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The Greater Mysteries of Demeter – Script Preface

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Greetings Script Readers,

This work is my dedication gift to Demeter. It is evolving in ways that I didn't anticipate in the beginning, as if it had a life of its own. Once I complete the script, my part of the process is almost done. I intend to turn in over to Mr. Eric Cagle for editing if he is willing and able to take it on, as he is a professional writer with a deep understanding of the Mysteries. I know that it will change throughout the editing and rehearsal processes. With that in mind, I thought that it was important for me to elaborate a bit on some of the specific things I have chosen to do differently from past scripts, in the hope that if changes need to be made perhaps the original intention can be preserved if it is deemed appropriate.

The first major change is the role of Zagreus. He appears in Lessers I at the bunker scene, as probably, though not explicitly stated, the son of Demeter. This is a blending of Homeric and Orphic writings as well as mythology that existed prior to both. According to the followers of Orphism, Zeus had lain with either Demeter or Persephone in the form of a snake. (Prior writings also indicated that Rhea could have been his mother) Zeus intended Zagreus to be his heir, but Hera, wanting to preserve the birthright of her children, ordered Zagreus to be killed. I wanted to give people a deeper understanding of Dionysos and his function in the Greater through telling his story earlier in the script. It also adds another layer to Demeter's grief, and her desire to protect the Kore from all possible harm.

The roles of the Fates and of the Winds have been taken by the three Temple Priestesses. I wanted to get away from having the Virgin Goddesses double up as Fates and also cut out the Winds as four more cast members expecting to get discounted rates to the festival. These priestesses are actual historical figures. They will be as the Winds were in the end of Lessers I. People will go to them for advice on how to heal Demeter's grief. Each one of them represents a quality needed for her healing – Love, Strength, and Compassion. Each priestess will have a "shrine scene", either scripted or written by them, illustrating the qualities and how they are interdependent – ie, love without compassion is controlling, compassion without strength is futility, strength without love is brutality. They will each give out a representation of these qualities, probably in the form of herbs or flowers. These will be gathered from the audience in baskets at the beginning of Lessers II and laid at Demeter's feet as an offering.

The Hierophant is the Temple Priest, a character separate from Eumolpus. He is guardian of the Goddess, the Temple, and the three Temple Priestesses. He serves this function throughout the Lessers. Then at the end of Lessers II, Demeter releases him from her service to rejoin his family, and then she names Eumolpus as her new Hierophant, and Triptolemos as the Dadochous.

Another difference is the substitution of Sirens for Oceanids. Their energy is more appropriate in this script, as they will become the Maenads in the Greater. The energy is much deeper, so this isn't a role for inexperienced people. There are only five of them, so in practical terms they will allow for a smaller cast and larger revenue for the Church.

Baubo is written here as more than the servant of the Royal Family. She has Olympian blood, and recognizes Demeter after she tried to make Demophoon immortal. In actuality, the character should probably be Iambe, the daughter of Pan and Io. The 'obscene gesture' has been turned into something more flirtatious and also seductive. The name could be changed if it seems to make more sense that way.

The abduction scene is a work in progress. My intent is to have it evolve into a staged abduction with the Kore as a willing yet frightened participant. This was a common custom in Greece for a couple who could not get consent from their families to be married. The dialog is not yet complete, so please bear that in mind.

The end of Lessers I and the beginning of Lessers II have been shifted. At the end of Lessers I we have not yet been told that we are going to Erebus, only that we must find a way to heal Demeter. This scene is where Hermes and Apollo come in contact with the Princes. The Princes think that Demeter is displeased with them after they have built her a temple. They don't know that Kore is gone, though Trip has witnessed something on the plains of Nysa that he didn't comprehend. Hermes draws this memory out of him. The Princes want to know why the Gods haven't healed her, and how can mortals be expected to do something that the Gods themselves can't do. Apollo & Hermes explain that as she wandered between Olympus and Eleusis, all the Gods came to her and tried to heal her grief, but to no avail. Apollo tells us that if anyone might know how to do this it would be her Priestesses. So off we go, led by the Hierophant, back to the Bunkers where the Priestesses are waiting for us. Then the blighted lunch.

When we return in Lessers II, we give Demeter the offerings, but it is not enough. Apollo & Hermes look grim. Apollo gathers all the love and energy from the audience. He channels that energy into Demeter, and she is drawn out of her silence. She is asked to end the blight by Metanaira and Keleos, to save their people, but she sadly says she can not, as she withers away without her daughter. Keleos is very ill by now. Demeter says she can not do anything without Kore. So Triptolemos realizes that the only option left to them is to get Kore back. Eumolpus says he is crazy, then Hermes does the "How to get to Erebus in 10 easy Lessons" speech. Demeter offers the Kykeon to us for the journey. Keleos then, as his last dying act as King, offers up the treasury of Eleusis as our payment to Charon. Apollo says we have to stop by to see Pythia, as she will know how to get into Erebus.

(this brings up an issue – since we don't know we are going to Erebus in Lessers I, we have not made tokens. I was hoping to not need them to be made. They could be given to us by Keleos, and then instructed by Hermes – perhaps in the form of a guided meditation - to charge them with everything that we are, and hope to be remembered for. I understand that the making of the tokens is a tool to make things more interactive. But in Lessers I we have more audience participation already, as we actually gather up what they have been given by the Priestesses. Formerly, they got stuff from the Winds, and never actually did anything with it. I am really striving for continuity in this script, where each and every thing we do makes sense, and has meaning. If we can not get away from making the tokens then the end of Lessers I has to be rewritten.)

Pythia scene is here, if needed it can be indoors. (Curtain could be drawn to hide Olympus backdrop and create Delphi.) Apollo asks for the Pythia's guidance – She is muttering and chanting in a low voice. She comes to center stage and begins her ranting. (I had a Moody Blues moment, envisioning the Pythia saying 'Breathe deep the gathering gloom, watch lights fade from every room..etc.) The veiled Priestesses enter perhaps, and make their way into the audience, doing the repeating, whispering thing. (a device to make more direct contact with the people)

in conclusion she says – the way is clear the Python sleeps, but be respectful of the Ferryman if you wish to cross the river...

We go to the gate of the Underworld. The Gate is slightly ajar, it would be cool if we could have some smoke seeping out of it near the top of the doors. Hermes stops everyone. He calls to Charon, whose voice comes booming out of the chamber. He does his speech about

going in to Erebus to face whatever judgement you earned in life... Hermes & Charon have a little banter, but mostly serious. All file through, and Charon is on a platform, dimly lit, right beside the entrance to the maze. (if we have access to the maze room. If not, we can construct something on the outside of the building, and have people enter the Anakteron by the back door) He is collecting the tokens as they enter.

Hades is hiding, just barely visible, behind a scrim in the maze – top lit, shadows all around if we have the maze – if not, we will rewrite this

As all enter, Kore is standing on a platform in the center of the Anakteron, bathed in blue light, she is lit with a single down light above her head. – No other light. She is disoriented, looking at the crowd filing in around her. Keleos is the last to enter, and walks up to the platform, looks at the Kore, and out over the crowd, searching for something familiar, seeming confused.

Hermes approaches her, and in a stage whisper calls to her “Kore! We are here to help you!...hurry, let’s get out of here before we attract too much attention”...

Kore replies – “I don’t know, I think I am supposed to be here right now. I’m not sure why, but I sense that there is something I have to do here...”

Eumolpus sees Keleos and from the bottom of the stairs calls – ‘Father! Father! I’m here! Can you see me?? Father, please, say something! Speak to me!’ Hermes tries to shush Eumolpus, urgently, to silence him before Hades enters. Metainira gasps, sobs, as if just understanding that he cannot speak. Keleos turns his head toward them, reaching out, but is silent.

Hades enters, looks out over the crowd, saying something like ‘Hermes, don’t you think that your charges here have been brought to me a bit prematurely? But, if it their wish to remain here, I’m sure that could be arranged!’...(this part might be better placed after the Kore’s transformation)

Hades sees Kore standing on the platform dazed and confused, crosses over to her through the crowd. Here the connection begins, (insert dialogue, where why how ... am I here? Because they need you – I need you here...

He reaches out for her, then she begins to reach for him, they touch...) then she starts to sway on her feet, and collapses onto the bier.

Hades panics, calls to Hecate for help, not understanding what is happening. Hecate enters. She goes to them, takes a moment, holding her hand over the Kore, then says "Hades, what did you think would happen? When you touch her here, in your realm, she becomes as the others here." He says "but that didn't happen when I touched her before.." Hecates explains that she was in the light, in her own realm then. Since she is to be his mate she must be transformed from the child of flowers into the Queen she must become – dying to herself and beginning anew. Hades is still distressed , saying to Hecate 'You must do something for her! She must not suffer! Hecate looks surprised at the emotion coming from Hades. She tells him to be calm, and allow the transformation to take place. She is still working on the Kore, as a midwife of sorts, aiding her in her rebirthing.

Kore/Persephone slowly wakes, looks at herself, looks around her, knowing that she is different. She looks up at Hades, who is relieved and concerned at the same time. He is still worried about her, and dialog here explores her changes, his concerns for her, and how he and Erebus are changed by her. Hermes is included in this dialog.

The Wedding Fruit –

Hades offers her the pomegranate seeds. They do the binding of love thing, (I'm thinking of each seed representing Past Present and Future –or life, death, rebirth) Hecate 'officiates' the union, Kore crowns herself and becomes Persephone, and we do the pomegranate juice thing. Demeter is wandering around searching for her. If there is a maze, we hear her voice calling and searching from there. She wails outside the Anakteron door, calling, banging on the door. Persephone then tells Hades that she has to go, but will return. The pain of separation is expressed in the dialog here – for both of them. She promises to return, but we can see his pain. (perhaps one of the windows can be uncovered so that the light from outside shines down on her. She reaches for it, is drawn to it..)

and then we exit to the Mother/Daughter reunion outside. We get our Dadachous & new Hierophant, Rhea works out the time Persephone spends in Erebus & with Demeter and an invitation to the Wedding feast & reception.

Greater:

Wedding Feast banter is going around, and as per usual the Olympians begin to bicker with each other. Hades & Persephone cut the cake and offer to share with everyone. After a bit more dialog, Hades says he

has to leave, and Persephone goes with him. Demeter becomes disoriented, as Persephone leaves her yet again. Rhea supports her, says she must find a way to hold on. She takes her offstage. Hecate says things are changing again, and she needs to find out what is happening.

Apollo & Hermes come forward to address the audience. Explaining that this time we step into a deeper Mystery, that not just our physical survival is at stake this time. Only those initiated as Eoptai should make this journey. The paths are different and there is a chance that some of us might not make it, so to insure our success we should divide up and try to get to Erebus by different routes. (For logistical reasons it might be wise to divide people into 2 groups determined by which side they are seated in the theater) Those from the Northern side of Eleusis (left side of the theater) follow Hermes, and those from the Southern side follow Apollo.

Hermes then asks Pan to help keep the travelers safe by holding the energy in the theater with the Mystai

One path is the path of the Heart, the path of emotional growth and change. (Hermes)

The other is the path of Spirit, the path that challenges us to grow in our connection to the Divine, the path of service to the Gods. (Apollo)

Each path is marked out, leading folks around the perimeter of the field in opposite directions. Hidden along the way are 'geffs', (but not really), whispering questions about why each person chose their path, and what about the other choices they could have made?

Example: on path of Heart – why do you walk this path? Are you a slave to your emotions?

On path of Spirit – how can you find the Gods if you cannot even find yourself?

Delphi - The paths converge at Delphi. Apollo & Hermes greet each other, and discuss that neither of them could find the way into Erebus this time, so Apollo must consult the Oracle. Along with her mad rantings that Apollo has to decipher, she says all paths must pass through the crossroads.

Crossroads – Hecate is waiting at the crossroads, set in the place used in previous years. She is relieved to see them, explaining that something very strange is going on. She advises silence, but warns that Charon has not allowed even her to enter, so isn't sure if we can get in. Hermes says that we have to try.

Erebos Revisited

Apollo & Hermes start banging on the door to gain entrance. Charon opens the door, surveys the crowd, and Hermes begins his babble about "we have brought another group"

Charon glares at everyone, and then interrupts Hermes saying, Very well then, you may proceed...Apollo & Hermes enter, Charon pushes them inside and slams the door...their muffled protests fade away as Charon begins his monologue:

"Those who think me a fool will find that they are the bigger fools themselves. I know that you are not dead. This time things are different, there is a new energy that grows in the Underworld. It calls to those who wish to enter in to the Heart of the Mystery. You are here because you have heard that call, and have been drawn to this place, unable to resist the pull of the changing tide. But the price is higher that it has been in the past, and you must be prepared to pay. (here the Dadochous comes forward with a purse of coins, offering to pay for everyone here) – Charon rejects the payment, saying that money will not be enough – a piece of each person, a piece that will resist change, has to be sacrificed as payment to enter.

Hiera – The new Hierophant (Eumolpus) leads us into the chamber. (this is being developed) If no maze, then we need to reconsider how to stage this.

He Is Risen!

All enter the Anakteron. Hades is up on the platform, hovering over a shrouded body lying on a bier. Rhea steps out from the shadowed back wall.

Hades says, - This is very strange. I do not know who is here on this bier, and yet I feel as if I do know – or that we have met in another time, in another place. Do you feel it?

Rhea – my son, I know who this was. I found him, torn to pieces by the other Titans. I gathered up the pieces and put them together,

then I brought him here, to you and your Queen. In this place, there can be new beginnings. You have experienced this for yourself. Things are not as they were before, stagnant and unchanging. If this soul has a chance to begin anew, this is where it must begin.
(Rhea tries to resurrect Zagreus, without success)

Hades – It isn't working mother, what is wrong? This the same thing that happened with Persephone...

Rhea – (thinking, pacing) Persephone....Persephone? Persephone! Of course! That is exactly what is needed here! Her touch brings the light into the heart of darkness. Where is my granddaughter now?

(Persephone appears at the maze entrance) Grandmother Rhea! I am here! I heard you call, and felt the strangest thing, as if a part of myself were reaching out for help. What could this mean? (walks up the stairs to the bier) Grandmother, who is this?

Rhea – This is perhaps that part you felt reaching out. This is Zagreus, and he needs your healing touch. I tried to help him, but this is not my realm. This is something only you can do. Will you help him?

Persephone – I will do what I can. But I am the Goddess of transformation and change. What he will be, I cannot say. But he will not be as he was before. Each soul has a unique journey to make, growing, changing, and evolving as each experience they have leaves its impression upon them, like clay is shaped by a potter's hand.

Rhea & Hades step back, in awe of Queen Persephone. She works her magic... and as she places her hand over his heart – then everything goes completely dark – a scream of pain and anguish pierces the pitch black of the Anakteron - then lights come up slowly

Zag/nysos –(sitting up on the bier, dressed in torn and bloody robes) Blood! Pain! NO! Stop! Help me... someone! Stop! No! Don't TOUCH ME!!... (rising slowly, looking around frantically) Where am I? Who are you? (long pause) Who...am..I? Am I dead? (turns to Persephone) WHO AM I????

Persephone – (visibly shaken) You are...you were, I don't know... I'm sorry...(exits down stairs to lower platform, with Rhea by her side)

Here we had originally inserted some dialog between Hades & Zag/nysos – this was intended to keep Hades involved in the scene. It may be reworked or discarded, depending upon how the scene progresses.

She Changes Everything She Touches

(lights up on lower platform where Persephone stands with Rhea)

Rhea – So, you DO know who he is, don't you?

Persephone – Yes, I think, but it was not my place to say that to him. Each of us must discover who we are...on our own, independent of the ideas of others.

Rhea – My precious grandchild, you have truly become a Queen in your own right...as wise as you are beautiful. Your mother Demeter would be very proud of you.

Persephone – My mother...I think of her often, and I am so worried about her! I know that she feels lonely when I am here in my own realm, so far away from her. But I am of this place now, and this is who I am.

Rhea – it is a difficult thing to accept when those we love need to find their own place in the world. But that is the nature of the universe – and we may fight against change, but it will happen regardless of our desires. Each change sparks another, then another, in an endless dance of transformation. To be fully engaged in living, each of us must find the courage to dance along.

(Demeter enters from the maze, disoriented, confused)

Demeter – where...how...why...am I in Erebus? Persephone? Are you here?

Persephone – I'm right here mother!

(Demeter comes down the stairs, up the platform, to stand beside Persephone, then notices that Rhea is there too)

Demeter - Mother! What are you doing here?

Rhea – Why, waiting for you my dear. I knew you would find your way here in good time.

Demeter – Waiting for me? But I don't even know why I am here!

Rhea – You may think that, but you know as well as I do that you have quite a bit of unfinished business to tend to here in Erebus.

Demeter – Unfinished business? I haven't the faintest idea of what you are talking about. I have no *business* here at all!

Persephone – Mother, think about it. We have worked out how the mortals will survive when I am here in my realm and nothing grows on the Earth. But we forgot one thing. How will YOU survive? You have to find a way, even when I am not with you, to thrive and flourish.

Demeter – Daughter, you ask too much. I don't have the will or the desire to do anything when you are gone. Don't you see that I cannot be whole without you?

Rhea – (chiding gently) Demeter, that is a heavy burden to put upon anyone, even the Queen of the Dead. You are and always have been, perfectly whole, strong, and complete – just as you are. You merely need to recognize it!

Demeter – (angry) You make it sound so simple! Yet when I look inside myself, all I can see is pain, loss, betrayal, abandonment. (maenads repeat the words in a whisper?) How can I be anything but broken and empty inside without my daughter? (she gives a sorrowful look to Persephone, who reaches out to comfort her)

Rhea – Search deeper, beyond the pain. Look beneath your sorrow and you will find something else. Within you, there are hidden treasures far richer than any hiding in the deepest reaches of the caverns here in Erebus. You will not find them all at once, it takes time and effort.

Persephone – Mother, that is it! When I am here in my realm and you cannot find the power to bring growth to the Earth, draw it back within yourself – use that time to find the riches within you. Hold them, let them build and grow. Then when I return, together we will make them burst forth in a glorious wave of bounty that covers the Earth!

Rhea – Demeter! Look!

(Lights come up on the upper platform where Dionysus & Hades are. Lights dim slightly on lower platform)

Dionysus – I know who I am! I know who I am! I can feel it in my heart, I can taste it on my tongue! I am he who has died and yet lives again...the vine who is cut and yet grows again, I am the Lord of the Winding Ivy, I am the grapes that are crushed to make wine, I AM DIONYSUS!

(maenads enter from the maze, or from under the stage, and begin slinking up the stairs to the upper stage as Dionysus begins his lines. The maenads begin stripping the bloody robes off his body. He stands naked, and the maenads dress him in his purple robes. – the lead maenad hands him his thyrsus. He takes the thyrsus, standing tall and proud.)

Demeter –Zagreus? I thought you were dead!

Dionysus – So did I...but something strange has been happening. I was dead, and not dead at the same time. I have discovered that there was something more within me, and when Persephone touched my broken body, it began to awaken. I am no longer Zagreus, though he still lives on within me.

Rhea – Dionysus! You have finally come back! I have missed you! And I have been waiting for you to return to us again. (more dialogue to come)

This leads us to a scene between Dionysos & Demeter, where they explore the madness and grief she experienced. Dionysos illustrates to her that there is always loss and tragedy, so to temper these things we search for joy and ecstasy in our lives. She thinks about these things, and looks down on the stage where there is a rose lying there.

She wonders, how did this get here? In Erebus? This is the lead in for Aphrodite to enter. Aphrodite explains that there is nothing that can wound us as deeply or heal us as completely as love. That it is the one key element. And as part of that love, there must be forgiveness. Not for the sake of the one being forgiven, but for the healing of the one who has been wounded. She then calls for Zeus, who enters.

Demeter is angered by the sight of him at first, but realizes that Aphrodite is right. Zeus loves his daughter. Rhea loves her children.

Hades loves his wife – and she loves him. Because there is love, death is not the end of existence. Aphrodite then shares the gift (cakes) with everyone.

The High Ritual

Still working on this one, but we want to base it on an adaptation of this Dylan Thomas poem:

And death shall have no dominion.
Dead men naked they shall be one
With the man in the wind and the west moon;
When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;
Though they go mad they shall be sane,
Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;
Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
Under the windings of the sea
They lying long shall not die windily;
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,
And the unicorn evils run them through;
Split all ends up they shan't crack;
And death shall have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.
No more may gulls cry at their ears
Or waves break loud on the seashores;
Where blew a flower may a flower no more
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;
Though they be mad and dead as nails,
Heads of the characters hammer through daisies;
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down,
And death shall have no dominion.

Demeter's Great Mystery is the recognition and embracing of the cycles of light and dark within ourselves, and the love that sustains us through those cycles. Instead of a chant to raise energy, we thought of perhaps a single word that could be toned, to take advantage of the acoustics in the Anakteron. The exit from the Anakteron to the outside and back to the theater still needs to be worked out.

The dialog written in this outline is a rough draft, to illustrate the message and intention. There is still much work to be done. I have tried to keep to the basic structure of the festival, and the constraints of time and practical matters.

I am open to help and suggestions, guidance and constructive criticism. This has been, and continues to be, a great learning experience for me. It is also a wonderful tool that has deepened my understanding and my connection to Deity.

I have received much support and inspiration from Touran. He has helped to guide me in many ways with his long experience in professional theater. The ritual aspects are there, and the theatrical aspects are crafted to enhance the impact of the ritual. The most intense scenes happen when there are just a few actors on stage, and the energy becomes very focused. The larger scenes are a lot of fun, and add pageantry and humor to the ritual. I have tried to avoid having characters in scenes where they have no clear function. I have also tried to broaden the mythological aspect, and allow the many faces of the Gods to emerge.

In service to the Mother,
Kathi DeAnda