

Heliopause

A One-Act Interplanetary Mash-up

A minor planet of the outer Solar System tries to divert Halley's Comet and smash Jupiter.

Dramatis Personae

ERIS, Goddess of Discord, spirit of a minor planet in the outer Solar System

CERES, Goddess of Agriculture, spirit of a minor planet in the Asteroid Belt

NEPTUNE, God of the Sea, spirit of the eighth planet

PLUTO, a clown, formerly the ninth planet

HIPPIE CHORUS, dropouts for Peace and Love

Setting

The view is inward from the edge of the Solar System. The stage is dark; the backdrop is lit.

The backdrop is a field of stars. At its center, the brightest star is the Sun. Eight lesser lights (planets) form a dotted line left and right of the Sun.

Mid-stage, right, a smartphone stands upright (about six feet tall).

Music is lugubrious cello and ambling viola, representing the motion of outer and inner planets. Bursts of electric guitar and violin suggest meteors.

Music ends. Spotlight reveals ERIS on the apron at stage-right.

Scene 1

ERIS (*gesturing to include the audience as a whole*)

You're an attractive mass. One by one,
you don't amount to much, but as a group
you have some pull. Trust me, gravity matters,
the more so near the edge — the heliopause.

10 We're far as you can go and feel the Sun —
assuming you're all trans-Neptunian objects.
But maybe not. Are you from farther out,
beyond the Solar System? Something you should know:

The solar gravity thrill-ride starts from here.
You feel its steady pull, gently at first,
bending your course, hauling you subtly in
toward a distant source, not your choice
but something big — like Grand Canyon big
but a million Grand Canyons, times a thousand —
20 and lit on fire! with all the gasoline
the Earth will ever produce, times a billion.
And possibly times a billion times again.
My math is not so great. Give me a break.
The Goddess of Discord doesn't do statistics.
If feud is what you want, then I'm your girl.
For crunchy numbers, talk to Jupiter Corp.
He's got a hundred moons'll square your root.
We all have our departments, niche pursuits.
Mine is office politics... I'm Eris. Miss Discord.

30 What was I saying before? Right, gravity.

Spotlight reveals the CHORUS upstage, center.

CHORUS (*performing a dance*)

Excitable Eris, ominous Goddess of Discord!
She's always at it, everything melodramatic.
In everybody's business, spreading doubt,
revising rumors, dropping sinister hints,
40 finagling words that somehow slip in edgewise...
Discord even interrupts herself!

CHORUS spotlight off.

ERIS (*to the audience*)
Gravity sucks. The cosmic Hoover gathers
motes like us to a massive central bag —
the Sun. Your ruffling hair, a staggering step,
and then you're flying superhero-style,
50 arms and hands in front, faster and faster.
Planets heave in view, then whoosh behind,
no looking back. There's Neptune blue and frothy,
Uranus (lost his keys) in Long Term Parking,
Saturn feeling blech but looking great,
and Jupiter juggling more than he can handle.
He thinks he's big but hasn't guessed what's coming.
Ahead you see a motel row of worlds —
the rusted Mars, a balmy sea-shored Earth,
and hot-tub Venus, neon-blinking Vacancy.
60 Zero chance of stopping overnight.
The kernel Sun has popped. Ahoy, it's filling
half your windshield. (When did you get a windshield?)
Now there's nothing else to see but Sun,
and you've been flash-sautéed to crumply crisp
in five arrays of solar radiation,
with not a drop of fat to grease the pan.
Your mass is gas. Your gravity's gone. Farewell.
Your ashes blow away on solar wind.
You float on back to where you are right now,
70 in the dark at the very edge of the Solar System,
the farthest you can go and feel the Sun.

You are star ... dust. You are golden.

CHORUS (*in unison*)

A Woodstock reference — groovy! Peace and love!
Half a million strong, we WERE at Woodstock.

CHORUS (*severally, sing-song*)

I was there.

80

And I was too.

Me too!

And so was I! [*Pause*] At least I think it was me.

CHORUS (*in unison*)

You know who wasn't there? Mistress Discord.
Beware of Eris! She is up to something.

90

ERIS

I'll say it again, you're an attractive mass.
You have gravity. You can make a difference
being here. Together you have oomph,
enough to change a world, or maybe two.

I happen to know of an opportunity coming.

All you have to do is sit right here.

Do you want in? Or will you gawk at the Sun

100 and race to your doom like pan-galactic lemmings?

Take it from one who knows: the system's rigged
to favor Big. For the likes of us to win,
we have to push ourselves and those around us
— how to put it? — perpendicularly.

Phone rings. ERIS takes out her phone. Spotlight reveals CERES, head and shoulders framed in the giant smartphone.

110 ERIS (*to audience*)
I have to take this. Put yourselves on Hold.

CERES (*bantering*)
Eris, you conniving bitch, I heard
from Juno you were up to something rich.
But you have guests, I see. An angry mob
of pitchfork folk who've come to toss your salad?

120 You've such a way of riling people up.
Details, I want them all. So fill me in.

ERIS
Juno wasn't wrong to have suspicions.

CERES
Suspicions go with being Jupiter's spouse.
He never met a nymph he didn't like.

130 ERIS
He won't be riding high for long if plans
in hand work out. He's going to feel your pain.

CERES
I wish he could. You say you have a plan.

ERIS
It's going to redefine the scale of "epic."
A thousand ships will look like penny-ante.

140 CERES
So, really, really big is what you're saying.
But where's the part where Jupiter feels the pain?

ERIS

That's as much as I can say for now.

CERES

Eris, you're a tease. I should know better.
What about your visitors: who are they?

150

ERIS (*lowering her voice*)

I think they might be tourists, Milky Waywards.
It's like they came ashore for lunch and shopping.
We're in the early stages, still just talking.
They might be right for a PIVOTAL comet scene.

CERES

A comet caper, is it? Sounds delicious.
I'll let you stir your sinister soup du jour.

160

ERIS

You'll be the first to know the fuse is lit.

CERES and ERIS hang up. CERES spotlight off.

ERIS

Please forgive our little interruption.
That was Ceres, cereal goddess, now
retired — where wheat and corn can never thrive,
on a salty clod in the Asteroid Archipelago.

170

I'll share with you, at the risk of spreading gossip:
Ceres has a grudge against the boss.

Jupiter, lord of daylight, was in charge
when Jupiter's brother Hades, lord of darkness,
kidnapped Ceres' daughter — picking flowers!
He dragged the girl below to be his wife,
the captive queen of death in the underworld.
Ceres' grief so wrenched the earth with famine

180

— not a sprig of planted grain would grow —
a custody agreement was determined:
the girl would alternate above/below:
half the year on earth, the rest in hell.

Which somehow has to do with yearly seasons
and why the Earth is tilted on its axis.

What's an axis? Ugh, I knew you'd ask.

Helios handles that. Just take my word:

190 Jupiter's name is mud in Ceres' book.
She hates his guts. And I so love to rankle,
naturally, we're pals, forever scheming.

And speaking of schemes, I have a proposition.
Perhaps you've heard of Halley's famous comet?

ERIS spotlight off. CHORUS spotlight on. Exit ERIS.

CHORUS (solemnly)

200 The deal for half the year tormented Ceres —
half the year with less than half a daughter,
her spring and summer eyes now veiled in shadow;
the girl who gathered flowers, gone forever.

In Eris, Ceres saw another girl
in need of consolation, not belonging
anywhere. She adopted Eris.
What can mothers do but offer comfort?

210 Even Hades wept. *A marriage from Hell!*
the headlines read. His brighter brothers held
the glamor realms: the sky and Neptune's sea.
Then the Romans changed his name from Hades...

CHORUS (*dancing, mocking*)
to Pluto! Pluto! Pluto!

Pluto!

220 Pluto!

Curtain.

Scene 2

Music: wedding march performed with a comical staggering gait.

230 *PLUTO enters in front of curtain from stage-right. He is dressed as a bedraggled bridegroom, in a broken top hat and tattered tails. An oversize corsage droops from his lapel.*

Music fades.

PLUTO (*staggering toward stage-left, channeling the Porter in Macbeth*)

Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars. Jupiter Saturn, Uranus, Neptune. Pluto! That's me!

240 The old mnemonic, how did it go?

My Very Eager Mother... My Very Eager Mother Just Served Us Nine... No, not eager. Mother is not "eager."

My very educated mother. Educated, pfui. Patronizing.

My very EARNEST mother.... That's the ticket, Earnest! Very important, being earnest. Can't say enough about the importance ... of being earnest.

250 My very earnest mother just served us nine. Nine? Nine what?(*Sarcasm*) Who did I leave out? Poor Pluto. Not a planet anymore.

(*Changing the subject*) There's something amiss about SERVED. Mothers don't

“serve.” Of course, they do, all the time. But mothers are mothers, not the wait staff, right?

CHORUS (*behind the curtain*)

Yes, chef!

PLUTO (*looks around, wondering where the voices came from*)

260 My VOLUPTUOUSLY earnest mother —. Voluptuous! Venus’ll thank me for that. My voluptuously earnest mother just SLICED up —. Sliced, appropriate for ... pizza!

CHORUS

No pizza, chef!

PLUTO

No pizza? No Pluto.

270 CHORUS

Off the menu, chef!

PLUTO

Off the menu. Since when?

CHORUS

2006, chef!

PLUTO

280 On whose authority?

CHORUS

International Astronomical Union, chef!

PLUTO

The IAU. Heartless bastards. No respect for their elders. Heigh ho.

My vituperous earnest murderers ... just showed us ... no pity.

290 Ha-ha! No for Neptune. That much is spot on. [*Exit stage-left.*]

Scene 3

Curtain opens. The stage is dark. A blue circle representing the planet Neptune, 12 feet wide, dominates the middle of the stage. There is an executive desk with an oversize visitor's chair, which faces the audience.

ERIS is sitting in the visitor's chair, looking tiny. Her feet don't reach the floor.

300

Enter NEPTUNE, bare-chested (a swimmer) but wearing a tie. He has mounds of wavy hair. He brings a coffee for his guest. In his other hand, a trident.

NEPTUNE

No, don't get up. You're fine. It's only me.
Thanks for coming in. How was traffic?

ERIS (*settling back into the chair*)

Not a lot of traffic. Lots of space.

310

The outer Solar System's mostly empty,
as you know. I caught a glimpse of Pluto.

NEPTUNE

My baby brother. How's he getting along?

ERIS

Same as always.

NEPTUNE

320

Good to hear..

ERIS

Adrift.

NEPTUNE

Adrift, you think? Should we call Nine-One-One?

ERIS

It's not for me to say. He's got his orbit.

330 Does his thing. But Pluto ... is really out there.

NEPTUNE

Indeed, we're meant to stay within our orbits.

Enough on Pluto. How is Eris doing?

How's your space within the organization?

ERIS

My space is good. (*With irony*) Plenty of room to grow.

Aligned with organizational goals, of course.

340 I like autonomy, very few distractions.

I don't have time for gloomy meditations.

Using his trident, NEPTUNE spears a file from the desk. He sets aside the trident (ideally, it stands up by itself, suggesting mysterious powers). He skims the file.

NEPTUNE

Minor planet Eris. Disk diameter:

fourteen hundred miles. The same as Pluto.

Three-fourths the earthly Moon, our sweet Diana.

350 Your Sun-to-Eris miles: about 9 billion.

Sunlight takes a dozen hours to reach you,
compared to Mars in just a dozen minutes.

Eris, let me ask a simple question.

Where do you see yourself five years from now?

ERIS

I'll still be chief of Discord, I imagine.

We're all immortals, deathless in our roles.

360 I could apply for God of War. Why not?

Discord often escalates to bloodshed.

But open confrontation — not my style.

In five years' time, nothing will have changed.
Five hundred years for me is just one orbit.
Or maybe it only seems that long. Whatever.

NEPTUNE (*empathizing*)

It sounds like you feel somewhat ... isolated.
Left out. Unseen. Alone. Perhaps you'd like
370 to join the inner circle. If Mercury's there,
you ask, why not you? A fair question.

Tell me, Eris, why are you so "out there"?
You used that phrase describing brother Pluto.
Be honest with yourself as well as me.
How did you end up so far away?

ERIS

It wasn't my idea. Why do you ask?
380 Did Jupiter put you up to this . . . this chat?

NEPTUNE

Jupiter doesn't delve in operations.
Are you thinking Jupiter's out to get you?

ERIS

The word is you are Jupiter's hatchet man.
Or trident man. Since Pluto was demoted,
you're the outer guard. To me it seems
390 like Jupiter thinks that someone's out for HIM.

NEPTUNE spears a bundle of comment cards from the desk. ERIS flinches, thinking for a moment he might stab her.

NEPTUNE

I have some comment cards to share. Your peers
were asked what it was like to work with Eris.

(Shuffling through cards)

400

“When Eris arrives, Consensus leaves the room.”

“She’s the queen of stressful group discussions.”

“Suspicion, awkward moments, ugly whispers,
damning praises, pointless quarrels — malice:
these are party favors Eris brings.”

Here’s an alternate view:

410

“A lonely girl,
she doesn’t fit. She chips at solidarity,
a mountaineer who climbs our stony faces.
Eris cannot help the way she is.
She needs a little love and sweet acceptance,
and plenty of time to heal.”

Your thoughts on this?

420

ERIS
Sounds like Ceres, ever-tender mother.

NEPTUNE (*reading next card*)
Then there’s this:

“A hallway chat with Eris
leaves me with a feeling — no one likes me.”

“Breaking bread with Eris: oh, it’s moldy!”

430

ERIS (*Out of the chair, facing NEPTUNE, but keeping a safe distance*)
Okay, okay, I think I get your drift.

NEPTUNE
Perhaps one more. It’s something rather special.

“Eris crashed my wedding, REALLY crashed it!
She was not invited. Reason why?
A wedding’s meant to be about the bride.
440 Discord steals the show wherever she goes.

“So Eris sauntered in, and minutes later,
Athena’s yanking hanks of Hera’s hair,
while Venus tries to scratch Athena’s eyes out.
Even Bacchus called my wedding raucous.”

Remember that? (*Appreciative laugh*) The dust will never settle.
Only you could dream up such a ploy.

450 The golden apple, deviously inscribed
To the fairest of them all... Ye gods! You threw
that vanity bomb at a pride of prima donnas:
Athena, Venus, Hera (Mrs. Jupiter).

The repercussions rang through halls of history,
the spat which then begat the Trojan War.

ERIS

I must admit: that was a day of glory,
460 a lesson Thetis had to learn the hard way.
Cut me from the guest list at your peril.
The payback comes in memories everlasting.

NEPTUNE

(*Suddenly serious*) Surely you can see that “day of glory”
is not a normal view of a ruined wedding.
It lacks a certain deference to grand occasion.
Some might even call it antisocial.

470 ERIS
Discord’s antisocial. I’m its goddess.

NEPTUNE

A negative attitude will not help you here.

ERIS

Positive is the one thing Discord isn't.
You wouldn't pressure Mars to be less martial.
What is Venus if she's not venereal?
480 And Neptune, if he's Neptune, will be wet.

A drop of Discord gives your day its texture.
Resistance — be it gritty, bumpy, boggy,
scraping, sticky — gives the moment meaning,
a lingering cast of candle-light in memory.

Absent Discord, where's your Trojan War?
Without the Trojan War, you'd have no Homer.
No arms. Nor the man. No Trojan Horse.
490 No Odysseus' long journey home.

No Homer, ergo no Euripides,
who channeled women bound to tragic men.

A daughter died to launch the thousand ships,
Iphigenia. Her father, Agamemnon,
fouled the wine-dark sea with virgin blood.
Ingloriously he bled in his own bathtub,
a mother's dreadful justice — Clytemnestra!
500 Elektra and Orestes, fated children,
doubly caught in righteousness and guilt,
struck their mother down. They fled the Furies,
reached Athena's temple, shining goddess!
They learned the only end to feud and vengeance
is trial and solemn sentence under law.
Euripides — illuminating Discord!

Will you sacrifice Euripides,
the voice of injured women, for peace and quiet?
510

That's all I have to say in my defense.
I'm immortal. I am leaving now.

ERIS storms toward stage-left.

NEPTUNE

Not so fast, young lady! (*Raising the trident*)
Dragons, dark!

520 *Thunder, blackout. The trident glows in the dark.*

Light returns gradually to the blue circle in background, silhouetting ERIS and NEPTUNE.

NEPTUNE

Remember where you are and who you're with.
Take a breath. Show a little respect.

Scene lighting returns to full as NEPTUNE speaks.

530

It's come to my attention you've been plotting
another brawl between Olympian gods,
very like poor Thetis' nuptial meltdown,
but this time with a whole lot bigger apple.

The golden apple now is Halley's Comet,
not rolled but flung among the inner planets!
The last time Earth beheld this size impactor,
the dinosaurs were wonderstruck. They vanished.

540

Your target isn't Earth. You'll smack the Moon.
She's small enough to carom out of orbit,
She'll bounce around the System like pachinko,
lighting up the planets, rampant mayhem.

ERIS

Ridiculous. I deny it all.

NEPTUNE

550 As evil genius goes, I give you credit.
The plan has cosmic scale. Its goal is simple:
wreck the lives of many. Their distress
may ease the ache of emptiness you live with.

ERIS

You think you understand me. Try again.

NEPTUNE

The question now is: Eris, what do we do?
560

ERIS

I don't know what you mean by what do WE do.

NEPTUNE

Jupiter's made it clear: this can't continue,
your life of sabotage against the System.
You're going to have to make a big decision:
The choice is down to Option One ... or Two.

570 ERIS

I don't need your options. I'm immortal.
What's Jupiter going to do — try and kill me?

NEPTUNE

Ask Prometheus, chained to an icy crag,
his liver served for eagle's breakfast daily.

ERIS

Okay, you're right. I don't care for liver.
580 It's time for me to take a new direction,
assess my past behavior, ask forgiveness,
and realign my life to ... larger goals.

NEPTUNE (*skeptically*)

A goddess doesn't change her spots. You're Discord.

ERIS

In that case, we had better look at options.

What can I expect from Option One?

590

NEPTUNE

Option One is closer supervision.

I'll pull you in: you'll be a captive moon,
like Triton. He could be your peer support.
You'll have your space ... within Neptunian space.

ERIS

A moon of yours? What about Option Two?

600

NEPTUNE

Option Two is exile. Never come back.
Your orbit nears the heliopause already —
only about a Wimbledon serve away.
I'd give you a push, and then you're on your own.

You'll go galactic. Interstellar space,
we hear, is different. The interstellar wind
is faint. The particles have a different charge.
A lot more open space, that much we know.

610

ERIS

I've wondered what the "way out there" is like.
It could be good for me, a new horizon.
Where's a Greek philosopher when you need one?
My options, it appears, are Bad and Worse.

NEPTUNE

Take a day to think the choices over.
If I don't hear by then, I'll pull you in.
You're one of us, even if we hate you.
The Solar System family hangs together.

620

Curtain.

Scene 4

Enter PLUTO, in front of the curtain stage-right, crossing to stage-left.

630 PLUTO (*talking to himself*)

Poor Eris, no good options. You know, I never liked that girl. But it's harsh losing your place in space. Relocate to Neptune? No, thank you! The other option: exile. Drifting like a ghost, a somebody nowhere. That's what we call: experiencing orbit-less-ness.

What a comedown for Eris. She was the Tenth Planet for a while, when she first appeared in telescopes. I was the ninth planet then. But never mind. I'm not bitter. (*Turns to audience*) Don't let it worry you, whatever became of poor old Pluto.

640 PLUTO notices CERES is at stage-left, watching him.

PLUTO

Look who's here. Oh my goddess, Ceres — my mother-in-law.

CERES

Pluto. You're looking well.

PLUTO

Ha! I look like Hell.

650

CERES

I'm looking for Eris. She doesn't seem to be home.

PLUTO

She might be still in transit, coming back from Neptune. Neptune called her in for an office visit. A reprimand for one of her practical jokes.

CERES

A practical joke — anything to do with Jupiter?

660

PLUTO

Halley's Comet is what I heard. Eris found a group of "tourists" to help her — "an attractive mass" she called 'em. Roving gang of planetoids is my I guess. The idea was these tourists had enough mass for a gravity-assist. As Halley approached, the tourists would bend the comet's trajectory — slinging it smack into Earth's moon. Ker-raaack! Like billiards. Earth first, of course, then Venus, Mercury, possibly glancing off to Mars. Forget the golden apple. Make way for the Halley's Comet cue ball!

670

CERES

There was nothing about Jupiter in all this?

PLUTO

If Jupiter was a target, Neptune didn't know.

CERES

But what if...

PLUTO

680

What if what?

CERES

What if the purpose of hitting the Moon was to turn the MOON into a SECOND cue ball — a bigger cue ball — big enough to punch a hole through Jupiter?

PLUTO

Why Jupiter? Come to think of it, it's Eris. Why not Jupiter.

CERES

690

Jupiter's a lying, pandering, back-stabbing, self-important gas bag.

PLUTO

Well, sure, there's that. But he keeps the orbits running on time.

CERES

Jupiter took a massive hit from a comet in 1992, Shoemaker-Levy 9. The energy from that impact was 600 times the total of all the nuclear weapons on Earth. People took notice. Especially Jupiter.

700 PLUTO

I remember. Jupiter had some potholes afterward.

CERES

The Moon is 2,000 times bigger than Shoemaker-Levy 9.

PLUTO

Epic collision. Possibly uber-epic. Super-uber-epic. There IS one problem.

CERES

710 What problem? It's simple orbital mechanics.

PLUTO

Neptune says the coordinates are off. Halley's Comet doesn't come anywhere near Eris. Halley's Comet will never hit the Moon. That crazy Eris. She never was any good at math.

Scene 5

720 *Stage setup is the same as for Scene 1, except:*

- *No smartphone*
- *The Sun is larger (grapefruit size)*

ERIS enters from stage-right, stops in spotlight. Soliloquy.

I'm here again. Same kettle of fish.

Pisces. Why does it happen over and over?

730 It's like I wake within a dream, in trouble,
accused. How did things get out of hand?

I'm like a villain in some kind of comic book,

concocting schemes to paralyze the world,
to make them stop their ceaseless, heedless buzzing,
to freeze them where they stand. They have to notice:

I am in control. They'd better listen,
or I will wreck their stupid little lives,
expose the fraud their happiness depends on,
740 cut the flow of pretense, lies, and favor.

This villain always fails. She's grandiose.
She fails because of over-active ego,
drunk on the honey-glow of their dismay,
those busy drones who didn't think to serve her.

The evil genius loves the spotlight, Agh!
My cracks of craven neediness are showing!
Everyone can see my histrionics
750 are just a cry for help. How pathetic.

No wonder then, the ups and downs repeating.
The genius wants what everybody wants:
the money, drugs, and love, the admiration
that's only ever offered — as a baited hook.

ERIS walks upstage, notices the Sun is larger than in Scene 1. Along the way, a spotlight reveals half the CHORUS at stage-left.

760 *ERIS returns downstage to her spotlight. Along the way, a spotlight reveals the other half of the CHORUS at stage-right.*

ERIS (*to the audience*)

Sorry. I have a bit of bad news.

The gathering we discussed, the grand convergence,
to steer the stars and bring the dawning of
the Age of Aquarius, is cancelled.

The Halley's Comet tour is going elsewhere,

770 not even close to here, like this was Lodi.
Halley's team regrets the inconvenience.
What can I say? You may as well go home.

CHORUS LEFT

Don't go home. Repeat: do NOT go home.
(*Pointing at the audience*) Stay, right where you are — at least for now.

ERIS

Again, I'm sorry. You cannot know how sorry.
780 The show is over. There's nothing more to see.

CHORUS LEFT

(*Urgently*) No, don't do it. Please stay in your seats.

CHORUS RIGHT

Let the people go, if they wanna.
"Go Where You Wanna Go" — that's our mantra!

Suggested rhythm: go WHERE you WANna GO

790

CHORUS LEFT

Go where you wanna go, amen to that,
but you don't have to wanna go right now.

CHORUS RIGHT

When you wanna's when you gotta go.
If you don't go, you may not wanna later.

CHORUS LEFT

800 So IF you WANna NOW, you oughta not.

CHORUS RIGHT

Oughta's so controlling. Wanna flow.

CHORUS LEFT

We WILL not wanna stay if THEY all go (*pointing to the audience*).

Halves of the CHORUS converge and begin a circle dance, holding hands.

810 CHORUS RIGHT

Everybody knows where they are at.

CHORUS LEFT

They wanna go where they will wanna stay.

Music.

WHOLE CHORUS (*singing*)

Go where you wanna go. Tune in, turn on.

820 Go where you wanna go. With Peace and Love.

Go where you wanna go. Our love is free.

Go where you wanna go. It's Option Three.

As music and dance end, CHORUS forms a half-circle behind ERIS, who walks back and forth, pondering.

ERIS

Option One or Option Two. Why

no Option Three? Take a little time,

830 a space for self-reflection — calming down.

Why can I not simply be myself?

CHORUS (*with discordant violin*)

Because you're Discord. Discord. Discord. Discord.

ERIS

Isn't there a vital role for Discord,

testing social bonds so they are strong?

840 CHORUS (*severally*)

You are restless, troubled, seeking trouble,

acting out, and getting more extreme.

ERIS

Okay. There's that. It's time to make some changes.

CHORUS (*abruptly after "changes"*)

Get some help!

850 ERIS

Help for a stranded ego...

See a shrink for mood-leveling drugs?

CHORUS

Those are not the drugs we recommend.

ERIS

Take the plunge with Jesus as my savior?

860 CHORUS

Sorry, pagan gods need not apply.

ERIS

What off-earth is a girl supposed to do?

CHORUS

How about an outpatient program?

Share your bottled Pain of Life with others.

870 (*Severally, stepping forward to speak*)

Hi, I'm Eris. I get off on Discord.

Sweet and clear for almost thirty minutes!

Relationships? Not me. I pulverize 'em.

This golden-apple necklace (*touching her necklace*) holds a memory,
a wedding day that birthed a world war.

I ought to be ashamed. But what I feel

880 is the thrill of throwing a rock at a glass window.

My hobbies are the planets AND ballistics!

Enter CERES downstage, stage-right. As lights dim at mid-stage, our view of the CHORUS fades. They break their semi-circle and sit in two lines, left and right, forming a runway toward the Sun.

CERES

Eris, mischief goddess, what's going on?

890 I heard it didn't go so well with Neptune.

ERIS

I'm contemplating Options One and Two.

There has to be some kind of Option Three.

I cannot kumbaya with Neptune's moons,
but then the Great Beyond ... It's all too much.

Or not enough. I feel the need of friction,
clash, commotion. I hate their smug complacency,
900 and yet I need them — people! (*With a scornful laugh*) I've heard it sung
that people who need people are the luckiest.

ERIS, feeling her loneliness, is overcome, sobs.

CERES (*hugging ERIS, with a cradle-rocking motion*)

There, there, darling. Everything
will be all right. You'll see. There, there.

ERIS (*stepping back from CERES*)

910 I see it now. Don Quixote was right.
I've gotta be me. You see it? (*Singing*) I've gotta be me.

CERES

Darling, that was Sammy Davis Jr.

ERIS

A giant or a windmill. Who can say which?

You see what's right, the choice that's right for you.

920 CERES

What are you seeing now as Option Three?

ERIS

I feel the gravitational pull increasing.

It's Neptune reeling me in. My hold is slipping.

I'm sliding, turning sideways — on black ice.

You see the Sun is bigger — slowly, slowly.

930 *The Sun is a dome-shaped balloon made of nylon or similar lightweight material.
It inflates by electric fan. The dome swells from grapefruit-size against the
backdrop to a 12-foot diameter. Over the next dozen lines, ERIS and CERES watch
the Sun growing.*

ERIS

I'm Discord. I won't go down without a fight.

Neptune may be vast, but Discord's older.

CERES

Eris, think. What are you going to do?

940

ERIS

I'll have to slide as far as Neptune pulls,
but then I'll slip his grip and keep on sliding.

In a long graceful dive, I'll splash the Sun.

Along the way, I'll aim to puncture Jupiter.

CERES

Will Jupiter intersect your line of sight?

950 ERIS

I'll see what can be done when I get close.

I'm bigger than Halley's Comet. He will feel it.

Even if I miss, he'll know I buzzed him.

I'll wave and pass along your kind regards (*flipping the bird*).

As the Sun reaches full size, its lighting increases and other areas go dim, so ERIS and CERES are silhouetted.

CERES

960 It doesn't have to end this way. There's time.

ERIS

It's time. A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.
That goes for a woman too. Good night, Mother.

ERIS turns to face the Sun. She is a black figure against the center of its disk, her arms spread slightly, like a gunfighter's. CHORUS members each raise a tiny light, showing the runway,

970 *Music by cello, viola, and violin, with electric guitar joining in — "The Weight" (Robbie Robertson, 1968). Lyrics optional.*

ERIS walks in place, facing her moment with courage, like a hero. As the song's refrain begins, she runs in place, arms flailing.

CERES

Eris, come back. Please. Come back to me.

980 *As the refrain ends, ERIS runs in slow-motion to the Sun, throws herself into its puffy mass, her hands outstretched and pulling the fabric around her.*

Music veers into discord. Curtain closes.

CERES is alone in front of the curtain.

CERES

Another girl gone. Destroyed, for what?
And I'm the one who's left to carry on.

990 *Music resumes as CERES exits, stage-left*