

Persephone's Spring

by

Alayna Jacqueline

PROLOGUE

Darkness.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Singing)

Slick. Slide. Slither.

Slick. Slide. Slither.

The humming is underscored with the sound of snakes, then the snakes and humming turn to music.

The sound of a pencil rolling on the floor is heard. As the rolling sound grows, we see the pencil roll into a dim light on stage and stops on its own.

Next, we overhear the distant steps of someone approaching. Stepping, into the light is Des. Curiously, he picks up the pencil and walks to his dimly lit desk. He starts to sketch a beautiful woman. We see the projected drawing in the background. Des keeps erasing or scrapping the paper altogether. Each time he clears or starts a new page the photo becomes darker and the woman loses life in her.

Across the room, a dim light rises on Kora, standing and examining her reflection in the mirror. She focuses on her stomach. She stares at a baby bump soon to grow. She stares in the mirror intensely and begins reaching out to her reflection.

Des notices and begins to sketch Kora. He draws her staring in the mirror, examining her face. Des is captivated by the picture he's creating until he notices Kora touching the mirror as if she is trying to go through it. Des pulls himself away from his desk to calm her. However, when he leaves, the pencil continues drawing on its own.

Des walks over and hugs Kora from behind. He touches her growing baby bump and smiles looking at their picture perfect image in the mirror. The pencil continues drawing, and we see the projected sketch of the man holding his wife from behind.

The pencil keeps sketching the scene, adding a large portrait on the wall, a decorated table with a pomegranate in the middle, a book sits at the end of the table, and a single candle is lighting the room. Yet, we don't see these items physically appear on stage. The picture now has a life independent of the couple that inspired it.

The couple sways back and forth, admiring the beautiful family. The man brushes Kora's hair back and kisses her neck. She turns to face him and smiles.

The pencil picks up speed, sketching feverishly. Des pulls Kora into him and kisses her on the forehead.

The pencil's strokes begin to slow down; the picture is almost finished. As Des kisses Kora, he looks at his own reflection in the mirror.

From behind the mirror appears Meg and Iris, both very alive and beautiful. They then put dark make up on each other, slowly taking life out of their faces.

At the same time, Demi appears behind the couple. She reaches out for Kora. When she tries to take a step forward, a swift blade cuts her side. It bleeds.

Demi tries to take a step forward, but she is cut again. This continues until she's too weak to go forward. She drops. She never makes it to Kora.

The pencil does one more grand stroke and then drops HARD on the desk.

The stage is dark, leaving a small sliver of light on the couple holding each other, the two women behind the mirror, and Demi on the floor.

Slowly fading in, a projected picture of Des weeping over Kora's limp body appears. In this same moment, the mirror slowly turns, revealing their reflection. However, their reflection is different. Instead of the beautiful family portrait, we see Des holding a bleeding Kora in his arms, and if you look close enough they both are smiling.

Lights fade slowly.

Demi is gone.

The two women leave.

The tableau of Des and Kora holding each other disappears in the dark.

Their murderous, alternative reflection dissolves.

The sketch fades.

The pencil on the desk is the only thing lit.

A SKETCH

The pencil begins drawing again. Lights up, revealing a large portrait of a happy Kora and Des. They are young, full of life and all the potential in the world.

We see Des drawing again at his desk. Kora is across the room looking in the mirror, contemplating which dress to wear while talking on the phone and checking her long to-do list.

KORA

(On the phone)

Yes, six o'clock. Please don't be late.

Yeah. Sure. Whatever. Invite who you want we don't care.

Des gives her a look.

Okay not just anybody. It has to be someone I know.

Des shakes his head.

Someone we know.

Des gives another look.

It has to be someone we both know and like?

Des gives up.

It doesn't matter we would just hate for you miss the toast. We're so excited... I just can't wait to tell you... Oh just forget it I'm gonna tell you now... No I can't. I'll give a hint... No I must be strong... Okay seven on the dot... We're gonna announce it then. Be there or... Be last to know... Okay. Bye.

Kora hangs up the phone.

DES

(Without looking up)

How many times is that woman going to call?

KORA

I know. I know.

DES

Why do you entertain her? And more guests?
What are you thinking? We already...

KORA

It's okay. You know how she is. She does this all the time. She puts on this huge performance for everything, asking about the food, what wine she can bring, who's all on the guest list, can she bring a plus one, and she goes on and on. This was her third call today to push the time of her unlikely arrival.

DES

(Annoyed)

Then why invite her.

KORA

Because it would be rude.

DES

And obnoxiously blowing up the hosts phone isn't?

KORA

She's our closest friend. If it wasn't for her I would've never met you.

DES

And how long do I have to suffer for that?

KORA

She's my long distance best friend.

DES

Then just tell her from long distance.

KORA

I can't! I want it to be a surprise.

DES

But you know she's not coming.

KORA

Then why do you care...

DES

I just don't see why you guys put up a front that you're best friends. You're killing yourself, trying to keep up with the past. Sometimes you just need to let go of old friends because you're not the same.

Kora looks at their portrait.

She studies it.

KORA

Am I really that different?

Des sees her examining the portrait. He jumps up and turns her away

DES

I'm just saying that...

KORA

What is your issue with her? You guys used to be close too and now...

DES

(Irritated and short)

I just don't want her in this house.

Kora has no clue where this came from.

Des tries to recover.

DES (CONT'D)

When we try and move on, she still gets pissed that she's last to be involved in our lives.

KORA

I mean I think she'll understand with this. When you're late nothing good happens.

DES

(With hand on her stomach)

Nothing?

KORA

(Sarcastically)

Ha. Ha. You're so funny.

She kisses him.

KORA (CONT'D)

(Walking to Des' desk)

So what are you working on?

DES

(Panicked)

Wait-wait-wait.

Des tries to cover his work station, but it's too late. Kora notices a picture on the desk.

KORA
(Quickly retreating)
Oh God.

DES
(Following her)
Sorry, you weren't supposed to see it.

He reaches for her.

KORA
Don't touch me.

They breathe for a moment.

KORA (CONT'D)
What... Why are you... How can you draw something like that?/You're sitting there nonchalantly talking while...

DES
I... It just came to mind... Well not...

KORA
Who thinks of that? Her eyes are... How could you think of... To draw a broken body laying in a sewer and my God those rats... I'm gonna be sick.

DES
Kora.

KORA
Comics are supposed to be...

DES
It's a graphic novel.

KORA
I don't care what it is... It's disgusting. It's too real.

DES
I'm just doing a favor for an old friend.

KORA
(Cold)
What happened to letting go of old friends?

DES
Kora...

KORA
Is it different for you? You get different
rules?

DES
It's not that...

KORA
What do you get?

DES
What?

KORA
What does this old friend do for you?

DES
I just... I owe them.

KORA
It's scary that this is what you think
about. That this is what you create.
(Beat)
Does this make you happy?

Des doesn't answer. This burns Kora.

KORA (CONT'D)
Let me see this novel.

DES
You don't wanna see...

KORA
Show. Me.

*She reaches for the pages, but Des quickly
pulls them away.*

*Without a word, we know their world will
come crashing down if that book opens.*

Both are afraid to speak or move.

*Kora tries to break the silence, but she
runs off stage. We hear her vomit off stage.*

DES
(To self)
Damn it.

Kora walks back on stage.

Des goes to her.

DES (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

He reaches for her stomach.

KORA
(Pushes him away)
I'm fine.

DES
Kora those all aren't from me... I mean I
made them, but I didn't make them up... I
mean...

KORA
(Relieved)
Thank God.

DES
(Confused)
That's an odd reaction.

Kora takes a moment to compose herself.

KORA
I'd rather you trace or sketch or whatever
the living thing than...

DES
Well the "death thing" in this case.

*He gives a small chuckle. It's a tick of his
when he's nervous. At first it's kinda cute
and endearing, but it will eventually become
annoying.*

KORA
It's not funny.

DES
You're always so quick to assume I'm... I
told you I'm doing this for an old friend.

KORA
What friend?

DES
Not really a friend. I don't know what
they are.

KORA

I don't care who they are. What do they do for you?

DES

What does that mean?

KORA

What do they do that I can't?

Des looks at his face in the mirror.

DES

(Shaking it off)
Nothing.

KORA

Des just tell me...

DES

I'm not just here randomly thinking about...

KORA

I don't know what you think about anymore.
I know it's not me.

DES

Don't start with this again.

KORA

The only thing I can do is "start with this" because you never help me finish it.

DES

Because I'm sick of going around in this circle.

KORA

Then let's try a triangle or a square.
Shit I'd be happiest with a straight line, to get to the same point.

DES

You're the one who's always in your head.
You've built a home there, and forgot to bring me with you.

KORA

No I didn't.

DES

When's the last time you've dreamt about me? Us?

KORA

I don't have control over what I dream about...

DES

Yes you do. You're so stuck in this fairy tale land, where you have to be saved and there's this revolving door of saviors and villains.

(Beat)

I saved you from the evil witch.

KORA

Don't call her that. My mother is not...

DES

You're the one who made her that. I moved from being the one who rescued you, and now I'm turning into the one that stole you away, right? I'm your new villain.

KORA

No you're not.

DES

I have to be. Things were going too well. So who's your savior?

KORA

I'm not calling you a bad guy. I don't think it's just black and white.

DES

Yes you do! You were so ready to condemn me for sketches that aren't for me...

KORA

Because it's a sick thing to be the man who could murder a woman like that. To do that to a living thing. A person. It's another thing to fantasize about being the man who did it.

DES

I'm not fantasizing about it. I'm trying not to be that guy.

That lays there between them.

KORA

Do you think you could be that guy?

DES
No. I mean we all could be anything,
Right?

Again, their words just lay there.

DES (CONT'D)
The important thing is that I don't want
to be him.

KORA
It's just as bad!

DES
That's ridiculous.

KORA
Is it? You owe someone that likes to leave
these women for dead.
(Beat)
Would you ever do that to me?

DES
Do you hear yourself?

KORA
I have life in me now. Beautiful, growing
life. I'm thinking about what this life
will become and how to nurture it. And
you're across the room creating death.
You're finding beauty in an abandoned,
shattered body that once carried precious
life. That could be our child. That...
That was my mother.

DES
I'm not like your father.

Kora is silent.

DES (CONT'D)
Will you stop trying to turn this into
Making a Murderer?

KORA
It just feels like you're inviting death
into our home.
(Beat)
Are we ready for this?
(Gestures to baby)
Once we announce it, we can't take it
back.

Kora holds her stomach.

DES
Were you planning to?

Kora hesitates. It's uncomfortable.
And there it is...

KORA
No of course not. I just with this...

DES
You don't think I'm ready.

They let his words sit between them for a moment.

KORA
(Defeated)
I think there's a lot of planning to do for tonight. And I'm just talking from exhaustion.

She strokes her stomach. Des walks over and places his hand on her stomach.

DES
Why don't you lay down, and I'll take care of some stuff.

KORA
(Moving his hand)
No I need to get started on the...

DES
Fine! You can do all of the everything, but take a nap first.

KORA
Okay. I'll lay down for a second.
(Yawns)
A really long second.

She starts to exit slowly.
A really really long second.

DES
Kora. I forget how hard this time of year is for you, without your mom and everything.

KORA
I don't want to get into it.

DES
I'm just saying you don't have to deal
with it alone.

KORA
I don't have to deal with it at all.
(Recovering)
I mean there's nothing to deal with.
(Beat)
Can I lay down now?

DES
Okay stop. You don't need my permission.
Don't do that.

KORA
Do what?

DES
I'm not your father. Your mother made a
choice.

Kora stops.
I didn't make you move down here. That was
your choice.

KORA
"Kora we can't make it here. I swear Kora
we'll be better if we leave this place."

DES
See. There it is again. I'm the villain. I
stole you and your free will?

KORA
It didn't have to happen the way it did.

DES
You always choose her over me / and you
know it.

KORA
No I don't. She's my mother.

DES
I'm your husband. I should come first!
Always!

KORA
(Knowing the truth in his words)
We shouldn't have left the way we did.

DES

Does it matter now? It's five years and a pregnancy later.

His words lie between them.

You couldn't save her... You being there would've just damaged you more.

That stings Kora.

She exits without a word.

DES (CONT'D)

(To self)

Shit.

Des' phone buzzes on his desk. He goes to pick up the phone. Before answering, a biting chill runs down his spine.

DES (CONT'D)

(Heavy breath)

Hello? It wasn't supposed to be this long... No there's no more sorries... Look... I just promised Kora...

In another room lights show Kora laying down in the bed.

You swore I'd be better here. I swore to Kora we'd be better here. She can't... No you listen! She's gonna catch on to this... I'm done... I want to be done. Just let me go. I didn't want to come down here either... Not like this. And it's not fair to make her stay because you won't let me go. Don't ask me that... Because you already know I... I don't want to be alone.

(Beat)

Kora might go. She might really leave this time... She saw my sketch.

Kora twists and turns in the bed.

I didn't show it to her... She just saw it... No... NO! I can't keep asking her to stay when there's blood on my hands. I want to be done. Let us leave. I never wanted this! I didn't ask for this. What is wrong with me? I don't have to listen to you... I don't want it anymore.

Kora's shifting turns into thrashing while Des continues begging.

Pick someone else... Anyone else.

The television flips on by itself. Des watches.

TELEVISION

The body found has recently been identified as Meg Thebes.

Des turns off the TV and walks away.

It turns back on.

TELEVISION (CONT'D)

Their domestic dispute quickly escalated from a screaming match to a murder...

He turns it off again, but it comes back on.

TELEVISION (CONT'D)

Police discovered her body in a sewer this morning.

He turns the TV off.

It comes back on, but this time we see Meg standing there behind Des. She is broken. Her skin is cracked. Her hair is wet. She is just a walking corpse.

MEG

(Echoing voice)

She didn't have a chance to fight him. She was never going to leave. She was too weak.

Des tries to turn the TV off, but nothing happens.

Meg moves closer as if she's going to pass through Des.

She was too weak.

Too weak.

Too weak.

She was dying before she ever met him.

The TV shuts off on it's own.

MEG (CONT'D)

(Whispers)

Who started my decay?

Des stands there in silence.

Meg walks toward his desk and begins to draw. She has little control over her arm. She looks possessed by the pencil.

The scratching underscores the scene.

DES

(Into the phone)

I should've never answered the first time you called. You get one more. We have a party tonight. I'll choose one then.

(Looking at the TV)

Don't call here again.

Des throws the phone.

Lights fade on Des, then on Meg, then the pencil.

The scratching is lightly heard.