

War: A Love Story
A reimagining of the myth of Aphrodite
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CHARACTERS:

FURY 1 (Plays HELIOS and HADES)

FURY 2 (Plays ARES, HERA, HEPHAESTUS)

FURY 3 (Plays ZEUS and POSEIDON)

All FURIES take turns playing APHRODITE, denoted by APH 1, APH 2, and APH 3

SYNOPSIS:

The three Furies are storytellers and this is *their* version of the story of Aphrodite. Aphrodite begins her “coming of age” story to discover that she is much, much more. Interweaving through the story they tell, the three Furies become the characters that she meets along the way to discovering that she is not only the Goddess of Love, but also the Goddess of War.

A NOTE ON PRODUCTION:

Keep things simple all around; build the story as an ensemble. Cast the actors that can tell this story the best regardless of gender, race, background, physical ability, etc.

Three FURIES enter, one by one to an empty canvas. A Breath.

FURIES:

Setting.

FURY 1:

A war-torn field in the middle of the night. Fires and smoke fill the air as explosions light up the sky.

FURY 2:

This is the start of the story; Our version of the story.

FURY 3:

We tell the stories.

FURIES:

We keep the memories.

FURY 1:

And this is a very good story.

FURY 2:

A complicated story.

FURY 3:

This is a story that has been repeated for centuries

FURY 1:

Or maybe just a day?

FURY 2:

Nobody is one hundred percent sure on how a story like this starts.

FURY 3:

This could have started long before, in a place very different than this.

FURY 1:

But here is the moment - that is all we can be sure of.

FURY 2:

A girl in a torn and ash-stained dress lays back, looking up at the sky.

FURY 3:

She closes her eyes and breathes deep, savoring the atmosphere.

FURY 1:

She did all of this, and she has no idea. But she is happy.

FURY 2:

And then, of course there is the boy.

FURY 3:

But in our version -

FURIES:

He is not that important.

FURY 1:

This is where our story differs.

FURY 2:

Because we're tired of tropes.

FURY 3:

And we want to shake things up.

FURIES:

So!

FURY 1:

Let's call this...an adaptation.

FURY 2:

Character description!

FURY 1:

Ares - a soldier. He is covered in dirt. Blood.

FURY 2:

His jacket is torn in several spots.

FURY 3:

The girl doesn't see him yet, but he sees her. And he thinks she is a corpse.

FURY 1:

He cautiously moves toward her. He taps her on the shoulder with his foot.

FURY 2:

She scrunches up her face,

FURY 3:

And takes a deep breath.

FURY 1:

He nearly falls over.

FURY 2:

She waits.

FURY 3:

And waits.

FURIES:

And smiles.

APH 1:

Are you here to kill me?

ARES:

What?

APH 1:

It was a simple enough question.

ARES:

I -

APH 1:

It's rude to keep someone waiting if you're obviously going to kill them so are you?
Going to kill them?

Them?

ARES:

Me!

APH 1:

I - Are you going to kill me?

ARES:

Depends.

APH 1:

On?

ARES:

Whether or not you're here to kill me.

APH 1:

I'm not going to kill you.

ARES:

Good.

APH 1:

Why would I kill you?

ARES:

She smiles at him. A shared breath.

Do I know - ?

APH 1:

Perhaps.

ARES:

You just seem so -

APH 1:

I always do.

Pardon?

ARES:

APH 1:
It's a thing that most people say. When they meet me. Daddy's famous.

Oh, I -

ARES:

It's tiresome.

APH 1:

I'm sorry.

ARES:

I have no time for platitudes.

APH 1:

'I'm sorry' is not a -

ARES:

She looks at him.

Oh. Well. All right, then.

He looks over a mound of something, out at the battle. She watches him watch. He smiles at her. She smiles at him. One grand explosion.

And then they fell.

FURY 3:

Into each other -

FURY 2:

Into the hole of blind passion, of obsession -

FURY 1:

Of wanting -

FURY 2:

And need.

FURY 3:

Pure -

FURY 1:

Unadulterated -

FURY 2:

LUST.

FURIES:

Would you say that you were mine?

ARES:

Yours?

APH 1:

Above all others, I mean if you were to choose -

ARES:

What kind of question is that?

APH 1:

The kind one makes when he has been broken by love.

ARES:

While I hate the word belong and think it's a terrible way to define a relationship and the boundaries of healthy partnership...yes. I'd say I were yours.

APH 1:

You are so right, as always. But I am grateful for your interest.

ARES:

Oh, are you?

APH 1:

I am.

ARES:

APH 1:
Your interest?

ARES:
Beyond grateful.

They almost kiss.

FURY 1:
But we get ahead of ourselves.

FURY 2:
It's not like they started out this fierce.

FURY 3:
Well...

FURY 1:
Well. Maybe they did. We need to go back to the beginning.

FURY 2:
And this is where the myth and our story intersect.

FURY 3:
Let's just show them?

A tableau begins as FURY 1 explains. FURIES 2 and 3 act out the story.

FURY 1:
In the beginning there were Zeus and Hera

FURY 3 becomes ZEUS, FURY 2 becomes HERA

Together they ruled the world from atop their mountain. they had a son, Ares. But he was rejected from the start. Too violent, too terminal. So they pushed him out of their home. He went off to fight and left the mountain for good. Aphrodite was born of her father. It sounds strange, but Gods and Goddesses are...Different. His head cracked open and out she came radiating in light and love full of the passion of a thousand years.

FURY 2:
Wait, wasn't that Athena?

FURY 1:

Huh?

FURY 2:

Athena. She was born from Zeus' head. Aphrodite was born of foam.

FURY 3:

Oh yeah! Like the painting of Venus?

FURY 2:

Right! Exactly! She came out of the -

FURY 1:

Ok, ok! I get it. My mistake. There are so many weird ways gods and goddesses were born, it's hard to keep track. So where were we?

FURY 3:

Born of foam -

FURY 2:

Right! She became Lust, Desire, Passion, but she couldn't be contained.

FURY 3:

And the lusts of the other gods and goddesses were powerful and unrelenting. Some pledged to protect her, and others did so until the time they could unleash their own lusts exclusively.

FURY 1:

She refused to be confined to this mountain, and this life.

FURY 2:

So one day, against her father's will she went down, down, down to earth.

FURY 3:

Where she found a battlefield.

FURIES 2 & 3:

And a boy.

FURY 1:

But there was a hiccup.

FURY 2:

Well, more than a hiccup.

FURY 3:

More of a crater. A tear in the tapestry they so painstakingly created.

FURY 1:

Kind of the worst possible thing that could happen to them.

FURY 2:

And obviously easier said to escape from than actually escaping.

FURIES:

Hephaestus.

FURY 3:

An arranged marriage. It wasn't her idea. Obviously.

FURY 1:

You see, Zeus had many lovers all of which melded in him to create Aphrodite.

FURY 2:

And Hera was not pleased.

FURY 3:

Zeus loved Hera fiercely, and often he gave her many beautiful things and showered her with affection, but he had a temper which outweighed all the good he did. And there were days when it was almost too much to bare.

FURY 2:

But then again, Hera had a temper, too. And she was not about to take any of his philandering lying down.

FURY 1:

So she had a son on her own. No lovers needed. He was all Her.

FURIES:

Hephaestus.

FURY 1:

He was kind, and doting. He loved his mother and she loved her son. He was talented, and crafty. He made beautiful things and had many friends on the mountain.

FURY 2:

And Zeus was furious.

FURY 1:

He flew into a rage, and set forth to attack Hera for her so-called treachery. But Hephaestus stood between them protecting his mother at all costs. He withstood the beating and the torment so much so that it enraged Zeus further causing Hephaestus to be thrown from the mountain, itself.

FURY 3:

Hera flung herself after him. She knelt beside the broken body of her son and whispered the sweetest songs of revenge in his mutilated ear. He turned from a beautiful, loving, kind boy to a vessel for his mother's fury.

FURY 1:

Zeus wanted nothing to do with the abomination.

FURY 2:

Until he found out about Ares.

FURY 1:

Then it became important to win Hera back and keep her from destroying him.

FURY 3:

Hence the arranged marriage.

APH 2:

Papa, please!

ZEUS:

No more questions. I've made up my mind.

APH 2:

Can't we just think about this for a minute? Please?

ZEUS:

I'm sorry, my dear. It's done.

APH 2:

There has to be another way -

ZEUS:

His mother is very powerful. She can do great things for our family. She can give us back our status, our power, our place.

APH 2:

But I don't care about any of that.

ZEUS:

Of course you don't you're just a child

APH 2:

I am not a child. I can take care of myself, \ you know this.

ZEUS:

I am not denying that. You have so much power, but you have done nothing but cause chaos with it.

APH 2:

Papa, I never meant -

ZEUS:

I know. But now it's time to atone. Doing this, marrying this boy, this is how you can make up for all the wreckage you have piled around you.

APH 2:

I don't want to marry him. I won't marry him.

ZEUS:

There is no other person you can marry.

APH 2:

But -

ZEUS:

There is no other person. We need this.

APH 2:

I don't.

ZEUS:

Don't you care about your family? Don't you want us to be who we once were? The opportunity that this arrangement will create is overwhelming!

APH 2:

But I don't love -

ZEUS:

All you do is love! Don't you understand that, you Silly Girl? That is why you need this. A husband to keep you from - whatever it is you've been doing.

APH 2:

Papa, you're not listening to me! I'm in love with -

ZEUS:

Enough. I can't look at you. Obviously you don't care about me.

APH 2:

Papa -

ZEUS:

You are his. That is all. End of story.

He is gone. She stares out into the dark. And then it fills her.

APH 2:

That's what you think.

FURY 1:

She was so powerful; more so than her father ever realized, or even cared about.

FURY 2:

So powerful, that she probably didn't even need to think on it. That she could just act without hesitation, without effort.

FURY 3:

She could create a searing hole where he stood.

FURY 1:

With just a smile she could end this. And yet - and yet she had no idea.

ARES:

I can't believe this...

APH 1:

What am I supposed to do, Ares?

ARES:

I don't know, just don't do it?

APH 1:

It's not that easy.

ARES:

Why not?

APH 1:

Do you know who my father is? Do you know what he is capable of? There's nothing I can do. Papa made up his mind.

ARES:

'Papa?'

APH 1:

Don't make fun of me.

ARES:

How can I not?

APH 1:

I - I guess I owe it to him after everything I've done...

ARES:

Who cares what you've done!?

APH 1:

I care! I'm supposed to have everything together. I'm supposed to be able to handle myself.

You can!

ARES:

Not according to my father.

APH 1:

It doesn't matter what he thinks You are so much more than...uh...

ARES:

Am I?

APH 1:

Are you? Who are you? I don't even recognize you.

ARES:

Don't. Don't do that -

APH 1:

What am I supposed to do, then? How can I get you to stay?

ARES:

You can't. I'm sorry, Ares. It's over.

APH 1:

She starts to leave.

I guess you are what they say.

ARES:

Not turning around.

APH 1:

And what am I?

Just a vessel. Just a thing to be used.

ARES:

I am not - I'm not - don't say that.

APH 1:

A plaything. A toy.

ARES:

Stop it, Ares -

APH 1:

A Weak Little Girl -

ARES:

I AM NOT WEAK.

APH 1:

I thought you...you of all people - Who am I to you? Really? Am I your prize? Was I a conquest? You made me believe that you thought I - Don't you believe in me? Ares, tell me it wasn't all a lie. WHO AM I TO YOU? WHAT AM I!?

He takes a step back. She collapses under her own weight. He goes to her - she looks at him. He leaves.

This is where the big change comes, folks.

FURY 1:

After all that, in the original myth they would have stayed together.

FURY 2:

Not here, my friends!

FURY 3:

Here things get a bit diverted.

FURY 1:

After all, this is a modern retelling of a classic coming-of-age story with the lense of the Greek Myth, no?

FURY 2:

So let's give our hero some credit, huh?

FURY 3:

Obviously she was hurting, though -

FURY 1:

FURY 2:

Who wouldn't after that?

FURY 3:

The realistic trend is that you still love the ones that hurt you, even if they hurt you badly.

FURY 1:

Which is the perfect segue into:

FURIES:

Hephaestus!

FURY 1:

In a cloud of fog arrived a carriage, rocking with the weight of its cargo.

FURY 3:

The door swung open and a shadow was silhouetted against the gloom.

HEP enters, fidgety and hunched. He seems nervous, but takes a deep breath, calming himself.

HEP:

My dear. Or should I say Betrothed? How I've waited so long to see you. How are you feeling?

APH 3:

I'm fine! I'm fine. Welcome. How are you, Hephaestus?

HEP:

Hep. I am tired from my journey.

APH 3:

Is there anything I - ?

HEP:

It was too long. And too hot. And too cramped. And the food was terrible.

APH 3:

Oh...I'm so sorry.

HEP:

Yes, well. I'm here now. I can say the journey was, uh...worth it.

APH 3:

Would you care to sit down?

HEP:

It's been a while. You've changed your hair.

APH 3:

Have we - ?

HEP:

You don't remember?

APH 3:

I'm so sorry, I didn't realize we -

HEP:

Oh it's no trouble. How could someone like you remember someone like me?

APH 3:

Well, that's not very fair, it must have just been a - a fleeting introduction.

HEP:

It was, it was.

APH 3:

Well there you go. Though I have seen pictures of you. My father showed me.

HEP:

Kind of him to remind you. Your father is very...

APH 3:

He is very.

HEP:

He tries...

APH 3:

Though what he strives for, I will never fully understand.

HEP:

I aspire to be as great.

APH 3:

Ah. Yes. Have you met?

HEP:

I did. When I was younger. And before I left. He and Mother talked for a long time about you. Seems you come at a price.

APH 3:

I didn't realize he thought of me as such a...Commodity.

HEP:

Mm. Indeed.

APH 3:

Look, Hephaestus -

HEP:

Hep. Please.

APH 3:

Hep. Let's be honest with each other. We can at least do that, can't we?

HEP:

Oh, I have no intention of ever lying to you.

APH 3:

Good. So, the thing about this, um...arrangement-

HEP:

It's wonderful, isn't it?

APH 3:

Well, actually that's what I want to talk -

HEP:

Mother said you are mine now. She told me officially before I left.

APH 3:

Did she.

HEP:

She did.

APH 3:

My father mentioned...the possibility as well.

HEP:

It's more than a possibility now.

APH 3:

Hep, let's just talk about this, doesn't it seem - ?

HEP:

You know, in the interest of being honest, I have to admit to one tiny fib.

APH 3:

Oh?

HEP:

Yes. You see I did meet you once. Properly. It wasn't fleeting, I don't know why I said as much. Though I have to say I am a tiny bit wounded by this, I can't pretend that's not true. But I suppose it doesn't matter now; I remember you. The first time I saw you in that dress that came just off your shoulders. You made me feel so - well, I didn't think I'd ever come down from it. You were...Are something to look at.

APH 3:

Um...Thank you.

HEP:

No thanks necessary. Genetics have been kind to you. Kinder than most, even.

APH 3:

I - Really, you should sit. You've had a long -

HEP:

Listen, Aph - I'm going to be your husband soon. This is what mother arranged -

APH 3:

Look, I know that this is sudden and neither of us really got a say -

HEP:

I did. She asked me what would make up for all of it and I told her -

APH 3:

Make up for - ?

HEP:

Mother is kind. Kind to me. She always wants the best for me. You belong to me now, this is what she told me. That's the deal. Well, after the wedding, of course. I can't do anything, really, until the papers are signed.

APH 3:

Ok. I'm sorry you came all the way out here, but this wedding is never -

HEP:

I am supposed to love you. I haven't had anyone else. You're special. You came from a hateful place, but you are so - Mother said you are Lust, and Beauty, and Wanting, but I see something else. I'm not sure what it is, but I think I need it. I will keep you locked in this room until it is time. I don't trust you not to run away.

He starts to leave.

I'm sorry. I can't break my promise to her. You'll learn to love me like I already love you.

He exits and she falls to the ground.

FURY 1:

She wanted nothing more than to keep fighting.

FURY 2:

She knew that this was wrong.

FURY 3:

But she was so tired.

FURY 1:

Tired of running, tired of fighting. Truthfully, she did feel weak.

FURY 2:

But the wedding day was soon approaching, and time was running out for her to escape.

FURY 3:

In a fury that lived only in her, she remembered how it felt.

FURY 1:

How it was to be confined on the mountain subject to the lusts of everyone else.

FURY 2:

She would not go back to that again.

Beat.

FURY 3:

Helios was Hep's right hand man, his best friend.

FURY 1:

The only friend he had left.

FURY 2:

And his own personal spy.

FURY 3:

Each night Helios would walk outside below Aphrodite's window.

FURY 1:

Hoping to catch a glimpse of her, but also making sure she didn't escape.

FURY 2:

And Aphrodite was perfectly aware of this.

FURY 3:

So one day she decided to use it.

FURY 1:

As Helios approached her window.

FURY 2:

She let out a moan that made the foundation shake below Helios' feet.

Ooooooooooooooh, Hep.

APH 3:

He couldn't be sure what she said.

FURY 3:

Did she say Hep?

FURY 1:

Or was it 'heh'?

FURY 3:

Why would she moan 'heh'?

FURY 1:

I don't - !

FURY 3:

Anyway. He ran instantly to tell Hep who, as it turned out, began to panic.

FURY 2:

Maybe she developed feelings for him?

FURY 1:

This thought made his fingertips tingle.

FURY 2:

He didn't know what to think.

FURY 1:

Hep.

FURIES:

FURY 3:

With fear of being hit Helios delivered his report.

HELIOS:

In the wee hours of the morning I saw a light trickling out from her window. In the illumination through the opaque drapes I saw her silhouette, asleep. But then a name floated from her quivering lips

APH 3 and HELIOS:

HEP.

HEP:

Is that really what she said? You must have misheard. Do you really think she - I - I - I can't handle that, Helios!

HELIOS:

Don't worry, don't worry!

HEP:

How can I not worry?

HELIOS:

This is a good thing! You've got her!

HEP:

If what you say is true. But until our wedding nothing is secure.

HELIOS:

Look, I have set up a way to catch her if this is a trick.

HEP:

Why would she do that?

HELIOS:

To distract me enough to come to you so she can escape.

HEP:

Which you *have* done.

HELIOS:

Right...but I could be totally wrong!

HEP:

Do you really think it's a trick?

HELIOS:

There is only one way to find out.

HEP:

This better work, Helios.

HELIOS:

I told you not to worry, Hep! We will find out what she said and by this time tomorrow you'll be a married man. And you know what that means?

HEP shrugs.

It means you will finally have your wedding night.

FURY 2:

Helios had set up a net by her window.

FURY 3:

If she was as treacherous as he thought, she'd be caught in it trying to escape.

FURY 2:

It was all set up to work.

FURY 3:

But Hep was still nervous.

FURY 2:

Helios was superior to him in that he had a confidence that Hep did not.

FURY 1:

But, also the fury of he and his mother, taking revenge for how her father ruined their lives was eating away at him, just a bit.

FURY 3:

As soon as Helios was out of sight, however -

FURY 2:

Aphrodite stole the net.

FURY 1:

And hid it in her bed.

FURY 2:

And because Hep was so nervous -

FURY 3:

He decided to climb outside of her window and...talk.

FURY 1:

The wedding was only hours away.

FURY 3:

And he really, really -

FURY 1:

Just needed to know.

HEP:

Aphrodite?

FURY 3:

Calling out warned her right away. But she already knew. And she was waiting.

APH 3:

Hep! I'm so surprised. I didn't expect to see you until the wedding.

HEP:

Well. I just. Couldn't wait to see you.

APH 3:

I know what you mean.

HEP:

You do?

APH 3:

You see, having all this time to myself I've been thinking.

HEP:

Thinking?

APH 3:

I have.

She moves closer to him. He is barely breathing.

HEP:

I've been, uh...thinking, too.

APH 3:

Have you?

HEP:

I, uh...

APH 3:

Hep.I think I was a bit rash. Before. You know, when we first - When you first came here. I mean, I didn't even get to know you, Not really.

HEP:

Well, I mean I know that it was fast -

APH 3:

I know the wedding is in a couple hours, but -

HEP:

But?

APH 3:

Maybe we can take this opportunity to get to know each other Better.

HEP:

Better? Better...

APH 3:

Better.

HEP:

I just...I, um. I'm sorry word's aren't -

APH 3:

I know. But don't worry. You will get what you need.

HEP:

Wait. Helios said -

What did he say? APH 3:

He said you whispered a name. HEP:

A name? APH 3:

A name. HEP:

Whose name did I whisper? APH 3:

I...I don't - HEP:

Hey, hey it's ok. We are just Aphan and Hepnow. APH 3:

You are so different than what I - HEP:

He almost kisses her. She raises the net.

You are nothing like your father. I can't do this...

My father? APH 3:

I can't do this anymore - HEP:

What does he have to do with - ? APH 3:

You are kind. He is not even half as much. HEP:

APH 3:

I'm not -

HEP:

I was hurt. By him. He is the reason I'm like this, why my mother seeks revenge.

APH 3:

I didn't know any of this.

FURY 1:

And so he told her the story of his demise.

FURY 3:

Of his mother's rage and of her love for him.

FURY 1:

Of the pain it caused her when Aphrodite was born of Zeus' lovers.

FURY 3:

Of the day Zeus tried to end him and -

APH 3:

I am not kind, Hep.

HEP:

How can you say that?

She pulls out the net.

APH 3:

I had no noble intentions, no desire for you. You were forced on me by them and I retaliated on you. That is not what a kind person does.

HEP:

I deserve every bit of cruelty you have. I am pained every day for this. And I know that you never wanted me, how could you? I'm a monster.

She puts her hand on his.

APH 3:

No you aren't. But you were hurt because of my father. He is terrible, he is cruel, he doesn't care about anyone's needs but his. I am sorry for what he did to you. I am even more sorry that it was because of me.

HEP:

Not you. My mother. His jealousy knows no limits and he wanted to punish her for having me.

APH 3:

I am ashamed I came from such a place of hate...

HEP:

No. You come from love. But you are more than just that. I can see it.

He looks into her eyes.

Though it is a big part of who you are.

FURY 1:

And then she saw everything.

FURY 3:

As she looked into his eyes she saw his true kindness, his giving nature. And she saw all the love that he felt.

FURY 1:

And then she saw the pain. All of the destruction and the anger that his mother filtered through him. It went through her like a shockwave.

HEP:

I can't ask you to stay.

APH 3:

Your mother –

HEP:

That is my battle. Yours is in another place.

APH 3:

I have no idea where that place is.

You will find it.

HEP:

And if it destroys me?

APH 3:

I don't think anything really could.

HEP:

Heartbreak, perhaps?

APH 3:

That, I understand.

HEP:

I thought I was in love before. But he was like everyone else. Everyone who thinks I'm weak.

APH 3:

I never thought that.

HEP:

I know. I'm not sure I can do this.

APH 3:

You can.

HEP:

But I -

APH 3:

You can. But I understand.

HEP:

Thank you.

APH 3:

Mother will come after you. But I know you will get away. Whatever you do don't stop running. No matter what, don't ever stop running. Now go, as fast as you can.

APH 3:

Wait -

She takes the net from her bed and wraps him in it.

Makes you look like you tried to fight.

She smiles at him. He smiles at her.

HEP:

Run fast, Aph.

She kisses him on the top of his head. She looks into his eyes for a long moment and then she's gone.

FURIES:

She ran.

FURY 2:

She ran like Hephaestus told her to.

FURY 1:

As fast as she could.

FURY 3:

It seemed like she ran for a year.

FURY 1:

Until she came to a battlefield.

FURY 3:

She could see the ruins left by War.

FURY 2:

The smoldering fires.

FURY 3:

The once fertile lands, wasted.

FURY 1:

She could not speak a word.

FURY 2:

She only wept.

FURY 1:

She wept for the unrecognizable bodies.

FURY 3:

For the life that was so quickly taken in anger.

FURY 2:

For something she couldn't help blaming herself for.

FURY 3:

But she heard Hep's voice in her head:

FURY 2:

RUN!

FURIES:

And so she kept running.

FURY 2:

Until she hit the ocean.

FURY 3:

Where she took one, long breath.

FURY 1:

Suddenly there was a rumbling and a great presence shot up from the sea.

FURY 2:

Ominous. Giant. Terrifying. Swirling in a whirlpool.

POSEIDON:

Creatures of the land heed my words. I am the terrible and mighty Poseidon. Thy feet hath come inches from thy doom. Step into this sacred water and thy soul shall -

He looks down.

Aphrodite?

APH 1:

Uh...Uncle!

POSEIDON:

Oh, little Aph! Wow...

APH 1:

I can't believe it! I should have known you'd be here.

POSEIDON:

I haven't seen you in ages! Though you are all grown up it seems now. Not my little Aph anymore...

He stares at her for a moment too long.

I apologize for the fanfare. I was expecting - Well you weren't what I was expecting.

APH 1:

I hope that's not a problem.

POSEIDON:

Oh my dear. Seeing you is never a problem.

APH 1:

Not that I don't love watching you work, but I am kind of in a bind.

POSEIDON:

So I've heard.

APH 1:

I need a favor.

POSEIDON:

For you, the world. What can I do?

APH 1:

I'm in trouble. I'm being chased.

POSEIDON:

By whom?

APH 1:

Well you know how stubborn Papa is.

POSEIDON:

Stubborn is putting it kindly.

APH 1:

I realize. But because of him and what he did to Hera –

POSEIDON:

I'm sorry – Hera is chasing you?

APH 1:

Yes. I am told her fury knows no bounds.

POSEIDON:

Not when it comes to your father, no. What has he done now?

APH 1:

He arranged for me to marry her son, Hephaestus –

POSEIDON:

Ugh! A terrible boy –

APH 1:

No! No, he's not – He's kind and gentle. He was only following his mother's orders. He let me go. But now she is after me. Please you have to -

POSEIDON:

Aaahh...I can not lie to you, my dear. I knew you were coming. She contacted me. She asked me to stop you.

APH 1:

What? No...you can't be -

POSEIDON:

She is powerful. And I am attracted to that power. I'm sorry. I can't help the connections I make, my dear.

APH 1:

If you think I'm going to let you -

POSEIDON:

Calm down, calm down, I'm not going to send you to your doom and the fury of that...woman.

APH 1:

Oh, thank you, Uncle -

POSEIDON:

But -

With a swipe APHRODITE is pulled to him.

That doesn't mean I can't have some fun.

APH 1:

What are you - !?

The scene breaks.

FURY 2:

Ok, hang on - that happened fast.

FURY 1:

What?

FURY 3:

Why are we stopping?

FURY 2:

It just - he seemed so great and then -

FURY 1:

Yeah, well that's the point, isn't it? He makes her trust him and then -

FURY 2:

Yeah, but do we have to do this part?

Why shouldn't we?

FURY 1:

I mean...it's gross, but -

FURY 3:

But nothing! I hate this part.

FURY 2:

Ok, what about it?

FURY 3:

Just this assault, the -

FURY 2:

Wow, that's a strong word -

FURY 1:

But it is! Can't you see that?

FURY 2:

Sure - I mean, this is really close to the actual myth -

FURY 1:

And since we're taking a lot of liberties -

FURY 3:

I know, but aren't we messing with this whole thing anyway? Why stop here?

FURY 2:

I suppose...

FURY 1:

Why don't we change it then?

FURY 2:

Well what if we use it as a device to depict the struggles she had to overcome -

FURY 3:

Oh my gods, aren't you tired of tropes like this though?!

FURY 1:

Like what?

FURY 2:

Oh let's see: Strong women coming from abuse.

FURY 1:

Needing to be broken in order to be taken seriously.

FURY 3:

Graphic depictions of rape and violence.

They turn to the audience.

FURY 2:

Being a respectable woman meaning being quiet and "virginal".

FURY 1:

Men who show any emotion being seen as weak.

FURY 3:

Women needing to get randomly undressed on stage.

FURY 2:

Strong women needing to be paired off with a man.

FURY 1:

Anything a woman creates being seen as lesser than.

FURY 3:

Unrealistic and unnecessary depictions of sex and intimacy.

FURY 2:

Being asked to relive your trauma to make a moment seem more authentic.

A collective sigh.

FURIES:

Portland.¹

A collective mulling.

So...

FURY 2:

We've...noticed some things happening in the community and we want to take a moment to ask you about them. Ok? So close your eyes. If you're comfortable let's have a show of hands, actors who play women - have you ever been paired romantically with a man on stage twenty years older? Open your eyes.

A reaction.

FURY 1:

Ok, now close your eyes again. Actors who play men in the audience - if you're comfortable raise your hand if you ever been presented the option to express your emotion on stage by crying? Open your eyes.

A reaction.

FURY 3:

This one is for everyone in the audience, - close your eyes. If you're comfortable raise your hand if you've ever had to be intimate on stage and you felt uncomfortable, rushed, or shamed for it. Open your eyes.

A reaction.

FURY 2:

Do any of you have anything you have felt alone in that you'd like to call out?

They wait, listen, affirm. They turn back to each other.

FURY 2:

We don't have all the answers to all these:

FURIES:

But!

¹ In the original production we performed two versions of the play in Portland, Maine. Please adjust the city for your location.

FURY 2:

The first step to solving any problem is recognizing that the problem exists.

FURY 1:

Yeah. I think it's time we make some changes.

FURY 3:

Me, too.

FURY 2:

So?

FURIES 1 & 3:

So...

FURIES:

So! Aph was having none of it.

FURY 1:

A grand explosion lit the sky.

FURY 2:

Poseidon was thrown back into the sea, vaulting through the waves to a place far from the girl who was not just a girl.

FURY 3:

She stood, feet planted in the water that was no longer unsafe to stand in.

FURY 1:

And breathed a long breath.

FURY 2:

She was new.

FURY 1:

She was unafraid.

FURY 3:

And she was on fire.

FURY 1:

She ran around the edge of the sea, to a place where she thought nobody would look for her. She ran back to the battlefield.

FURY 2:

She breathed in the ashes, letting them fill her lungs.

FURY 3:

In her mind she always knew what she could do.

FURY 1:

But seeing it, feeling it for herself made everything so clear.

APH ALL:

I don't want to run anymore.

She swoons and falls to her knees.

FURY 3:

Hera was not far. She came to the wreckage of Poseidon and roared in frustration.

FURY 1:

She had a feeling the lecherous God of the Sea would mess things up for her.

FURY 3:

She had been told of the way he lusted after his niece.

FURY 1:

But then again who didn't?

FURY 3:

She was determined to catch Aphrodite.

FURY 1:

She roared again. And the earth shook with her fury. Aph could not stand, no matter how hard she tried.

FURY 3:

She knew if she stayed Hera would end her.

FURY 1:

But she could not move to save her life.

FURY 2:

Instead she let her whole weight sink into the ground.

FURY 3:

Which suddenly cracked beneath her -

FURY 1:

And took her down.

FURY 2:

Down, down, down -

FURY 3:

To the Underworld.

FURY 2:

It was ruled by Zeus' brother, Hades. He, unlike the rest of the gods did not fawn over his brother.

FURY 3:

In fact, he disliked him fiercely.

FURY 2:

Hated him, truth be told.

FURY 3:

So Aph knew that she would be safe from Hera.

FURY 1:

But she had never met Hades, though she knew of his feelings for her father and didn't know what treachery lay within him.

FURY 2:

She crossed a dark, murky river. Taking the greatest care not to touch the water.

FURY 3:

Occasionally she would see a glimpse of something white poke out from the water. But in a flash it was gone.

FURY 2:

She kept her eyes focused straight ahead.

FURY 3:

Suddenly the river went calm and several hands shot out of the water grabbing her and pulling her slowly down.

APH 3:

Hades?! HADES!!

From the shadows.

HADES:

Sooo. What unannounced visitor has graced my presence today?

He enters.

Aphrodite. My niece. Interesting. Looks like today won't be as dull as I thought.

APH 3:

Please, I need to stay here. I can't go back up there until she stops looking for me.

HADES:

She?

APH 3:

Hera.

HADES:

What have you done to her?

APH 3:

Something happened, something - something like I've never seen.

Looking at the hands that have been tapping her this whole time.

Can you - ?

HADES:

Oh, no please do keep me in suspense. You know how I love to waste time.

APH 3:

I can't explain it. It was so – can you please get these things off of me?

He sighs, waves his hand and she is released.

Thank you.

HADES:

You were saying?

APH 3:

I was being held by Poseidon –

HADES makes a disgusted noise.

- and suddenly everything...exploded. I don't know how else to explain –

HADES:

I see.

APH 3:

You don't seem shocked.

HADES:

And why should I be?

APH 3:

Well...it doesn't – it's not something that I have ever –

HADES:

You still don't know yourself after all these years.

APH 3:

How can I? They always tell me -

HADES:

They? See how well that has worked out for you, listening to what 'they' say. And what do they think you are?

APH 3:

Lust, Desire –

HADES:

Right. And you are, that is where you came from and what you are made up of. But there was another ingredient that nobody ever noticed.

APH 3:

Another ingredient?

HADES:

You see, when Zeus was busy with all of his philandering I was busy attending to my niece, you're welcome. That is, of course before I was –

HADES and APH 3:

Banished.

HADES:

You see why I'm bitter.

APH 3:

More than most.

HADES:

I knew I wouldn't always be there to protect you, so I gave you one final parting gift that you didn't know you had. A title that no other could contend with.

APH 3:

But I thought my title was –

HADES:

Oh you are the Goddess of Love and Lust and Blah, blah, blah...That is certain, and always will be. But you are also the Goddess of War.

APH 3:

War...

HADES:

Indeed.

APH 3:

But Ares -

HADES:

Oh god, that meat-head. You're not still running around with him, are you?

APH 3:

No.

HADES:

No. Of course you're not. He couldn't see you for what you are. Or he did and it made him jealous.

APH 3:

Why couldn't you find me and tell me?

HADES:

You don't think I wanted to? I never got the opportunity to tell a soul before I was sent away. Seems like it has become more clear, though to the rest of the world since you blew old Fish-guts out of the water.

APH 3:

You're the only one who never - who didn't -

HADES:

How could I?

She screams, filling the chamber.

Oh, my sweet. Look at you. You are filled with the rage of a thousand years. Find Hera. She is waiting for you. You know what to do now.

APH 3:

To hell and back.

HADES:

Good. That's a very good joke. Now, go. Get out of my cavern.

FURY 2:

Smoke swirled around her.

FURY 3:
And carried her back Up, Up, Up to the battlefield -

FURY 1:
Where Hera was waiting.

HERA:
There she is.

APH 1:
Hera.

HERA:
Aphrodite. We have a lot to discuss.

APH 1:
We do.

HERA:
It seems you jilted my son. But then upon further investigation he seems to have let you go.

APH 1:
He is kind.

HERA:
He is weak. I love him more than anything, but his kindness is his downfall.

APH 1:
Do not punish Hephaestus.

HERA:
I would never. Not for a thing like you.

APH 1:
I am not the one you are looking for.

HERA:
You are exactly who I am looking for.

APH 1:

I am not the one who wronged you. But Zeus –

HERA:

You came from him! You are just like him!

APH 1:

I am nothing like him.

HERA:

You are the incarnation of his Debauchery and Lasciviousness. You are him!

APH 1:

Hera.

She takes a step forward.

Look at me.

HERA looks above her.

Look at me.

HERA reluctantly looks down at her. She peers deeply into her eyes. Everything that has happened flashes before HERA in a catastrophic cacophony of sound and space. HERA sinks to her knees; a Goddess' surrender.

HERA:

I didn't know...

APH 1:

Neither did I.

She helps her to her feet. HERA touches APHRODITE's cheek.

HERA:

Forgive me. Your father put me through so much.

APH 1:

I wish I could take your pain away. I wish I could take back what he did.

HERA:

It is not your job to atone for your father's sins.

APH 1:

But you deserve much more.

HERA:

Sweet girl. My anger is all for naught. I love my son and he is still with me. But you. There is still hope for you. I can see it as it happens. Do what has to be done. Until we meet again, Sweet Girl.

And she is gone. APHRODITE stares into the distance. Suddenly she screams, shaking the heavens.

APH 2:

ZEUUUSSSS!!

Thunder and lightning and ZEUS appears.

ZEUS:

You invoke me, daughter? After all you have done I am amazed that you show your face.

She stares, unmoving.

Nothing to say for yourself? I am shocked that you haven't begged my forgiveness.

She's just waiting.

This silence is tiresome, Aphrodite. I command you now, speak!

APH 2:

How was I born, Papa?

ZEUS:

A ridiculous question. I will not play this game -

APH 2:

Please, Papa.

ZEUS:

You were born only of me and my desires, wants, and cravings; of the countless bouts of passion that I experience every day. You are the epitome of my Lust made flesh in a beautiful form. You are nothing else. And you are coming home with me.

She will not be moved.

Do not disobey me further, Girl. Come!

Her lip twitches.

Disrespectful little thing. You will obey me!

He moves to hit her and she catches his hand.

What - ?

APH 2:

Oh, I love when the Mighty are proven wrong.

ZEUS:

What nonsense are you spouting now?

APH 2:

I am so much more than what you think.

HADES appears from the dark.

HADES:

And what are you?

APH 2:

I am WAR.

A grand explosion.

FURY 1:

The air lit up -

FURY 3:

And popped -

And spun -

FURY 2:

The ground cracked and opened up.

FURY 1:

Fire rained from the sky and filled every bit of empty space.

FURY 2:

As Aphrodite stood on the field of battle.

FURY 3:

In the place where she met herself.

FURY 1:

In the place where she belonged.

FURY 2:

All of those who desired to keep her in the dark -

FURY 3:

All of those who doubted -

FURY 1:

That she was so much more -

FURY 2:

Were proven so, so very Wrong.

FURY 3:

A girl in a torn and ash-stained dress lays back, looking up at the sky.

FURY 1:

She closes her eyes and breathes deep, savoring the atmosphere.

FURY 2:

She did all of this. And she knows now.

FURY 3:

She is proud of herself.

FURY 1:

A long beat.

This is not how this myth goes.

FURY 3:

And we know.

FURIES:

Zeus was prophesied to fall.

FURY 2:

And be replaced by someone better.

FURY 1:

They exchange a look.

And in our version -

FURY 3:

The girl who could end the world with a smile -

FURY 2:

Sat back in her torn and ash-stained dress -

FURY 1:

And watched the world burn.

FURIES:

They smile. And the lights go out.