

# Love's Memory: Eurydice and Orpheus

by Tom Smith

CHARACTERS: Eurydice, 18  
Ophelia, 21, Eurydice's sister  
Sophia, 20, friend  
Hypatia, 20, friend  
Isodora, 18, friend  
Zoe, 18, friend  
Maia, late 30s  
Persephone, ageless, goddess of the Underworld

Orpheus, 22, prince of Thrace  
Aristaeus, 25, a member of the Argonauts  
Philandros, 20, a member of the Argonauts

*Note:* Isodora, Zoe, Sophia and/or Hypatia may be doubled with Maia and Persephone

TIME/PLACE: Act One: Ancient Greece, the woods outside of Thrace  
Act Two: Months later, the Underworld

RUNNING TIME: 100 minutes

Ophelia, her sister Eurydice, and four friends set up camp to study for a period of two years. Soon after, Orpheus, prince of Thrace, returns home after fighting alongside Argonauts accompanied by two soldiers, Aristaeus and Philandros. The men encounter the women and agree to assist in their studies.

Ophelia and Eurydice, having grown up with Orpheus, ask him to teach music since he is a demi-god blessed with special musical abilities. During the lesson, Ophelia declares her love for Orpheus, who does not respond in kind. Her sister Eurydice, a girl when Orpheus left, is now a woman and the two find they have instant chemistry. Eurydice rushes off to find Ophelia.

Eurydice and Ophelia are attacked by Echidna, half-woman and half-serpent, but are saved by Orpheus. At a party celebrating this, Orpheus announces his love for Eurydice. Ophelia agrees to the match, though is deeply heartbroken. Later that evening, Aristaeus, drunk and jealous of Orpheus's abilities and reputation, attacks Eurydice, who runs away. She is attacked once more by Echidna and dies. Orpheus discovers her death the next morning, along with Ophelia's, who hung herself in grief. In anguish, Orpheus unleashes his power and the world seemingly disappears.

Eurydice finds herself in the Underworld, looked after by her sister, Ophelia, and Maia, an older woman with a hidden past. Inhabitants slowly lose their memory in the Underworld, and Ophelia struggles to help Eurydice retain hers. Suddenly, a door appears and Orpheus arrives, having fought his way to retrieve Eurydice, yet losing his memory of her. Persephone, queen of the Underworld, hears of Orpheus' arrival and banishes him. After much argument and a test, Persephone allows Orpheus to lead Eurydice back to the world of the living, as long as he does not look at her on the journey. Not hearing a single sound, Orpheus grows suspicious and looks back, banishing Eurydice to the Underworld forever. Days later, Eurydice sits in the Underworld, her memory of Orpheus completely gone, when Orpheus arrives, having killed himself to rejoin his love. Orpheus and Eurydice, not remembering each other, exchange pleasantries as he walks away forever...

## **ACT ONE**

### **SCENE FIVE**

*The WOMEN sitting in circle, holding hands. ORPHEUS enters. THEY are in mourning.*

#### **ORPHEUS**

Good morning, sisters! Last night's wine has made you look so sad, but this is a day of great joy! My father consented to the match, and by sundown Eurydice and I shall be married! What, not a smile from a single one? Sophia? Zoe?

*(The WOMEN cover their faces with their hands and begin praying.)*

Philandros? Aristaeus?

*(PHILANDROS enters.)*

Great news, Philandros!

#### **PHILANDROS**

Orpheus.

#### **ORPHEUS**

Tonight Eurydice and I shall wed!

#### **PHILANDROS**

Dear, sweet noble Prince...

#### **ORPHEUS**

What is it, Philandros? Has Sophia broken your heart again? Forgive her, and be done with it.

#### **PHILANDROS**

Mighty Prince, I have been given a task more unbearable than any I have faced before. Even now, my heart would rather burst from my body and stop its beating than reveal to you what I must.

#### **ORPHEUS**

What is it?

#### **PHILANDROS**

Your betrothed, your Eurydice, is dead.

#### **ORPHEUS**

What...? What say you?

#### **PHILANDROS**

Dead, my prince.

#### **ORPHEUS**

It cannot be...! You are wrong!

**PHILANDROS**

I pray I were.

**ORPHEUS**

I do not believe you. Aristaeus! Aristaeus!

**PHILANDROS**

He too is dead, my prince.

**ORPHEUS**

What means you by all this?

**PHILANDROS**

Last night, I awoke to the sound of screams. Fearing the worst, I went in search of its source. From atop a small perch, I spied Aristaeus chasing your Eurydice, intending to accost her. I called down, and Aristaeus, startled, ran off. As I approached Eurydice, I saw a figure behind her silhouetted in the moonlight: half-woman, half-serpent.

**ORPHEUS**

Echidna?

**PHILANDROS**

She slithered into the darkness, saying, "Tell Orpheus the same fate will befall all he loves." I ran to Eurydice and there in her chest were the unmistakable puncture wounds of a serpent, its venom having completed its sinister duty. I protected the body until dawn, when Ophelia and the others found me. The women carried the body back and have prepared it for ascension.

**ORPHEUS**

Nooooooo! By the gods, this is unbearable! And Aristaeus? What of him?

**PHILANDROS**

Dead. Ophelia's axe heaved in his skull. Revenge for a sister by a sister.

**ORPHEUS**

And where is she now? Ophelia?

**PHILANDROS**

Unable to bear the grief of her loss, she killed herself. Hung by the knotted fabric of her own dress.

*(ORPHEUS breaks down into tears. The WOMEN slowly rise and dance, part of the ascension ceremony. ISODORA and ZOE make a small circle of flowers and branches.)*

**ORPHEUS**

This is too much! I cannot bear it! I will go mad!

*(HE waves his hand. A cacophony of sound, rage-filled, vengeful. The music gets louder, as ORPHEUS wails to the gods above. His wailing intensifies, until it becomes singing. The world seemingly explodes, and goes black.*

*Darkness. All has seemingly disappeared. A figure walks out into a single light. It is EURYDICE, damp and frightened.)*

**EURYDICE**

What is this place?

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

### SCENE 1

*EURYDICE, alone in the same light as the end of Act One.*

### EURYDICE

What is this place? Nothing is familiar. Am I alive?

*(Calling out.)*

Hello?

*(Beat.)*

Anyone?

*Blackout. Lights up.*

For days, I have been wandering. Are there even days anymore? I must be dead, for this is not the life I knew. There is not a soul around. Not a single soul.

*Blackout. Lights up.*

There are shadows and a shadow must be cast by something. Yet I have seen nothing. Touched nothing. Nothing has touched me.

*Blackout. Lights up.*

I can no longer remember my mother's face. Or my father's voice. Thoughts. Feelings. Memories. Are leaving. I am losing...

*(Searches for the word.)*

things.

*Blackout. Lights up.*

I am Eurydice. My sister is Ophelia. My betrothed is Orpheus. I must never forget. I will not forget.

*Blackout. Lights up. The Asphodel Meadows in the Underworld. The Underworld is a gray, dulling place, a reflection of the world with all joy and emotion drained from it. EURYDICE sits, reading a book.*

### MAIA

Again, Eurydice?

### EURYDICE

It is my favorite.

**MAIA**

You already know the ending.

**EURYDICE**

So?

**MAIA**

Why read something when you already know how it turns out?

**EURYDICE**

It is comforting. It never changes.

**MAIA**

Where is Ophelia?

**EURYDICE**

Off on another walk. Someday I shall follow her, just to see where she goes.

**MAIA**

I worry about her. The Underworld is a vast place.

**EURYDICE**

Ophelia never loses her way.

**MAIA**

Still...

**EURYDICE**

Where have you been? I looked for you earlier.

**MAIA**

Talking to others. Hearing the rumors floating about.

**EURYDICE**

What now?

**MAIA**

Variations of the same: none of us shall be here much longer; this is not really the end of existence.

**EURYDICE**

Why do those rumors persist? You have been here how long?

**MAIA**

I could not tell you. Years and years...

**EURYDICE**

Longer than most. And nothing has ever changed.

**MAIA**

Not much, but some things have. It used to be that everyone arrived looking as they did when they were among the living. But now, people who have taken their own lives come with the evidence of their suicide still upon them. Your sister for one, with those horrible marks around her neck...

**EURYDICE**

But, in general, things remain the same. Time passes. No one leaves this place. No one moves on. Nothing changes.

**OPHELIA**

*(Entering.)*

Eurydice! Are you reading that book again?

**EURYDICE**

Leave me be.

**OPHELIA**

There is no point to it; it is foolish romantic fiction.

**EURYDICE**

Reading keeps my mind active.

**OPHELIA**

Then read something other than the fantasy of a love-starved poet. I should take that book from you and hide it.

**EURYDICE**

No!

**MAIA**

Oh, leave her be. What else is there for her to do?

**OPHELIA**

I do not know. But not that. She will just dwell upon—  
*(Starts to well up.)*

**MAIA**

She enjoys it, Ophelia.

**OPHELIA**

It is not helping her!

**MAIA**

Maybe it is. It affirms that someone may experience the kind of love that Eurydice lost.

**OPHELIA**

She can never heal completely if she is reminded of her past over and over again.

**MAIA**

Let her go; she no longer needs your care. Things are different here. You have seen for yourself. We all eventually lose our past: forget experiences, emotions, people. I know you want to protect her but there is little use: eventually it will all be gone anyway. Besides, it is better for you as well. Trying to maintain the relationship you had in the Upper World: in time it will be meaningless to you both.

**OPHELIA**

Do you think I do not know that? But until one of us no longer recognizes who we are to each other, she is still my sister.

**MAIA**

You are only prolonging the inevitable. Eurydice's hair was damp when she arrived, which means she was dipped in the River Styx. They do that to some so they can lose their memories more quickly, because their lives were too full of emotion. Down here they would surely go mad if they had full awareness of what—or who—they left behind.

**OPHELIA**

Memories should never be taken away, even if the reason is merciful.

**MAIA**

Some people do keep theirs. Murderers, rapists, warmongers—they are not given the gift of forgetting. They must live with their thoughts: haunted by them until the end of time. But for you, and especially for her, it is best this way.

**OPHELIA**

Only I know what is best for Eurydice and me. I have looked after her her entire life and I will continue to do so. And what happens to us here, forgetting against our will—it is not just.

**MAIA**

There is a reason for all things, whether or not we can understand it.



**OPHELIA**

You may believe that, Maia, but I do not. And I will fight to prevent it from happening to us.

*(Calling out.)*

I am going for a walk, Eurydice. Come with me?

**EURYDICE**

I want to finish my book.

**OPHELIA**

It shall be there when you return. Come explore with me. Maybe we shall discover a lake or a garden.

**MAIA**

Or an exit?

**OPHELIA**

I know we cannot leave, Maia; I have resigned myself to this place. But the more time I spend with Eurydice, the longer she may remember me.

*(Calling out.)*

Last chance, Eurydice?

*(EURYDICE shakes her head and continues reading.)*

Please yourself.

*(Exits.)*

**EURYDICE**

Ophelia is always watching over me so closely. I long for the time she forgets me.

**MAIA**

Do not say things like that, Eurydice!

**EURYDICE**

I am not a child, Maia; and unlike my sister I accept how things happen here. Ophelia will forget I am her sister, as I will forget she is mine. And thereafter, every memory I have ever had will also disappear. Why fight that? Ophelia needs to find comfort in it, like I have; for me, it is like knowing the ending of my book.

**MAIA**

Ophelia believes she can change the ending.

**EURYDICE**

...Perhaps she can.

**MAIA**

You should have gone with her.

**EURYDICE**

Ophelia only invited me on her walk because she worries this book will remind me of Orpheus; she did not really want company. She relishes solitude.

**MAIA**

How lonely she must be.

**EURYDICE**

She even chose to die alone. But at least she was able to die by her own hand.

*(A loud, crashing, thunderous sound. Light flickers. A door from nowhere appears and opens. Inside is ORPHEUS, sopping wet and exhausted. HE enters, and falls to the ground. The door disappears and all is restored.)*

**ORPHEUS**

Where am I?

**EURYDICE**

*(Warily crosses over.)*

...Orpheus?

**ORPHEUS**

Did I make it?

**EURYDICE**

Is it really you?

**ORPHEUS**

*(Slowly rising, still exhausted.)*

The journey I have taken. The creatures I fought. The power I unleashed!

**EURYDICE**

Maia!?!

**MAIA**

It is no illusion. I see him too.

**ORPHEUS**

Yet it was all worthwhile, for it has finally brought me to my destination.

**EURYDICE**

My love!

*(Rushes towards ORPHEUS. HE pulls back.)*

**ORPHEUS**

Who are you?

**EURYDICE**

Orpheus, my love, it is me: Eurydice!

**MAIA**

Something is not right. Look, Eurydice. He is soaking wet!

**EURYDICE**

*(Grabs onto him.)*

Have you come to take me home?

**ORPHEUS**

*(Pushing her away.)*

What do you want with me, girl?

**EURYDICE**

Orpheus!?!

**ORPHEUS**

I have completed my journey, but now I cannot recall its purpose.

**EURYDICE**

You have come for me. You must have!

**ORPHEUS**

I do not know you.

**EURYDICE**

You are exhausted. Come, Orpheus, sit. Everything is confusing. It was for all of us, at first.

**ORPHEUS**

You call me by my name. How do you know me?

**EURYDICE**

I am Eurydice, your betrothed.

**ORPHEUS**

I am a soldier and an Argonaut. I am promised to no woman.