Harmonia

A play

Part one of

City of Wine

A cycle in three trilogies

by
Ned Dickens

The Grape Trilogy
HARMONIA
PENTHEUS
THEBE

The Vine Trilogy
CADMEA
ELIS
JOCASTA

The Wine Trilogy
OEDIPUS
CREON
SEVEN

Commissioned by Nightswimming
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"Thebes is famous everywhere, for wine and welcoming."
City of Wine is a nine-play cycle telling the story of the Greek city of Thebes—best known as the home of Oedipus. It begins with the founding of Thebes by Cadmus and Harmonia, and ends with the death of six of its last seven citizens on the battlefield of Troy.

The *City of Wine* cycle is a powerful portrayal of leadership and civic life. This contemporary epic breathes new life into these magnificent stories while portraying the citizens of Thebes as distinct yet familiar individuals, unique to playwright Ned Dickens' vision of this legendary city. Brian Quirt.

Playwright's Notes

The UnNamed
City of Wine features great names: Zeus, Athena, Harmonia, Laius, Jocasta, Oedipus, Dionysus, and Tiresias, to mention only a few. Such names are so powerful that I felt I could not introduce fictional ones into the mix. At the same time, I very much wanted to find a new approach to the idea of the Chorus. I wanted to show a diversity of interacting personalities which, taken together, would represent the ordinary people—the citizens—of the *City of Wine*.

The result is a group of seven personalities (often related from play to play but not always the same individuals) who, although distinct and real, are never named. Throughout *City of Wine* they are always present, reacting to and affecting the actions of the Named.

The UnNamed are "the aching, dancing body of my town." In order to keep them straight in the text I gave them "tags". The truth of my premise that names are powerful things is borne out by the fact that many people persist in thinking of these tags as names. You, of course, will not make that mistake.

Synopsis

The Grape Trilogy

Harmonia
This is the story of how Harmonia, daughter of the gods Ares and Aphrodite, and her mortal husband Cadmus, become the founders of the city that will become Thebes. In the kitchen of Ares' palace on Mount Olympus, surrounded by the desires and games of both gods and mortals, Cadmus wins the love of Harmonia but incites the fury of the gods. Harmonia gives up her immortality to pursue her love as she and her new husband are driven from Olympus. They vow to found a great city dedicated to equality and truth—and thus the city is born."Nothing begins in history." As I scratched around for a point of entry into the story of Thebes I tripped over the idea that two gods would give Harmonia, their goddess daughter, to marry an enslaved mortal who had not only offended them but had failed at everything he had tried to do so far. Equally intriguing was that she might fall in love with him. "There has to be a story behind that!" I told myself, and here it is.

Pentheus
The second play introduces us to Harmonia and Cadmus' grandson Pentheus, who finds himself chosen king just as the city is undergoing an unexpected transformation. Also brought to life are the magical characters of Tiresias, the seer whose prophecies play a pivotal role in city's story, and Dionysus, the god whose gift of wine brings both joy and chaos to Thebes. In this alternative

version of the events of The Bacchae, the tragedy of King Pentheus (and a hidden love story!) brings our city into a new era .

While HARMONIA can be said to deal with the conception of the city, this play looks at its adolescence. It swirls with sexual infatuation, questions of emerging identity, and a tragic loss of innocence. Robert Graves (poet and scholar) suggests that the real root of all the problems which beset Thebes (called Cadmea at this point in the story) is the institution of patrilineal monarchy, the idea that the crown must pass from father to son. He argues that this idea offends the powerful female energy in the ancient world and sets off "the war of the sexes" with a bang. I have tried to show how, in context, that idea, called here Pentheus' Law, might make sense to a young man who unexpectedly finds himself on a throne for which he feels completely unprepared.

Thebe
The character and story of Thebe have grown organically over the years. Exploring and unpacking both was a huge part of the impetus behind the last expansion of *City of Wine* from seven to nine plays. In HARMONIA, Poseidon, spurned by her, spits into Thebe's mouth (a particularly nasty assault that echoes the story of Apollo and Cassandra) and he decrees that her kiss will always give instant forgetfulness. The dynamic between memory and forgetfulness is central to our story, and storytelling. It also allows me to introduce narrative elements that have no basis in traditional versions, as long as I arrange to have them forgotten, such as Thebe's being the mother of Tiresias and, eventually, Laius.

The Vine Trilogy

Cadmea
The city has grown, but so has distrust and fear between the sexes. Lycus and Dirce rule in luxury while Laius waits impatiently to take the crown. Amphion and Zethus, the twin unacknowledged sons of Lycus, arrive. They use Laius to punish Lycus for his treatment of their mother, Antiope, unleashing assassination, riot, and massacre. Laius escapes into exile and the brothers arrange to be elected twin kings. Thebe fulfills the prophesy that she will be queen.

Fairly late in the 30+ year *City of Wine* writing process it occurred to me that the Theban plays of Sophocles et al. weren't Theban at all: they were created and celebrated in a city trying to be a democracy (Athens). They are stories about the horrifically dysfunctional monarchy, and military rival, next door. They are deeply political. The city of Cadmea/Thebes is the protagonist of *City of Wine*, and her challenges, growth, triumphs, disasters, and her journey from an intentional settlement to a city state, take centre stage in the Vine Trilogy. Here she becomes a place familiar to a modern audience, shaped by familiar characters: grifters, schemers, dreamers, and traditionalists.

Elis
Elis is a nearby city in the mountains, where Laius has sought refuge in exile. Wine has also arrived in town and a dis-used slaughterhouse is becoming a tavern, with help from Bowl. Laius festers in bitterness and self-pity, abusing the hospitality and the vulnerable son of his hosts until he, Laius, commits a crime that will haunt Thebes and its people for generations.
ELIS is the middle play of the cycle and, like the first and last, it doesn't take place in Cadmea/ Thebes. Elis is a mountain city based heavily on cattle farming. Their main festival celebrates the semi-annual slaughter. Dionysus is the god of wine, of course, but he is also god of the theatre. One theory suggests that public theatre emerged as a way to contain and control the rites of the riotous god. The need for that containment shows when bacchanalia meets slaughter festival.

Jocasta
This play illuminates the story of Jocasta, one of the great figures of ancient mythology, familiar to us largely for her death scene in the play Oedipus. The exiled Laius returns to Thebes, marries Jocasta and she bears him a son. The first act of Jocasta traces the descent of the city, under King Laius' rule, into dictatorship and despair. Act two brings with it a much-discussed moment in Greek mythology/legend: the magnetic first meeting between Jocasta and Oedipus. With no idea what their relationship portends (for themselves or Thebes) their happy marriage restores peace to the city.

Tragedy is often an architecture of unfortunate choices, many of which make sense in context, but which add up to disaster. The impulse to write this play (fourth in the cycle but the second written, after Oedipus) came from the realization that many of the critical choices which inform that story were made before it begins, by Jocasta and Laius, rather than by Oedipus. I wanted to find out why, and what those situations may have looked like. The more I explored and imagined my way backwards into hypothetical time, the more enthralled I became with this extraordinary woman. Wanting to understand her is the seed crystal around which the entire *City of Wine* has grown.

The Wine Trilogy

Oedipus
Oedipus attempts to relieve Thebes of a plague, and the curse that brought it to the city, and in doing so brings the famous story of Jocasta, Laius, and Oedipus to its disastrous and horrifying conclusion.

OEDIPUS was the first play written, and still marks the grand climax of the cycle. Much of the motivation for writing the larger project was rooted in a desire to fully contextualize what happens here. In the modern world we have tended to think of ourselves as moral singularities, responsible only for our own choices and actions. Seen through that frame, Oedipus becomes a victim of cruel and irrational fate, doomed to suffer despite his best efforts. I offer him rather as a point in a larger narrative curve, paying the cost of his father's crimes and his family's unfolding pattern of well-intentioned error.

Creon

On a pleasant evening, years after the events of Oedipus, a visiting stranger enters a peaceful tavern and acquaints himself with the Thebans savouring the local wine. His questions about their city and its history result in an impromptu and often comic reconstruction of the story of Antigone. Its controversial story about leadership is re-evaluated and the fate of Thebes is explored, disputed and reinvented. Once again, wine points the way, bringing both chaos and, finally, good cheer in its wake.

Throughout *City of Wine* the Unnamed are always present, responding to and influencing the actions of the Named, but in CREON they take over, and the cycle enters a new stage. Increasingly it is less about history and more about story. BOWL says "I have just listened to the stories that wounds tell." I wanted to look at how communities define, heal, and even re-create themselves through the sharing of narratives. I also wanted to introduce an element of suspense to an ancient tale. Since I have chosen to wander from the path of received mythology from time to time, in this play I decided to offer my characters the same opportunity, and then see where they would take the story.

Seven

During the siege of Troy, seven scruffy Theban citizens, all that remain of Thebes, sit drinking around a campfire in their makeshift outdoor tavern. After receiving orders to go on a futile and certainly fatal mission the next morning, the seven spend their last night trying to make sense of their lives, their place in history and in memory. Will wine offer insight or blindness? How will they meet the challenge that dawn brings? What will remain of Thebes after they are gone?
The Iliad is such a detailed account of the Trojan War that some scholars surmise that the author was actually present for the great events and not just passing on an oral tradition, thus marking a transition from myth to history. How stories, and through them societies, evolve and survive, or not, up to and then through such a massive transition fascinates me. Theatre itself, in a way, sits on the threshold between written and remembered narratives. Indeed, it pushes backwards from written into oral narrative. Beyond all that however, I could not resist the temptation to spend one last night with the UnNamed.

Harmonia

Characters

Named Mortals
CADMUS A prince, and the newest slave

Gods
AMPHITRITE Goddess of the sea
APHRODITE Goddess of physical love
ARES God of war
ATHENA Goddess of wisdom
ERIS Goddess of discord
HARMONIA Daughter of Ares and Aphrodite
HEPHAESTUS God of blacksmiths and inventors
HERA Queen of the gods
POSEIDON God of the sea
ZEUS King of the gods
THEBE A naiad

The Unnamed
BLOOD
BOWL
BREAD
CLOTH
FIREWOOD
GLASS
WATER

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Olympus, Various places in the palace/fortress of ARES

Prologue

High above the kitchen

THEBE

So, droplets, once again,

The passions of the sea and rain

Have dripped us here,

Until we spill and flow downhill,

As water will,

To, through, a city that, eventually, is named for me.

Who would have guessed Olympus could be so dry and cold?

And yet, in all this less than death,

I taste a breath of warmth below.

They are just slaves who die.

Why do they even try?

I thirst to know.

Act 1

Pre-dawn darkness in the kitchen. A large cooking fire is prominent. The fire is just embers.

(FIREWOOD chops firewood. BOWL enters, followed by CADMUS.)

CADMUS

But, before that—

BOWL

Oh! For the love of sleeping gods,

Come in,

But leave your stories at the door…

CADMUS

Well, you asked.

(To FIREWOOD.)

Hello.

FIREWOOD
This is the kitchen.

BOWL
My kingdom.

CADMUS
Ah. I see.

BOWL
See what?

CADMUS
Nothing. At least…

I thought perhaps Olympus offered more.

FIREWOOD
It does, (*Kisses BOWL)* but not to you.

(Exit.)

CADMUS
Of course.

BOWL *(Rummaging noisily amongst some dirty dishes)*
But I, such as I am, can offer this.

(He has poured some water into a bowl.)

CADMUS
Dishwater? No.

No thanks, my friend.

My only thirst is to be free again

That I might bring my sister home.

BOWL
Your sister?

No, I said before, and meant it too,

I will not hear another of your tales today,

Tomorrow is... What do they say?

(BOWL smells the drink with pleasure.)

Your loss.

No greasy soup slop this.

See this, that blushes on the vessels cheek?

That is no less than Nectar.

The essence of eternity itself.

Yes, on that shelf, in numbered rows, corked, counted, and confined,

Stands immortality.

And so,

I swirl this earthen world with water once,

And, kissing from its walls sweet Nectar, *(He drinks deeply)*

The water springs to life with...

Well?

You will not drink?

CADMUS

I do not think I dare.

BOWL

Then you dare nothing and you never will be free,

But live and die a slave, like me.

Come drink with me.

(CADMUS drinks. Enter FIREWOOD with wood.)

CADMUS

My eyes are filled with fire and tears.

FIREWOOD

What do you see?

CADMUS

That I might learn to like it here.

Who would have thought?

Once prince, now kitchen slave who… what?

FIREWOOD *(to BOWL)*
Promote the girl to clean up after you.

(To CADMUS.)

You feed the fire.

CADMUS
I see.

(He drinks again.)

BOWL
But what a fire!

The great hearth in the palace of a god,

And not just any god,

Ares himself, who's very self is fire.

Let me tell you—

CADMUS
He is not pleased with me.

You see—

FIREWOOD
No stories, please.

Either of you.

Our dawn comes first on this great mountaintop.

Tomorrow, early, there is much to do.

CADMUS *(Spreads his cloak in a corner)*
I will sleep here, I think.

BOWL
You will do well.

You know your place.

FIREWOOD
Be warm.

CADMUS
And you.

BOWL *(taking the bowl)*
I will.

(Exit BOWL and FIREWOOD. CADMUS lies down. APHRODITE enters from outside. She pauses by the fire, removes her cloak and warms herself. CADMUS watches in awe. ARES enters above, unseen until he speaks.)

ARES
I almost waited.

APHRODITE
Well, I did.

Hephaestus gives no sign that he will ever rest.

At last I saw that he sees nothing but his work, and left.

ARES
Crippled in unseen ways to not see you.

(Coming down.)

APHRODITE
I am here now.

ARES
And now is everything.

APHRODITE
For now.

(They embrace passionately. The fire blazes, revealing CADMUS.)

ARES
Oh, you.

You angered me.

Yet here you are, alive.

CADMUS
I am a mortal trying to survive.

ARES *(Approaching CADMUS aggressively)*
Remember that,

Or, better yet, forget all now.

(ARES is about to kill CADMUS.)

APHRODITE

Stop, Ares, please.

He is your slave.

ARES

So?

APHRODITE

He can wait.

I am your love and I cannot.

ARES

Worship her, boy, if you can be so wise.

(ARES and APHRODITE exit above.)

CADMUS *(On his knees)*

I do, or would if I knew who she is,

Or if she is.

Rest must make sense of all my senses now.

(CADMUS lies down again. A moment passes. GLASS enters, running, above, and ducks just in time as a pot flies from OFF and sails to the floor below, making a loud noise. BLOOD enters behind GLASS.)

BLOOD

Senseless, mindless, bloodless brat!

How dare you spy upon the gods?

GLASS *(Running down the stairs)*

What, bloodless? Me?

If your eyes saw what I just saw up there your blood would…

Oh great gods, I need some rest.

Although…

I would prefer to see the rest of that.

(GLASS tries to go back up the stairs. BLOOD blocks the way.)

BLOOD
Not while I live.

GLASS
Oh well then, I can wait.

BLOOD
Such impudence.

CADMUS
What did you see?

BLOOD
Nothing, for mortal eyes must burst at such a sight.

GLASS
Imagine that.

Hello. You are..?

CADMUS
Cadmus. I am –

BLOOD
A slave, like all of us, and so without a name.

CADMUS
I see.

GLASS
Well, I saw Aphrodite naked—

CADMUS
Oh.

GLASS
Oh, yes.

And Ares was –

(GLASS tries to demonstrate. HARMONIA has entered above, noticed but not acknowledged. She sits on the stairs.)

CADMUS
That would kill me, I think.

BLOOD

Enough.

Great Ares is your lord and Aphrodite is his guest.

GLASS

But seeing without saying is like smelling without taste.

CADMUS

No. I agree.

Respect and privacy must be preserved.

Please, say no more of this and let us work.

BLOOD

You heard him, work.

(From here on CADMUS and HARMONIA are intensely aware of each other: he speaks, even performs for her and she watches, listens, and encourages him. They build and share an understanding.)

CADMUS *(Aside, to GLASS, as they work)*

Who is the other girl?

GLASS

What girl?

CADMUS

Up on the stairs.

GLASS

Again I say, what girl?

When gods and goddesses choose to appear,

We wait until they speak before we notice them.

CADMUS

She is a goddess then?

(He manages to take a longer look at her.)

Of course she is.

What is her name?

GLASS

Harmonia.

She is the product of the secret love that binds this household in conspiracy.

Her mother slips from tired Hephaestus bed—

CADMUS

Why is he tired?

GLASS

He goes to bed with Aphrodite.

CADMUS

Oh.

GLASS

Here, young Harmonia was secretly conceived.

She is herself a secret, known by all, but never spoken of.

CADMUS

Poor thing.

GLASS

You are an odd one, sir, a kitchen slave who pities goddesses.

CADMUS

My heart embraces anyone without a home.

So, Aphrodite's daughter? Well.

GLASS

Her father is—

BLOOD

The master of this house.

It is our privilege to be his slaves,

And mine to lead in that.

Do not forget your place.

(Enter BOWL and FIREWOOD.)

CADMUS

This is my place, for now,

But I was raised to rule.

FIREWOOD
Then raise yourself and rule the fire.

GLASS
That is my job.

FIREWOOD
It was.

BOWL
You now chop finer things.

Bring me that pot when it is clean.

BLOOD *(To BOWL)*
You have slept late.

BOWL
I know.

BLOOD
There is much work to do.

BOWL
So, we will do it, then.

BLOOD
I am in charge.

BOWL
Upstairs, not here.

FIREWOOD *(To GLASS)*
You may be Cook some day.

But, please…

Take care how much you learn from him.

(The kitchen gets busier. WATER enters with several bottles of Nectar.)

WATER
Good morning, all.

When are they now?

FIREWOOD
Ablaze in bed, again.

WATER

Oh, good.

(BOWL gives a bowl of food and a spoon to HARMONIA, who smiles at him.)

HARMONIA *(To BOWL)*

Thank you.

My nose has made a promise to my tongue,

(Eats.)

And kept it, too.

Who is this new young man?

BOWL

Your father's latest prisoner,

Condemned to slavery for seven years.

HARMONIA

And then?

BOWL

Who knows?

He was a prince before, apparently.

It strikes me strange, I must admit.

HARMONIA

What does?

BOWL

It is his punishment, and yet it is our lives,

And we will not be free until we die.

I like him though.

HARMONIA

Yes, so do I, I think.

BOWL

Excuse me, lady. I have other pots to stir.

(To CADMUS.)

You, prince.

The sun is up, hot food is waited for,

Unless such labour is beneath your majesty.

CADMUS *(feeding the fire)*
I will of course,

For who can hope for greater things

Who will not work today?

BLOOD
Well said. (*Bangs on a pot)*

Get up, you slaves. Your duties call.

(CLOTH and BREAD emerge or enter.)

CLOTH
You are a slave as much as anyone.

BREAD *(Aside to CLOTH)*
More so than most.

BLOOD
I serve the god himself. You serve his food.

Remember that.

CLOTH
How could I dare forget?

BREAD
Oh, look.

I am no more the newest slave.

GLASS
No, nor the prettiest.

CLOTH
Hello.

CADMUS
Hello. I am – I tend the fire.

WATER
We have heard much of you.

BREAD
Ares himself has told the tale.

GLASS
Quite loudly, several times.

BREAD
You must be mad.

CADMUS
Perhaps I am.

Why do you say?

CLOTH
Why else would you offend him so?

CADMUS
I never sought to give offence.

CLOTH
And yet you have.

WATER
What peaceful laws have you decreed

That turn his fury towards you?

CADMUS
None.

FIREWOOD
Yet you were “born to rule”?

GLASS
No, “raised”, I think he said.

GLASS
Though somewhat fallen now.

CADMUS
I am as royal, here and now, as I have ever been, or hope to be.

BOWL *(Drinks)*
And so am I. *(Belches)*

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CLOTH

Well I am not, and I have work to do.

The bed clothes will need changing, yet again.

Why does he tear at them so much?

BREAD

I will come up with you.

BLOOD

No, you stay here.

I will decide who works with whom, upstairs at least.

BREAD

What would you have me do?

My skills are strangers here.

CADMUS

Help me.

BLOOD

What? Yes, do that.

But stay in sight.

(Exit CLOTH.)

BREAD *(To CADMUS)*

Thank you.

I do not like the way he looks at me. *(BLOOD)*

I had a name once too, you know,

A home, a child, and then the war.

Now I am tribute to an angry god.

CADMUS

Misfortune does not bring a good heart down.

BREAD

No, but he might. *(BLOOD)*

Why are you here?

CADMUS

Ares is furious with me.

BREAD
What did you do?

CADMUS
I killed his precious snake. It killed my men.

WATER
What? All of them?

CADMUS
Good, brave, and honest men

Who only sought some water from its stream

To sanctify a sacrifice.

BLOOD
A sacrifice? This part is new? To whom?

CADMUS
Athena.

ALL
Ah!!

CADMUS
As she had asked me to.

BOWL
No wonder, then.

BREAD
Poor thing.

WATER
More so his men.

FIREWOOD
The gods have noticed him.

GLASS
He is the ball in one of their great games, and must be kicked,

Or thrown, or knocked about until the game is won.

(Enter CLOTH with Laundry.)

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BLOOD
Tell us about this sacrifice.

CLOTH
You and your bloody rituals.

BOWL *(To CADMUS)*
Spare us, oh king of kindling,

Such details as tender stomachs cannot bear.

CADMUS
Well, might your tenderness embrace a cow?

FIREWOOD *(Patting BOWL's belly)*
This has already held a herd.

BOWL
Or two.

Respect my size if not my dignity.

FIREWOOD
You need no dignity with me.

WATER
Begin at the beginning then.

BLOOD
But, duty calls.

GLASS
Oh, calm yourself.

The master lies with Aphrodite now,

We have this time.

BREAD
Tell us your tale.

CADMUS
I will.

My father is King Agenor.

BREAD
Oh, I have heard of you.

22

Europa was your sister then?

CADMUS
I dare to hope that she still is.

WATER
Europa? What of her?

BREAD
Abducted, so they say, by Zeus himself, shaped as a bull.

CLOTH
Oh, not again.

GLASS
Will some gods never learn?

BREAD
And carried on his back across the sea.

Forgive me, friend.

CADMUS
My father, crushed by helpless grief,

Called on my brothers and myself to bring her back

And never to return until we had.

BREAD
And so he lost his children too.

CADMUS
We tried, no god or man can say we did not try.

But nowhere did we find Europa.

CLOTH
How sad.

CADMUS
One by one my brothers stopped their search

And so could not go home.

I too almost despaired.

I did what people do who do not know what else to do.

I went –

23

BLOOD

To the oracle?

Of course you did.

CLOTH

A blind man could see that on the horizon of this tale.

BLOOD

Imagine that, you have been there.

CADMUS

I climbed the mountain and performed the rites.

I tell you, friends, I shook with awe and,

I suppose, with some small fear.

BLOOD

As who would not?

CADMUS

And when at last I raised my shaking gaze

And met that clear, unblinking eye that sees all things,

My dry voice dragged this question from my heart,

"What do I do?"

(FIREWOOD enters with HEPHAESTUS, disguised. They are carrying bundles of fire-wood.)

GLASS

Good, just in time.

BOWL

Yes, come. And bring your injured stray.

Sad cat to wander into slavery.

Sit here, beside the fire.

GLASS

Listen to this.

BLOOD

Yes. Yes. And then?

(CADMUS leans in close to the hushed group.)

CADMUS

A voice like burning leaves swirled down on me and said…

"Cadmus, prince,

Do this one thing and make your name ring through eternity."

BLOOD

Do what?

WATER

What did it ask?

FIREWOOD

Be still and let him say.

(CADMUS leaps up on a table or bench, imitating the oracle, and pronounces in a grand and terrible voice.)

CADMUS

Follow that cow!!

BLOOD

What?!

CADMUS *(Himself again, stepping down)*

Just that.

I was to find a certain cow, and follow it, until it died. No more.

(Silence, then HARMONIA laughs, followed by the others.)

BLOOD *(Exiting within)*

Mockery, mockery. Madness and mockery.

(GLASS leaps up in the "oracle's" place and points dramatically at BOWL.)

GLASS

Follow THAT cow!!

(BOWL moos and bellows. A good-natured chase ensues. At the height of the fun BOWL lumbers into HEPHAESTUS and falls melodramatically to the ground, a dying cow. All laugh.)

HEPHAESTUS

Careful, you clod.

BOWL

No harm, no harm.

Relax and lick yourself, cold cat.

We have a cow or two to sacrifice ourselves.

Come girl, to work.

HARMONIA

But wait. Where is Athena's hand in all of this?

CADMUS

Did I not say?

HARMONIA

Not yet.

CADMUS *(He moves towards HARMONIA. The others return to work.)*

She came to me and said it was my destiny to found a city.

HARMONIA

She came to you?

CADMUS

She did.

A vision of such grace and dignity…

And when a goddess speaks a man must act.

HARMONIA

But why the cow?

CADMUS

The oracle declared that where it fell my city was to rise.

WATER

How odd.

GLASS *(a shrug perhaps)*

The gods.

HARMONIA

And so the sacrifice.

CADMUS

And so the stream, the snake, the slaughter of my men,

And my imprisonment.

HARMONIA
I have heard much of this before, told differently,

Through Ares' teeth.

HEPHAESTUS
It is a likely tale.

CADMUS
You doubt my word?

HEPHAESTUS
No, not at all.

The gods are known as much for their perversity as for all else.

What happened next? Before you were brought here, a slave?

CADMUS
That part may test belief.

BOWL
Who dares to doubt the word of he who follows cows?

CADMUS
On some impulse, perhaps my own,

I seized the head of Ares' serpent—

BREAD
Dead by your hand.

CADMUS
What? Yes.

And smashed its teeth out on a rock, and then

I scattered them across the field in which I stood.

Intending that the monster never would,

Alive or dead, bring harm to anyone,

But here I met with even less success than I have found

In anything that I have done.

GLASS
So far.

27

FIREWOOD
Respect.

GLASS
For him?

He tends the fire.

(They go back to work.)

HARMONIA
Athena seems to have some faith in you.

CADMUS
Or interest, at least.

I know not why.

HARMONIA
I think I do.

(Pause. CADMUS is smitten.)

HEPHAESTUS
What next?

CADMUS
The serpent's teeth fell on the ground

Where I had scattered them.

(He enacts the story as he tells it.)

Not for an instant were they ever still,

For each and every one of them gave forth a sprout

Then grew in moments to a full-grown man, of sorts,

Extravagantly armed and full of war.

Each glared at each in thoughtless, silent rage.

Caught in the middle of this awful throng,

As slowly as the dawn, I tried to slip away.

My foot came up against a little stone,

Which made a scratching sound.

All heads began to turn,

And so, catching the pebble on my toe,

I flicked it through the air, like that.

It hit one warrior behind the ear.

He roared and turned,

Striking at those around him with his sword.

I dropped onto my knees.

Before I touched the ground it shook with battle on all sides.

I crawled away

And watched behind a friendly rock.

Each man then fought with all,

Until the flying sweat and blood bore down the dust

And showed that only five still stood,

Deep mired in flesh, too tired to strike a blow,

And silence fell.

(ARES enters above, again unseen.)

And when they raised their weary eyes

I stood upon my rock and, one by one,

They bent their knees and bowed to me.

GLASS

Most glorious.

BOWL

What next?

ARES

Go back to work.

(Most do. HARMONIA stands proudly but is either ignored or unseen by ARES. CADMUS stokes the fire. HEPHAESTUS leans on a staff, still cloaked and staring into the blaze.)

ARES *(Cont'd)*

Who is the shrivelled thing that does not work?

FIREWOOD
A stranger, sir, not of this house.

HARMONIA
Less strange than I, apparently.

FIREWOOD
He helped me bring the firewood in.

ARES
Well, cripple, are you warm enough to leave?

HEPHAESTUS
Almost too hot to stay.

ARES
Then leave, or labour, now.

HEPHAESTUS
Is there more wood to bring?

FIREWOOD
Always more wood.

(Exeunt FIREWOOD and HEPHAESTUS.)

ARES
Slave Cadmus.

CADMUS
Yes?

ARES
Defend yourself.

(ARES tosses a weapon to CADMUS. They fight. ARES toys with CADMUS who struggles desperately.)

ARES *(Cont'd)*
Not bad, if this were sport. Fight for your life.

Good. There.

I might have made that same mistake myself.

Give no more thought or energy to striking me.

It will not happen and would do no harm.

Defend yourself as if you could.

(ARES deftly disarms CADMUS and leaves him prostrate next to HARMONIA.)

ARES *(Cont'd)*
So, Prince of Tyre.

How is Europa? No, of course, you would not know.

You are a failure, a coward, and, I see, a braggart too.

It is, I think, both right and good that you are just a slave.

CADMUS *(Angered)*
I am not just a slave. *(HARMONIA touches CADMUS)*

I am your slave.

ARES
Remember that,

And you.

(To BOWL, who is hiding, as are the rest.)

BOWL
Sir?

ARES
Food, now, and drink.

BOWL
At once.

ARES
No. Now.

(Exit ARES.)

BOWL
Quickly now, girl,

Bring that and those.

This is not ready but he likes meat raw.

(BOWL scoops up several bottles of Nectar in the rush. GLASS watches this exchange carefully.)

31

WATER

I will bring those.

It is my job.

BOWL

You do not trust me, friend?

WATER

I do, to be yourself.

Trust me, you do not want the stuff.

BOWL

I do. I do trust you, I mean, of course.

(To CADMUS, with a glance at HARMONIA.)

You stay and feed your fires.

(Exeunt omnes but HARMONIA and CADMUS, carrying the morning feast up.)

CADMUS

No one should have to scurry so.

I swear, I could –

HARMONIA

Do what?

He is a god.

You are an unarmed man.

You have already weakened him.

CADMUS

You flatter me.

HARMONIA

I have no need, but I admit I may have some desire.

(She takes her hand from him.)

CADMUS

My words were not for him.

HARMONIA

I know.

But know this too. I want no slaves.

Sit with me, Cadmus, please.

(CADMUS sits. Enter HEPHAESTUS with more wood.)

CADMUS
Why do you say that I have weakened him?

HARMONIA
Because you have.

Why do you think he speaks to you that way?

He must believe that you might be a threat.

Why else would he explore your strength with small attacks?

CADMUS
I see.

HARMONIA
He also knows that you are not alone.

CADMUS
And yet I am.

I was.

HARMONIA
Your sacrifice was to Athena was it not?

And in her name you claimed a place

Sacred to him since time began.

CADMUS
I did.

HARMONIA
And he knows that.

He does not know how much Athena watches over you,

Nor why she cares.

CADMUS
No, nor do I.

33

HARMONIA

Then I suppose she does not want you to.

Gods choose, not always consciously,

When to be seen and what to see.

CADMUS

And does that mean you wanted to be seen?

HARMONIA

I did. I do. But I so rarely am.

CADMUS

I see you now and you are beautiful.

Of course you are.

Your mother is great Aphrodite.

HARMONIA

Yes. She does not see me any more than Ares does.

CADMUS

Oh, most un-natural.

HARMONIA

Her mother was the foam that rings the sea.

I doubt she taught her much of mothering.

HEPHAESTUS

Or of fidelity.

CADMUS

What did you say?

HEPHAESTUS

Harmonia is right.

The gods can choose not to be seen,

Or to be seen as beautiful, or terrible.

Look at me now.

(HEPHAESTUS reveals himself.)

HARMONIA

Hello Hephaestus.

34

What brings you here?

HEPHAESTUS
My wife is here.

HARMONIA
My mother, yes.

Will there be trouble now?

HEPHAESTUS
There is already.

I am not here to make things worse.

HARMONIA
Why then?

HEPHAESTUS
I hear that Aphrodite has been seen around this house

By mortal slaves.

CADMUS
I saw her so myself, and I am both.

HEPHAESTUS
Unless I make things right,

I cannot take my place among the gods.

I am humiliated, child.

HARMONIA
There are worse things.

HEPHAESTUS
Perhaps for you.

And so,

To bring an end to all this secrecy,

I made a special gift with my own hands.

HARMONIA
An offering of peace?

HEPHAESTUS
Something like that.

35

HARMONIA
A breath of dignity.

I wish you well.

HEPHAESTUS
Thank you, sweet child.

HARMONIA
I am no child.

Prince Cadmus, please, show me your fire.

CADMUS
I will....well ...she... (*Indicates FIREWOOD)*

HARMONIA
Hello.

FIREWOOD
Hello, Harmonia,

You are always a welcome sight.

HARMONIA
I am?

FIREWOOD
And may I say,

I see from here a woman worthy of the world.

HARMONIA
Thank you so much.

(Exit FIREWOOD.)

POSEIDON *(Off)*
Are you through here, Thebe, my dear?

HEPHAESTUS
I took the liberty of asking a few friends.

HARMONIA
I will withdraw.

Prince Cadmus, have you time to tell me stories now?

CADMUS

I have my life. I hope that is enough.

(They withdraw. Enter ATHENA and ERIS.)

ERIS

What room is this?

The bedchamber?

ATHENA

It is the kitchen.

ERIS

Oh, too bad.

POSEIDON

Uncomfortable and cold.

HEPHAESTUS

Come in and welcome, friends.

Eris, Athena, and Poseidon.

(To ERIS) And will your brother, Eros, join us soon?

I think my gift will suit his taste.

ERIS

Who knows? He pops up suddenly and unannounced.

HEPHAESTUS (*Laughs*)

He does. I think he might today.

He tends to be where Aphrodite is.

POSEIDON

So she is here?

HEPHAESTUS

She is.

ATHENA

Yes, well.

(Enter THEBE.)

Please, join us, Thebe, dear.

Here, by the fire.

POSEIDON
Yes do.

THEBE
Thank you Athena, no.

I tend to boil and blow away.

(THEBE explores the kitchen, appreciating everything.)

HEPHAESTUS *(He looks around.)*
Is there no one to serve these gods?

BOWL *(Off)*
I come. I come.

(BOWL enters hurriedly and sees them.)

Oh gods!

THEBE *(Tasting something delicious from a large pot or bowl)*
Four gods and me, I am a Naiad.

Thebe..

BOWL
Hello.

THEBE
Did you make this?

BOWL
I did.

THEBE
I thirst for the words to say how good this is.

BOWL
I always have a feast prepared.

If I do not, I die.

ERIS
A cup or two of nectar would be nice.

BOWL

A cup, or two, of course.

At once.

Where is the man?

THEBE
What man?

BOWL
Who pours.

I am a cook.

It is beyond my place.

THEBE *(Pointing at a bottle on a shelf)*
Then you must reach.

HEPHAESTUS
I will excuse myself.

My gift requires some final preparation.

I will return to join you for a cup. *(Exit within)*

BOWL
Oh, cups.

Forgive me…

THEBE
Bowls will do.

ATHENA
Serve out the drink and serve yourself as well.

BOWL
Oh, goddess, I cannot.

POSEIDON
Enough, man.

You cook here and so this fire is yours.

(POSEIDON pours.)

Here, drink.

39

BOWL
If you insist.

POSEIDON
I do.

(Hesitantly at first and then with increasing enthusiasm, BOWL drinks.)

BOWL
Of course, I never have, but—

Oh.

(A change of lighting or something suggests that the gods are now invisible.)

BOWL
Where did they go?

THEBE
They are still everywhere.

What is your name?

BOWL *(Shrugs)*
I am a slave.

You are a Naiad, yes?

THEBE
I am.

BOWL
Forgive me, but,

Exactly what....?

A goddess?

THEBE
No.

What is water in your work?

BOWL
Oh, well.

It flows through all of it:

Boiling and blending,

Cooking and cooling,

And cleaning after to begin again.

THEBE

I am a water spirit.

BOWL

A nymph?

THEBE

Naiad, I choose to say.

BOWL

Well, good for you.

THEBE

At times,

More often good for someone else.

BOWL

Oh.

May I ask…

You are so very beautiful.

And I have just been drinking nectar with the gods….

THEBE

Yes?

BOWL

Are you real?

THEBE

Not real enough, not yet.

I must confess,

I never noticed slaves before,

But I came early and have been ...

BOWL

Watching?

THEBE

Yes.

This strange warmth that I feel, is all that you?

BOWL

The fire is high.

THEBE

Yes, so I see.

Come here, please, friend.

Impress yourself on me.

(They dance. BOWL hums a tune which will fit the Drinking Song. They kiss beautifully.)

THEBE *(Cont'd)*

This is beyond eternity.

Bring that *(The nectar)*

And flow with me.

(As they dance off, ARES and APHRODITE enter in a very different kind of dance, passionate and combative. APHRODITE blindfolds ARES with a piece of her clothing, caresses him and slips away. He tears off the cloth and rushes off in hot pursuit. Enter CADMUS and HARMONIA.)

HARMONIA

What a delightful day.

What might this evening bring?

CADMUS

Oh, disappointment probably.

HARMONIA

Now why say that?

CADMUS

Where else but down from such a height?

HARMONIA

And why not flight?

CADMUS *(Entering into the rhyming game)*

With what for wings?

HARMONIA

A heart that sings.

CADMUS
Into the clouds above?

HARMONIA
Into the arms of…

CADMUS
What?

HARMONIA
Not yet.

Let me still fall a while.

(Enter CLOTH and BREAD. They fold bedding.)

CLOTH
So, please, take care.

No-one is safe in Ares' house.

BREAD
Thank you, I will.

How long have you been here?

CLOTH
I was born here, a slave, until you came.

(They laugh. Enter BLOOD.)

BLOOD
Come now, you two, and make the bed again.

(Exeunt BLOOD, CLOTH, and BREAD. Back to the fire. Enter BOWL in a hurry. He rushes to fetch a jug or bucket of water.)

BOWL
I am so sorry, love.

(Enter THEBE, weakened.)

THEBE
I never guessed.

Water is life to me and I have lost a river's worth most happily.

(She takes the jug or bucket. Perhaps she drinks it all. Perhaps she pours it over herself.)

BOWL
Better?

THEBE
Nothing is better than what we did just now.

BOWL
You flatter me. Poseidon is a god.

THEBE
He never touches me.

BOWL
I thought...

THEBE
Oh yes, he surges over, into me,

But...

Gods care for nothing but themselves,

And so he never really touches me, like that, like, you.

To him I am a decoration, nothing more.

BOWL
Yes.

I mean that you are very beautiful,

And kind, and young forever, think of that.

THEBE
I do. It is not true.

BOWL
Not true?

THEBE
I am young now,

And many mortal lives will come and go,

Including yours, before I age,

But, sure as rain reaches the sea,

I too will die, eventually.

Give me a kiss, my brief, sweet love. *(They kiss.)*

(Return Gods.)

POSEIDON
Ah, Thebe, there you are.

As you can see great Amphitrite is with me.

I am so cold.

(With a clumsy wink.)

Go fetch my shawl and find me with it.

THEBE
Sir.

(To BOWL.)

Meet me downstream?

(Bowl squeezes her hand. Exit Thebe.)

POSEIDON
More drink.

ERIS
We need to be prepared, I think.

BOWL *(Pouring)*
So, may I ask, what brings you here today, and in this way?

POSEIDON
You may.

AMPHITRITE
He may?

You keep strange company, Poseidon, dear.

ERIS
We come to hear the gossip of the gods.

ATHENA
We were invited, in Hephaestus' name,

To come and witness what we hope will be

A resolution to an awkward and embarrassing affair.

45

ERIS

That is the word.

(To BOWL) Your eyes and ears are sharp?

BOWL

Yes, I suppose.

ERIS

And I suppose you may have noticed Aphrodite in the house

Some nights, all night, and in the morning still.

BOWL

Ah… yes, perhaps, from time to time, more recently I think.

ATHENA

Remember, friend, that time moves strangely, if at all, to us.

As you see things, how long has this gone on?

BOWL

Oh, now. Well, let me see.

About as long as it would take to raise a child.

POSEIDON

As long as that?

BOWL

Yes, more or less.

ERIS

Perhaps exactly?

BOWL

Yes.

AMPHITRITE

A child? There is a child?

BOWL

Almost a woman now.

AMPHITRITE

This is not good.

(The world shifts yet again. BLOOD enters above.)

BLOOD

He wants more flesh!

Always more flesh.

Where is that cook?

And her, the other one, the one who—

Oh! Names really would be easier.

Ah! Listen to me, muttering blasphemy.

This is not good.

(Exit within.)

HARMONIA

Tell me another story, please.

(She picks up the bowl and spoon from earlier.)

And feed my heart.

CADMUS

But why the bowl?

Your spoon has scraped it clean and it is empty now.

HARMONIA

The more I scratch the more full it becomes.

CADMUS

Is this some magic only goddesses can do?

HARMONIA

It is just something that I do. See here?

This scratch is you.

CADMUS

(He looks.)

How so? I do not understand.

HARMONIA

This morning, I was… listening.

47

CADMUS
I know.

HARMONIA
I wanted every word.

At first I tried to draw the things.

This is your sister.

CADMUS
This is Zeus?

It looks more like a beetle than a bull.

HARMONIA
Be kind.

It is a record not a work of art and you speak quickly.

So, the marks grew simpler every time I put them down,

And some are hard to draw.

This is despair and this is fear.

CADMUS
And this is me? They look the same.

HARMONIA
It was your fear,

It bends and turns away.

CADMUS
And here I am again, but standing tall.

HARMONIA
Exactly, yes, and facing Ares' wrath.

CADMUS
There was, perhaps, a little fear.

And these are serpent soldiers are they not?

HARMONIA
They are.

CADMUS
Why this is magical.

48

They are like silent words.

HARMONIA
Not like. They are.

CADMUS
They are. These marks are words.

Think what this means.

HARMONIA
Wait. Let me mark this down,

What might it mean?

CADMUS
Let me see now, laws, records, poetry,

HARMONIA *(Scratching in the bowl)*
Yes, good. What else?

CADMUS
Well, messages.

HARMONIA

(She scratches in the bowl.)

Like that?

CADMUS

(He represents the shape in the bowl with his arm and hand.)

That shape is mine, now not afraid or proud but something else.

Something or someone else stands close beside.

(HARMONIA stands beside him. They both stare intently into the bowl. She makes another shape with her hand beside his.)

HARMONIA
Like that. No, *(She takes his hand in hers)* that.

CADMUS
It seems the bowl is full.

49

(World switch. Enter POSEIDON, blindfolded with a shawl, followed by THEBE. They play a kind of Blind Man's Bluff.)

POSEIDON
Thebe?

(She darts in and kisses him on his cheek, then darts away as he reaches for her.)

THEBE *(Bored, pretending to have fun)*
Poseidon.

(Repeat.)

POSEIDON
Land on me, dragonfly.

THEBE
I think you cheat.

Oh, very well.

(In keeping with the game, she darts in to kiss him on the cheek. He catches her and tries to force a far less innocent kiss on her.)

THEBE *(Struggles)*
Please, No.

POSEIDON
The surf is high and bends to break on you.

THEBE
Poseidon,

NO.

POSEIDON
I am a god, and you forget yourself.

THEBE
And I a Naiad, daughter of the Earth herself.

On her, and in her, I know now that mortals feel, and taste, and love

Deeper than any god,

Especially you.

POSEIDON

You flooded gutter slut.

How dare you—

Thebe. Stop.

I will not hurt you, dear,

I wish to apologize.

Come here.

(She approaches hesitantly.)

Please, look into my eyes.

I feel the truth of what you say.

(Removes the blindfold. He caresses her hair.)

I will leave you alone.

But first, just one last little kiss?

(She hesitates. He grabs her head.)

No one defies me, ever, anywhere,

And now, you never did.

(He forces open her mouth, and spits into it.)

You will remember none of this:

And... yes, forgetfulness now licks your lips

And no-one ever will recall your kiss.

(He throws her down. She wipes the spit from her face. Exit THEBE, lost and confused. Back to the fire. POSEIDON pouts.)

ERIS

You disagreed with great Poseidon.

Please, go on.

BOWL

I did? Oh dear.

(Pours himself a drink of nectar and drains it. Looking into the empty bowl he has a thought.)

BOWL

You, like the sea, are limitless, is that not so?

AMPHITRITE

Of course.

BOWL

And we are not.

And yet, because of that,

We all know things that you will never know.

ATHENA

Oh yes? such as?

BOWL

Well, what it means to live in fear of death.

Our lives are passionate because they are unsure.

That passion burns in every touch and breath.

(POSEIDON snorts.)

At any moment in a thousand ways it all may end.

Right now would be a good example.

I never have been more alive and, I suspect,

More close to death,

And that is life.

In short, we are alive, and you… well… you are not.

Did I say that?

ERIS

Oh yes you did.

BOWL

This is not good.

ATHENA

There is some truth in what you say.

BOWL

Oh yes? Which part?

52

ATHENA

We may be infinite but we are not complete, no more than you.

And I, for one, have much to learn.

ERIS

Well good for you.

ATHENA

If we knew everything what would we talk about?

AMPHITRITE

Eternally.

ATHENA

We see and know so much, but not always ourselves.

Observe, and hope to see.

(She reaches into the fire and holds a small, glowing coal in her hand. She squeezes it.)

This stone bears on one side the imprint of my thumb,

The other side is smooth.

I roll it in my empty bowl *(Does so)* and then…

(She overturns the bowl with the stone under it.)

Now. Who can say which side is facing up?

BOWL

Not I.

POSEIDON

This is mere foolishness.

ATHENA

Which side is up?

POSEIDON

I do not know.

ERIS

Again, Poseidon, please. I did not hear.

POSEIDON

I do not know which side is up.

53

ATHENA

You see? We can know anything,

But only notice what appeals to us, or irritates.

AMPHITRITE

Mostly we think about ourselves, eternally.

BOWL

I say the smooth.

ERIS

I say the marked.

Show us Athena, this is fun.

BOWL

Wait.

(To ERIS.)

If I am right, will you… watch over me?

ERIS

You know, I will, and all your family.

But if I win, then you serve me.

POSEIDON

Two sides of but one stone.

ERIS

Almost.

AMPHITRITE

Now, let us see.

ATHENA *(She lifts the bowl)*

The smooth side shows, my mark is underneath.

Our mortal friend has won this throw.

BOWL

And I have won the watchful gaze of this great goddess

Who in all things represents…

54

AMPHITRITE
Discord.

ERIS
I am your family's patron now.

BOWL
I think that I deserve a drink.

POSEIDON
I know I do.

ATHENA
You keep the stone for when you need to hope for chance.

(The worlds shift again. BOWL begins to speak in one and is heard in the other as the gods exit/vanish. Enter BLOOD.)

BOWL
I do. I will.

BLOOD
Who were you talking to?

BOWL
What do you want?

BLOOD
Like you, like all of us, I only want to serve the gods,

And this is what they think they want: *(continues with BOWL aside.)*

(APHRODITE. WATER, CLOTH, and BREAD enter variously and observe discretely during this scene.)

APHRODITE
I changed my mind.

(They are unsure whether or not to see her.)

I will not be ignored by anyone.

BOWL
It would be wasting beauty.

55

APHRODITE
You do know who I am?

BLOOD
We do.

APHRODITE
Then say my name.

BLOOD
Your name? I dare not, no.

BOWL
Your name is Aphrodite.

And you are the mistress in this house.

BLOOD
“Of” it, he meant to say.

WATER
How may we serve?

APHRODITE
Quickly and with discretion.

Bring fruits, both sweet and cold,

And other small, light foods as one might nibble on.

BOWL
While taking rest from vigorous exercise, of course.

GLASS
What did he say?

WATER
Be careful.

BOWL
Why?

And will you have some flesh with that?

APHRODITE
Why yes, perhaps.

56

BOWL

Of course you will.

Some seafood then,

And other little tasty things as might lend energy?

Some ice perhaps.

And shall we fill a bath?

APHRODITE

Yes, yes, you understand.

BOWL

I think I do.

APHRODITE *(To BLOOD)*

Bring it yourself, alone,

And leave it where your lord can find it

When he wakes.

BOWL

Beside the bed?

APHRODITE

Yes, yes, beside the bed.

BOWL

What else?

Fresh sheets, of course.

APHRODITE

Just bring the food.

(Exit APHRODITE.)

FIREWOOD

You made her blush.

BOWL

I did, indeed I did.

No dawn gives such a glow.

BLOOD

How dare you treat her so?

57

BOWL

How dare she treat her daughter so?

WATER

Someone must train these gods.

BLOOD

She is – they are –

BOWL

You are a man, remember that.

BLOOD

I do, and I remember every day to try to stay a man, alive.

WATER

Are you alive?

BLOOD

So far.

And I am proud to serve the gods.

BOWL

You are a slave in every corner of your heart.

BLOOD

But, but.

WATER

This Cadmus boy has shown us possibility.

BOWL

Yes, yes.

I need some rest.

And then a bath, I think.

BLOOD

But, but, the food?

BOWL

Oh, ask the girl.

She can cook well enough for them.

(Exit. The rest go about their business.)

BLOOD

But, but.. I will go polish spoons.

ARES' most private chamber.

(HEPHAESTUS is putting the finishing touches on his invisible trap. ERIS is appreciating it.)

ERIS

Well, well, what a surprise to find you here,

In Ares' private... place.

HEPHAESTUS

My wife is here.

ERIS

I know.

Through there, all wet and naked and yet –

(Noises off.)

HEPHAESTUS

Not with me.

ERIS

This is your gift then?

HEPHAESTUS

Yes.

ERIS

In its way, quite beautiful.

HEPHAESTUS

Why are you here?

ERIS

I am invoked.

59

(Noises off.)

HEPHAESTUS
That does not sound like discord.

ERIS *(Plucking a thread.)*
No, not yet.

(Exit HEPHAESTUS along the thread and ERIS follows. Enter CADMUS.)

CADMUS
Harmonia... are you... Anywhere?

Oh look at this.

What happens here? Does this?

(He explores the room in a lascivious pantomime.)

Or when the walls of beauty fall to passion's furious siege,

Does this? Or this?

(Enter HARMONIA.)

HARMONIA
Or this?

(CADMUS abruptly changes his actions.)

I was created here.

CADMUS
You were. Of course you were.

My temple then, and I must offer you my prostrate adoration.

Devoutly I must hurl my flesh into your fire.

HARMONIA
Well, if you must.

(They approach each other slowly but with passionate anticipation. With every move they are increasingly aware of ubiquitous minor irritations, like tiny flies or cobwebs. HARMONIA speaks at the absolutely last moment before they fully embrace.)

HARMONIA
Stop.

CADMUS
What?

HARMONIA
No motion and no touch.

CADMUS
At all?

HARMONIA
It is a trap.

CADMUS
Can you see it?

HARMONIA
Believe me, it is there.

CADMUS
Some sort of snare?

HARMONIA
More like a web,

But very strong and if we touch at all it closes tight.

(Pause.)

CADMUS
Could you try not to breathe so deeply then?

HARMONIA
Breathe in when I breathe out. (*They do)*

How does that feel?

CADMUS
Good. Fine.

And now?

HARMONIA
Something must be undone.

There is, I think some room to move below.

CADMUS
Under –

HARMONIA
Between.

(Staying as close as possible to maximum contact, but without any, CADMUS slips between HARMONIA'S legs.)

HARMONIA
Good, good, yes, closer, yes, And yet –

CADMUS
Never to touch.

(CADMUS is now behind her, very close and facing her. He twitches at something.)

HARMONIA
What now?

CADMUS
This is not fair.

Something is touching me.

HARMONIA
It is the web. (*He does as told)*

So, neither push nor pull away,

But slide around me, closer still, under my arm,

Until you are again in front of me.

Well done.

CADMUS
Thank you.

HARMONIA
Thank you. (*Pause. Breathing.)*

CADMUS
What now?

HARMONIA
The knot may just now slip both ways.

Go back exactly as you came to me. *(He tries)*

No. Stop again. You cannot vary in the least detail.

CADMUS
Patience, my love. I am a man.

HARMONIA
I know.

Remember this “My flesh into your fire”?

(He remembers the motions.)

Reach more. Yes. “Adoration”

Good “My temple”

Yes, almost. Good.

Yes. Very good.

Here I came in.

What did you do before?

CADMUS
Not much.

HARMONIA
There was something... complex, I see it in the lines.

However small, you need to do it backwards now.

CADMUS
In front of you?

HARMONIA
What did you do? Something about a siege?

CADMUS
Just this.

(CADMUS re-enacts his lascivious movements from when he entered the chamber, in reverse.)

HARMONIA
All that?

CADMUS
Just that.

63

HARMONIA
So quickly though.

CADMUS
Harmonia, I am so sorry, I –

HARMONIA
For what? And why?

You are now free.

CADMUS
Of what? Of you?

HARMONIA
Yes. No. Unless you wish to be.

You are no longer tangled in a net of golden threads

So fine they might escape the notice of a god,

If he, or she, were… unaware.

CADMUS
Distracted?

HARMONIA
Yes, oh Cadmus yes.

(Pause.)

CADMUS
Is there no way that we…?

HARMONIA
All ways go there from here, I hope.

But just not yet, not now.

The knot would slip and bind us tight as one.

CADMUS
I ask no more.

HARMONIA
Never to move, eternally.

For me at least.

Death and decay and gravity

Would spill you out eventually.

CADMUS
I see.

BLOOD *(Off)*
This is the chamber, father of all gods.

I think you may find them through there,

CADMUS
What shall we do?

HARMONIA
Reach with your softest hairs until you find a thread.

(He does.)

HARMONIA
Now follow it toward the wall, *(He does)*

And hide.

(HARMONIA and CADMUS withdraw into separate shadows. Enter ZEUS and HERA who look about.)

HEPHAESTUS (*Entering*)
ZEUS! HERA! Stop! And do not move!

(Enter ERIS, POSEIDON, AMPHITRITE, and ATHENA.)

ERIS
Not something I would choose to say.

ZEUS *(Examines the trap.)*
Is this your work?

HERA
Of course it is.

Just look at it.

AMPHITRITE
And do you mean to catch some animal in this?

ZEUS
Too fine for insects yet too strong for bear.

HEPHAESTUS
Indulge me, sir.

Great Hera, mother, help me now.

HERA
Perhaps, but why?

HEPHAESTUS
I think I have some claims in here. My Aphrodite –

HERA
Yes, we know.

ZEUS
What is all that to me?

ATHENA
He asks for justice, sir.

I hope.

ZEUS
What would you have us do?

HEPHAESTUS
Nothing, for now, but be unseen and see.

POSEIDON
This is the entertainment, then?

HEPHAESTUS
It is.

ERIS
Yes, good.

ZEUS
What do you think, my dear?

HERA
We shall see.

It may do you some good to witness infidelity.

ZEUS
My love –

HERA
Not now.

AMPHITRITE
They come.

(The gods withdraw to the edges of a diminished light. ARES and APHRODITE enter.)

APHRODITE
Is this merely a truce or is it peace?

ARES
Is there a difference? There always is more war.

APHRODITE
Oh, is there now?

ARES
Always.

(They circle each other with ferocious passion.

At the moment just before an act of spectacular, perhaps gymnastic, sexuality they become immobilized by HEPHAESTUS' trap. They struggle… SND: Discordant strings. Blackout or equivalent.)

End of Act One

Act 2

(The scene is exactly as before the intermission except that the stage is well lit and the web/trap/harness that holds ARES and APHRODITE suspended flagrantly can be seen. They struggle vainly.)

APHRODITE
Hephaestus!?

HEPHAESTUS
Yes, my love?

(ARES bellows and struggles wildly.)

APHRODITE
Ares! Stop! (*He does.)*

HEPHAESTUS
And so, my friends, this is my show. *(He bows.)*

ERIS *(Applauding)*
I like it very much.

APHRODITE
Eris?

ERIS
Yes?

ARES
Who else is here?

ATHENA
I think you ought to let them go.

HERA
And I agree.

APHRODITE
Hello Athena, Hera, and thank you.

ZEUS
I wish to see a little more.

68

ARES
And mighty Zeus.

POSEIDON *(looking more closely at the trussed pair, as if in an art gallery.)*
Yes, let us all digest this tasty crumb of time.

APHRODITE
Poseidon, naturally.

AMPHITRITE
And me.

POSEIDON
Look now, from here those look like wings.

ERIS
And so does that, but upside down.

ZEUS
They are a mighty couple, are they not?

ERIS
A mightier coupling I have never seen.

APHRODITE
Hephaestus. Please.

HEPHAESTUS
I gave myself to you.

And you, it seems, but lent yourself to me.

And now my heart has dried and curled so tight

It is not even empty anymore.

AMPHITRITE
How sad.

HEPHAESTUS
And all I want is what I have right now.

ARES
I will dismember you in every way throughout eternity!

HEPHAESTUS
Tell us, oh god of wasted blood and pointless pain,

How do you like her now, all harnessed like a cow?

HARMONIA
No more.

APHRODITE
Whose voice is that?

HARMONIA
Do you not know your daughter yet?

APHRODITE
Oh shame, that you should see me so.

HARMONIA
Shame to be so.

CADMUS
And shame to keep her so and leer and laugh at anyone.

ATHENA
I do not leer.

HARMONIA
You do not help.

ATHENA
I do not interfere.

HERA
Now, now, Athena dear –

CADMUS
Shame on you all.

ZEUS
Did someone speak?

HERA
Who dares to interrupt?

CADMUS
Who dares to share in such disgrace?

ZEUS
Be still now, all of you.

You are Harmonia?

HARMONIA
Yes.

ZEUS
You are, I see, a goddess grown.

AMPHITRITE
And yet unknown to most of us.

ZEUS
Much of your mother's beauty is in you.

ERIS
And much of Ares' is in Aphrodite still.

HERA
Please, Zeus, some dignity.

ZEUS
Hephaestus, let them go.

HEPHAESTUS
I will, my lord, but first—

ZEUS
No. Now.

(The bonds release, dropping ARES and APHRODITE on the floor.)

Get up like gods.

ARES
Thank you, great Zeus.

And welcome to my home.

APHRODITE
Excuse me, friends, a moment, please. I must retire. *(Exit)*

ARES
And so must I. *(Exit)*

ERIS
Such modesty.

71

HEPHAESTUS
Almost humility.

ZEUS
Now.

Who are you?

CADMUS
My name is Cadmus, sir. Son of King Agenor.

HERA
You are a man?

HARMONIA
He is.

CADMUS
And brother of Europa, whom you knew.

AMPHITRITE
Europa?

ZEUS
Who?

CADMUS
My sister, taken from our home by you.

You wore the form of bull but it was you.

ZEUS
A lion I recall, also a swan…

HERA
Really? A bull?

CADMUS
Europa, taken, used, and left, no-one knows where.

By you, my lord.

ZEUS
Perhaps.

CADMUS
You cannot say?

72

ZEUS

I do not care enough to know.

CADMUS

You have destroyed her life, our family.

HERA

Oh, probably.

ZEUS

Tell me, do you recall each grape you burst between your teeth

When you were young?

But on your tongue the taste of grapes,

All grapes, remains eternally.

So are these little fruits to me: all one, forever sweet.

CADMUS

My whole youth was a quest to bring her home.

ZEUS

All wasted then.

She could be anywhere,

But if she did know me,

She is no more herself, and so is lost to you.

POSEIDON

How sad, their little lives just wash away.

CADMUS

Not mine, my lord.

I am the greatest man who ever lived.

ERIS

Oh yes?

CADMUS

For no-one, man or god, will ever have as much as I.

Know all forever and for evermore,

Harmonia is my love.

73

HARMONIA
I am, and he is mine.

HERA
Oh dear.

ERIS
Oh better still.

ZEUS
No, she is not and that is that.

POSEIDON
Up until now you have been only arrogant and rude.

But this is madness.

ZEUS
It is not possible.

ATHENA
What do you mean, she is your love?

HERA
How can that be?

CADMUS
It is. She is.

ZEUS
She is immortal, on Olympus born and you –

HARMONIA
Are not.

He is a mortal man,

And is in every way

All that I want or need to walk with in the world.

AMPHITRITE
Can anyone deserve such love?

CADMUS
I must be worthy of her love,

For she believes I am and so it must be true.

HARMONIA

I know this man and he knows me.

He looks at me.

AMPHTRITE

Yes, so I see.

HARMONIA

Not one of you has yet acknowledged me.

ATHENA

Until today.

HERA

We did not know.

HARMONIA

You did not choose to know.

He saw.

In him I see humility and courage, fear and faith.

I see a man to have.

But more,

I see him look at me and know he sees a woman.

POSEIDON

Goddess.

HERA

Both.

HARMONIA

And all I am, I freely give into a bond of love with him.

AMPHITRITE

Be careful child. Love, given, often fades.

ZEUS

I might just scratch him like a flea and there,

He never was.

HERA

It is not natural.

75

CADMUS
And no god has a taste for that.

ERIS
Ha!

ZEUS
I must be mad. Poking this tiny splinter in my toe.
Why do I even notice them?

ATHENA
Before you came, my lord, we shared a drink with one below,
And in his shallow bowl we glimpsed the light of something new.

ERIS
Not really.

POSEIDON
No.

AMPHITRITE
It was amusing though.

ZEUS
You see?
Athena stirs their nests to watch them scurry and rebuild.
Your father stomps,
And I –
I too have toyed with them,

HERA
From time to time.

ZEUS
And you are free, Harmonia,
To please yourself in any way.
This “love” is, I know, a glorious thing,
But it will fade and be replaced.

HERA
A hundred thousand times.

AMPHITRITE

Trust me, Harmonia, I know with all I am.

If gods grow cold, how sooner will a man?

ZEUS

Play with him if you want,

Consume him, share him, give his flesh away,

But never talk and listen less.

Your place is with the gods.

There are no limits, low or high, to beauty such as yours.

HERA

Just ask your mother, dear, she knows.

ZEUS

Come here to me, sweet thing.

You are completely blameless in my eyes.

The crime against us all is his,

To dare –

CADMUS

To love?

ZEUS

Silence, splinter.

Your guilt is greater than you are.

POSEIDON

What punishment does he deserve?

ERIS

I have a thought.

I say we let her have him, here and now.

I think that he would be consumed.

ZEUS

Intriguing.

HERA

No.

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ZEUS
What else?

HEPHAESTUS
My golden game could play with him.

POSEIDON
Oh yes?

ERIS
Reverse itself and slowly pull him every way

Until he is the size he thinks he is.

HEPHAESTUS
Or tears into his smallest parts.

ERIS
More likely that.

POSEIDON
Yes, that is good.

ATHENA
It is?

ERIS
It would be fun to see.

And that is good enough for me.

HERA
So? Do it then.

You watch a brave man die for being so.

I will not watch Olympus being low.

ZEUS
Some things are still unworthy of a god.

ERIS
Such as?

(Exit HERA, followed by ATHENA and AMPHITRITE.)

POSEIDON
Teach us about unworthiness, great Zeus.

(Aside to the others.)

See how the greatest appetite now preaches taste.

(The power of ZEUS' mounting anger begins to be felt. Distant thunder for example.)

ZEUS

What did he say?

POSEIDON

Less deaf on Hera's side, I see.

ZEUS

How dare you mock me so?!

(If thunder before, then lightning now.)

ERIS

He often does.

ZEUS

He does!!?

His long last wish will be that gods could die.

(ZEUS and POSEIDON begin to transform from human form into storms etc. CADMUS and HARMONIA lose each other and exit separately.)

Elsewhere in the palace

(POSEIDON's and ZEUS' voices ring out from the depths of backstage. Enter HERA and ATHENA. ATHENA, with a gesture, turns down the audio of ZEUS and POSEIDON.)

HERA

Thank you. Athena.

ATHENA

Yes, of course.

HERA

So, this is happening.

HARMONIA (*off)*

Cadmus, my love!?

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ATHENA
Has happened, I would say.

POSEIDON *(Off)*
Oh listen now and hear a hot breeze dust the sea.

ZEUS *(Off)*
Which sprawls beneath the furious sun.

CADMUS *(Off)*
Harmonia? Are you there?

HERA
Yes. So?

ATHENA
We might help him to be—

HERA
Not worthy?

POSEIDON *(Off)*
So roars the wrong end of a bull.

CADMUS (*Off)*
Where are you love?

ATHENA
Better prepared.

(Enter AMPHITRITE.)

AMPHITRITE
For what?

(ENTER ERIS.)

HERA
For love?

ERIS
Good luck with that.

ZEUS *(Off)*
Enough!

POSEIDON *(Off)*
Enough of you.

(Enter APHRODITE.)

ATHENA
Well, for Harmonia, then.

ZEUS *(Off)*
You sewer of the world.

POSEIDON *(Off)*
Spent gas.

HARMONIA *(Off)*
Stay still and I will come to you.

APHRODITE
And she for him.

HERA
This is your fault.

APHRODITE
I do my best.

ERIS
I must admit, I am impressed.

There is so little left for me to do.

ZEUS *(Off)*
You bog.

POSEIDON *(Off)*
Cold ash.

ZEUS *(Off)*
Hot puke.

POSEIDON *(Off)*
Be careful, Zeus!!

ERIS
Chaos complete.

81

HERA
Not while I rule.

(To the others.)

Please deal with this.

(Exit the goddesses separately, except ATHENA, who turns up the volume a bit and listens.)

POSEIDON *(Off)*
You blistered pisser!

ZEUS *(Off)*
Seeping wound!

POSEIDON *(Off)*
Zeus!

ZEUS *(Off)*
Poseidon!

CADMUS *(off)*
Harmonia!

ATHENA
Cadmus.

(Enter CADMUS.)

CADMUS
My Love!

ATHENA
She will find you.

Before she does, I have a gift for you.

CADMUS
You do?

ATHENA
Do this: trust me, but follow Zeus, and watch him carefully.

(ATHENA allows ZEUS more volume.)

ZEUS *(Off)*
Fish shit soup!

(CADMUS hesitates.)

ATHENA
And do it now.

(Exit CADMUS into a particularly violent lightning/thunder blast. Enter THEBE, wandering. ATHENA watches her.)

ATHENA
Bright Thebe, are you lost?

THEBE
Help me, Athena, I am changed.

ATHENA
Yes, so I see.

Oh, Poseidon, no.

(She looks carefully at Thebe.)

You have lost much, and yet you glisten, child.

But no, you are with child.

THEBE
I cannot be.

ATHENA
You are.

A boy, no girl, no, boy again.

How strange.

Sweet thing, what have you done?

THEBE
Wait, I remember now.

At least, my body does.

ATHENA
Yes, so I see.

You glow with pleasure now.

THEBE
It was much more than that.

ATHENA
So, who?

THEBE
They have no names, apparently.

(ATHENA turns down the volume.)

ATHENA
A slave?

How very interesting.

I might have thought a prince, perhaps, to found a dynasty,

But this?

THEBE
A child grows in me now.

That changes everything.

(ATHENA touches THEBE's belly.)

ATHENA
It does.

Hello, Tiresias.

So this is how you find your way into the world.

Wait? Does Poseidon know?

Pity the father if he does.

May I suggest that you return to your spring.

THEBE
I fear it will be changed as well.

A serpent I recall, and then such blood and dust,

I could not stay.

I slipped away and ran down to the sea,

Where, I suppose, Poseidon noticed me.

And then... How strange.

I feel like I was never here.

ATHENA
You have already changed the world.

THEBE
Come visit me?

ATHENA
Of course.

(Exit THEBE. Enter HARMONIA alone.)

HARMONIA
Cadmus?

Poor boy, to be so lost in such a place.

(Enter ARES.)

ARES
Harmonia. I want a word with you.

HARMONIA
The great god Ares speaks at last and no-one hears.

ARES
I am your father.

HARMONIA
Oh?

Go back and say it to me every day since I was born,

Then you might say it now.

Leave me alone.

You always have.

ARES
I am –

HARMONIA
Nothing to me.

ARES
I see.

85

HARMONIA
Give me consistency, if nothing else.

ARES
And is that what you want?

HARMONIA
It is.

ARES
Then let me give you this.

Good bye.

(ARES begins to leave.)

HARMONIA
Father.

ARES
Yes?

HARMONIA
I have to go.

(The world shifts yet again and she finds herself with APHRODITE.)

APHRODITE
To where, Harmonia?

HARMONIA
You also wish to speak to me at last?

APHRODITE
Harmonia, I am –

HARMONIA
I know exactly what you are.

APHRODITE
You know, and now have seen,

The least and worst of me.

HARMONIA
The shadow shows the substance well enough.

APHRODITE
This love of yours,

It sounds so beautiful.

HARMONIA
It is.

APHRODITE
I am the goddess of that too.

HARMONIA
All love is love of you?

APHRODITE
Something like that.

HARMONIA
It all goes in and none comes out?

APHRODITE
You are my child.

HARMONIA
And what is that to you?

An awkward memory?

An irritating ornament?

APHRODITE
I love you, daughter.

HARMONIA
Ha.

I do not think you know the meaning of the word.

APHRODITE
That is absurd.

HARMONIA
Is it?

APHRODITE
You are confused by love, by me, in fact.

HARMONIA
Proud of my love, ashamed of you, but not confused.

APHRODITE
I see it now.

You pride yourself on this,

This flirting with mortality.

HARMONIA
I do not flirt.

APHRODITE
Everyone flirts.

HARMONIA
Life is no game to them.

They are alive.

APHRODITE
And then they die.

HARMONIA
And that is why it means so much

To share the one brief life they have with someone else.

Because you have no limits you cannot give all that you are.

Because you will not die you cannot really love.

APHRODITE
Can you?

(APHRODITE is replaced by ERIS.)

HARMONIA
Yes?

ERIS
Nothing.

I watch and I enjoy.

(Another shift and HARMONIA is with AMPHITRITE.)

HARMONIA

What? You as well?

Does all Olympus wait to lecture me?

AMPHITRITE

No lecture, dear.

A story, though, if you will hear.

HARMONIA

Yes, Amphitrite. Please forgive my tone.

My anger is my own and not for you.

AMPHITRITE

I think I understand.

Once, far away in time, I too was loved as you are now.

A glorious god pursued my heart most passionately.

He sent to me a boiling sea of dolphins

Singing gloriously, and I was swept away.

Only the deepest waters of the world could keep

Our fire from consuming us entirely.

But now only the ash remains

To stain the wet sands of far distant shores.

Love knows no immortality, and all love will, eventually,

Grow old, and cold, and die.

HARMONIA

I know you mean me well,

And tell me this most painful tale

To save me pain, but –

AMPHITRITE

No, no. Sweet child.

Despite the sadness and the loss, I swear

That I would do it all again.

Just know that it will end.

Go, love your man,

89

And cherish every moment while you can.

HARMONIA
Goddess, I will.

(Exeunt.)

The kitchen

(Enter BOWL, clean and rested. He hums the tune from before and dances into his duties. He pours himself a cup of Nectar. His hum includes the line…)

BOWL
Raise up your cups, and another one, please.

(Enter THEBE. She watches and then applauds.)

BOWL *(Cont'd)*
Hello.

THEBE
Do you remember me?

BOWL
Do I remember you?

Remember you?

The taste, the smell, the touch,

The sight and sound and thought of you

Flood through my too hot blood

And wash my will away.

And I will always –

THEBE
No.

BOWL
No? It is too late for no.

THEBE
Perhaps.

Who knows?

I taste something on my lips.

Forgetfulness, imagine that?

It has its own distinct deliciousness.

Come here and kiss me beautifully.

BOWL

And when I do will I forget..?

THEBE

Not when,

That bubble needs to be,

When we exhale we may just sigh away ... all this.

BOWL

But… why?

THEBE

Nothing is perfect, love, until it is complete.

(They kiss. A long and lovely moment.)

BOWL

Hello.

THEBE

Goodbye.

(Awkward moment. Exit THEBE. Enter FIREWOOD.)

FIREWOOD

There you are.

BOWL

I am, my blaze.

FIREWOOD

Have you been lost or hiding, love?

BOWL

Neither, I think.

FIREWOOD

Whatever. Kiss me now.

91

(They do. She sniffs him.)

BOWL
What do you smell?

FIREWOOD
Not food nor fire.

More like a stream... Who is it, then?

BOWL
My blaze! I never, I—

FIREWOOD
I make no claim on you,

But do not lie to me.

BOWL
I swear—

FIREWOOD
No.

Go cook.

I need to chop something.

(They busy themselves in opposite corners. Enter BREAD, and then BLOOD.)

BLOOD
You are alone.

BREAD
Just for the moment.

BLOOD
Why?

Who are you waiting for?

BREAD
No-one.

But everyone comes here eventually,

Especially in such a storm, they seek the warmth.

92

BLOOD *(Too close)*
We all seek warmth.

BREAD
What do you want with me?

BLOOD
Just that.

To be with you.

BREAD
What? No.

BLOOD
But, why?

BREAD
If you had looked at me and dared to see someone a bit like you,

We might be friends,

And friends who feel each other's fire

Might blaze together.

But not this.

This is just smutty smoke.

BLOOD
I did not dare...

BREAD
Go poke the fire and let me be.

(Enter BOWL, CLOTH and GLASS.)

CLOTH
And what is this?

BREAD
He did not watch his step.

BLOOD
Nor see, quite soon enough, what lay before me,

BREAD
So he tripped, with hands outstretched,

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BLOOD
But she caught me before I fell.

BOWL
Peace, then.

FIREWOOD
I see.

CLOTH
You do?

FIREWOOD
I see an error made, some new respect,
And in the dust, some seeds of trust.

GLASS
You do?

BOWL
I see a heap of dirty bowls, a fire burned low,
A pile of wood that could not hide a mouse.

(They return to work. Enter CADMUS and then HARMONIA, above.)

HARMONIA
Oh, there you are, at last.

CADMUS
And I will be, at last.

HARMONIA
What do you mean?

CADMUS
Just let me cool my eyes.

(He gazes at her.)

I saw... A slice, I think, of everything.

(He seems lost.)

HARMONIA
I am here, listening.

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CADMUS
Do you remember when Poseidon warred with Zeus?

HARMONIA
Just now?

CADMUS
For you, perhaps, but not for me.

Athena had me follow Zeus—

He blazed.

Splinters of immortality tore through my eyes.

I saw us curled around each other at the end of time.

This, we, our love, is more than everything that happens between now and then.

HARMONIA
It is. I see it too.

CADMUS
Of course you do.

(Enter WATER.)

WATER
The house is full of gods.

There are not doors enough for all their glorious entrances.

BOWL
I know, I know.

GLASS
You do?

BOWL
Not long ago I sat and drank sweet nectar here

With Eris, Amphitrite, great Poseidon, and Athena too.

And someone else, I think…

GLASS
What was it like?

BOWL
Nothing I know.

Inviting, frightening, like life itself.

(An exchange of looks.)

WATER
One cup for each.

BOWL
For now.

FIREWOOD
Sit, friends.

GLASS
For now.

(They sit around the fire and taste the Nectar.)

FIREWOOD
Oh my.

WATER
My tongue is blushing.

GLASS
And my stomach smiles.

BOWL
Almost enough to make me envy them.

They are all here, in the house.

WATER
And yet I do not think I saw Poseidon, no, nor Zeus.

CADMUS
They are at war.

WATER
Oh dear.

CLOTH
Feel that?

BLOOD
Olympus shakes and worlds fall on us.

BREAD
What can we do?

HARMONIA
Please, look at me.

I am Harmonia.

(They raise their eyes.)

BOWL
We know.

CADMUS
So see her now and see the woman whom I love

And who loves me.

WATER
Oh dear.

BLOOD
This is all wrong.

All will collapse.

BREAD
No it will not.

This is a good thing here.

BOWL
Of course it is.

BREAD
Just look at them.

CLOTH
How so?

FIREWOOD
They are in love.

GLASS
Yes, very nice. Go on.

CADMUS
We recently have left, well, fled, a meeting with the other gods,

97

HARMONIA

And now must leave this house where I was born,

This maze of dungeons where I played alone.

CADMUS

And try to find some shadow or some crack

Where we can live un-noticed by the gods.

BREAD

And love most shamelessly.

We wish you well.

BLOOD

The gods will crush us all for this.

BREAD

Perhaps they will forget.

(Enter HEPHAESTUS, unseen.)

BLOOD

Small chance of that.

GLASS

They do not like to be annoyed.

BOWL

Our great grand children's live will bear the blow of this.

CADMUS

There is, you see, no way but out into the world.

HARMONIA

To face whatever comes.

CLOTH

What? Run away?

BREAD

Escape.

CADMUS

A chance, however small,

Is more than we have here.

WATER

I do not know.

CADMUS

I know what freedom is.

BLOOD

You should be proud and glad to live among the gods.

CADMUS

As slaves?

BLOOD

As anything.

No king down there will ever know the glories,

That you seek to throw away.

This is Olympus.

BREAD.

Yes.

The only home that you have ever known, I think?

BLOOD

What? Yes.

And what of that?

BREAD

Cadmus and I have lived “down there”,

Breathed the sea air and tasted freedom’s spring.

If now, today, there is the slightest hope I can return,

I will, or die.

GLASS

And so will I.

BLOOD

But, but… If I say no?

BREAD

Say what you will. We go.

(The “storm” fades with a last long roll of thunder.)

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FIREWOOD
The moment comes.

BREAD
So let us save ourselves,

For no one else is likely to.

WATER
Alright then, all together, equal, free.

GLASS
What have we got to lose?

What can they really do?

HEPHAESTUS *(Appearing to them)*
Oh, you might be surprised.

You scraps.

Go back to all the pointless things you do

Before I beat you into something I can use.

(The Un-named hide in their duties. CADMUS is bound and gagged invisibly.)

HARMONIA
Leave him alone.

HEPHAESTUS
What? Without you? My child.

HARMONIA
I am no child, not anyone's, and never yours.

HEPHAESTUS
The one warmth left within my crippled heart

Is that I wish you were.

HARMONIA
Your child?

My whole heart hopes whatever wound has bent you so

Prevents you ever having one.

HEPHAESTUS
Your mother –

HARMONIA

Shared herself with you and then with Ares, so?

I have more cause by far than you to hate them both,

But what you did to them up there…

I pitied you before, now I am sad to know that you exist.

HEPHAESTUS

Be careful, little girl.

I do exist, and I suggest you never mock me so.

HARMONIA

You mock yourself.

HEPHAESTUS

I know a thing or two about revenge.

HARMONIA

About humiliation too.

I have to go.

HEPHAESTUS

You do.

But first,

Observe that I am much reformed.

HARMONIA

How so?

HEPHAESTUS

See what a loyal god am I, devoted to propriety,

Who apprehends such desperate fugitives.

Come, gods!

See! Here they are!

I have them here.

(Enter ZEUS and POSEIDON as if they had both been napping over a game of chess.)

ZEUS

You have whom where?

POSEIDON

And why the noise?

We have had quiet for so long I ... I...

ZEUS

And I, old friend, and I.

(To HEPHAESTUS) And you, what have you found that needs this noise?

HEPHAESTUS

Harmonia and Cadmus.

POSEIDON

Who?

(HEPHAESTUS releases CADMUS who falls to the ground. HARMONIA rushes to him and hold him tenderly.)

ZEUS *(Turning to go)*

Oh them. Well done. Good night.

HEPHAESTUS

But Sir, you were so furious.

POSEIDON

He was? At whom?

HARMONIA

Largely at you.

(ZEUS and POSEIDON laugh together at this.)

ZEUS

Impossible.

POSEIDON

Hello Harmonia.

How is your mother, dear?

HEPHAESTUS

This man is Cadmus, kitchen slave who dared…

That was the word you used, immortal Zeus,

Who dared to love this goddess, young Harmonia…

ZEUS

Wait, I recall now, yes.

Did any real harm result when all was done?

HEPHAESTUS

He lived his little life when he offended you,

And yet he lives before us now.

POSEIDON

Oh, yes. I see. (*He doesn't)*

HEPHAESTUS

This is that crisis still.

What will you do?

ZEUS

Why, contemplate, of course.

(Long pause. ATHENA enters.)

ATHENA

May I suggest?

ZEUS

Oh, yes,

Please do, Athena, dear.

ATHENA

This is the perfect opportunity

For you to demonstrate your wisdom,

Judgment, power, and love.

ZEUS

Of course it is.

Go on.

ATHENA

Give him, for your amusement, if for nothing else,

A fair and open trial.

(Enter the other gods.)

103

POSEIDON
A what?

ATHENA
You be the judge, great Zeus.

HERA
An excellent idea.

ZEUS
Of course I will.

HEPHAESTUS
It might lend colour to his punishment.

So, if I may, I will present the arguments against the prisoner.

ZEUS
You may.

And you Athena volunteer, I think, to undertake defence.

ATHENA
I do.

ZEUS
Good then.

Shall we begin?

ATHENA
We shall.

HEPHAESTUS
From the beginning then.

My Aphrodite –

ATHENA
Is not here on trial.

HEPHAESTUS
Of course not, no.

Her trial was long ago.

When she abandoned me and fled into great Ares' bed,

When she deceived me so –

ATHENA

We who are infinite carve out our shapes with lies.

We lie in words, in actions, and each other's beds.

ERIS

Well, most of us.

HEPHAESTUS

And take revenge.

But we are gods and he is not.

POSEIDON *(Aside, to ARES)*

That was the issue, yes.

A most intriguing case as I recall.

ZEUS

Go on.

HEPHAESTUS

This cuts the root of everything.

How can he claim equality with her?

By definition she is infinitely more.

CADMUS

Of course she is.

HARMONIA

Sweet Cadmus. No.

ATHENA

Wise Zeus and patient gods.

How small a thing time is.

May I now have a crumb of it

To chew with Cadmus and Harmonia?

(ZEUS nods.)

ZEUS

When you return let one voice speak.

(ATHENA takes CADMUS and HARMONIA aside.)

105

ATHENA
What do you want?

HARMONIA *(Turning to CADMUS)*
To be with him, in everything.

ATHENA
At any cost?

HARMONIA
Yes, anything.

ATHENA
So speaks a goddess.

Then we must make it so.

Do you trust me?

HARMONIA
We do.

ATHENA
Then follow me along a path you do not know.

It has a turn or two,

But I believe it just may take you where you seek to go.

HARMONIA
We follow hand in hand.

ATHENA
Hang on.

(To ZEUS) My lord.

ZEUS
Hephaestus, carry on.

HEPHAESTUS
Please, let the mortal speak.

I cannot better demonstrate his crimes than he.

ZEUS *(To CADMUS)*
Go on.

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ATHENA

Yes Cadmus, have your say.

(HARMONIA stands beside CADMUS and turns to listen to him.)

CADMUS

Not only is she more, and better,

Wiser, kinder, and more brave

Than I can hope to be

When I have spent a pocketful of little lives under her star,

She has the dignity and grace, the generosity to look at me,

Frail, ragged, scrap of living stuff;

She has the powers to see

In this not quite yet rotten flesh

Something to love.

ATHENA

Is this bold impudence?

He worships her.

Is that not right?

POSEIDON

Well, so it seems to me.

ATHENA

Do you not think it is, Harmonia?

HARMONIA

Athena…

ATHENA

You are a goddess, dear.

And here, at last, your peers are listening,

So do not fear to say exactly what you think and feel.

Is Cadmus right to love you as he says?

HARMONIA

I must say no.

107

CADMUS
Harmonia.

POSEIDON
I did not hear.

HARMONIA
Again, and always, love, I must say no.

It is not so.

CADMUS
But, love –

HARMONIA
That is not how I know your love to be,

Nor is it so to me.

Whatever world we hope to share

There is no place in it for what you have described.

Not there, not here *(She places his hand on her heart)*

And both so full of what is true.

Trust in the truth, Athena said,

And we agreed.

So let us do it now.

HEPHAESTUS.
Is this what being worshipped means to you?

He touches her: her hand, her hair, her heart.

He looks at her and speaks to her.

He interrupts. He disagrees.

But worse.

He does all this and then he dies.

He dies.

He rots and he is gone,

And with him goes some part of her, however small,

And it dies too.

Do you not see?

This is a crack in immortality.

ATHENA

A crack? Or more?

This is just something new.

New is the edge of more.

HEPHAESTUS

“The edge of more”

It sounds almost like truth.

What does it mean?

ZEUS

Not much to me.

Oh, cracks and edges,

Stuff and words, always more words.

I am, of course, of all the gods, most patient,

Yet my anger warms to hear you two.

Harmonia, come here to me.

(She does.)

Look in my eyes.

(She does.)

What do you see.

HARMONIA

The sun, but through the darkness of a thundercloud,

A star through that.

A galaxy..

The sun again. Then all again at once.

I see –

(She breaks away.)

ZEUS

Now look in his.

HARMONIA
Most willingly.

(Harmonia looks CADMUS in the eyes.)

ZEUS
Now, do you see eternity?

(She cannot answer.)

So.

Brush this small scrap of dust aside.

One breath from you and he is gone

And all this fuss just never was.

Do this.

Come sit with Zeus and be a goddess, dear.

I may have mysteries to share with you.

HARMONIA *(Recoiling)*
Grandfather, no.

I am ashamed to be a god.

ARES
What did she say?

APHRODITE
She says she is ashamed of us.

HARMONIA
My shame is mine and I have none to spare for you.

How can you do the things you do?

HERA
Why are you so ashamed?

HARMONIA
Why are you not?

When I look into Cadmus' eye

I see a candle struggling in a storm to light me home,

And when I face that light,

There are no shadows in the world except my own.

AMPHITRITE
How do you feel?

HARMONIA
Alive.

(HARMONIA kisses CADMUS. It is a sustained and expressive, beautiful smooch. It lasts until ZEUS' line "That is enough".)

ZEUS
I see the problem here.

They both offend.

HEPHAESTUS
Exactly, yes.

Try them together, then, I say.

APHRODITE
How dare you judge her?

HEPHAESTUS
I? How dare I judge?

ZEUS
I judge.

Remember that.

That is enough.

(CADMUS and HARMONIA part lips.)

This pretty, sentimental stuff is tedious.

I will decide, now go away and listen for my word.

(Exeunt omnes except ZEUS, ATHENA, HARMONIA and CADMUS.)

Athena. Keep them close to you.

ATHENA
I will. You have my word.

(Exit ZEUS.)

ATHENA *(Cont'd)*
All will be well.

CADMUS
How can you say?
It seems to me that we are more at risk
Than when this "trial" of yours began:
I, almost freed, am once again in doubt;
And now Harmonia, not judged before,
Must face humiliation and disgrace.
"All will be well", you say.
How can you smile so beautifully and lie to us?

HARMONIA
Cadmus.

ATHENA
Let us remember that you both are guilty as accused.
And there is nothing else to do
But wait for justice.

CADMUS
But –

(ATHENA withdraws and watches.)

HARMONIA
Tell me, my love,
When you are done offending all the other gods
Will I be last?

CADMUS
But, we are doomed.

HARMONIA
Together, yes.

(Enter the UnNamed, packed to go.)

WATER

You still are free?

HARMONIA
As much as this, for now.

CADMUS
Zeus is deciding while we wait.

CLOTH
What do you think?

CADMUS
Athena, our defence, declares our guilt.

BREAD
Not good.

HARMONIA
She also said all will be well.

CADMUS
But how?

At every turn we aggravate Zeus even more.

BREAD
Well, once before he was so lost in rage that you could slip away.

CLOTH
Perhaps she knows you cannot be excused

And so contrives to help you now escape.

BOWL
So, here and now, we are prepared to go,

BREAD
With you, and build a place,

Where love, respect, and truth can rule.

HARMONIA *(To BREAD)*
And you are ready now for that?

BREAD
I am.

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BOWL

I always was.

(FIREWOOD and BOWL exchange a look. FIREWOOD turns away.)

FIREWOOD *(To WATER)*

Come, friend.

I need someone I trust beside me now.

WATER

Our time, at last, is here.

GLASS

To flee Olympus without fear.

(They start to leave.)

ATHENA

No. Stop.

I gave my word to Zeus.

(to GLASS) Girl, hear yourself.

"Flee without fear"

Does that make any sense to you at all?

GLASS

But… no.

ATHENA *(To CADMUS)*

Listen to me, young man.

Your estimation of the case was quite correct, almost.

You were almost set free,

Unleashed by flattery.

Instead you now will be held to account

For what you think and feel.

Or do you fear to get what you deserve?

Harmonia, you said, was never judged before today.

Can you know her so poorly as to think

She shrinks from being judged?

114

Shall we go now and face Olympus?

CADMUS
Yes.

HARMONIA
We shall.

ATHENA
The rest of you, be patient too,

The world is changing,

Now.

(It does. The UnNamed withdraw or disappear. Enter HEPHAESTUS.)

HEPHAESTUS
Do you think so?

I rather think it tosses in its sleep,

Rolls once and then forgets a nasty dream.

ATHENA
Olympus, yes, but not the world.

HEPHAESTUS
That world? Down there?

Why do you care?

ATHENA
Because it matters.

HEPHAESTUS
Oh?

ATHENA
And we do not.

HEPHAESTUS
Do you believe that silliness?

ATHENA
Death makes life meaningful.

HEPHAESTUS

115

Death we can do.

ATHENA
Just not our own.

(Enter ZEUS and the other gods.)

ZEUS
I have considered this for many ages now.

I have determined what to do.

Harmonia must face my judgment too.

HEPHAESTUS
An excellent idea.

APHRODITE
But Zeus –

ZEUS
I am the only judge, make no mistake.

But, being so, I am Olympus too.

So tell me now, each one,

Your true opinion of this case.

Is Cadmus guilty of presumption, pride, and arrogance

Beyond your appetites?

And is Harmonia, also, or separately,

To be found guilty of betraying us?

HEPHAESTUS
I say they are.

And so I feel –

ZEUS
No doubt you do.

Now, who is next?

Poseidon, wise old friend,

What do you think?

POSEIDON

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Well. Let me see.

I liked the boy at first when we four drank with him,

Or was that someone else?

And I have always loved Harmonia, of course.

But something here is wrong and must be stopped,

And yet I liked the boy…

AMPHITRITE

Poseidon is unsure.

I think that they are innocent.

ERIS

Perhaps that is their crime.

ZEUS

And you?

ERIS

I choose to wait.

ARES

He was my prisoner.

He is my slave.

And yet,

He spoke for us when we could not with any dignity.

Also, he tried to sacrifice himself for someone else.

In short, the man is weak.

And for that crime, if nothing else, he needs to die.

I volunteer to see it done.

APHRODITE

You do?

ZEUS

Let us convict him first.

And what about Harmonia?

ARES

Guilty as well.

117

APHRODITE *(To ARES)*
She is our child.

ARES
And she has broken ranks with us.

APHRODITE
Are we an army then?

Are we at war?

With whom?

Who threatens us that we are so afraid?

ARES
Afraid?

Fear is my slave.

APHRODITE
She is your child.

HEPHAESTUS
Much as I am enjoying this,

Great Zeus, the trial?

ZEUS
Yes, yes, of course.

Hera, my dear?

HERA
Not yet.

ZEUS
Hephaestus, then.

Conclude.

HEPHAESTUS
I fear.

I am not shy to say.

Only a fool could see this day

And not fear what will come of it,

If we, together and as one,

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Do not now crush this crime before it grows.
None of us knows the monster it would be.
I can, you know, make almost anything,
But even I cannot repair the fabric of the world,
When it has suffered such a tear.
My wife betrays me with another god
And you all nod and smile and laugh at me
And even I can see that only I am hurt by it.
But this, this is not sport or appetite,
If it were that, we might make light of it,
No, this, they say, is love.
A goddess and a man.
Their crimes are absolute I say,
His to presume, hers to betray.

ZEUS
Yes, well. Well put.
Now, Hera dear?

HERA
This is a serious case.
Far too much so to be decided on the strength
Of rhetoric, or fear, or pride.
You must decide based solely on the facts
As sorted through great intellect.
A judgment we can all respect must settle this.

ZEUS
Thank you my Queen.

HERA
I mean,
The final word is yours Athena, dear.

ZEUS
I see.

119

HERA

What legendary stroke of intellect

Will you bring now to their defence?

ZEUS

Well?

ATHENA

None.

The case is indefensible.

We happily concede the point.

CADMUS

We do?

ATHENA

So I suggest we now consider punishment.

HEPHAESTUS

I quite agree.

ARES

And so do I, most eagerly.

APHRODITE

You know what my position is.

ERIS

We saw it earlier, and I, for one,

Was much impressed.

ATHENA

True punishment must match the crime

In form and in detail.

So, tell me, Ares, you know of these things,

Time plays some part in torture, does it not?

ARES

Deliciously.

Much of the art of it is drawn out in lines of time.

ATHENA
Pain and fear, your slaves,

Are more, the longer that they last?

ARES
Oh yes.

ATHENA
I see, and thank you, Ares.

CADMUS
Yes, thank you.

ATHENA
But torture, even Ares',

Is not punishment enough for what this man has done.

CADMUS
Oh?

ATHENA
No.

As Ares wisely said before, Cadmus must die.

CADMUS
Of course I must.

ATHENA
The fear of death must be his greatest fear.

That it must come must be his greatest pain.

HERA
And so.

What you propose is that we torture him, as long as we,

With all our skills and powers,

Can make his thin life last.

AMPHITRITE
We torture him with knowing that eventually, he dies.

POSEIDON *(Again awake)*
Most terrible.

121

ERIS

Yet somehow just.

ATHENA

And for the extra satisfaction of those few

Who always crave for more,

ARES

Yes?

ATHENA

That he do so cast out from here,

Away from all of us.

CADMUS

Oh, yes?

ATHENA

And never have a god or goddess present in his life.

CADMUS

But, no.

(ATHENA smiles at CADMUS.)

ZEUS

Good. It is so.

And for Harmonia? Sweet girl, it is a shame.

ATHENA

So once again your wisdom names the word.

Hers is a shame no god should bear:

To do what she has done,

To love someone so different from herself.

In doing so she has rejected us.

And we must answer that with everything we are

Taken away from her.

I say Harmonia is cast out too,

To live her shame with him.

To watch his torture and to share his loss,

And, in the end, even to die.

POSEIDON
That is too much.

APHRODITE
Great Zeus.

You have heard arguments,

All crafted skillfully by those who do that best.

You have with your immeasurable eye seen all the evidence.

Let me now offer you persuasions of my own,

Hear with your blood from Aphrodite's tongue

The joys of generosity.

Preserve my daughter's immortality,

Instead, take me.

I beg of you, a goddess on my knees.

Athena spoke of more.

I can do more, be more, give more.

Accept my gratitude in all its forms.

I eagerly will come, or crawl, to you.

I offer you the fullest feast of Aphrodite's fire –

HARMONIA
Oh, mother, stop.

Not this for me.

APHRODITE
You are my child.

HEPHAESTUS
Now lost.

ZEUS
I will consider this.

HERA
No doubt you will.

123

ATHENA

As you consider everything:

With wisdom, judgment, power, and love.

HEPHAESTUS

Love of Olympus.

ZEUS

Yes.

Let us forget her name.

Let her be mortal, too.

If you agree. *(To HERA.)*

HERA

Reluctantly, I do.

ATHENA

Olympus is for us, the mud for them, for all of them.

HERA

What do you mean?

ATHENA

As wise Hephaestus' words suggest,

Olympus must be purged

Of any hint of weak mortality,

Or all of this, or worse may come again.

POSEIDON *(Aside to AMPHITRITE)*

Who is she purging?

AMPHITRITE

Just the slaves, and I suggest,

Sweet Thebe too.

POSEIDON

What? Yes, of course.

ATHENA

She can remind them of their loss.

124

HERA

Let them all go with Cadmus and Harmonia.

POSEIDON

But who will serve us, bring us ... food?

ATHENA

Zeus nods and food will bring itself

If he, or any god, desires.

AMPHITRITE

We do not need them, lord.

ZEUS

Need them? Ha!

Let them all go,

And leave us to immortal things.

HERA

But first, before they do,

Harmonia and Cadmus must be...

ATHENA

...bound?...

APHRODITE

Yes, together, in their suffering.

We will perform a wedding ritual so grand

That every wedding after it will—

ZEUS

Yes, of course.

Can we get on with it?

(CADMUS and HARMONIA step up ritually. The gods are bored for a few seconds.)

CADMUS

Harmonia, I—

ZEUS

No doubt you do.

125

POSEIDON
And now, the feast!

HERA
Let there be food and drink so much and of such kinds
No god can taste them all nor taste enough.
Sunsets for table cloths,
And shooting stars to prick the appetite,
And let deliciousness itself
Sprawl passionately across our tongues.

ZEUS
Let all this be,
And let these mortals see,
Olympus was like this.

ERIS
If only once.

(Exeunt the gods as if entering a great feasting hall, fanfares and cheers etc.)

CADMUS *(To HARMONIA)*
We are alone?

HARMONIA
We are. *(They embrace.)*

CADMUS
Did you see that?
She did exactly what she said she would.
A few sharp turns, a way not seen,

HARMONIA
She is Athena, after all.

CADMUS
Oh yes she is.
I was so rude to her.

HARMONIA
I think she understands.

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CADMUS *(Taking her hands)*
So, here we are.

Two mortals in the mud.

HARMONIA
Not yet, but very soon.

CADMUS
Forever, love.

HARMONIA
Whatever that now means.

And I am just as pleased as you to hear our punishment.

CADMUS
Just pleased?

HARMONIA
I want for nothing more,

But still, with each new breath,

I taste the promise of impatient death.

It comes. Embrace me, Cadmus.

(He does. She shudders.)

CADMUS
What?

So soon?

HARMONIA
Yes, love.

The thing is done.

Before we celebrate,

Forgive me one small tear.

I have gained everything,

But I have lost eternity.

CADMUS
You are immortal in my heart.

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HARMONIA

To say so is so beautiful, yet still,

I can see insects nesting in these hearts we talk about.

This Death is real, Cadmus.

CADMUS

And so is life.

I had, you may recall, a little land that I was given by a cow.

Shall we go there?

HARMONIA

Why not?

CADMUS

Well, when I left there were some fellows, large,

All sprung from serpent's teeth,

And somewhat fiery of temperament.

HARMONIA

We have a well fed cook

And other gentle friends with us,

No army in the world can conquer us.

CADMUS

Wise love.

HARMONIA

Tell me again how we will live forever through our love.

CADMUS

We will have children, will we not?

HARMONIA

We will, eventually.

CADMUS

And they?

And theirs?

HARMONIA

Perhaps.

I have an orphaned trust in family.

Show me another way.

(CADMUS picks up her bowl from the earlier scene. He looks at it carefully and then gives it to her.)

CADMUS

The first brief glimpse I had

Of what eternity could mean

Was when you scratched my fear into your dish.

HARMONIA

Your courage too.

And then right here, the moment of first love.

Oh, Cadmus, I –

(They embrace and the bowl falls, smashing on the ground. Enter the UnNamed.)

HARMONIA *(Cont'd., Grasping at the pieces.)*

You see? You see?

It all is dust.

No, blood and dust. I bleed.

Cadmus, I bleed.

What have we done?

FIREWOOD

You bleed like us, and like us you will heal.

And every wound will write its story in the scars.

HARMONIA

I thought to write my story on the stars.

Now I will die and be forgotten.

CADMUS

Our names will still move smiles and tears

When Time has lost the tally of the years.

This field I hope we own is by a good strong stream.

There are no sacred serpents any more.

Perhaps the crashing teeth are now worn down

And chew their bread like other men.

HARMONIA
They bowed to you.

CADMUS
Perhaps there is a town.

If there is not then let us build one there.

It was Athena's will so long ago.

(Enter ATHENA.)

ATHENA
And it is still.

CADMUS
Oh goddess, greatest goddess of them all,

Can you forgive my foolishness?

ATHENA
Stand up, always stand up.

Of course you are a fool, you are a man.

FIREWOOD
Athena, please accept our thanks for everything.

WATER
We now are saved by you.

ATHENA
You are set free to strive, to fail, to suffer, and to die.

BOWL
But freely so.

ATHENA
With Eris watching over you.

BOWL *(Taking out the stone)*
Yes. I forgot.

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ATHENA *(Kisses him on the cheek.)*
Oh, lucky you.

(To them all.)

So, freely go and build our town.

(ATHENA watches from above as they begin a transformation from slaves to free people, picking up their burdens and climbing down the mountain.)

HARMONIA
What kind of city should it be?

CADMUS
For what we now begin will live, somehow,

HARMONIA
As stacks of stones, as laws, or scars,

CADMUS
Or scratches in a bowl.

FIREWOOD
Or tales told low around a fire,

BLOOD
Or songs sung to the stars.

(Enter THEBE besides ATHENA.)

THEBE
And so I go.

Downhill.

It feels right.

ATHENA
It is.

Olympus is no place for you.

Remember, you are going home,

(She touches THEBE's abdomen.)

To start a family.

Until we meet again.

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(THEBE kisses ATHENA's hand and turns to pursue the gang. She weaves her way through them, unseen.)

BLOOD
May I live there?

HARMONIA
All will be welcome, friend.

BREAD
How long they stay that way is up to them.

WATER
What first great truths will shape our town?

FIREWOOD
Equality.

WATER *(With a nod or bow to HARMONIA.)*
And harmony.

BREAD *(To CADMUS)*
And never slavery.

CADMUS
Great public squares for celebrations,

GLASS
And debates.

CLOTH
Broad streets,

FIREWOOD
And parks.

WATER
Water supplies and sewers,

BOWL
Schools,

BLOOD
Temples,

HARMONIA
Perhaps, to keep the gods away.

CADMUS
Yes. Yes.

And palaces of course.

BLOOD
A state so grand that Zeus might envy it.

CADMUS
And we shall name our town Cadmea,

After me.

And I shall be your king.

End of play

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