

Phyllis Green Leaf

The Almond Blossom Prophecy

By

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(Inspired by the Greek Myth)

STORY

DURATION: 1 hr 45 mins (2 Acts)

Based on Greek Mythology of how the Almond Blossom Tree originated, and how Almonds relate to love. Phyllis Green Leaf tells the story of Attican soldier Demaphon who after his success in the battle of Troy, falls in love with Thracian princess Phyllis, and they plan to marry. However his sick Grandmother Aethra, who he rescued from Helena, needs to return home. Demaphon takes a lot longer than expected and Phyllis travels to the harbor regularly for nine months waiting. Broken hearted, she takes her own life. But the Goddess Athena has pity on her, and turns her into an Almond Tree, but without blossom. Demaphon finally returns, and seeing the fate of his beloved, declares his commitment to stay by her side. This vow triggers the tree to blossom as a symbol of their love.

CAST - can be just a handful of actors playing multiple roles

NARRATOR: Reverant, shows passion, but grumpy and intolerant old thespian

PHYLLIS: Princess. Dreamy and always good natured; loves nature and her garden.

DEMAPHON: Attican Soldier. Good with a sword, good willing but quite thick and clumsy.

AETHRA: Granny to Demaphon. Grumpy woman yielding a 'weapon' walking stick. (very Monty Python when played by a man)

PALLENE: Phyllis's older sister. Conniving with bad intentions

KING SCITHON: Father of Phyllis and Pallene. Regal, self-important but easily henpecked.

ATHENA: Zeus's daughter. High opinion of herself. Vanity and power is everything but has a good heart. (Great when played by a man)

PRINCE MARZIPAN: 16 yr old son of Phyllis & Demaphon. Spoiled brat but good intentions buried deep below.

YOUNG MARZIPAN: 10 yr old spoiled brat (played by child or adult)

YOUNG PHYLLIS: 12 yr old 'dreamy' (played by Adult Phyllis)

YOUNG PALLENE: 12 yr old 'pouty' (played by Adult Pallene)

HAG: Evil trickster, (Pallene in disguise)

MAID/MESSENGER/VILLAGERS/CHERUBS/GUARDS/ADVISER

STYLE - Very tongue in cheek, classic melodrama with possible audience interaction. Music can be pre-recorded or played live. Sets and props work well as cheap cardboard. Ominous classical music like Grieg compliments the Greek comedy/tragedy.

ACT ONE

Scene 1 - Inside a cave

Light focus on one tablet of sketching as the NARRATOR enters from centre curtain.

NARRATOR: Long ago near the beginning of time; the destiny of mankind was hereby prophesised. A future that foretold of hope, laced with despair, valour...thwarted by treachery, and the path that would shape the course of mankind and its connection to the very world that created it. But as day becomes night, it also spoke of the relentless power to reap, without the need to sew. For thousands of years, the prophecy lay untold, it's mysteries to unlocking the secret to life's harmony had yet to be disturbed...until now. But first we must take a moment to introduce our characters. King Scithon.

Curtain open to reveal KING SCITHON posing.

NARRATOR: A kind-hearted, downtrodden and somewhat hen-pecked man, who enjoys midnight strolls among the palace orchards, and pitiful renditions of musical theatre.

KING SCITHON: (singing) "If I were a rich man, la da dee da..."

Curtain close on him to cut him off.

NARRATOR: Next we have the eldest of the King's daughters, Pallene.

Curtain Open to reveal PALLENE cracking her whip.

NARRATOR: Whose cunning deception, whose unrelenting treachery is something to behold! Preferred methods of torture include whips, hand stockades and tight leather undergarments.

Curtain close on her hissing and whip cracking.

NARRATOR: And while someone fetches me a cold spoon, we now come across our accidental hero, Demaphon.

Curtain open to reveal DEMAPHON posing with his sword and shield.

NARRATOR: The deeply emotional, deeply misunderstood and deeply disturbing soldier from Attica. A man, who by reputation, talks from his heart...but thinks with his sword.

Curtain close on him to cut off his sword thrust.

NARRATOR: And while we're on that unfortunate bloodline, we acknowledge the noblest of all, Aethra, Demaphon's ill fated grandmother.

Curtain open to reveal AETHRA posing nobly and grumpily with her walking stick.

NARRATOR: A revered and radiating beauty, granny has strong values of family, integrity, and a healthy appetite for young men (to granny) hey this is your handwriting!

Granny cheekily taps Narrator on the bum with her walking stick.

NARRATOR: Get off!

Curtain close on her glaring menacingly at the audience.

NARRATOR: And now we introduce the unborn Prince. The yet unknown figure of dashing grace, unbridled dexterity, and above all a mere model of a gentleman.

Curtain open to reveal PRINCE with his back to the audience or masked.

PRINCE: (Burps) Will somebody please wipe my chin!

NARRATOR: And perhaps somewhat a spoiled brat. Next we pay homage to the much respected, much radiating and questionably virginal goddess Athena.

CHORUS/ACTORS: (Singing angelic) 'Aahh-Ohh-Ahhhhh'

NARRATOR: She can strike fear into the hearts of the living. She can send shivers down the spines of the dead. And she can pretty much do whatever she pleases...like not turning up when summoned.

THUNDER SFX. NARRATOR cringes.

NARRATOR: Perhaps a bit later then, and that brings us to our final character. The gardenic heroine of our story, the compost queen herself, Phyllis Green Leaf.

Open curtain to reveal PHYLLIS, in all her gum boot glory.

NARRATOR: Phyllis has but one mission in life. To bless this land with her fertilical nature, to rid life of its misery, to bring peace to the kingdom of Thrace, and to admit she once was a man! Wait a minute...Aethra!!!!

Curtain closes on a dumbfounded PHYLLIS. AETHRA laughs from behind the curtain.

NARRATOR: Anyway there you have it, and now we begin our story which takes place in the ancient kingdom of Thrace – once brimming with fertility, it has, since the untimely death of the queen, become a barren land.

Scene 2 - Inside King Scithon's Palace

Curtain opens to reveal the inside the King Scithon's Palace KING SCITHON and ADVISOR look over plans.

NARRATOR: Since the loss of his beloved wife, King Scithon is saddened by his unfertile land and works day and night with his advisors to devise a plan to solve their problem... but to no avail.

KING: No no no no no! This will not do! Be gone!

ADVISOR exits.

KING: How do I end this suffering? My Kingdom requires food and water. Oh Zeus, will thou not speak to me in this hour of need?

THUNDER SFX and flashing lights.

KING: That's it?

NARRATOR: Despite his lament, the King has the blessing of two young daughters who comfort him. Pallene, the eldest is twelve, who boasts being knowledgeable beyond her years.

YOUNG PALLENE enters.

YOUNG PALLENE: Daddy? Why not pay merchants to voyage far and wide in search of distant lakes and distant farmers, and pay high prices to deliver it to Thrace.

KING: You might just have something there Pallene.

NARRATOR: Despite being overjoyed at such a simple plan; the King is bestowed with another suggestion, from further down.

YOUNG PHYLLIS nine yr old, enters and tugs on King's robes.

NARRATOR: The King's youngest daughter Phyllis, but a bud in the garden of life, has returned from playing in the compost, with her own idea to share.

YOUNG PHYLLIS: Daddy? We could get the whole kingdom to start mulching, and spread it all over our land. Soon the soil will get better, we can save the water we have, and we can plant more seeds, and we can help other lands that are also suffering.

KING and YOUNG PALLENE in shock about her idea.

NARRATOR: And the King's regal response was thus.

KING and YOUNG PALLENE burst out laughing.

KING: Oh Phyllis, you do amuse me with such frivolities. Please, we're trying to work here, now run along and play in your garden.

YOUNG PALLENE: Yeah, go play in the mud where you belong.

YOUNG PHYLLIS runs off crying.

YOUNG PALLENE: Seriously daddy, who does she think she is? Interrupting the future queen, I mean... interrupting my ideas like that. I shall call her...Phyllis tree face, or Fertiliser Phyllis, because she's so full of...

King doesn't notice, too busy calculating.

KING: Now now Pallene, play nice.

YOUNG PALLENE: (sarcastic) Of course daddy.

YOUNG PALLENE exits after PHYLLIS.

Scene 3 - Inside a cave

YOUNG PHYLLIS runs along wailing.

NARRATOR: As poor young Phyllis runs away in sadness and humiliation, she stumbles across a cave.

YOUNG PHYLLIS stops crying and is intrigued, she looks at the paintings.

NARRATOR: Her tears soon dry up at the discovery of the untold prophecy; and although she can't read its meanings, the simple imagery gave her a strong feeling of hope.

YOUNG PHYLLIS: Why can't we have a land like that? A land full of fresh air, lots of trees

and blossoms; it's like paradise. That's it! I may only be small, but my I declare to devote my life to make such a place, in Thrace, whatever the sacrifice! Oooh, that sounded very grown up didn't it?

YOUNG PHYLLIS exits. YOUNG PALLENE enters opposite side.

YOUNG PALLENE: Oh Phyllis? Phyllis... (thinks of another nickname)... Green Leaf? (laughs) Time to play with your big sister! Oh, hiding are you? You can come out, it's safe.

No response, YOUNG PALLENE disappointed.

YOUNG PALLENE: (Mocking) Oooh I'm Phyllis, I just think I'm so adorable. Think again flower child, if you think you're gonna win daddy's attention with that cutesy crap then...ooohhhh.

YOUNG PALLENE notices cave paintings.

NARRATOR: And then it was revealed. But unlike young and innocent Phyllis, these markings were no confusion for young Pallene; thanks to the teaching of many cultured studies from her mother.

(optional) Have 2 ACTORS miming Young Pallene's speech.

YOUNG PALLENE: I see strange visitors, sudden romance with equal pain & suffering, ooh I like the sound of that. I see trickery, deception, and bountiful wealth, oh this is soooo me! (disappointed) Oh...I see noble sacrifice...well as long as that part is someone else. And finally I see a land that is filled with riches and the love and respect for the leader who brings this to the people. And by the sounds of the prophecy, it could be anyone...well I wouldn't be doing my royal duty if I didn't make sure it was to come to pass. And to make sure this leader was in their rightful place, to make sure this leader was...me. Wouldn't daddy be proud?! '

YOUNG PALLENE exits.

NARRATOR: So young Pallene had a plan. She calculates it will be at least another nine years before the prophecy can be fulfilled, but she is patient, and every day she studied the prophecy in fine detail. So as time passed...[cont'd]

Curtain opens.

Scene 4 - Inside King Scithon's Palace

KING SCITHON mimes the following.

NARRATOR: [cont'd]... and following Pallene's suggestion, the King searched far and wide for food and water; spent the entire treasury with random stimulus packages for the peasants, with little return. And after raging inflation, crooked merchants, the

kingdoms riches were gone and King Scithon gave up hope for his future and the wellbeing of his loyal subjects.

ADULT PALLENE enters.

KING SCITHON: Oh what have I done?! I will surely evoke the wrath of the gods with such ... poppycock shenanigans!

PALLENE: (aside) Lighten up loser...(gushing) oh daddy, never mind all that, why don't you take a walk to see if anything should inspire you?

KING SCITHON: I couldn't possibly leave these chambers for the humiliation is too much to...

PALLENE: But you might meet a stranger; one who could be seeking shelter and food.

KING SCITHON: Oh no I have nothing to offer and it would...

PALLENE: Oh for Zeus's sake will you just go?!!

KING SCITHON: (Henpecked) Hmmf, I'm a king; she shouldn't talk to me like that.

KING SCITHON exits sulkily.

PALLENE: Thank the gods for that. Such a blithering fool; yet a vital pawn in the prophecy, which is unfolding quite nicely thou might add.

PALLENE exits.

NARRATOR: And Pallene had indeed read the prophecy correctly. A stranger was indeed journeying through the land of Thrace. On his way home to Attica, a young soldier named Demaphon, who had just saved his beloved Grandmother from the battle of Troy in a famous and monumental victory!

BATTLE NOISE SFX from behind the curtain.

Scene 5 - The Kingdom's Field

DEMAPHON and AETHRA enter front of curtain.

AETHRA: That's a very nice backswing you have dear Demi.

DEMAPHON: Thanks Granny.

AETHRA: The way you took that soldier's head clean off; would make any grandmother proud.

DEMAPHON: Yes it was rather heroic wasn't it?

AETHRA: Indeed.

DEMAPHON: Yes. I think when we return to Attica, I shall commission a large sculpture of myself in that very pose...or maybe this pose...or what about...

AETHRA whacks him over the head.

AETHRA: We have to get there first!

DEMAPHON: Ah, yes, sorry.

AETHRA: I'm hungry, thirsty and in need of a good bedding!

NARRATOR: I bet you are.

DEMAPHON: Of course Granny. However I feel there is nothing much to offer in such a barren land that lay before us.

AETHRA: And we won't know if you waste more time with that stupid talk. Now move it!
They exit.

NARRATOR: And thus our story brings us back to our innocent heroine, Phyllis. Phyllis Green Leaf. [cont'd]

Scene 6 - Palace Gardens

PHYLLIS enters (front of curtain)

NARRATOR: [cont'd] Who, despite creating a beautiful garden of her own, is feeling dismayed that after nine years of weeding, mulching, planting, pruning, digging, whipping and snipping...[cont'd]

PHYLLIS attempts to mime these gardening actions but gets mixed up.

NARRATOR: [cont'd]...that after nine years, her efforts weren't making a difference on a grand scale as she had hoped.

PHYLLIS: Oh dear, my heart doth weep at such unfertile land. For the past nine years I have held the prophetic vision of sweeping beauty, and I try to inspire my fellow folk but alas! They are thus too busy to stop and smell... the compost.

Curtains open to reveal lush garden.

Scene 7 - Phyllis' Garden

Phyllis enters her garden, checking her buds [she stays hidden from the others]

NARRATOR: And despite her Phyllis-ophical thoughts, our poor heroine finds her only comfort in the fruitfulness of her beloved garden. Meanwhile, the King, upon Pallene's advice, did in fact find our wandering travellers and cordially invited them to stay for supper.

AETHRA enters with DEMAPHON.

AETHRA: Half an hour we've been walking and no palace, castle or chateau in sight!

PALLENE enters.

PALLENE: Oh hello there strangers in need of food and shelter. I'm afraid Daddy, the King sent you the long way to the palace.

AETHRA: That's an understatement.

PALLENE: Let me show you a short cut my dear.

PALLENE escorts AETHRA out but stops DEMAPHON.

PALLENE: Er perhaps you'd enjoy the more...scenic route.

PALLENE hands him a golden trowel.

PALLENE: And please accept this as a...token of friendship.

DEMAPHON: Ooh local customs, how quaint.

PALLENE: Yes, whatever.

PALLENE exits.

DEMAPHON: Hey! What about that scenic route?

He's distracted by a smell.

DEMAPHON: My word, what is that intoxicating smell?

He notices the Phyllis's garden around him.

DEMAPHON: What a lovely garden, that dwelleth in such a barren land.

PHYLLIS backs out from her garden bed, bent over pulling weeds. Neither notice each other.

DEMAPHON: In all my days, I have never seen such beauty, such unrelenting colour...such
firm ripe...[cont'd]

PHYLLIS unknowingly bending over in front of him, now he sees her.

DEMAPHON: [cont'd]...fruit.

An improvised courting routine (via a lame interpretive dance) to the theme of CHARIOTS OF FIRE (optional). She plays hard to get but softens to him. He presents gifts, a necklace, a shoe, a head (from battle) but fails until he presents the golden trowel, then he's won her heart.

NARRATOR: So it wasn't long before Phyllis and Demaphon fell deeply in love and were promised to marry.

DEMAPHON tries to carry PHYLLIS away and they both stumble out.

NARRATOR: Just as the prophecy foretold.

PALLENE enters.

PALLENE: Ahh the wait has been worth it, as the prophecy is now set in motion!

DEMAPHON sticks his head back in.

DEMAPHON: Pssst! (referring to trowel) Thanks for this...Pallenty.

PALLENE: It's Pallene.

PHYLLIS (Offstage): Oh Demi? Bring back the trowel.

DEMAPHON disappears in a hurry. PALLENE cringes and exits. Curtain close.

NARRATOR: And so as the first stage of Pallene's plan is complete, she embarks on her second quest. In the lead up to the wedding of Phyllis, Pallene gets to know Demaphon's Grandmother, Aethra, and her family back home in Attica; to which Pallene uses to her utmost advantage.

Scene 8 - Inside King Scithon's Palace Chamber

KING is feeding AETHRA grapes.

AETHRA: Oh tis a hard life as a palace beauty.

KING SCITHON: Ah indeed.

AETHRA: But I do miss my home in Attica.

PALLENE enters.

PALLENE: Hello Aethra.

AETHRA: Pallene my dear! Fancy a grape. (grapes fall out of her mouth)

PALLENE: I'll pass.

AETHRA: Suit yourself.

PALLENE takes KING SCITHON aside.

PALLENE: Er daddy, I believe the court jester has some new material to try out on you.

KING: Ooh jolly good, I do hope he has some new limericks, the last ones were atrocious. A boy stood on the burning deck, a pocket full of crackers...what kind of child would keep food in his pocket?

KING exits.

PALLENE: Oh, I forgot, I have some bad news from home.

AETHRA: What is it dear? Spit it out!

AETHRA spits out grape pips.

PALLENE: A messenger came to say your dear Hercules has taken ill, and has called you to his bedside.

AETHRA: Oh my...oh dear! Not Hercules?! But what can I do?

PALLENE: You must go to him. He's family! And there just happens to be a boat leaving the harbour tomorrow night.

AETHRA: But that's the night of the wedding! I couldn't do that to my dear Demaphon. And besides; when he gets that look in his eye, like he has for that little garden tramp...I mean, your dear sister, nothing will stop him.

PALLENE: Well I do have a backup plan.

PALLENE whispers in AETHRA'S ear as they exit.

AETHRA: Oooh...ohhh...Oh you are a wicked one.

PALLENE: (aside) You have no idea.

Curtain Close.

NARRATOR: And so, in building up her alliance with Aethra, Pallene sets in motion her second stage of the prophecy, as we conveniently segue into the night of the wedding.