

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

120 But you have guests, I see. An angry mob
of pitchfork folk who've come to toss your salad?

ERIS
Juno wasn't wrong to have suspicions.

CERES
Suspensions 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.

150 What about your visitors: who are they?

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.

160 I'll let you stir your sinister soup du jour.

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

170 retired where wheat and corn can never thrive,
on a salty clod in the Asteroid Archipelago.

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,

180 the captive queen of death in the underworld.

Ceres' grief so wrenched the earth with famine
— 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.

190 Helios handles that. Just take my word:
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.

200 CHORUS (solemnly)
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

Curtain is closed. Offstage, the CHORUS sings a lugubrious, cacophonous version of the wedding march.

230

CHORUS

La la la-loo, boo hoo hoo-hoo,
Sobbing, crying, wailing, lamentations too.

Hmm, hmm, hmm-hmm. (*Repeat until PLUTO enters.*)

Oh, here comes the groom,
Once the Groom of Doom,
Former lord of Hades,
Orbiting in gloom.

240

Enter PLUTO in front of the curtain, shuffling from stage-right to stage-left. He is dressed as a bedraggled bridegroom, in a broken top hat and tattered tails. An oversize flower droops from his lapel. He regales himself, like the Porter in Macbeth.

PLUTO

Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars. Those are your inner planets. Jupiter, Saturn. Uranus, Neptune: the gas bags. Finally, always last, my humble self, Pluto.

250

One big happy family. (Belches.)

There used to be a mnemonic for the nine planets: My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas.

It doesn't roll trippingly off the tongue. My Very *Educated* Mother? Sticks out, four syllables. It's because of a little-known yet severe shortage of short adjectives beginning with the letter E.

260 My Very *Eager* Mother. No. My Very *Earnest* Mother. No. My Easy, Equal, Empty, Extra ... Evil ... Mother? No-no, no-no, and not in this context.

And how about "Just" for Jupiter? That's a laugh. There's nothing fair-minded about Mr. Lightning Bolt. If ever a god were *just* an adverb, Jupiter's the one.

The hard truth is: it's hard to make a good mnemonic for nine planets.

My Very Embarrassing Mother ... Just Showed your anus — No Pity. Doubious value in the classroom.

270 Many Vegans Eat Mushrooms ... Just So Uncle Neddy ... what? Panics? Prances? Just So Uncle Neddy *Pukes*?

Pukes might work. But no. I will never sign off on Pluto Pukes. Not that anyone is asking.

There are eight planets now, not nine.

280 We were brothers: Jupiter, Neptune, Pluto. Three realms surrounding Mother Earth: the sky, the sea, the underworld. Of course, the underworld was not the most glamorous of the three. It was very isolating down there.

Then we all retired as planets. And, once again, I'm way the hell out there! Here.

Nobody even knew where I was until 1930. Thank you, Clyde Tombaugh of the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona! I thank Clyde Tombaugh all the more, having no idea what or where Arizona might be.

Clyde Tombaugh discovered Pluto in 1930, and 76 years later I'm no longer a

290 planet — according to the IAU, International Astronomical Union. I didn't get even one orbit as a recognized planet. Out this far, seventy-six years is one-third of an orbit. IAU bastards.

Mercury's a planet, measly Mercury. Venus, Earth, and Mars — all planets. Four big balls of gas — Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune — those are planets and Pluto is not? Pluto — Jupiter's older brother — is not a planet. Pluto is a “trans-Neptunian object.” Heigh ho.

300

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.

310 *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.
The outer Solar System's mostly empty,
as you know. I caught a glimpse of Pluto.

320

NEPTUNE

My baby brother. How's he getting along?

ERIS

Same as always.

NEPTUNE

Good to hear..

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

340 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.
I like autonomy, very few distractions.
I don't have time for gloomy meditations.

350 *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.
Your Sun-to-Eris miles: about 9 billion.
Sunlight takes a dozen hours to reach you,
360 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.

I could apply for God of War. Why not?

Discord often escalates to bloodshed.

370 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

to join the inner circle. If Mercury's there,

you ask, why not you? A fair question.

380

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?

Did Jupiter put you up to this . . . this chat?

390 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

like Jupiter thinks that someone's out for HIM.

400 *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)

“When Eris arrives, Consensus leaves the room.”

410 “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:

420 “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?

ERIS

Sounds like Ceres, ever-tender mother.

430 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!”

ERIS (*Out of the chair, facing NEPTUNE, but keeping a safe distance*)

440 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.

Discord steals the show wherever she goes.

450 “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.

Neptune takes an oversize bocci ball, painted gold, from his desk.

460 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).

Neptune elaborately rolls the golden ball. A member of the CHORUS rushes onstage to grab it. Two more CHORUS members rush out and struggle for the ball. They exit noisily as a group, still struggling. End this bit with a loud noise, such as furniture tipping over or glass shattering.

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

ERIS (*getting out of the chair, eager to talk*)

I must admit: that was a day of glory,
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

480 *(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.

ERIS

Discord’s antisocial. I’m its goddess.

NEPTUNE

A negative attitude won’t help you here.

490

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?
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,
500 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.
No Odysseus’ long journey home.

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

510 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!
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
520 is trial and solemn sentence under law.
Euripides — illuminating Discord!

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

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

ERIS storms toward stage-left.
530

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

Thunder, blackout. The trident glows in the dark.

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

540 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.

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.

550

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.

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.

560

ERIS
Ridiculous. I deny it all.

NEPTUNE
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.

570

ERIS
You think you understand me. Try again.

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

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

580

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.

ERIS

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

NEPTUNE

590 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.
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*)

600 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?

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.
610 You'll have your space ... within Neptunian space.

ERIS

A moon of yours? What about Option Two?

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.
620 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.

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?
630 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.

Curtain.

640

Scene 4

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

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, with nowhere to haunt. Orbit-less.

650

Eris was the Tenth Planet for a while, when she first appeared in telescopes. That
was 2005, when I was still the Ninth Planet. Before the IAU — Ignoramuses Are
Us — chucked me out. Never mind. I'm not bitter.

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

PLUTO

Oh my goddess, look who's here. My mother-in-law.

CERES

660 *Hell-o, Pluto. You're looking well.*

PLUTO

Ha! I know I look like Hell.

CERES

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

PLUTO

Neptune called her in for ... an office visit. She may not be back yet.

670

CERES

This "office visit," did it have anything to do with Jupiter?

PLUTO

Halley's Comet is what I heard.

CERES

Halley's Comet?

680 PLUTO

Another of Eris's practical jokes, rolling another ball into a crowd. She said she found a group of "tourists" to help.

CERES (*looking around, not seeing the audience*)

A group of tourists? Who was she talking about?

PLUTO

She called them "an attractive mass." Gang of planetoids is my guess. Her idea was these tourists had enough mass to pull Halley's Comet off course. When the comet got close, the tourists would bend its trajectory toward Earth's moon.

690

Planetary billiards! Halley's Comet, the cue ball, hits the Moon. Ker-raaack! The Moon hits Earth. Earth hits Venus. Mercury caroms into Mars. If you thought the golden apple at Thetis' wedding caused trouble, wait till you see Bowling with the Planets!

CERES

Where does Jupiter come into all this? Eris was focused on Jupiter.

700 PLUTO

If Jupiter was the target, Neptune didn't know about it.

CERES

Neptune doesn't know everything. Suppose the purpose of hitting the Moon is to punch a hole in Jupiter. Is that possible?

Earth and Jupiter are both east of the Sun right now. So it's a straight shot from one to the other. If the comet hits the Moon at just the right moment, the Moon takes off like a bullet, right?

710

PLUTO

Sounds like a tricky shot.

CERES

But worth a try if you're Eris.

PLUTO

Well, yes, if you're Eris. Or Hera. Or you for that matter.

720 CERES

The Moon is 2,000 miles wide. Traveling at tens of thousands of miles per hour, the explosion on impact ... It would be big enough to wipe out the dinosaurs on Jupiter.

PLUTO

Dinosaurs?

CERES

It would be a very large explosion.

730

PLUTO (*intrigued*)

It could work. If the Moon were knocked out of orbit, there's a good chance

Jupiter's gravity would pull it straight into his gut.

CERES

He couldn't stop himself. Same as always.

PLUTO

But there is one big problem.

740

CERES

What problem? It's simple orbital mechanics.

PLUTO

According to Neptune, Halley's Comet won't come close enough to Eris. Eris's orbit is too tilted.

CERES

Too tilted?

750

PLUTO

Neptune says Halley's Comet won't come close enough to wave hi, much less cause the comet to swerve.

That crazy Eris. Her anti-social skills are second to none. Her math is a black hole.

Scene 5

760

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

- *No smartphone*
- *The Sun is noticeably larger (now soccer ball-size)*

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

I'm here again. Same kettle of fish.

In Pisces (*gesturing to backdrop stars*). Why does it happen over and over?

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

I'm like a villain in a Batman comic book,
concocting schemes to paralyze the world,
to make them stop their ceaseless, heedless buzzing,
to freeze them where they stand, so they will notice:

I am in control. They'd better listen,
or I will wreck their stupid little lives,
780 expose the fraud their happiness depends on,
bash the humming hive with golden apples.

My villain always fails. She's grandiose.
She fails because of over-acting — ego!
She's drunk on the honey-glow of their dismay,
those busy drones who didn't serve — me!

The evil genius loves the spotlight, Agh!
My cracks of craven neediness are showing!
790 Everyone can see my histrionics
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 — on a baited hook.

*ERIS walks upstage, notices the Sun is larger. Lighting follows ERIS upstage,
revealing half the CHORUS along her path.*

800 *As ERIS returns downstage at stage-right, lighting reveals the other half of the
CHORUS.*

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 about the dawning
of the Age of Aquarius, is cancelled.

810 The Halley's Comet tour is going elsewhere,
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 STAGE-LEFT

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

820 ERIS
Again, I'm sorry. You cannot know how sorry.
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!

830 *Begin a chanting cadence between LEFT and EIGHT.*

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.

840

CHORUS LEFT

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*).

850 *Begin music, as halves of the CHORUS converge and begin a circle dance.*

CHORUS RIGHT

Nobody REALLY knows where THEY are at.

CHORUS LEFT

They just WANna GO ... where THEY will stay.

CHORUS (*singing call and response*)

	Go where you wanna go.	Tune in, turn on.
860	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,
870 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?
880

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, emphatically, in unison*)

Get some help!

890

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?

900

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.

910

(*Severally, stepping forward and imitating Eris*)

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

Sweet and clear for almost thirty minutes!

Relationships? Like frozen fruit in Jell-O!.

(Touching her necklace)

920 This golden-apple necklace holds a memory,
a wedding day that birthed a world war.
I ought to be ashamed. But what I feel
is the thrill of throwing a rock at someone's window.

My hobbies are ... the planets AND ballistics!

Enter CERES. Lighting dims our view of the CHORUS f. They break their semi-circle and sit in two lines, left and right, forming a runway toward the Sun.

CERES

930 Eris, mischief goddess, what's going on?
I heard it didn't go so well with Neptune.

ERIS

I'm contemplating Options One and Two.
There ought to be some kind of Option Three.
I cannot kumbaya with Neptune's moons,
but exile Way Out There ... It's all too much.

940 Or maybe not enough. I need the friction,
clash, and tumult. I hate their smug complacency,
and yet I need them — people!

(With a scornful laugh) I've heard it sung
that people who need people are the luckiest.

ERIS sobs.

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

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

ERIS *(stepping away from CERES)*

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

960 A giant or a windmill. Who can say which?
You *feel* what's right, the choice that's right for you.

CERES

What are you feeling now is 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.
970 The Sun's been getting bigger — slowly, slowly.

The Sun is an inflatable yellow bag or balloon against the backdrop. It swells from soccer ball-size to a 12-foot diameter during the next dozen lines.

ERIS

I'm Discord. I won't go down without a fight.
Neptune may be vast, but Discord's older.

CERES

980 Eris, think. What are you going to do?

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-arcingdive, I'll splash the Sun.

On my way, I'll aim through Jupiter's belly.

990 CERES

Will Jupiter intersect your sunward path?

ERIS

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

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

Even if I miss, he'll feel his peril.

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

1000 *As the Sun reaches full size, its lighting increases and other areas go dim. ERIS and CERES are silhouetted.*

CERES

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

ERIS, turning in silhouette to face the Sun, becomes a gunfighter, her arms spread as if to draw pistols. CHORUS members each raise a tiny light, defining the runway toward the Sun,

ERIS

1010 It's high noon at the OK Corral.

A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do.

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

ERIS walks in place, miming a gunfight about to happen. As the song's refrain begins, ERIS jogs and then runs in place, arms flailing.

CERES (*in silhouette, kneels, throws out her arms, imploring*)

1020 Eris, come back. Please. Come back to me.

As the refrain nears its ends, ERIS runs in slow-motion to the Sun and lunges into its puffy mass, her hands outstretched and pulling the fabric around her. ERIS disappears.

Music veers into discord. Blackout. Curtain closes.

CERES is alone in front of the curtain.

1030 CERES
Another girl I've lost. Destroyed, for what?
And I'm the one who's left to carry on.

Music resumes as CERES exits, stage-left.