



HADES AND PERSEPHONE

CAST

DEMETER	<i>Goddess of the Harvest</i>
PERSEPHONE	<i>Goddess of Springtime</i>
HADES	<i>Lord of the Underworld</i>
HERMES	<i>Messenger God</i>
HELIOS	<i>God of the Sun</i>

NARRATOR: Many years ago the seasons were not as they are today. It was always spring. The sun shone, and the ground yielded. Demeter, the Goddess of the Harvest, was eternally happy—teaching mortal man to farm and to grow. She bore her brother Zeus a beautiful daughter, Persephone, the Goddess of Spring.

DEMETER: Wouldn't you say my daughter is the most gorgeous sight you have ever seen?

NARRATOR: Demeter was a very proud mother and thought that nothing could ruin her happiness. But she had not counted on the eye of Hades—the Lord of the Underworld—lighting upon Persephone as she picked flowers one day.

Hades was a god of few words. Living below with the dead had made him morose and withdrawn. His skin was sickly pale and his fingernails were in bad need of cutting.

HADES: (*mumbling, nearly incoherent*) What a beautiful maiden. I must have her as my own.

NARRATOR: Roaring up from a crack in the ground, his black chariot—pulled by skeletal horses—thundered into the meadow where the young Goddess of Spring was frolicking.

PERSEPHONE: (*innocently*) Who are you?

HADES: (*muttering*) I—I—am—Hades—would—you—hmmmm . . .

PERSEPHONE: I'm sorry, but I'm not supposed to talk to strangers.

HADES: But—I—

NARRATOR: Definitely lacking in social skills, Hades began to sweat. Most of the people he dealt with on a daily basis were *dead*. He desperately wanted to tell this stunning goddess just how stunning she actually was, but all he could do was grunt inarticulately.

HADES: Um—would—you—mind—(*cough*)—errrr . . .

PERSEPHONE: I'm afraid I don't understand.

HADES: (*angrily*) Oh, nevermind!

NARRATOR: Spurring his steeds forward, Hades swept the terrified goddess into his chariot.

PERSEPHONE: (*screaming*) Help! Mother! Mother! Heeeeeeeeeelp!

NARRATOR: The ground once again opened, swallowing its deathless master, and the cries of Persephone were sealed up within the Earth.

PERSEPHONE: Let go! Let go of me, you brute! What kind of freak kidnaps a defenseless girl?

HADES: I only—want—you—to—(*cough*) love me.

PERSEPHONE: Are you insane? You just grabbed me!

HADES: Sorry, I panicked. I just get so nervous around girls.

PERSEPHONE: So you just abduct them instead?

HADES: No—I mean, yes. This whole dating thing is so hard to figure out.

PERSEPHONE: Let me give you a little hint! This is *not* the way to do it! Heeeeeelp!

NARRATOR: Back above the earth, Demeter discovered that her daughter had vanished.

DEMETER: (*calling out*) Persephone! Where are you? Oh, I told you not to wander away!

NARRATOR: Demeter soon realized that Persephone had, in fact, disappeared without a trace. The goddess began to wail.

DEMETER: (*in anguish*) My daughter! My daughter! Woe! (*pause*) I will search until I learn what has befallen her.

NARRATOR: But then a sudden thought came to her: What would happen to the earth with no one to tend it? It would wither without her power to make its fields prosper.

DEMETER: Let it die. What has it done for me? It has taken my only love and hid her from me.

NARRATOR: So the world wilted. Crops failed. The sky produced no rain. The sun scorched the land barren. And Demeter wandered, in the guise of a simple maid, searching for her beloved daughter. At last, Helios, the sun himself, saw that creation would soon die if someone did not intervene. He called down from his fiery chariot to Demeter below.

HELIOS: Demeter! You must cease your wandering! Tend to the earth, or it will die—along with all that live upon it!

DEMETER: I will not allow a plant to grow or a flower to bud until I have my daughter again!

HELIOS: Persephone? Do you not know? Hades has taken her into the Underworld. He has made her his queen there.

DEMETER: (*gasping*) My baby? Abducted?

HELIOS: I saw it with my very eyes. Go to Father Zeus, and tell him your complaint. He is the only one strong enough to force Hades into giving her back.

DEMETER: (*gratefully*) Thank you, Helios. I will.

NARRATOR: Demeter cried out immediately to immortal Zeus, begging him to remember his sister and the daughter that he had fathered by her. Zeus heard her cry, and immediately dispatched the messenger god Hermes to fetch the Goddess of Spring back from the Underworld.

HERMES: Acutally, I prefer “Hermes the handsome and infinitely intelligent messenger god.”

NARRATOR: As Hermes flew into the bowels of the Earth, he saw ranks of decaying bodies waited in endless lines, foul rivers crisscrossed across stinking plains, and the air smelled of rotting flesh.

HERMES: Whew! It sure stinks here! Now I see why they call this the bowels of the earth! No wonder Hades has to abduct his dates.

NARRATOR: Soon Hermes came to the palace of Hades and came before the grim God of the Underworld seated on his throne of death. Beside him sat the emotionless Persephone—her youthful colors muted with a veil of black.

HADES: (*mumbling*) What are you doing here, Hermes?

HERMES: Hello, uncle. I bring orders from Dad.

HADES: Orders? What do you mean *orders*? Zeus rules above the Earth. I rule below it.

HERMES: Interesting distinction, but what I’ve come about is definitely an above-earth matter.

HADES: (*angrily*) Hmph. Well, I—

HERMES: You know, nobody’s trying to point fingers here, but abducting a young goddess in broad daylight right out in the open isn’t really the brightest idea.

HADES: I take what I want!

HERMES: Uh-huh. Well, you see. This lovely lady happens to be the daughter of Demeter. (*sarcastically*) And for some strange reason Demeter is a bit depressed about her daughter getting sucked down into Hades.

HADES: Maybe Demeter should watch her daughter more closely.

HERMES: You’re not listening. Long story short, Demeter is so miserable that the earth is dying, people are starving, yaddah, yaddah, yaddah.

HADES: Why should I care?

HERMES: Think about it. Everybody’s *dying*. Look around you! This place is already crowded as it is. Do you really want to be swamped with all that extra work?

HADES: (*sheepishly*) No, not really.

HERMES: Plus, I have this personal message from Zeus Almighty.

NARRATOR: The messenger god unrolled a parchment.

HERMES: Ahem. He says, “Don’t make me come down there!”

HADES: (*angrily*) Fine! You may take her back to her mother! I didn’t want a queen anyway. It’s not fair! (*weeping*)

NARRATOR: Hermes patted his uncle's shoulder.

HERMES: (*consoling*) Oh, calm down! There'll be more girls to abduct. There are plenty of maidens in the meadow.

PERSEPHONE: (*emotionlessly*) Am I free to go? Ever since I ate those pomegranate seeds yesterday, my heart has grown so cold. I think the sun will be the only thing to warm it once again.

HERMES: Uh-oh. Did you say pomegranate seeds?

PERSEPHONE: Yes. Why?

HERMES: How many?

PERSEPHONE: Four.

HERMES: Whoops. Well, I don't know if anyone told you this rule, but if you eat the food of the Underworld, you are bound to it.

HADES: (*excitedly*) Ah-ha! I had forgotten that rule. Oh, well. Too bad. Guess you'll have to stay here and be my queen after all.

HERMES: Wait a minute. If she's only eaten some tiny seeds, then she doesn't have to stay here all the time.

HADES: What?

HERMES: She may leave, but since she has eaten *four* seeds, she shall return here for 4 months out of the year.

HADES: No! I won't allow her to leave.

HERMES: (*cautioning*) Remember the note.

HADES: (*pouting*) Fine. Go. I'll see you in eight months, I guess.

NARRATOR: Persephone smiled and leaned in close to the Lord of Death.

PERSEPHONE: It's weird, but I kind of like it here. And underneath it all, you're kind of cute—in a creepy kind of way.

HADES: (*stunned*) You really think so?

NARRATOR: Hades leaned in for a kiss, but the Goddess of Spring took his hand instead.

PERSEPHONE: Let's work up to that, okay? (*pause*) I'll go visit Mother, but I'll be back.

HERMES: If you don't, he'll probably come and get you.

HADES: (*laugh*) True. Goodbye, my love.

PERSEPHONE: Goodbye.

NARRATOR: And so every year Persephone returns to her mother, the Goddess of the Harvest, and there are eight months of plenty. But when she once again goes away to be with her subterranean husband, Demeter mourns, and the earth grows barren until her daughter's return. And that's why we have fall and winter each year.