

The warm glow of the sun's vibrant rays fills my room. A soft breeze flows through the window, lifting the curtains slightly. As the birds chirp and sing their songs, someone comes in through my bedroom door. There was that same voice, as comforting as ever, gliding across the room. "Let's go. It's time to get up." The door closes shut. I open my eyes and let out the deep yawn brewing in my core. I stretched about to get out of bed, feeling as if my limbs could reach out for miles. As my bare feet touch down, the cold sensation of the hardwood floor hits my body like a quick shot of caffeine. I rub my eyes and head to the kitchen, where my mom awaits a freshly cooked breakfast. "I was starting to think you wouldn't wake up." She says with a smile on her face, handing me a plate. I shake my head and set it down on the table. I walk over and hug her. "Good morning," I mumble, my voice faint since I haven't spoken today. I sit down and start serving myself some delicious-smelling food—eggs, bacon, toast. Simple, yet so satisfying. A little while into breakfast, my mom speaks up again. "Do you have any tests today?"

"No," I reply, keeping my head down. I pick through the eggs until I find a sound bite. "That's good. There's nothing to worry about then." She adds cheerfully. "Yup." I follow, still looking at my food. She speaks again. "I was reading through one of your dad's old books today." I look up. My eyebrows raise with immediate interest. She continues, "Found some interesting stuff in there... some of it was hard to understand. I don't know, but you should read it." She gets up and heads to her room. I continue picking at my breakfast, now thinking about my father. I had never gotten the chance to know him as he had passed shortly after I was born. All I had left of him were the photos and stories shared with me by my mom, yet he still always felt like a stranger. She returns and hands me an ancient-looking book.

I put down my fork and flipped the book to a random page, where a strange depiction of a devil stared at me straight in the eyes. I glance at the clock, realizing I need to head to school. Hurriedly, I stand up, closing the book and grabbing my backpack. "I'll see you after school."

Love you!" I yell to Mom, hustling out of the door. She smiles and waves back at me as I roll my bike down from the porch. I get on and start riding to school. The book is still in hand, and I wobble for a little until I get balanced and take my hands off the bars. I start flipping through the pages opening to a short passage under a small drawing of a strawberry. Barely legible, I squint down, reading the first lines. "He may persuade Hadês, with gentle words, that he allow holy Persephone to leave the misty realms of darkness and be brought up to the light..." I scrunch my face, slightly confused, and try reading the next lines. "in order to join the gods in Olympus, so that her mother see her with her own eyes and then-"

In about a fifth of a second, my eyes widen significantly. Overbearing brightness illuminated my sightline. The beams of light shine as if they're piercing through my body. I can't hear a thing. The shrilling screech of tires and a stranger's "lookout" call are all drowned out from my head. Then the impact. I'm hit hard as if I had just landed from skydiving with no parachute. I become airborne for just a moment. Not breathing or seeing a thing. The moment seems to last hours. My body hits the ground. Feeling lifeless, I find whatever strength that's left in my body and open my eyes. A large truck is in the middle of the road, stretched across both sides. My bike is nowhere to be seen. There's a scream somewhere in the distance. I look up and see the clouds moving slowly. From behind a cloud, peaks the sun's light. The warm rays of light embrace my body, yet I remain cold. Freezing almost. A sort of unsettling comfort is brought upon me as my vision slowly fades into darkness. I struggle, fighting against my heavy eyelids. Slowly my eyes begin to close.

FLASH. My eyes flutter open and I am sprawled across the same road but this time in a darker, apocalyptic type world. Still gathering my senses, I look up focusing on everything around me. It felt as if all of the shadows were heightened and a hazy fog set in, putting a thin layer around me. After a couple seconds, I slowly stood up utterly confused about where I was. The last thing I remember is the truck and then I appeared here. Am I in hell? Am I in a dream? Where am I?

I look down and see the book still open. Now the runes are glowing with a dark hue almost like a smoke. Quickly, I pick up the book, shutting it closed quickly. Nothing happens. I open it again to a random page and the same letters are glowing. Just as I start to read the words once again, I hear a scream echoing this place. Quickly looking up I see what seems like a star illuminated in the distance. Cautiously, I start to walk in the direction of the star, making sure not to step on any of the roots that run along the road, breaking up the cement. As I get closer, I hear another cry. Turning back to where I started, now all there is, is fog. My stomach grumbles, which I find confusing as I had just eaten a couple minutes prior.

I continue towards the “dark star” I named it. Rustling in the bushes startles me, as a young bearded man walks out.

“Where am I?,” he said frantically.

“What,” I said confused. This man looks interestingly familiar like I know him, yet I have never met him.

“Where am I?” He repeated. I stare at him. He stares back at me, creepily.

“What is that?” He motions towards the book in my hands.

<https://uh.edu/~clidue/texts/demeter.html>

charles