light So, she the Dark Lord's Wife became But she missed her mother all the same.

> (Persephone and Demeter stand looking at each other across the stage.)

SCENE NINE

(The Gods and Goddesses are protesting angrily. Pan enters and hesitates whether or not to tell Zeus that Demeter knows Zeus is behind the disappearance of her daughter. He keeps looking back anxiously waiting for Demeter's entrance.)

GODS/GODDESSES Help Demeter Save the Earth! Bring Back Persephone!

ATLAS

Come on, Great Zeus! Haven't I borne my punishment nobly? I'm not sure I can keep the heavens and the earth apart much longer. What have I done to deserve this extra weight? Why does the Earth have to suffer so? What have we done to deserve such suffering? Come on Zeus, I can't carry on like this! The weight is unbearable. The Heavens are most unusually a burden... so...much...suffering. I know I have no right to complain, but please ...bring Persephone back, bring back the crops, the people are starving!

ZEUS

Impossible! Pan, you who watches over the flocks, the forests, the mountains, and all wild things... come here!

ATLAS

Come on, please! Find a compromise....Help Demeter Save the Earth!

ZEUS

As soon as I can find her we'll start negotiations.

GODS/GODESSES Yeah, right! We've heard that before....Negotiations!!

PAN

Great Zeus, I've already found her. Near a crooked stream she lay, distraught. Desperate to find her daughter...

ZEUS

Bring her here at once.

PAN

Well, that's what I wanted to tell you ... uh ... here she comes.

DEMETER

You knew what had happened to our daughter and you said nothing!? Send someone to get her! Now!

ZEUS

Now, my dead...you always did have such a temper. Okay, okay...I'll send Hermes to get her if you promise to stop punishing the Earth. But I warn you, I won't be able to do a thing if your daughter...

DEMETER

...and yours, remember!

ARTEMIS

If Persephone has eaten anything Hades has given her, it is beyond the gods' power to help her. Even Zeus. Those that eat the food of the dead may not return.

DEMETER

I've told her never to take anything from strangers...Oh, my dear sweet Persephone... I promise I'll restore the earth once she steps foot again above it.

SCENE TEN

(Sitting on Zeus's throne, Hermes is bragging to the nymphs Cyane and Arethusa and to the goddess Aurora of his visit to the underworld)

HERMES

Yes, it was quite an adventure. Let me tell you all about it.

AURORA

Weren't you nervous, going down into the Underworld?

HERMES

No, I take people there down all the time…it's just that it was the first time I was being sent to bring someone back. Hades doesn't just let anyone walk out of there you know.

(Hephaestus enters, acting out the scene just past)

HEPHAESTUS

Here, Hermes, be sure to take your winged helmet and sandals. I've fixed them again for you, made some minor improvements in the design; do take care! They alone will ensure you a speedy return from the underworld.

CYANE

What did Persephone look like? What was she wearing?

HERMES

She was radiant. Striking and sad. Dressed all in black, but beautiful. A Queen of the Dead. It made me almost wish to stay there...

ARETHUSA

Oh...that sounds frightening.

HERMES

That's just it. It wasn't really. She seemed born for the role. Put me at ease.

AURORA

At ease? The Queen of the Dead?

HERMES

Yes, her words were calm and her voice serene.

(Persephone enters, acting out the scene just past. She is dressed all in black.)

PERSEPHONE

I am in charge of greeting all our new arrivals. I help them settle into their new life, to stop their restless drifting. To accept their after-life, as I have accepted mine.

HERMES

But I am sent to bring you home, to your mother, Demeter.

PERSEPHONE

But my place is here now, with Hades. Besides, I have eaten of the seeds of the pomegranate and can no longer return.

AURORA

Is this true? She ate of the pomegranate?

CONTINUED: (2)

CYANE

Hades must have tricked her.

ARETHUSA

Hades must have forced her.

HERMES

No, no. Just ask Hades' gardener, Ascalaphus. He witnessed the whole thing and told Demeter himself...and then she turned him into a screech owl! No one likes a messenger who brings bad news...

CYANE

What about the Earth? I've heard nothing but bad news since Demeter stopped caring for it.

SCENE ELEVEN

SPRING

We'll begin our song ...

SUMMER

...and through it show ...

AUTUMN

...Persephone's days and months ...

WINTER

...on the earth and below ...

(Persephone stands with Hades.)

WINTER

While Demeter awaits her daughter to climb out of the earth, into warm sunshine, I roll the endless round of winter's frost and Demeter she mourns the daughter she's lost.

WINTER

Demeter is waiting Winter is here Wind and cold and death is near Demeter is waiting Her daughter to climb Out of the earth into warm sunshine

SPRING

When Persephone ascends from under the earth, I bring about a miraculous rebirth. The flowers bloom and the birds begin to sing, all is fresh and new, for I am Spring.

(Persephone crosses to her mother, Demeter.)

SPRING

Then can come the planting Then can come the rain Soft and gentle growing Of the seeds again

(Persephone stands with her mother, Demeter.)

SUMMER

With the full height of sun and the warm summer air, I bring to all a season without care. But with autumn on the wing and spring so quickly past, Persephone knows the joy and warmth won't last.

SUMMER

Full warmth of summer Persephone sighs Full growth of summer Demeter replies

DEMETER

(sadly) "Now can come the harvest."

(Persephone stands weeping with Demeter.)

AUTUMN

As quickly turn the leaves of autumn's golden trees; Persephone knows the time has come to leave. The fields turn gold with grain and the harvest from the rain and sun and seasons past before, signal her parting from the mother she adores.

(Persephone crosses to Hades.)

AUTUMN

Now can come the harvest Now can come the grain From the warmth of summer From the warmth of rain

(Persephone joins Hades. They are happy together)

TOGETHER

At the start of Autumn Demeter she sighs Time to end the cycle Time to say good-byes

(Persephone waves a goodbye to Demeter.)

SPRING

A compromise was made:

AUTUMN

For the long months of the year ...

CONTINUED: (2)

WINTER

Hades would have his bride

(Persephone crosses to Demeter)

SUMMER

But for the rest of the year, Demeter would have her daughter at her side.

(Persephone stands in joyful reunion with her mother, Demeter)

CURTAIN

RETURN TO FRAME STORY-TO DEVELOP