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J. N. Andrews Honors Program
Andrews University

HONS 497

Honors Thesis

You Tell the Tale: Interactive Retellings of the Myth of Orpheus

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Abstract

The thesis retells the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in an interactive narrative style. The interactive medium encourages readers to take an active role in storytelling by deciding what the protagonist does at key moments in the plot; each decision branches out into alternate story paths, allowing the adaptation to draw from multiple versions of the myth, particularly Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *The Georgics*. The content chosen for inspiration is based on how it can offer new interpretations of and insight into this retelling of the familiar story.

Dedications

To the teachers, friends, and family, for encouraging my interest in interactive storytelling

To Dr. Bruce Closser, for showing enthusiasm and providing support

To R.A. Montgomery and Edward Packard, for pioneering the field of interactive books

To Ryan North, for showing me what interactive stories are capable of

To Mercedes, for offering invaluable input from this idea's conception to its completion

Introduction

Some of my favorite books growing up were from the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series of gamebooks. My elementary school library had several books from this line, and I read every one they had. I enjoyed being able to choose what the protagonist of each story did and seeing what outcome each choice had on the story.

After elementary school, I rarely came across another gamebook—the common term for books that let readers steer the direction of the story. Beyond their popularity with children, gamebooks do not have a large market. There are some people, however, who try to expand the limits of gamebooks in terms of subject and intended audience.

In 2012, Ryan North, Canadian author and programmer, funded through Kickstarter his gamebook adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which he titled *To Be or Not to Be* and published the following year. For me, this represented a new possibility for gamebooks—adapting famous works into an interactive form. As I read *To Be or Not to Be* and *Romeo and/or Juliet*—North's second Shakespearean adaptation—I found that far from just being entertainment, these books offered commentary on the original plays they adapted and emphasized themes from those stories. North had combined the best qualities of gamebooks with the richness of Shakespeare.

I read *To Be or Not to Be* as I was starting college. When I joined the J.N. Andrews Honors Program, the idea to write my own adaptation of a well-known story rooted in my mind and grew. Once I had confirmed that as my thesis project, the next step was to decide what story I would adapt, and after consideration I chose the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. My goal was to adapt this myth into an interactive format, around the length of a typical *Choose Your Own Adventure* book (80+ numbered sections), and with a similar number of endings (5 to 15). The finished story would cover Orpheus' wedding, then his visit to the Underworld, and finally his life after he returns to the surface. I also wanted the adaptation to shed light into the motivations behind the actions of the characters, both Orpheus himself and those who influence his plot.

An advantage of adapting this story is that it has no official version, and thus the different versions in existence can all contribute to the outcomes that I present in my retelling. This allows me freedom in taking aspects of the story from multiple versions, while adding my own interpretation as

well. Ovid and Virgil, Roman poets, wrote the two most famous versions. These are the “backbone” of my adaptation, but my retelling draws from many other sources.

The elements of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice that are mostly consistent across different sources are: the protagonist, Orpheus, who is a skilled musician; his wife, Eurydice, who dies shortly after she weds Orpheus; Orpheus’ journey to the Underworld, where he convinces Hades to let him bring Eurydice back to life; Hades agreeing so long as Orpheus does not look back at Eurydice as he leaves the Underworld; and Orpheus inevitably looking back at Eurydice, thus breaking the contract and dooming Eurydice to the Underworld permanently. This story contains themes as relevant today as they were in the Greek and Roman eras, such as agency, fate, art, love, and death, which can all be highlighted through an interactive retelling. Interactive narratives, because they are usually told in the second-person, can make a story more personal, and thus emphasize these themes from the story. Both content and form work well together.

Of the themes present in the myth, agency and fate were the themes that were most significant to me when retelling this tale. The choices that I make available (or specifically not available) in the story are there to highlight the control that people possess over their own lives, and the influence their decisions have. In Aristaeus’ story, which serves as a framing device for the rest of the myth, there is the idea that one’s actions can have unseen consequences far down the road. For Orpheus, the idea was that though a single person can have some agency over his or her own life, sometimes there are events outside of his or her power to control—events governed by fate. On the other hand, some people, like Eurydice, experience little agency because of the factors surrounding them.

When I researched other kinds of interactive narratives, I found similarities between reader-response theory, the parsers of text adventures, and my own goals in adapting Orpheus’ story. Reader-response theory suggests that the meaning of a text is not found in its words alone, nor in the reader’s interpretation, but somewhere in between these. In text adventures—like *Zork* and *Planetfall*—what the main character does in the game depends on what text commands the programmers included in the game’s programming and what the player chooses to type. Both reader-response theory and text adventure parsers influence my adaptation; when writing, I choose what the reader can or cannot do in the story based on how constrained I want the reader to be, and on my predictions of how the reader

will react to what I have written. Each reader's unique reading experience is created through their own views about the plot interacting with the options the plot gives each of them.

One of the choices I made early on was that I did not want to offer readers an option in which Orpheus succeeds at bringing Eurydice back to life. Except for a few, all versions of the myth depict Orpheus as failing in his quest, whether by his own flaws or by a force greater than him. Rather than give readers the ability to succeed, I provide choices that impact the motivation behind Orpheus' failure. The aim is not to draw attention to whether Orpheus will succeed or fail, but to illuminate the reasons behind why Orpheus may have failed. Furthermore, by keeping the key moment of failure in the adaptation, I preserve the themes of fate and loss that would be missing if the reader could choose an ending where Orpheus overcomes all odds and wins Eurydice back. Unlike the other interactive narratives I have mentioned, even North's adaptations of Shakespeare's tragedies, my retelling has no "happy ending," but does have endings where Orpheus may find peace with himself.

Not offering the choice to succeed yields two potential problems. First, readers may feel "cheated" out of their power to affect the plot. What is the point of an interactive story if control is taken from the reader? Second, because Orpheus *must* fail, all branching points in the story prior to this must lead to this moment, which limits my freedom in writing alternate paths. The solution to both problems is the same; instead of letting the reader take the story down any possible path they could desire, I write choices that do not change the overall course of the story but affect how readers interpret the events that are to come. Early choices influence the reader's perception of the characters, leading them to make conclusions about their actions later. Thus, the choices are not so much about the literal outcome but about how we perceive the significance of those outcomes.

Some of the perspectives of the story gained while working on this project are new to me, which I take as a sign that my thesis can accomplish what I set out to do: expand an understanding of the story through interactive storytelling. These perspectives include insight into the reasons why Orpheus may have failed, such as paranoia, thoughtlessness, or the intervention of fate. They also include ideas behind why the gods may have cursed Orpheus, whether he insulted them or failed to give them proper respect. Though the finished project looks different from what I originally envisioned, I am satisfied with the conclusions that I reached in these interpretations.

1

You Tell the Tale: Interactive Retellings of the Myth of Orpheus

This is an adaptation of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. This means that you, the reader, get to read the story as if you were the main character. You also can influence the story by choosing what you do as the protagonist.

At the end of each numbered section, there will be instructions for which numbered section to go to next; sometimes there will be more than one instruction, in which case you decide which one to follow. This will lead to different events affecting the characters, and once you have reached an ending, you can start over again and discover what would happen if the protagonist were to try something different.

It is important not to read the story straight through in numerical order. If you do this, the story will be chronologically out of order, and thus make little sense. Instead, follow the instructions to jump from section to section.

There are three places you can begin this story:

To begin the tale with Aristaeus, turn to 97

To begin the tale with Orpheus, turn to 60

To begin the tale with Eurydice, turn to 102

2

You leave the audience chamber of Hades behind. Also behind you is the form of Eurydice. Her steps are silent, so you can only imagine her presence a few feet behind you.

A strong urge to turn and gaze at her grips you briefly, but you shake it off and continue forward. Soon you arrive at a crossroads. To the left comes the sound of a breeze—perhaps a draft of wind from the surface? To the right is an unpleasant raspy and guttural noise, but the path has an inclined slant.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 79

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 50

3

“Yes, it did bring me here. All things run towards death, as you said. But if you truly believe that, then why not give Eurydice another chance at life? We can share our love once more, and then when we die we will be brought here again. You don’t lose anything out of this.”

TURN TO 70

4

You seek out people who might be able to shed light on who you are, and where you’ve been. The first person you come across, a swineherd, sees the lyre that you are carrying and suggests you speak to the musicians in the nearby city. You do as he says, and soon learn from these musicians that you are the legendary Orpheus, renowned the world over for your music. Upon hearing this, you find that your skill at the lyre was not lost when your memory disappeared.

Last anyone had heard of you, you were grieving over your lost wife. One of the minstrels then tells you where you can find your mother, Calliope.

TURN TO 23

5

It is your mother. She has a covered basket, which you assume contains food; every now and then, Calliope will share a breakfast with you, or a lunch, even though you never have an appetite and your food goes untouched.

She waves as she gets closer. When she reaches the edge of your cave, you embrace, and then enter the den where you have been living these past few seasons. You both sit, and Calliope unveils her basket: two loaves of bread, goat cheese, tomatoes, olives, and a pomegranate.

Calliope separates the olives into two piles, placing a pile in front of both of you. She sets a loaf next to your pile, then breaks off a piece of her own. Popping an olive into her mouth, she looks at you thoughtfully, but says nothing.

Half a loaf of bread and a third of the goat cheese later, she finally speaks (you, as usual, have not touched anything): “And how are you today, Orpheus?”

IF YOU TELL HER YOU ARE FINE, TURN TO 51
IF YOU TELL HER YOU ARE NOT FINE, TURN TO 67

6

The search party returns to see you cradling Eurydice. They found nobody. Nor did anyone find the snake that may have bitten Eurydice. You think of how ill-fortuned you must be to have your wife taken from you the very day you married, the culprit vanishing almost as if he'd never been there.

The following days, many come to offer their condolences, but nothing lifts your spirits. You wish there were some way to reverse what has happened. If you could go back and replay that day differently, might you have been able to stop what happened? Ruminating on this makes you more and more morose.

Calliope says you must do something to get out of this slump—Eurydice would not have wanted this. You begrudgingly agree, then consider your options.

IF YOU TRY TO FORGET EURYDICE, TURN TO 38
IF YOU SEEK A WAY TO BRING EURYDICE BACK, TURN TO 74

7

You steel your resolve. You *mustn't* turn back! Instead, you wait. How long? It is hard to guess. The river's gurgle gives you a sense for passing seconds, but those add up to minutes, hours. Days? Has it been a week since you first descended into the Underworld? Will you wait yet another week? Will your body age and decay, until you meet your death and become a true resident here? Or are you already one with the souls who dwell in this twilight world?

You could end this now.

IF YOU TURN BACK, TURN TO 69
IF YOU KEEP WAITING, TURN TO 56

8

After a few minutes, you sit up. Your mind reels as you gain your bearings. For a moment, you cannot remember where you are. The moment becomes several, stretching into a full minute and still you cannot recall what you were doing here in this dark chamber far underground.

You turn around, seeing the form of a beautiful woman. Her eyes widen in apparent shock, before violently lurching back into the shadows, as if tugged by some invisible rope. You gape in awe and confusion, uncomprehending.

Then you stand up and meander through the darkness, your hand brushing against an old signpost where the word “Lethe” has been printed some far-off era ago.

TURN TO 84

9

You stretch out your hand to take Eurydice’s—it is like plunging one’s hand into deep snow. The sudden cold catches you off guard, and in that moment you forget what you are doing.

You turn to look at Eurydice. Her face registers surprise, and you exclaim, “Eurydice! I’m sorry!”

She replies, “Don’t be, my husband! You did it because you loved me, and should I be upset at you for that?”

In the seconds that follow, while you watch as Eurydice is pulled away from the Styx and into the lower recesses of Hades’ realm, you wonder if she is right that you turned out of love. Was it the cold touch that was to blame for your mistake, or were you perhaps too eager to get one more glimpse of her face? Just so long as it was not wretched carelessness that brought this tragedy upon you.

TURN TO 80

10

You have been all but defeated. True, your quest to fetch Eurydice and return to the surface with her in your company did not succeed, but she has not been torn from you yet, and never will so long as you do not turn around.

You can live like this, perhaps. You could never gaze upon Eurydice’s beauty, nor see the sunlight ever again, but being with Eurydice—knowing she is with you—would be enough.

IF YOU REMAIN HERE, TURN TO 25

IF YOU TURN BACK, TURN TO 69

11

You resolve to put an end to your grieving. You had your chance to bring back Eurydice, but lost it. Now, there is no more hope for the life you wanted. But you could improve the lives of others. Your musical skill could bring a smile to someone’s face. Or, you could share what you know about Hades’ realm, so that others might reverse the deaths of those they love.

IF YOU DEVOTE YOUR LIFE TO PLAYING MUSIC FOR OTHERS, TURN TO 62

IF YOU DEVOTE YOUR LIFE TO SHARING YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNDERWORLD, TURN TO 42

12

You sit beside your mother, who has just finished a conversation with one of the other muses who attended your wedding. She smiles brightly at you, and grasps your hands as she asks how you are enjoying your wedding.

“I’m enjoying this day very much, mother. Thank you.”

“I couldn’t help but notice that when you were offering up libations at the start of the reception, you forgot to mention Dionysis. Wouldn’t you want his blessing over a party such as this?”

You chuckle at Calliope’s remarks. “Oh mother, don’t you know I’m an artist? My skill with words is a gift of the intellect, and for that I offered praise to Apollo. It was Apollo, after all, who gave me the lyre I use. If this day is to be a merry one, then it will be by his doing.”

“Well, I hope my son’s wedding day is very happy, regardless who oversees it from above.”

Calliope leans over and gives you a long, warm hug. As you disengage from the embrace, suddenly a naiad runs up to the table, breathing heavily as if she had been sprinting for several minutes. “Come quick!” she shouts, “Something has happened to Eurydice!”

The tone of the reception is shattered immediately. All dancing and laughter ceases as you and the other guests hurry into the woods, following the naiad as she leads you to Eurydice. Then you find her, sprawled out on the ground.

Dead.

TURN TO 31

13

But even as you turn, you realize something is wrong. Panicked, you try to pick out the detail that is alarming your brain. Nothing seems out of place at first: Eurydice’s face is as lovely as you recall it from your wedding; her skin has lost some pallor from her extended stay in the Underworld, but already some warmth is returning to it; her figure still possesses all the grace from when you first met. What could be amiss?

Then you see it. One of her feet still rests within the shadow of the cave. Her face is twisted in fright, and as understanding dawns on you both, she cries out, “Orpheus!” And as she is pulled back into the cavern, your name continues to echo. It is the last word you hear from her, and the last time you see her.

TURN TO 80

14

As you watch your mother disappear into the woods, you think about the conversation you have had. Everything that was said has been repeated many times before. And you know they will be said again, for Calliope will keep returning again and again; she cares too much for your wellbeing.

But it pains you to see her try so hard and yield no change from yourself.

IF YOU LEAVE ON A JOURNEY, TURN TO 39

IF YOU TRY TO GIVE BACK TO SOCIETY, TURN TO 11

IF YOU MAKE A NEW EFFORT TO COME TO TERMS WITH EURYDICE’S PASSING, TURN TO 75

15

“No, my lord. Love did. Death only severs the physical connection between lovers, but it cannot break the emotional tie they share. It is love, rather, that can send soldiers into war. It is love that can triumph over fear of death. It was love that inspired the suitors to compete for Atalanta’s hand in marriage, though they knew the penalty for failure was death. It is love that brings me here today, to journey into your realm of death so that I might be one with my bride.”

TURN TO 89

16

The Ciconian women pull you to the other revellers. Hands seize your limbs, pulling in different directions. Fingernails graze your skin, and whole tufts of your hair are pulled out as the women attack from every direction. Incensed by your refusal to join their rite, and influenced by a long day of drinking and partying, the women hardly realize what they are doing as they literally pull you apart.

Long after any normal person would have died, you remain conscious, feeling every painful moment as you are dismembered limb by limb.

One of the women pulls off your head, and then runs to the river, screaming and hooting with several others. She flings your head into the water, where you float away down the Hebros. Still alive, you watch as the Ciconians toss your lyre into the river as well, and it dawns on you just how little power your art has over your own life—though your musical skill could influence nature and persuade gods, in the end you were unable to save either Eurydice or yourself. You also cannot help but think this is truly your punishment for failing Eurydice. You cry out “Eurydice, ah poor Eurydice!” before the stream carries you away.

And across the water, from the riverbanks down to the island of Lesbos, the name “Eurydice” echoed.

THE END

17

Maybe this is how things should be, you think, as you depart Hades’ chamber and ascend to the surface. This whole trip was a pointless endeavor. Did I really think I could save Eurydice? If the Fates did not want us to be together, would they allow me to bring her back from the dead?

You cross the Styx, and exit the cave by Lake Avernus. The sunshine is a welcome sight, but there is still a shadow in your heart, that you don’t think will ever be lifted.

TURN TO 80

18

As the reception begins, the guests file past you and Eurydice, expressing warm words of congratulations, but you hardly hear what they say—you are so caught up in the bliss of being wed to Eurydice. You turn to her and smile, as yet another prince from somewhere or other shakes your hand.

Soon, there are cries for dancing, and everyone is out of their seats, engaging in all sorts of revelry. During the excitement, you and Eurydice split up. She moves off to join some naiads in a throng, and you link up with a separate group of partiers.

After a while of fun, you are exhausted.

IF YOU WANT TO FIND EURYDICE, TURN TO 73

IF YOU WANT TO SPEAK WITH CALLIOPE, TURN TO 12

IF YOU WANT TO ASK HYMEN ABOUT THE TORCH, TURN TO 47

19

“How did you come to love Persephone?”

“On an excursion to the surface, I saw Persephone and fell in love. I escorted her to my domain, to be my bride.”

“Depending on who I asked, would they say you escorted her, or you kidnapped her?”

Hades sighs. “Persephone’s mother, Demeter, was outraged that I had taken her daughter to the Underworld. She demanded I return Persephone.”

“But you weren’t going to give her up that easily, were you?” you ask.

“No. I gave Persephone a pomegranate, from which she ate six seeds. Then I told Demeter that Persephone must live with me for six months of the year, because she had consumed fruit from my realm.”

“And that is why the seasons change, is it not? Demeter is in mourning six months of the year.”

“That is correct,” Hades concludes.

“My lord, I see you were so in love with Persephone that you were willing to go to any length to keep her, even if that meant deceiving her and her mother. Why then, am I not allowed to go to great lengths for my own love, and request her soul in plain terms, without trickery?”

TURN TO 89

20

You make your decision.

Then you turn.

Eurydice’s face first registers surprise...then confusion. Following that, the boat rocks once more as Eurydice is pulled into the air, suspended by a force beyond your sight. This same force carries her away, back to the receding shore and the lower realm of the Underworld’s lord. But before she vanishes into the gloom, you see one more expression on her face, one that perhaps is mirroring the same look on yours: contempt.

TURN TO 36

21

Time passes. The water flows. Eurydice waits behind you, but you do not see, hear, or feel her behind you. You relive the events of your life up to this point. You relive every moment you got to spend with Eurydice—too few.

You consider turning back.

IF YOU TURN BACK, TURN TO 69

IF YOU WAIT, TURN TO 56

22

The water is chilling, but you are determined not to be stopped by this river. You comfort yourself in the knowledge that Eurydice, still being a spirit, will not feel the cold.

Halfway across the river, the floor steepens, and you find yourself submerged completely. In surprise, you open your mouth to gasp. The frigid water fills your mouth and you heave yourself out of the water, sputtering.

TURN TO 8

23

You find the woman who you’ve been told is your mother. You are surprised to learn that you are the son of one of the nine muses—little wonder that you are so skilled with music.

Calliope tearfully teaches you everything about who you were—are—used to be. When she gets to the part where you married a woman named Eurydice, you are dumbstruck. When Calliope tells you how Eurydice died the very same day you both weep. She ends her story at the point where you left for the

Underworld, but she believes you must have lost your memories in the river Lethe at some point in the Underworld.

You cannot help but feel guilt over failing in your quest. You know you must have convinced Hades to let you return with Eurydice, for she must have been the woman you saw when you emerged from the river Lethe. How must she feel, knowing how close she was to life, yet having her fate placed in another's hands? Your hands?

You vow to never love another, so long as you live. That is the only fitting punishment for failing Eurydice so cruelly.

TURN TO 39

24

The path enters a long, winding tunnel. The sound of rushing water reverberates loudly against the walls, which at times press so closely together that you must squeeze sideways to make it through. At other points you have to duck to avoid hitting the cavern roof. You are careful to face ever forward as you clamber through these narrow passages. But you take comfort as you recognize the tunnels from your reverse journey. You know you are close to the Styx, and the surface.

This puts you in high spirits, especially when the tunnel opens out into a lengthy corridor. This stretch, for now, means you may walk more comfortably. You even begin to hum as you travel along.

The lack of distinguishing features of this hallway, however, begin to weigh on your mind. You lose any sense of distance travelled, and you start wondering if time has slowed. Anything could be possible in the Underworld, you surmise.

You stop humming. Then you stop walking. Listening very quietly, you notice two things. First, you hear nothing, save your own beating heart. Should Eurydice be making any sounds? You call her name, but there is no reply. Has Hades forbidden her from speaking? "If you are there, make a noise so I can tell you're following behind me." Still no sound.

Then, you hear the other thing: laughter. It's very quiet, as if emanating from far away. Is that Hades' grating voice? Does he find your situation amusing? Dark possibilities parade through your mind.

Could he be fooling me? Has he devised a ruse to convince me to leave without Eurydice, by telling me that I must not look back as I exit his lair? Do I dare look to confirm my suspicions? If I'm right and I look, then I can return to Hades' throne room once more. But if I don't look, then Charon might not let me cross the Styx into the Underworld a second time, and Eurydice will be lost to me forever.

IF YOU CHECK BEHIND YOU, TURN TO 41

IF YOU KEEP GOING, TURN TO 34

25

You continue to face the river before you. Knowing that Eurydice waits behind you is a comfort for now, but how much longer can you wait, not being able to see her face? You recognize the cleverness of Hades now; you may have won her back from the Lord of the Underworld, but what does that mean if you cannot see her, hear her?

Being united in death would be better than this eternal limbo, your living self in Death, her dead self halfway to Life, yet not meeting each other in the middle.

IF YOU TURN BACK, TURN TO 69

IF YOU WAIT LONGER, TURN TO 7

26

You're back in front of the enormous beast, Cerberus! Passing the triple-headed creature you pause, heart beating fast, when it stirs from sleep a moment then resumes its grotesque slumbering. On the far side, you assess your options—a left-hand turn that leads to a churning noise, and a right-hand turn that follows the sound of running water.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 65

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 54

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

27

You have never been more nervous in your life; usually you're brimming with confidence, especially when you have a lyre in your hands. You imagine this must be what stage fright feels like for other people. *I wonder how Eurydice is feeling?*

Just then, a man in a saffron robe approaches you, carrying a torch. It's Hymen! Tradition dictates that any perfect wedding ought to have Hymen in attendance. His torch's presence at a wedding is a good omen that the union will be a happy one. When you see him, you feel your nerves calm down, if only a little bit.

"Orpheus! How good to see you!" Hymen slaps your shoulder with his empty hand.

"The same to you," you reply.

"And I must add," he intones, "that it is good to see you are marrying such a lovely bride. Tell me, friend, how is it that you two fell in love?"

IF YOU TELL HYMEN THAT YOU WOODED HER WITH YOUR MUSIC, TURN TO 33

IF YOU TELL HYMEN THAT HER BEAUTY ENTRANCED YOU, TURN TO 90

28

The room you enter is filled with awful carrion-birds. They hover in lazy circles above you, and then you spy what it is that has attracted them to this chamber: Prometheus. He brought fire to mankind from Mount Olympus, and for this was punished to eternally have his liver devoured by the birds, only for it to regrow and be eaten all over again. You decide to leave as soon as possible. A tunnel on the left-hand wall appears to curve up and back in the direction you came. The tunnel opposite it curves downward.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 63

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 35

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

29

Your skill at the lyre has served you throughout life. Now it will serve you in Death. As some have said before, your talent is so great that you can charm nature. Now is the ultimate test: can you move the god of the Underworld?

You begin plucking softly, weaving from the notes a sad melody that comes straight from your grieving heart. As the chords build in a crescendo you start to sing, loudly and with full emotion. Your voice falls soft, and you slow the strumming of the lyre's strings. Then, playing quickly again you raise your voice as you punctuate your lament with cries of anguish. You know this is the most sorrowful song you have ever performed. But will it be enough to impact the stoic Hades?

Everyone else in the vicinity has been moved. Persephone weeps openly, as do the spectres who float in the distance. But Hades alone appears unaffected. Then, a single tear streaks down his grey cheek.

“You sing most beautifully, mortal. Would that I had your gift. As thanks for playing for me, I will grant your request. Yet, I must add one more condition: that you not turn to look at Eurydice as you make your journey back to the overworld.”

You gratefully accept.

TURN TO 2

30

“Tell me, what is the strongest power in the world?”

Hades scoffs at your question. “Death. All things run towards it.”

“A worthy answer,” you respond. “But are the gods not immortal? Is that not what makes one a god?”

He doesn’t miss a beat when he replies. “Yes. But a god’s power stems from his influence in the world. Ares may wage war, but it is my domain that ultimately increases for every soldier who dies on the battlefield.” He fixes his gaze on you as he adds, “or for every lover who dies on the battlefield.”

“But, is it death that inspires one to go into battle?”

Now Hades seems taken aback. “Death brought you here, did it not?”

*IF YOU SAY LOVE BROUGHT YOU HERE, TURN TO 15
IF YOU ASK FOR A SECOND CHANCE AT LOVE, TURN TO 3*

31

As other guests begin to gather around you and your wife’s body, you ask a naiad standing nearby what happened.

“I don’t know! I saw her running in the woods here, but not clearly.”

“And what was she doing by herself?”

“She was with me and some other naiads; we were dancing. Then when we were worn out from dancing, we lied down to rest. The next thing I knew she was off in the woods. I think there might have been someone else with her, but whoever he was, he disappeared.”

Several guests volunteer to search the woods, and as they leave to do so, you look closely at Eurydice’s body. There are deep punctures in her ankle, which another guest identifies as a snake bite. “Poisonous, no doubt.”

TURN TO 6

32

You breathe the fresh air, shading your eyes as they adjust to the surface’s brilliance. You can’t believe you’re finally in the overworld again! Your memories of Hades’ realm feel like they lasted weeks, but already they are fading away. Even the sounds of the decrepit Styx have been replaced with the assuring crashes of water on Lake Avernus’ shore.

You have done it. You have reversed death, and brought back your wife, Eurydice. Not even the Fates could stop your love.

Now you can finally see Eurydice’s face, after all this time.

TURN AROUND; TURN TO 13

33

“It is no secret that I am of the best musicians in the world,” you begin. “The wonders I can produce from the strings of my lyre have been known to charm the very rocks and trees! I daresay I could woo Athena or Hera if I wished. With my songs, I could even turn the head of Aphrodite!

“When first I met Eurydice, I knew she was meant for me. From the first note I played, she was under my spell, and we both fell madly in love.”

TURN TO 49

34

You finally reach the end of the corridor, where the sound of rushing water is loudest. As you turn the corner at the end of the passage, you suddenly behold the river Styx. Charon awaits you in his boat. Beneath the hood of his cloak, you think you see a glimmer of joy on his face when he sees you approach.

Charon steadies the boat with his pole as you place your lyre near the prow. The vessel rocks dangerously when you do this. Perhaps you should help Eurydice onto the boat? It would be a shame if she were to fall into the stream when you’re so close to the surface.

IF YOU HELP EURYDICE, TURN TO 9

IF YOU JUST GET IN THE BOAT, TURN TO 87

35

Something underfoot catches your step, and you find yourself falling forward and down—down an unknown distance before landing roughly on some damp and subterranean moss. In front of you, a harsh laugh sounds from the throat of Hades himself. Your tumble has landed you back in his throne room.

“Lost, are we? Pay attention and watch your step, or you may become a permanent resident of my domain...years before your time!”

You get back on your feet, taking care not to look behind you, then leave once again. You arrive at the crossroads, where the left choice continues to carry the blowing of winds, and the right one still sounds like something monstrous is growling.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 79

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 26

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

36

When you emerge from the surface, you breathe in the fresh air. It is the first you’ve had since descending into the Underworld, but it also feels like the first in a far longer time.

With each passing moment, you shake off the memory of Eurydice’s departure. Soon, you have all but forgotten her, and are ready to begin your life’s next chapter.

But half an hour later, your expectations for the future are drastically altered. As you climb to the crest of a wooded hill, suddenly a bolt of lightning streaks from the sky, smiting you where you stand. The electricity courses through your body, as does knowledge through your mind. As your heart makes its erratic final beats, you realize that your experience in the Underworld is not one that the

gods want revealed to mankind, lest they all attempt what you have. Were these secrets to be given to all humans, then too many dead would arise once more, and order would be subject to chaos.

This you understand, before you lay down and breathe your last breath of fresh air.

THE END

37

A brief premonition that you may have taken the wrong turn passes over you like a shadow. Then you begin hearing the rasping snores of the drowsing three-headed dog, Cerberus. Your melodies have kept it asleep this long. You creep past the sleeping form, staying quiet until a safe distance away. Ahead are two passageways; you hear a strange churning down the left one, but nothing from the other.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 77

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 26

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

38

If you could find someone else whose companionship could make you forget your loss, perhaps then you could find peace of mind. You visit a nearby town, and soon find plenty of women who are charmed enough by your music that they'd spend time with you. But it takes no time at all for your mother to learn what you are doing. You receive a stern visit from her in the morning.

"Orpheus! Is this the son that I raised? Your wife's body is hardly cold and you already seek to cosy up with another woman? You should be ashamed! I know I am."

"You are right, mother. Please, I ask forgiveness."

"You should apologize not to me but to Eurydice. You dishonor her memory."

"But how can I seek her forgiveness?"

"I know of a way. I will tell you..."

TURN TO 64

39

In the months that follow, you take to wandering. You do not want to cause your mother any more disappointment—and maybe you can find some place where you can be altogether forgotten. Thus, your travels take you far north, to snowy Tanais, and regions where Rhipaeian frost covers the fields year-round.

One day, you see a group of women in the distance. The road you travel crosses paths with them; if you continue, you'll doubtless have to interact with them.

IF YOU TURN AROUND AND FIND ANOTHER PATH, TURN TO 46

IF YOU CONTINUE, TURN TO 53

40

You stop, abruptly.

Then you turn around.

Eurydice is there, but just for a moment; as soon as you see her face, she lurches backwards, pulled by a force your eyes do not see. But you do see the look on her face as she flies away from you, down into the lowest regions of the Underworld.

You only saw her briefly, and were unable to decipher the expression she gave you. Did those eyes convey anger? Sorrow? Gratitude?

You might never know.

TURN TO 80

41

As you turn, your mind leaps ahead to the conclusion that your eyes will confirm in moments—that Eurydice is indeed behind you. Internally you cry out in protest, but your body has already committed to the turn.

There she is. As she has been all along. Though she is beautiful, the look on her face puts you to shame, for she knows, as you do, that she has been betrayed. She says not a word to you as she is summoned back to the Underworld's depths. You think of chasing after her, but you do not think you could face those eyes again.

When she disappears into the darkness, there is no more noise, save for the distant river's rumble. The laughter is gone, if it was ever there in the first place, but your memory of its cruel mirth echoes in your ears.

You trudge back to the surface, cursing yourself for doubting Hades' word, and damning both Eurydice and yourself.

TURN TO 80

42

Though you can never return to the Underworld while you still live, others may. But this is not common knowledge—you had to seek the counsel of others who knew this secret.

Why shouldn't mortals be offered this chance to reverse death? Humans are subject too often to the whims of the gods, so why not give them one way to take back control of their destinies? This you vow to do.

You begin to tell your acquaintances that you will be sharing a great mystery with the world. You set a time and place for your first meeting, and the news spreads wildly. It seems everyone is discussing your upcoming announcement. The air feels charged with everyone's excitement, as they eagerly await the day.

TURN TO 59

43

Lord Hades and his wife, Persephone, sit before you in two massive grey thrones. Hades seems put off by the appearance of a living man in his realm, but Persephone smiles wryly. You step forward and begin to speak.

"Lord and Lady, I come here to make known my request: that you grant to me the life of Eurydice, my wife, who was taken from me the day we were wed."

With a gesture, Hades summons forth a spirit from behind his throne. It is Eurydice! Though grey and transparent like all the shades you have seen in the Underworld, she still looks as lovely as you remember her in life.

Hades speaks with a voice like gravel. "And why should I hear and obey this plea?"

IF YOU CONVINCED HIM THAT LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH, TURN TO 30
IF YOU CONVINCED HIM THAT LOVE IS THE HIGHEST GOAL, TURN TO 72

44

"Lord Hades, I am not going to leave your realm. I will stay here, in your throne room, day after day, until you have to listen to my plea. I love Eurydice, and will not be moved on this matter. Gladly will I dwell in your shadowy domain, because I long to be with her."

With that, you cross your arms and wait. A minute passes before Hades shakes his head, turns to his wife, and says, "I'll never understand the stubbornness of humans."

Persephone replies, "I'll never understand the stubbornness of gods."

"Very well, mortal. You have your wish. But I have one condition:"

"Yes?"

He looks at you gravely, but you think you see the hint of a smirk on his face. "On your return journey to the surface, you must never turn around to look at Eurydice, who will be following behind you. Do you accept this condition?"

"I accept."

TURN TO 2

45

"I am afraid I must refuse."

"Refuse!" the first woman shouts.

"Yes. I will not engage in your frivolity."

"What? Do you reject our kind offer?"

"Does he spurn us?" says a third woman.

"What arrogance!" cries a fourth.

Another voice yells, "Grab him!"

TURN TO 57

46

You could be wrong, but those women looked like trouble. Something about their movements suggested they may be drunk, and you don't want to deal with that today.

You retrace your path and find another road some hours back. This takes you to a town, where you spend the night performing to earn your keep. By the time you've woken up the next morning, the women are long forgotten, and you continue on your way.

Though the Ciconians pass from your memory, Eurydice does not. Even after all these years, and the distance you've put between yourself and your home country, you are unable to forget your late wife. The only change in yourself that you can observe is a dulling of your grief. When your pain was recent, it impaled your heart anew each morning. But now you are growing more tired with each passing year, the pain is an ache that is low enough to endure, but not to ignore.

One cold winter, when the elements assault your outer body as much as your grief afflicts your insides, you resolve to put an end to your sorrow. You leave town and strike out for the woods. Finding a quiet clearing, you sit down and begin to play the lyre. From your fingertips comes a stirring melody, and though the melancholy in the notes are as familiar to you as your pain, it is a new sound to the creatures who live in these forests. They come stalking from out of the brush, and gather in a circle around you as you continue to perform.

Your music begins to build in intensity. Soon you are weeping, and the animals around you are sharing in your anguish; they howl and cry along with the notes. The time comes to end your tune. You strike a chord, and the beasts are so overcome by sadness that they do the only thing they can to stop the miserable song; they devour you.

What's left of your body is recovered by the townspeople, and your lyre is sold to a passing merchant.

And far off in the Underworld, you are finally reunited with Eurydice.

THE END

47

You sit beside Hymen, who is midway through a leg of mutton. You wait politely for him to finish, then ask him the question that's been on your mind.

"What happened to your torch during the ceremony?"

His cheery disposition flees, and he looks into the middle distance with a frown. "I confess that I do not know. Alas, I am no arbiter myself, only a torchbearer who is content to let the torch do the prophesying." He turns to you, making deliberate eye contact. "To tell you the truth, I often wonder if my torch is but a delusion. Its flame may inspire lovers to commit to their marriage, but the real strength of a relationship must come from themselves, not the blessing of a torch. Still, I cannot tell you that the events from your wedding do not disturb me. If there is some meaning behind my torch's behavior, you must discern it for yourself. Perhaps you might discover if and why your marriage offends fate, though sometimes it is beyond any of us to learn the Fates' will."

Seeing that his words have dampened your spirits considerably, Hymen makes an effort to smile and adds, "But it all could be coincidence! It's probably nothing." Suddenly a naiad runs up to the table, breathing heavily as if she had been sprinting for several minutes.

"Come quick!" she shouts, "Something has happened to Eurydice!"

The tone of the reception is shattered immediately. All dancing and laughter ceases as you and the other guests hurry into the woods, following the naiad as she leads you to Eurydice. Then you find her, sprawled out on the ground.

Dead.

TURN TO 31

48

"No!" you exclaim, turning around. "No, I will not be dismissed so quickly. Not over my chance to be reunited with Eurydice."

Hades looks you over with surprise, but is that also contempt in his expression? You'll have to think carefully about what you do next.

IF YOU VOW NOT TO LEAVE THE ROOM UNTIL HADES RETURNS EURYDICE TO YOU, TURN TO 44

IF YOU DEMAND A CHALLENGE TO WIN EURYDICE BACK, TURN TO 86

IF YOU ATTEMPT TO CHARM HADES WITH YOUR LYRE, TURN TO 29

49

As you finish your tale, Hymen laughs uproariously. "Well told! Ah! but it looks like the ceremony is starting soon. I must take my place—as should you, if I'm not mistaken!" With a wink, he departs.

And as quickly as he leaves, your anxiety returns. You scan the gathered crowd, seeing friends, family, and all sorts of creatures who have arrived for your wedding. You take a deep breath, then make your way to the front of the crowd.

The guests finish mingling and take their seats. The musicians take up their instruments. Then, she appears.

You watch, awestruck, as Eurydice makes her way to the front of the congregation to stand opposite you.

TURN TO 61

50

The upward passage quickly turns, heading down instead, and you find yourself once more face-to-face with Cerberus, though this time all three of its heads are snoring a deep sleep. You tiptoe past then continue through the archway and up the slanting floor to where two corridors split off to the left and the right. The occasional flapping noise emanates from the former, while the sound of some large object churning over and over comes from the latter.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 28

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 65

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

51

"I am doing alright, mother."

She regards you carefully, biting into a tomato.

This time you break the silence, "Really, I am. It may not look like it—" you gesture to the icy cave, empty save for your lyre, "—but I am content to live out my days here. It is penance enough."

Calliope says nothing. She opens the pomegranate and begins to remove seeds from it. You are about to say more, when Calliope, still looking at the seeds in her hand, speaks, "You don't need to be paying penance. It wasn't your fault Eurydice died in the first place."

"But she had another chance at life!" you cry back. "And losing it was my doing."

"Maybe the Fates wanted you to fail. It was their design that she should be stumble and be struck by that viper. Why should it not be their will for you to stumble as well?"

“All the more reason for me to repent for interfering with destiny.”

“And you have done that in full,” your mother replies. “But you shouldn’t have to give up your chances of being happy once more.”

“Mother...”

“Will you not even consider it?”

“I have sworn never to love another woman, so long as I live.”

Calliope doesn’t fight you; she knows this will be your final answer. She eats the seeds in her hand. The rest of the meals goes by in silence. When she finishes eating, she closes the basket. The remaining food she leaves with you, though she has never asked whether you eat it or throw it away.

You stand up to see her off. She hugs you once more before departing, then opens her mouth to say something more, but decides against it.

TURN TO 14

52

A large cave—the largest one you’ve seen, by far—opens up before you. Within it, a great mountainous crag stretches up to the cavern’s roof. And struggling up the side of the hill is the form of Sisyphus, eternally pushing his burden to the mount, only so that it might roll back down over and over.

Around the base of the mountain, two paths split from the one you are on. On the left, you hear a high-pitched sighing, almost like a surface breeze echoing through the air. On the right, gurgling water.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 37

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 24

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

53

On a whim, you unsling your lyre and begin to play. The grief you still carry with you inspires your hand, and you strum such mournful notes that the trees beside the road bow their heads in sorrow.

In this fashion, you approach the women, who are making songs of their own and dancing in circles around a fire. As you draw near, some of the celebrators break off and run towards you. The closest ones grip your arm as they beg you to join them in their revels.

“You must join us! Put aside your sad melodies, and celebrate in our Dionysian ritual!”

“Who are you women?”

Another answers, “We are Ciconians, stranger! Dance with us, please!”

TURN TO 68

54

The reverberations of rushing water lift your spirit, for you have found the river Styx, the barrier between this world and that of the living. But all lightness vanishes from your heart as you round a corner and find, not the ferryman who will carry you and Eurydice across the Styx, but an empty

shoreline. The river itself is not the one you remember from your descent either, for this one appears narrower and shallower. You must have taken the wrong tunnel.

IF YOU CROSS THE RIVER, TURN TO 22

IF YOU TURN BACK, TURN TO 69

IF YOU STAY HERE, TURN TO 10

55

On the far side of the river of hate, you disembark. You are only footsteps away from the surface, and you can see the sunlight, blinding in its contrast to the dreary realm of Hades. Tears of pain and of joy well on your cheeks as you prepare to move into Apollo's radiance.

IF YOU BASK IN THE JOY OF SUCCESS, TURN TO 78

IF YOU CONTINUE WALKING, TURN TO 32

56

Time passes. The water flows. Eurydice floats behind you, but you do not see, hear, or feel her behind you. You relive the events of your life up to this point. You relive every moment you got to spend with Eurydice—too few. You consider turning back.

IF YOU TURN BACK, TURN TO 69

IF YOU WAIT, TURN TO 21

57

The Ciconian women pull you to the other revellers. Hands seize your limbs, pulling in different directions. Fingernails graze your skin, and whole tufts of your hair are pulled out as the women attack from every direction. Incensed by your refusal to join their rite, and influenced by a long day of drinking and partying, the women hardly realize what they are doing as they literally pull you apart. Long after any normal person would have died, you remain conscious, feeling every painful moment as you are dismembered limb by limb.

One of the women pulls off your head, and then runs to the river, screaming and hooting with several others. She flings your head into the water, where you float away down the Hebros. Still alive, you cannot help but think this is punishment for some deed you committed in your past. But you will never know what it was that could warrant such a grisly death.

THE END

58

You decide that your amnesia must be for a good reason—you yourself may have inflicted this upon yourself, so rather than uncover some disturbing secret, you leave your memories alone. Instead, you travel north, to snowy Tanais, and regions where Rhipaeian frost covers the fields year-round.

One day, you see a group of women in the distance. The road you travel crosses paths with them; you'll doubtless have to interact with them.

IF YOU CONTINUE, TURN TO 82

59

Then the day arrives. You have arranged for people to gather around the base of a hill, where you hope the crowd can hear you speak. You also hope there will be enough room to accommodate the ever-growing mob.

Wanting some time to yourself before your meeting, you spend the morning pacing the woods. Distantly, you hear the people making small-talk as they prepare for your speech.

Eventually, the time comes. There is no more putting this off. You breathe deeply, then ascend the hill from which you will speak.

The crowd is gathered—bigger than you had thought possible. You are going to make a difference here today. You take another breath, exhale, and begin to speak. “My fellow p—” But your words are cut off as a bolt of lightning descends from above, striking you squarely on the head.

TURN TO 91

60

You are Orpheus, famous poet and musician. Much of your success comes from being the son of Calliope, the muse of epic poetry. She claims that your musical prowess comes from your father’s side, which you doubt because King Oeagrus doesn’t have a musical bone in his body.

Regardless of where your talent came from, you are widely known as a masterful poet, which has earned you the title “Orpheus famous-of-name.” Jason sought your skill when he sailed to Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece. Rumors have it that you can enchant nature itself with your lyre.

Today, however, you will not be strumming the lyre; that is someone else’s task, for today you are to be wed!

TURN TO 27

61

As the officiator begins his speech, you continue gazing at Eurydice. She is as lovely as the day you met her, and more. But as you look at her, something out of the corner of your eye catches your interest. It is Hymen’s torch, which is sputtering on and off.

You are not the only one to notice. Whispers hiss throughout the crowd, and the officiator pauses mid-sentence before continuing. Even Eurydice falters before resuming her smile.

Why is Hymen’s torch acting up? What could this mean?

TURN TO 85

62

You spend your next few decades of life doing exactly that. You travel the world, performing songs and reciting poetry for the entertainment of others. You also inspire others to use music in their worship of the gods, creating hymns to show gratitude and honor the Olympians—Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Dionysis...even Hermes, whom you learned was the invisible force that pulled Eurydice back when you turned to look at her.

While you miss Eurydice every now and then, you take comfort in knowing how your music has brought happiness to the lives of some people. You’re sure Eurydice would have wanted this in any case.

Many years later, you fall ill. As you are laying on your deathbed, waiting to be ushered into the Underworld where you may join Eurydice in the Elysian fields, Calliope and the other muses pay you a visit. Calliope smiles at you, but you can see the sadness in the creases of her eyes. “Orpheus,” she says, “The others have come to pay their respects.”

“But what have I done to deserve their respect? I’m just an old fool with a harp.”

“Nonsense. You have done as much for music as anyone else on earth. The other muses and I agree. Even Apollo.”

“You flatter me because I’m at death’s door.”

Your mother shakes her head. “We mean it. If it’s alright with you, we’re going to ask Zeus to place your lyre in the night sky, for all to remember you by.”

Hearing this, you begin to cry. It is far more than you deserve, yet touching all the same. The notion that your music could have such an impact on people that they would want to commemorate it with a constellation is more than you can handle. Wiping your eyes, you give your consent to the muses. Calliope kisses your forehead, and you fall into a drowsy sleep.

THE END

63

The upward passage quickly turns, heading down instead, and you find yourself once more face-to-face with Cerberus, though this time all three of its heads are snoring a deep sleep. You tiptoe past then continue past the archway and up the slanting floor to where two corridors split off to the left and the right. The occasional flapping noise emanates from the former, while the sound of some large object churning over and over comes from the latter.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 28

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 77

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

64

You stand on the shores of Lake Avernus; the gurgling cavern ahead of you is the entrance to Hades’ realm. This is where you may descend to Hades’ throne room, and request that Eurydice’s soul be returned to the land of the living. You hope this can finally set things right once more.

You enter the cave, where you soon find your way barred by a river—the Styx. A boatman is there, face shrouded in a hood, one hand gripping a long pole. He outstretches his other hand, beckoning you to board the small boat. Then, the ferryman pushes off the shore and guides the boat downstream.

“Do you play that harp?” asks Charon. “It has been ages since I heard human music.” Understanding his request, you cradle the lyre in your arms and begin to play a simple melody. Even this, however, is enough to bring a tear to Charon’s eye. He turns his gaze into the distant darkness.

TURN TO 88

65

The churning loudens as you stumble forward; the noise is the only thing that confirms that you are making any progress in these shadowy tunnels. All at once you step out into a high chamber, in the center of which lies Ixion, strapped to the wheel of flame. It has begun to turn again, after your music halted it for the first time since Ixion’s incarceration. Beyond, two tunnels offer a way forward: the left one, which slopes gently upwards, and a right option from which a crashing sound suddenly echoes.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 35

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 52

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

66

You lean out over the boat's edge and dip a single finger into the water. You get a strange sensation in your digit, as if it's been encased in lead and now feels incredibly weighty. Your hand is yanked deeper into the stream, which only increases how heavy your limb feels. As you attempt to pull back on your arm, the boat beneath you rocks and throws you off balance. The boat sways and tumbles you into the pitch-colored river, where your entire body sinks straight to the bottom. Icy liquid floods your lungs, and within a minute you succumb to death.

THE END

67

"To tell the truth, I am miserable."

She nods her head slightly and bites a tomato.

"Though I wish for Eurydice, I cannot help thinking that I no longer hold any right to love her. And so, I try to content myself with this poor existence," you wave an arm towards your barren cave, where your lyre makes up its only furnishing, "but still I miss her, and curse myself for losing her."

Calliope says nothing. She opens the pomegranate and begins to remove seeds from it. You are about to say more, when Calliope, still looking at the seeds in her hand, speaks, "You don't need to be paying penance. It wasn't your fault Eurydice died in the first place."

"But she had another chance at life!" you cry back. "And losing it was my doing."

"Maybe the Fates wanted you to fail. It was their design that she should be stumble and be struck by that viper. Why should it not be their will for you to stumble as well?"

"All the more reason for me to repent for interfering with destiny."

"And you have done that in full," your mother replies. "But you shouldn't have to give up your chances of being happy once more."

"Mother..."

"Will you not even consider it?"

"I have sworn never to love another woman, so long as I live."

Calliope doesn't fight you; she knows this will be your final answer. She eats the seeds in her hand. The rest of the meals goes by in silence. When she finishes eating, she closes the basket. The remaining food she leaves with you, though she has never asked whether you eat it or throw it away.

You stand up to see her off. She hugs you once more before departing, then opens her mouth to say something more, but decides against it.

TURN TO 14

68

"I am afraid I must refuse."

"Refuse!" the first woman shouts.

"Yes. I have vowed not to love another woman, nor will I engage in your frivolity."

"What? Do you reject our kind offer?"

“Does he spurn us?” says a third woman.

“What arrogance!” cries a fourth.

Another voice yells, “Grab him!”

TURN TO 16

69

You turn to take one last look at your beloved. She returns your stare, a grey tear welling up on her transparent cheek. She is as beautiful as the day you met her.

Then, without warning she lurches backwards, drawn back into the Underworld by an unseen force. She stretches out her arms as she is pulled back, back. You reach out your hands to grab hers, but it is hopeless.

You retrace your steps as best you can, hoping to find her, but the Fates, in their irony, have decreed that all paths take you back to the surface. And since no one may cross the river Styx twice while still living, any hopes of being with Eurydice once more have vanished.

TURN TO 80

70

You finish your case. Then, you wait to hear what Hades will say. He remains silent for a long time. You study his face, trying to determine if he has been affected by your words.

Finally, he says, “You speak well, mortal. You could be a great leader if you so choose.

“But, I cannot grant your request. It would not be right for me to simply allow one of the departed to return to her former life. You say that humans love each other in spite of death. Then I say that her death has made your love even stronger, and I shall not reverse that. Go back to the world of the living. Think fondly of Eurydice, but do not hope for her return. Death comes for all mortals, but it is not for them to choose when it comes.”

TURN TO 81

71

Soon, you have reached the other shore of the river, and can see light up ahead. You disembark and walk towards it, discovering that it’s the light of the sun. You cannot recall why you were in this subterranean system, but you soon put that matter behind you. Now, the question is, what do you do next?

*IF YOU FIND PEOPLE AND ASK THEM ABOUT YOUR PAST, TURN TO 4
IF YOU IGNORE YOUR PAST AND BEGIN A NEW FUTURE, TURN TO 58*

72

“I am a poet, and a musician. Thus, it is my job—no, my sacred duty—to tell the world about love. My lord, do you know what love is?”

Before answering, you see Hades’ eyes dart towards Persephone. “Yes, mortal. The gods are as familiar with love as you humans.”

*IF YOU ASK HIM ABOUT HIS LOVE FOR PERSEPHONE, TURN TO 19
IF YOU CHALLENGE HIS CLAIM ABOUT KNOWING WHAT LOVE IS, TURN TO 83*

73

You move about the reception, scanning faces for the one you love more than any other. But though you recognize many whom you saw dancing with Eurydice, none are your wife herself.

Then you spy a pair of naiads laughing merrily, cheeks bright red. You ask them if they have seen Eurydice. One of them giggles and gestures past the line of trees, saying, "I saw her run off into the woods."

Confused, you move in the direction she pointed. But as you walk deeper into the forest, you begin to doubt the naiad's words. Just as you're about to turn around, your foot brushes against something. You look down, and feel your heart stop.

It's Eurydice.

Dead.

TURN TO 31

74

You spend the next month speaking with the gods and demi-gods whom you can find, asking if there exists a way that you might be able to reunite with Eurydice. Most are recalcitrant to speak on the subject, but Athena is willing to share wisdom on this topic. She tells you of a secret ingress to the Underworld, and how to find it...

TURN TO 64

75

You try to convince yourself not to feel so terrible about Eurydice. But nothing you tell yourself works, because nothing can make you feel better about failing Eurydice the way you did.

Then, a solution hits you. Of course nothing can cheer you up when you're so sure that you squandered Eurydice's chances at a second life! But what if you never actually had a shot at succeeding in the first place?

If Hades was never going to agree to let Eurydice return to the surface, then nothing you did mattered. That must be what happened. The Eurydice you saw was only an apparition, and not Eurydice herself. Everything Hades said was a ruse to give you the illusion of having a chance.

In the following days, you explain this idea to yourself again and again until you're confident in your belief. Slowly, you begin to improve. You visit your mother more often. You take up a job. You go through the motions. One day, you realize you no longer feel guilty about Eurydice. She's moved on. So should you.

THE END

76

Excited, the strangers escort you to the rest of the Ciconians. You continue to play the lyre, and the others dance with renewed vigor. Alcohol pours freely, and soon you are as intoxicated as the female revellers are. As such, you are unaware of what is happening until you feel sudden pain. The women are assaulting you!

Hands seize your limbs, pulling in different directions. Fingernails graze your skin, and whole tufts of your hair are pulled out as the women attack from every direction. Influenced by a long day of drinking and partying, the women hardly realize what they are doing as they literally pull you apart.

Long after any normal person would have died, you remain conscious, feeling every painful moment as you are dismembered limb by limb.

One of the women pulls off your head, and then runs to the river, screaming and hooting with several others. She flings your head into the water, where you float away down the Hebros. Still alive, you cannot help but think this is punishment for some deed you committed in your past. But you will never know what it was that could warrant such a grisly death.

THE END

77

The churning loudens as you stumble forward; the noise is the only thing that confirms that you are making any progress in these shadowy tunnels. All at once you step out into a high chamber, in the center of which lies Ixion, strapped to the wheel of flame. It has begun to turn again, after your music halted it for the first time since Ixion's incarceration. Beyond, two tunnels offer a way forward: the left one, which slopes gently upwards, and a right option from which a crashing sound suddenly echoes.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 50

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 52

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

78

You are overjoyed at the thought of your success. You have done what no mortal has done in living memory: reclaimed a soul from Death's domain. Now you and Eurydice may finally begin your married life.

Thinking of your bride, you turn to see if she shares your excitement, but as you do, recognition of your terrible mistake crashes through your mind. Eurydice is visibly shaken by your error, and she cries, "*Orpheus, what madness has destroyed my wretched self, and you? See, the cruel Fates recall me, and sleep hides my swimming eyes. Farewell, now I am taken, wrapped round by vast night, stretching out to you, alas, hands no longer yours.*"

Then she is gone.

TURN TO 80

79

You arrive in a wide cavern, where the shades of the dead float eerily by. None bother to turn their heads and look at you.

You are deeply unsettled. You attempt to pick a tunnel, but there are so many branching off of this chamber, the dead pouring in and out of them, that you cannot decide. Sensing your indecision, two souls glide over to you. One of them, a warrior with a half-bloodied face, points towards one tunnel on your left. The other gestures towards one on your right, her vacant eyes conveying remorse at some tragic past. Both options seem to angle upwards.

IF YOU TURN LEFT, TURN TO 37

IF YOU TURN RIGHT, TURN TO 63

IF YOU WANT TO TURN AROUND, TURN TO 40

80

You wake up, miserable. At some point last night, amidst all the tears, you fell asleep. You've been crying yourself to sleep for seven months—every single night since you lost her, and Charon refused to let you enter the Underworld twice, at least not with your mortal body.

You arise and wash in the Strymon river. Nobody disturbs you as you bathe, for all your former acquaintances have long since learned that nothing will stir you from your sorrow. All have given up, and now grant you privacy to mourn Eurydice, who has now been taken from you twice.

But this morning, you hear someone approaching. You dress quickly.

TURN TO 5

81

Hades signals for you to exit his audience chamber. You begin moving automatically, but stop before you leave the room.

Are you really giving up? If you leave now, you might never be allowed back into the Underworld—at least, not until you die.

You think about the things Hades said about death. You consider your love for Eurydice. You ponder the role of fate in all of this. Then you make your decision.

IF YOU RETURN TO THE SURFACE, TURN TO 17
IF YOU PETITION HADES ONCE MORE, TURN TO 48

82

On a whim, you unsling your lyre and begin to play. You are in high spirits today, so your music accompanies your steps as you stroll along.

In this fashion, you approach the women, who are making songs of their own and dancing in circles around a fire. As you draw near, some of the celebrators break off and run towards you. The closest ones grip your arm as they beg you to join them in their revels.

“You must join us! Put aside your sad melodies, and celebrate in our Dionysian ritual!”

“Who are you women?”

Another answers, “We are Ciconians, stranger! Dance with us, please!”

IF YOU ACCEPT THEIR OFFER, TURN TO 76
IF YOU REJECT THEIR OFFER, TURN TO 45

83

“I believe you do not know of love the way that we humans do. For our love is all the more beautiful because it is short-lived. We have a scant few decades in which to live and to love. But we love anyway, and those fires of passion burn bright. The love of gods is muted, because the gods know they will endure. Over time, the gods may even take to new lovers.

“My love for Eurydice is as strong as any human’s, all the more because I’ve had so little time to be with her. Will you deny me even a day’s more happiness?”

TURN TO 70

84

As you meander these strange corridors, you stumble upon another river, different from the one you just left. There is a cloaked figure waiting in a boat. As you approach, he comments, “It’s been a while. Liked what you saw?”

Puzzled by his words, you shrug. He gestures for you to board, and not seeing much point in staying, you climb into the vessel. The ferryman pushes off the shore with a long pole, and soon you are both adrift in the river. You glance over the edge to gaze into the stream's inky black surface. Something about this opaque substance calls to you to reach out and touch it.

IF YOU SCOOP UP SOME OF THE WATER, TURN TO 66

IF YOU REFRAIN FROM SCOOPING UP WATER, TURN TO 71

85

You do your best to put the torch out of your mind, but it lurks there regardless.

Then, before you even know it, the officiator is reading the vows, and you and Eurydice are saying "I do." Then you are kissing her, and the officiator is pronouncing you husband and wife, and the crowd is applauding, and you and Eurydice are walking down the aisle and to the glade where the reception will take place.

TURN TO 18

86

A challenge? You seek to challenge the lord of death?" When he sees you are committed, he adds, "So be it."

He leans over to Persephone, and they confer quietly for long minutes. Then, Hades straightens up and says, "You have come all this way to be with Eurydice. I can only imagine it is because you are so infatuated with her. Thus, if you are to rescue her from my domain, you must return to the surface without once turning around to look upon her. If you can accomplish this, then you and Eurydice will be free to live again as soon as you have fully left the Underworld."

"I welcome your challenge, Lord Hades."

TURN TO 2

87

Sitting once more in his vessel, you face forward, towards the entrance to the Underworld on the edge of Lake Avernus. You do not glance back at Eurydice, though you can almost picture her sitting behind you. Charon is silent on this return voyage. You do not play the lyre.

A stray thought enters your mind as you glide across the river's surface: *What if I'm making the wrong decision?* Is life with Eurydice what you truly desire? Perhaps her death was a chance to make a new start. Explore other options, as it were. How well do you know her, really? Maybe she'd turn out to be a horrible match for you. One might even say that the serpent was providential. Now you have one more opportunity to clear the slate. All you'd have to do is look at Eurydice, and then you'd be free to strike out on a new path.

Besides, you think, is it wise to interfere with death?

IF YOU TURN TO LOOK, TURN TO 20

IF YOU KEEP YOUR EYES FORWARD, TURN TO 55

88

Beyond the river, the ground slopes downward. The walls close in and the light dims. You continue to sing, bolstering your own flagging spirit in the presence of overwhelming despair. As you sojourn further and further downward, your music begins to affect the grim world around you; you pass Sisyphus, and your singing is powerful enough that he temporarily forgets his endless struggle against the boulder he is fated to push up a hill for all of eternity. Down another corridor you come across

Ixion, whose crime of lusting after Hera was to be chained to a fiery wheel. The sweet melody from your lips stops the wheel's continual rotation, and Ixion's pain is absent from his mind, if but for a few moments.

A mighty archway rises up before you when you finally emerge from the small tunnels that descend through the earth. Through the portal stands watch the mighty Cerberus, whose three heads see all would-be-intruders. But a soothing lullaby quells the monster, who drops to the ground and begins a slumber it has not known for ages.

Once past the triple-headed watchdog, you enter the audience chamber of the Lord and Lady of the Underworld.

TURN TO 43

89

As you finish speaking, you begin to strum your lyre, summoning all the misery that you have experienced this past fortnight. All within the Underworld hear your lament and are visibly moved by it—Sisyphus, Ixion, Prometheus, the Belides, even the Furies. Everyone, that is, but Hades.

Hades' face betrays no emotion, just a thoughtful countenance. Is he alone beyond your powers to stir one's heart? Will he deny your request? You look to Persephone, whose cheeks are streaked with tears. She faces her husband, and you turn your gaze back to him as well.

At length, he speaks. "Very well. I grant your request. But—" your heart lurches, "—it is unnatural for one to be taken from Death and brought back into Life. As such, you must accept my one condition."

"And that is?"

"That on your journey up to the world of the living, as Eurydice follows silently behind you, that you not once turn back to look upon her."

TURN TO 2

90

"Some people claim that, because of my musical skill, I could woo any person I want," you begin. "But the truth is, when I saw Eurydice for the first time, I was charmed by her appearance. When she spoke, I was transfixed by her words. When she moved, I was entranced with every step. She had me in her spell before I ever plucked a single note.

"My mother is muse to millions, but for me, Eurydice is my only muse."

TURN TO 49

91

You open your eyes. Your first thought is that the bolt of lightning affected your vision, because now you can only see in black and white. Then you notice more of your surroundings. Cold grey stone.

The people here are not the gathered masses who were ready to hear you tell the secrets of the Underworld. Instead, these people are denizens of the Underworld. Their transparent appearance and forlorn expressions tell you that much. Looking through your own hands, you realize you are now one of them.

As you drift along, you wonder if that lightning was intentional. Was someone up there preventing you from telling the humans information that they should not be allowed to know? You pass Prometheus and wander deeper into Hades' domain.

Then, you see her. Eurydice. She sees you too, and drifts in your direction. As you meet, it crosses your mind that this was the answer you had been missing all along. To be with Eurydice once more, you didn't have to bring her back to your world, you just had to arrive in hers.

THE END

92

Another blast of fetid air wafts from the beast's mouth, and then Proteus alters himself once more. The claws meld together, the furry limbs turn translucent, and every other part of Proteus starts to spill onto the floor in waves.

Within a moment Proteus has become a pool of water on the cavern floor. Tendrils of water seep away towards the sea.

*IF YOU ASK PROTEUS TO STAY AND HEAR YOUR REQUEST, TURN TO 101
IF YOU KEEP YOUR CHAINS AROUND PROTEUS, TURN TO 96*

93

You hardly hear the footsteps as someone approaches. When you look up, it is your mother that you see appearing out of the mist. Cyrene looks at you pityingly, then says,

Son, set aside these sad sorrows from your mind. This is the cause of the whole disease, because of it the Nymphs, with whom that poor girl danced in the deep groves, sent ruin to your bees. Offer the gifts of a suppliant, asking grace, and worship the gentle girls of the woods, since they'll grant forgiveness to prayer, and abate their anger.

Then she tells you precisely how you might atone for your deeds. The process is a complicated one, involving the sacrifice of four bulls and a black ewe. After she explains what to do, you immediately set yourself to the task.

TURN TO 99

94

You return to Proteus' cave several moons later. As before, Proteus arrives and settles down amongst his herd.

You pounce once more on the sleeping Proteus, and again, he morphs into a fire.

*IF YOU THINK YOU SHOULD PROTECT YOUR HANDS FROM BEING BURNED, LET GO OF THE CHAINS AND TURN TO 101
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR GRIP ON THE CHAINS, TURN TO 98*

95

You and Cyrene enter the cave, and she gestures to a stand of rocks, where you may hide until Proteus arrives. Then, wishing you good luck, she withdraws.

Fortunately, you do not have to wait long, for the sun has been heating up the world outside the shady cavern: the grass withers and deep rivers bake and dry up to mud. Proteus is surely uncomfortably hot by now, and will be seeking his customary cave.

Then, Proteus rises up out of the water, which forms a natural bay in the cave's cool confines. The salty water sprays in the air behind him as he moves into the center of his sea-cow herd. He approaches a rock in the middle of the seals, and seats himself. You think he looks as a guardian of the sheepfold would, like Vesper bringing his calves home at the end of a day, and checking his lambs to see that none have been taken by a wolf, attracted by the sounds of bleating.

Before he has a moment to rest his weary limbs, you spring upon Proteus, fettering him with your chains. He cries aloud, and as your mother foretold, he uses his magic arts and morphs into a bright yellow flame.

IF YOU THINK YOU SHOULD PROTECT YOUR HANDS FROM BEING BURNED, LET GO OF THE CHAINS AND TURN TO 101

IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR GRIP ON THE CHAINS, TURN TO 98

96

Miraculously, the chains keep Proteus from escaping. You hold tight for a while longer, and then Proteus transforms into his human shape.

"Now who has told you to invade my home, boldest of youths? What do you look for here?" speaks the beaten Proteus.

"You know, yourself!" you retort. "You are deceived by nothing." Proteus glares at you with grey-green eyes, like the color of the sea floor, and he gnashes his teeth. You continue, "Following divine counsel, I come to seek the oracle here regarding my weary tale."

So you relate to the seer all that has happened to you: how you gained fame from your knowledge of apiculture, the art of bee-keeping; how the bees you cultivated died, due to hunger and disease; how you sought out your mother at the source of the River Peneus; how you asked Cyrene the nymph to divest to you the reason for your recent misfortune; and how she instructed you to seek Proteus in his seaside cave, so that you might understand why you had been cursed by fate.

Proteus pauses, considering your question, then says, "Not for nothing does divine anger harass you: you atone for a heavy crime: it is Orpheus, wretched man, who brings this punishment on you, no less than you deserve if the fates did not oppose it: he raves madly for his lost wife."

"What's this?" you cry, "Orpheus? What have I to do with him or his wife?"

"If you would learn more, then I will help you. Close your eyes, say the name of either Orpheus or Eurydice, and you will find out."

[WHEN PROTEUS IS DONE TELLING THE STORY TO YOU, HE WILL SAY 'THE END.' WHEN THIS HAPPENS, TURN TO 100]

IF YOU SAY "ORPHEUS," TURN TO 60

IF YOU SAY "EURYDICE," TURN TO 102

97

Sirius shines brightly in the sky as you approach the cave—the one your mother Cyrene brought you to. Here is where Proteus lives, along the coast of Neptune's Carpathian waters. The entrance to the cave is filled with water where the wind pushes waves, but further in you can see dry land and several dozen seals.

“Listen closely, Aristaeus,” your mother begins. “Proteus will arrive here at midday to rest from the sun, and once he is slumbering, it will be your task to bind him so that you may ask him your question.

“The seer is a crafty one. He will attempt to escape by taking on the masks of many beasts and other forms—once you seize him in your grip, you must not let go, no matter what trickery he might employ. He will not obey if you plead or pray; only brute force will make him submit.

“Use chains. Proteus will become a bristling boar, a malicious tiger, a scaly serpent, or a tawny-maned lioness. Otherwise he might dissolve into water, or roar into a fierce flame, and slip away in that way. Keep a tight grasp on him as he transforms, and then he will alter back into his original form, as you saw him when he began his slumber. Then he will listen to your request.”

TURN TO 95

98

Proteus struggles, but your grip is tighter than his strength as a raging fire. He fights several more seconds, then changes shape again.

Now, wrapped in your chains, is a fearsome beast. Long, razor-edged talons swipe at you as you continue to hold Proteus bound. His hoary head now owns a set of sharp fangs, and from inside that horrible mouth emanates a rancid, rotting smell.

Proteus roars, and his breath almost knocks you out. Another swipe nearly tears off your arm. His toothy maw looms dangerously near.

IF YOU STEP AWAY TO PROTECT YOURSELF, TURN TO 101

IF YOU KEEP HOLDING TIGHT, TURN TO 92

99

The atonement takes all of nine days. You set up four shrines, each to bear one of the bulls and a heifer each as well. You also offer up a calf for Eurydice. All that is left is the offering for Orpheus. If the naiads accept your penance, there will be a sign.

The morning of the ninth day, you place poppies in memory of Orpheus and sacrifice the ewe. You reflect once more on how your thoughtless actions brought such grief on two lovers. How different would their lives have been if you had restrained yourself, or taken a different path that day? The results of just one careless moment reach far into the future, so who can say but the Fates what any one decision will bring, years from now?

All you know for sure is that your current actions have brought about the desired change; from the carcasses of the beasts comes the familiar buzzing of bees.

THE END

100

You open your eyes.

At first, you are confused as to where you are. Then a splashing stirs your memory. You are in the cave of Proteus, the seer. He is swimming away, having finished his tale. You are left to consider your role in the sad story of Orpheus.

It was you who chased Eurydice in the woods long ago; seeing her so vibrant—little did you know it was her wedding day—you ran after her. She fled, and you gave chase. You thought she was being coy. If you had known she was married to another, you wouldn't have pursued her.

A voice deep within tells you that this is a lie. You were taken by her appearance, and wanted her for yourself. The only reason you abandoned your chase was because she fell, and you saw the snake bite on her ankle. You sit on Proteus' abandoned rock and cry. Your tears are for Eurydice, and for Orpheus.

TURN TO 93

101

As soon as your grip loosens, Proteus slips out of the confines of the chain. A second later he has splashed into the bay, now back in his normal form. Before you can join him in the water, he has left the cave, and you know you haven't the slightest hope of catching the natural swimmer.

You return home, dejected at having missed your opportunity. You will have to wait a long time before Proteus deems it safe enough to return to his cave, where you may try to capture him and ask your question again.

THE END

IF YOU WISH TO REVISIT PROTEUS, TURN TO 94

102

You are Eurydice, a young nymph from the woods. Today you are marrying a man called Orpheus, famous across the countryside as a musician and poet. You met him a few months back, when you heard him playing his lyre in a nearby glade. When you spoke with him, he was so charming and sweet that you fell in love with him—you almost couldn't help yourself. And he, in turn, fell in love with you (or maybe he already was smitten when you first greeted him?)

Later, he asked if you would marry him, and you found yourself agreeing—how could you not? His looks and skills with the lyre are unlike any you've seen or heard elsewhere. You think you could be happy living the rest of your life with Orpheus. You happily consented to a wedding.

Today, you will make good on that promise.

TURN TO 105

103

The reception goes by in a similar whirl, with dancing and feasting and much laughter from your friends and your newfound acquaintances. A naiad comes up to you and asks you to join in a dance with the other naiads, so you kiss Orpheus and split ways.

You and the others dance for a long time in a merry circle, until everyone tumbles to the ground exhausted. But today is such a joyous occasion that you can't rest for very long. You stand up and take a walk through the woods before joining the rest of the wedding guests and your husband.

Suddenly, you hear running footsteps. You turn to see a man in shepherd garb charging in your direction. The look in his eyes is one you do not like, for it betrays something sinister.

IF YOU TURN AND RUN, TURN TO 110

IF YOU TRY TO TALK TO THE MAN, TURN TO 106

104

From behind Hades' enormous throne you emerge, until you are standing between him and his wife, the Lady Persephone. But in front of the thrones is a man who does not have the pallor of the dead; this man is alive! And more astounding still is that this is your husband, Orpheus!

You open your mouth to speak, but something stops your tongue from speaking. Instead, the voice of Hades booms, “And why should I hear and obey this plea?”

Orpheus is requesting something from Hades. Does he know how ridiculous that is? Orpheus, a mortal, making a request from the lord of death? Yet here he is, trying to convince Hades to let your soul return to the land of the living. Your heart surges with joy, for your husband has come to bring you home!

But even as joy fills your heart, doubt creeps into your mind. Should Orpheus dare this? Will there not be a great toll for bringing you back to life? Is it right to reverse the state of death? Are you going to return in a drastically changed way? You might have lost your beauty from all this time in the Underworld. Will things ever be the same for you both? Maybe Orpheus should leave without you, and live out his life as he should.

IF YOU WANT ORPHEUS TO BRING YOU TO LIFE, TURN TO 109

IF YOU WANT ORPHEUS TO LEAVE YOU HERE, TURN TO 113

105

The morning goes by in a flash of excitement. You stand patiently as the nymphs and naiads adorn your hair with flowers and make last-minute adjustments to your dress. “Do I need to do anything,” you ask one of your friends.

“Don’t worry yourself about it,” she replies. “You just need to stand there, and we’ll take care of everything else.”

With a final flower woven into your locks, the sprites step back and admire their handiwork. They lead you to the river so you can see how you look, and you couldn’t be happier. You are eager to see what Orpheus will think, and thankfully you don’t have to wait much longer, for the ceremony will start soon.

TURN TO 108

106

“Please, sir, tell me what you are doing!”

The man does not heed your words, for he continues sprinting towards you. You have no choice but to flee, unless you want to find out what happens when he reaches you.

TURN TO 110

107

You thought hell was your existence in this place before Orpheus arrived, but now you know it is this: resigned to follow behind Orpheus, unable to speak to him, or see his face. Nor can he look at you. This is true torment.

The journey upwards is excruciating for its length and dullness. You pass by others who have been incarcerated here for ages—Prometheus, Ixion, Sisyphus... you would prefer to be any of these right now, for though they experience pain, you imagine that they have forgotten joy. You, on the other hand, have joy just beyond your reach, but no power to extend out and grab it. You can only wait to reach the surface, if that will ever happen.

Finally, you arrive at the river Styx, where you both board the ferry and Charon, the boatman, pushes off the shore. Orpheus carefully keeps his eyes forward. You wish he would speak to you, or play the lyre at least, but he remains silent, and you still cannot say a word.

On the other shore, you exit the boat and proceed to the caverns exit. You dare to hope once more, for you can see sunlight! How long has it been since you felt the sun's rays on your skin? How long since you had real skin? You close your eyes to heighten the warmth you begin to feel as you emerge into the light.

TURN TO 111

108

The musicians have started to play. It is time for you to make your appearance in the clearing where the wedding will take place.

At the edge of the tree line, the nymphs stop you to check over your looks. Then they take their places, and you step into the light.

You wish you could freeze time so you can take in Orpheus' face forever, because his face is so happy to see you that you are filled with a joy you have never felt before. The fact that your beauty can inspire such awe in another makes you glad that you are marrying this man.

The rest of the ceremony is over before you even realize, before you can react to anything other than saying "I do" in response to the vows. Orpheus has kissed you and is leading you to the reception area. You follow along happily, ready to join him in this new life together.

TURN TO 103

109

"Please take me with you, Orpheus!" you exclaim. But you still cannot say anything. It doesn't matter, though, because Orpheus has convinced Hades to let you leave with him, so long as he never looks back at you as you both ascend to the world above. You will follow behind him, but you still may not speak.

TURN TO 107

110

Feeling helpless to do anything besides run away, you turn and dash away through the trees. You cannot tell if you are outpacing the stranger, so you turn to look.

As you are turning, you suddenly feel a sharp pain ripple up your leg. You collapse to the ground, clutching at your ankle. Looking at it, you see that a snake has bitten your heel, and though you barely see the viper as it slithers away into the grass, you can tell from the pain that it was venomous. Ironically, this snake has saved you from another, for the man chasing you, once he saw you had been struck, turned and fled into the woods.

Your strength leaves you rapidly. You call out "Orpheus!" but nobody hears you. You lay down your head as unconsciousness takes you.

TURN TO 112

111

But when you open your eyes, you see that Orpheus has turned to look at you. His face is as amazed at your looks as when he saw you at the wedding, so long ago. You are relieved that this has not changed.

Then you notice another expression on his face. Is that concern? Has your appearance been marred, as you feared? You look down at yourself. That's when you realize that your foot is still in the shadow of the Underworld. You are still in Hades' domain.

You look back up at Orpheus and feel the spell that was silencing you dissipate, so you finally say your lover's name, though you know it cannot accomplish anything. Both of you now understand what has happened. Some unlucky fate had separated you two on the day of your wedding, and now it has separated you two again, when you were so close at being together once more.

And the worst part is, you think as an invisible force picks you up and carries you back into the Underworld, I never had a hand in steering this fate.

THE END

112

Your next sensation is of a shadowy grey world all around you. There are no trees, no gentle spring wind, no bright sun, and no scent of fresh rain. Instead, there is only the cold grey walls around you, and stretching into the distance a multitude of ghostly forms. Knowledge of where you are dawns on you as you realize the snake's bite was fatal.

Here in the Underworld, no heavenly bodies exist to tell the passing of time. Every moment is the same as the one before and the one after. If it has been weeks or months or years since you died, you do not know. You consign yourself to oblivion.

But then, you feel the summons of Hades, the lord of the Underworld. You cannot imagine why he would be calling you to appear in his throne room, but you must obey the summons, whether you want to or not; he is absolute ruler over this domain.

TURN TO 104

113

"Don't do it, Orpheus! I want to remain here!" you cry. But no words come from your throat. You are still bound to silence by Hades. You can only listen on, as Orpheus successfully bargains for your soul, but only on the condition that as you both journey back to the surface, you following silently behind him, that he cannot turn to look at you.

TURN TO 107

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