

The Bathhouse

This is a game about gods, queerness, the power of shared myths, and the intimacy of bathing together.

A group of old friends take a trip to a bathhouse together, to reminisce and share stories. In the intimate sanctuary of the bathhouse, as protective layers and long held feelings are stripped and encrusted dirt is washed away, who will they become? Will the gods awaken?

This is a 3 hr LARP for 4 or 6 players designed to be played online in the comfort and safety of your own home. Players take a bath together in the middle; this section is played as an audio only experience, which can be surprisingly intimate and immersive and allows you to lean back and wallow in your bath.

Setup

To play this game, you will need:

- To be able to take a bath. If you don't have a tub, you can simulate the experience by getting undressed and lying somewhere comfy wrapped in a warm blanket.
- To switch easily on a mobile device between both group and one-on-one video/audio chat rooms
- The ability to contact another player while they're in another chat, either by briefly joining their existing call or with software that will ping easily-audible message notifications
- You may also want to set up a shared stream to play soundscapes.

Check your tech is working before you start; something like Discord might work well for this game. This game includes a 'dry' section and a 'bathing' section; players may want to use laptops for the dry parts and a tablet or phone for the rest, so don't forget to ask players to check both devices, including a check on sound volume. For each section, you will need a group chat and some rooms for players to interact in pairs. The bathing part is audio-only; it might be prudent to disallow accidental video calls if you can!

Make sure that everyone has access to this document and has read the first three pages. You should be familiar with the intended timings, but don't worry if you don't follow it exactly; go with the flow. Charge up your device before you start, as you may not be able to plug it in while you're in the bath. Note that you are given about 10-20 mins to run your bath; if your bath takes longer, you will need to begin sooner.

Game Start [20 mins]

Begin with an out-of-character group chat. Introduce yourselves to each other; give your names, pronouns, and share a memory or feeling about water. Discuss comfort levels and whether there's anything you don't want to include in your stories. Have everyone repeat the phrase "I'm just fetching something from my locker"; this is a verbal signal that participants can use if they need a moment's break during the game. Don't forget to announce your return if you're ready to come back into the game.

Now you need to choose characters. You have been friends since you were teenagers. When you were younger, you played a game together where you were reincarnations of Gods. As you got older, you played less, but you still used its stories as shared references and in-jokes. Each of you secretly felt 'other', and your group was often full of unspoken thoughts and feelings that each of you were experiencing but didn't understand or dare to articulate (note: this can also include feelings you did not experience the way you thought you should) You have not hung out as a group for some time.

This game is intended to allow you to expand and discover your character and the details of your past relationships in-play. Each character sheet contains a short summary, followed by a number of 'seeds'. These are snippets of memories of unresolved things between you, stories from your gods game, and glimpses of things seen in the bathhouse. Seeds are there to inspire conversation, but you can make up your own if that feels right. You will need your character document for reference during play; if it will be difficult to use your device much in the bath, print this out and place it in a plastic wallet.

Read through your character seeds before you start, and take a few minutes to think about your character. How wealthy was your family? How much freedom did you have? Were you popular? What are you doing now? What is the main dilemma or problem in your current life? What does the group know about you and what have you kept hidden? Take five minutes to introduce yourselves and your gods to each other, and then decide together why water is particularly meaningful to your group.

The Journey [20 mins]

The characters board the bus and take a seat in one of the paired video chats. Sit sideways to the screen but facing the same direction, as though you are sat next to each other. Chat should mainly be a catch-up on your recent life and how it relates to your friendship. You can use the following to inspire conversations:

- The bus takes a diversion. When did you change direction, and how did this person point you there?
- You pass a child learning to ride a bike. What skill did this person teach you, and how did it help you?
- You see a walker with six dogs. How did this person's advice let you succeed when others advised caution?
- A wheelchair user searches for a gap in the traffic to cross the road. When did this person's perspective bring out your empathy and show you the bigger picture?

You should ask to change seats a couple of times during the journey and try to take the conversation in different directions if you can. For each person that you sit next to, decide on the nature of your current feelings for this person and how they might have changed over the years. In this scene, chat should be light-hearted, playful, and excited to see each other; skitter away from difficult topics.

The Bathhouse [Total: 1 hr 30 mins]

This is the main bulk of the game. It is split into multiple sections, and should be played as an audio-only experience. Conversation is inspired by prompts in the character sheets: a mixture of scenes glimpsed in the bathhouse beyond the camera's view, memories of their youth, and stories from their old game of myths and gods. As play continues, those magical stories become more prominent and the bathhouse scenes stranger and increasingly tangled with the myths. Are your characters truly incarnations of mythical beings, their other selves reawakened in the liminal space of the bathhouse? Or are they ordinary people choosing to imaginatively embellish and use stories to express things they find difficult to say?

1) Undressing [10 mins]

Switch to an audio-only group chat as you run your bath and get ready to enter it. You should be aiming to make it feel luxurious, warm, and comfortable. Ideally, the water level should cover your body, but leave your head easily above the water when laying down. If at any time you have had enough bathing and need to get out of the bath, you can switch to relaxing somewhere cuddled up in a warm blanket.

Be careful with how you're setting up your tech. You could place your device a short distance from the bath, so that it is within arm's reach but will not fall in the water if it tips over. Have a nearby hand towel so that you can dry off your hands before you use your device, and some water in case you dehydrate.

This will be mainly out of character as you concentrate on sorting out the practicalities, but feel free to contribute to in-character group chat if you feel like doing so.

2) Entering the pool [20 mins] soundtrack: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FenYwtyhUzc>

It's time to get into your bath! Your characters should be inviting each other into the pools for one-on-one chats; you should expect to have at least two of these. Don't turn down invites, but do wrap up chats you're already having, letting the inviter know that you're 'just finishing up in here'.

At this stage, your character is testing the waters, cautiously trying to bring up things that they felt were left unfinished or unsaid between you. There should be a sense of openness, that now is the time when such talk might be welcome. You will flesh out the details and agree on the bare facts of what happened, but you are still only warming up; this is still old ground between you, though now openly acknowledged.

3) Warm water immersion [20 mins] soundtrack: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_j5QY5LbCOM

In this scene, your characters have decided to let go and enter deeper waters, revealing more about what was really going on for them and why they acted the way they did in the hopes of rekindling the strong friendships that are still so important to them. This time, the prompts also includes memories from the game you used to play; you should start talking about some of your games, using those mythical stories as ways to discuss what was happening underneath.

4) Ocean of possibilities [20 mins] soundtrack: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwFXmC4ytyM>

Your stories are coming to their climax. For these one-on-one talks, your character is finally prepared to confess all, confront their feelings, and together finally write an ending to your story. This time, the prompts are full of strange scenes and the shared myths of your gods game. You are a person, coming to terms with their queerness, using your game to express yourself. Or perhaps you are a God, reincarnated and awakened, telling this cycle of your story. The interpretation is up to you.

5) Where rivers meet [20 minutes]

Finally, your characters come together for a group chat. You are now fully in your Gods personas, reunited and awake. You are friends having fun, replaying your old game. Bring together your threads to create your group's story and what binds them together, why you are returned, and what will happen next.

The Return Home [20 minutes]

It is time to leave the bathhouse. Join the audio-only group chat again to get dressed; as with the undressing scene, there may be limited chance to talk in-character, so don't worry if you don't say much. As you put your layers back on, think on your characters' experience and how this has affected them. How much will you take with you? How much will you leave behind? Which of your old layers will you reject? Have your perceptions of yourself changed? What about your relationships with each other?

Once you are dressed, tell the others that you're going to the café to wait for the bus home. Then return to the group level video-on chat room. As each character joins, greet each other and resume your chat about your trip to the bathhouse and your future plans together. The air has been cleared; things left for years have been resolved. Your talk should sound easier, your friendships closer.

Wrap Up [20 minutes]

Switch out of character now, and return to your real self. Have a round of positive feedback; let people know specific things they did well and ways they contributed to your game. Take a moment to each reflect and discuss your experiences. Thank each other for coming, and say your goodbyes.

Character Summaries

B: A hopeful dreamer, seeks joy, avoids stress and conflict. Adept at spotting links and patterns. The group's fountain of ideas and suggestions, less good at details. Is seizing whatever seems interesting enough to feel meaningful? Played the God of Dreams, Breath of the Wind, the Bridge.

J: Child of immigrants, caught by expectations. Reserved, measured, and studious, the advice-giver of the group, never quite breaking free of duty. Will they choose their own road? Played the God of Travellers, Seeker of Knowledge, Opener of the Passage.

S: A kind and empathic soul, but often hurt. The nurturer of the group, usually cast unwanted as either victim or sheltered one. Can they use their steel to bring kindness even to the least deserving? Played the God of Birth and Death, Holder of the keys, the Final Judge.

D: Energetic only child. Mercurial and quick to anger but decisive, loyal, and generous. The protector of the group, often charges in unwisely. Will they find a new kind of strength and face the consequences of their decisions? Played the Warrior God, the Messenger, Bringer of the Seasons.

C: Was a young carer. Held the group together, made spaces feel like home. Resilient and tenacious in adversity, unsure how to reach beyond their circumstances. Dare they take a risk and grasp for more? Played the God of the Hearth, The Guardian, Harbinger of Chaos and Growth.

M: Younger child trying to live up to a sibling. Flamboyant, charming, and always noticeable. The entertainer of the group, still hiding in the limelight. Can they shine if they're not performing? Played the God of the Sun, Muse of Music and Dance, Bringer of Light and Truth.

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Entering the steam

"What is this? What are we doing?" You shrug. You hadn't really bothered to analyse it that much. "We're having fun, aren't we? I enjoy hanging out, so do you." Why did everyone always want to label everything? Couldn't things just be what they were? Why did they want to confine and box it in?

You hear the clever fingers of a pianist, blending seamlessly with the strong mezzo-soprano, music just audible above a noisy fountain. Bathers wade into the wave pool or pause to listen, cheering appreciatively.

You had dragged your friend to this party, and you were both having a good time chatting to the fascinating people. Your friend went to grab you both drinks, and you ended up wandering out onto the balcony with someone, and then to a private spot in the garden to continue your conversation. When you came back, your friend was sat on the doorstep in tears. They refused to tell you what happened, and they never quite trusted you after that.

You see a large locker room with bunkbeds gathered together in the middle, some occupied, some pushed together to accommodate greater numbers.

Warm water immersion

"You could just write it? You don't need the big companies these days, we can use one of those crowdfunding sites". Your friend wasn't convinced at first, but the more you come up with answers and ideas, the more they become enthused. You know you're right; even if this doesn't go anywhere, so what? It's the kind of thing your friend should be doing more of.

You see a large seamless dome, half-lit with small glass skylights. The light is focussed into a beam shining on a person lying on a marble slab in the centre, surrounded by hot stones and steam.

You slept for 100 years. When you awoke, you found that the people had become pieces of clockwork, and the world was grey. You appeared as a child and taught those who would listen how to play. But for all your efforts, the grey continued to spread; your followers were too busy playing to stop it. You realised that your children would have to use their clockwork as well as their dreams, otherwise their dreams would die.

A group of naked friends sing and drink beer in a sauna. Some of them are hitting themselves with birch branches, some with long, sweet grasses, cleansing their skin. Their sweat smells clean and wholesome.

"Why not? Look at it! Opportunities like that don't come around often!" You point dramatically. Your friend frowns. "I'm not convinced it's really a good idea". You sigh. Life is so full of bad stuff anyway, why dwell on it? Better to seize the moment, grab the good things, and let it go when it doesn't work out. Life favours the optimist.

Ocean of possibilities

You are a winged shapeshifter, and you can take many forms. You were the seller in the marketplace; the bandit on the road; the traveller who showed them the mirror. You can be a whole experience in one, just to shake one person's complacency and cause them to rethink their life's choices.

You see a woman holding a baby by its ankles in a whirlpool bath. You think you see souls drifting past in the foam.

Your friend's smile was stolen away by the Crocodile. You took them to see the stars dance, and they enjoyed it, but they still could not smile. So you built a bridge of air to the place where the waters of all the worlds mingle, and you stole the biggest rainbow from their cascade. You blew into it until it parted to allow wind and breath to pass through it, and then you gave it to your friend for a new smile.

A group of merfolk sing as they swim, strong and free and untamed. A human looks at them longingly and tries to swim with them. They smile and welcome their new kin.

J: Child of immigrants, caught by expectations. Reserved, measured, and studious, the advice-giver of the group, never quite breaking free of duty. Will they choose their own road? Played the God of Travellers, Seeker of Knowledge, Opener of the Passage.

Entering the steam

You'd planned it for years. You were supposed to travel together: a gap year, then you were to go to uni while they got a job near you. They looked so hurt when you told them about the offer at a prestigious medical course. Did you ever really intend to go travelling? Getting in doesn't give you the thrill you thought it would; it's just yet another weary trudge. But your parents' faces showed the happiness and pride missing from yours. How can you say no? They gave up everything for this.

You see a door to a dark room, a red 'exit' sign above it. From within you see silhouettes moving. Sometimes, passing strangers pause and peer through the door for a while. Nobody speaks.

You held hands as you walked, but you let go as you turned the corner. Nobody could see you. Holding hands in the dark; that's all it was. Not enough, but it could never be more. The next time they reached for you, you didn't respond. Eventually they stopped reaching

You see a café, where groups of people in towels lounge together, laughing and talking. Sometimes people embrace and share a touch, a secret smile. They look like the pictures on the walls.

Warm water immersion

You loved showing them, your hands guiding theirs. This is what knowledge should be; not just about grades and status, but about applying it, building something new together. You knew you were shirking. This wasn't what you were supposed to be doing. How to choose between families?

You see a stone channel, carrying a stream of steamy water through the room, and filling a trapezoid bath. There are people covered in gold, washing themselves near a large stone. glimpse of the full moon through the ceiling with intricate stars pattern

They shot you while you were flying as a bird, revelling in your freedom and soaring over the world, spying out pearls of wisdom. Your friend saw you fall, and took you to the hot springs. They bathed you every day in the healing waters, their hands gentle and sure. On the day you recovered, you danced, leaving your footprint on the stone before you flew away.

You see an outdoor pool, surrounded by snow and walkways. People sit in the pool, wearing towels on their heads, relaxing in the heat. Someone runs out of a door and dives head-first into an icy pond.

Had you done the wrong thing? Failure, letting people down; that was your biggest fear. It held you in a vice. They were so free, so much their own person. You loved that about them. But you were so jealous, too. And you were sick of them thinking of themselves, never taking responsibility.

Ocean of possibilities

You were out on the ocean, your hands sure at the tiller. You know the ways. You take your friend to the crystal fields where the sea dips and heaves with heat. It's ready to be shaped. Together you start to make the new islands.

You see a horse, black as midnight, standing by the pool. The sparks from its hooves cause waves to ripple across its surface. A young girl with webbed hands climbs onto its back, and they dive into the pool and are lost from sight.

You whispered in the ears of rulers, sending your advice, telling them of things from distant lands. One ruler caught you in a bottle so that they could keep you for themselves. But without the ability to sail and discover, your words and wisdom failed. There was a hero who loved you, and one day, they stole the bottle and set you free. You couldn't stay, but you brought them gifts every year, and took them sailing with you beyond the rim of the stars.

A woman stands, holding a fishtail. She looks longingly at the water. Her companion weeps even as she smiles for her. She smiles and points towards the shore, not the open sea, as she puts on the fishtail.

S: A kind and empathic soul, but often hurt. The nurturer of the group, usually cast unwanted as either victim or sheltered one. Can they use their steel to bring kindness even to the least deserving? Played the God of Birth and Death, Holder of the keys, the Final Judge.

Entering the steam

Your friend tugs on your arm. "We should go". "No! You shouldn't have done that. The rules are there for a reason. Now someone is hurt and it's your fault." You're being unfair to your friend and you know it. You understand that they had to defend their boundaries. But there's a crying person in front of you and your being is crying out to make them feel better, to ease pain by lashing out at the person that hurt them.

You see a glimpse of what looks like a medieval dungeon, though the person in the restraints hung from the ceiling looks happy to be there. They give the occasional sigh of contentment, their eyes closed.

You friend told you not to fetch the adult in charge. You knew they'd been mean to your friend; you didn't feel safe with them either. But it was their job to help when the other group started in on your friend. "Calm down, dear" they sneer at your friend; "it's just a bit of fun. Stop causing trouble."

A group of women, one of them transgender, help each other scrub clean in the showers before they enter the spa. The water in the room is knee deep; one of them has ticklish feet and scrunches her face.

Warm water immersion

"I don't want to hang out". Their blunt words hurt. "Why not? I miss you!" They had protected you others were hurting you. They took care of you, and then you took care of each other. "After it happened, when I was coming to terms with what I'd lost, you wouldn't help". It was true. Their sadness gave you so much pain, you couldn't cope. So you spent time with someone else, someone who could take care of you.

You catch sight of a steam room with marble mosaics, statues and stars speckling dome-shaped nooks. There are a number of naked people having what a serious political debate; something about tax laws.

When they come before you, you see the good and bad they have caused, rippling out. But you also see the ripples inwards, forming them and rebounding back to infinity. You understand their heart completely. You are both compassionate and ruthless. Punishment is measured and limited, scouring their heart of heaviness, teaching them consequences and destroying their illusions about their self. When this is done, forgiveness and love is limitless and complete, and it heals their heart until it is lighter than a feather. You are the Final Judge; they fear and love you.

You see a room with an old lady throwing more stones onto a glowing pile atop a woodburning stove. You hear the cry of a new-born baby through the steam. She ladles hot water onto the stones; it hisses.

"I'll tell you when you're older", they laughed. That annoyed you. All that time and effort trying to listen to people, offering them your support and care, being nice. Then they acted like that meant you were a child, like they shouldn't take you seriously. People 'protected' you by not telling you things. Then you got hurt.

Ocean of possibilities

Every birth brings a life and a death. Each one is sacred to you. In the end, all are born from the Ocean, and all will return to the Ocean.

You see a man standing by a still pool, staring raptly at his own reflection while flowers grow rapidly at his feet and his face ages. He does not look unhappy with his fate.

You offer compassion to those who cry out for you. Once you wrought a magic to take away all pain from the world and take it on yourself. It was a great burden, and you lay still for a year and a day, unable to walk. When you crawled to take a look at the world, you found that there were no acts of compassion, no reason to avoid harm, no bonding for there was no grief at absent loved ones. Humankind was dying, and things were worse than before, only nobody knew it. There was no healing. You took back your magic, and heard their cries as their pain returned.

You see an old man with long straggly hair and claws, crouched in a steam room with two tree people. Someone stands with their back against the door, and the old man strokes their back.

D: Energetic only child. Mercurial and quick to anger but decisive, loyal, and generous. The protector of the group, often charges in unwisely. Will they find a new kind of strength and face the consequences of their decisions? Played the Warrior God, the Messenger, Bringer of the Seasons.

Entering the steam

You bared your teeth at the sky. You felt strong and fierce, part of something right. This time your voices would be heard. You stared defiantly at the Dean, who did not look so pleased. A squabble broke out to your right as one of the counter-protestors broke through your ranks. You shouted at your side to calm down, to no avail. Your friend hadn't even wanted to be there, and you couldn't protect them.

You see a corridor with a series of private rooms. Some doors are shut. Some are open, and inside them are men, lying naked on a small bed near bottles and small packets. Some lie face down, some face up.

You had put up with them for a week already on this holiday. You thought it'd be fun. But they kept dithering, or leaving their stuff for you to trip over, or keeping you up with all their loud calls home. This was the last straw. "That was the last ferry today! Great, now we're stuck on this fucking island. We're supposed to be spending time together, just us, why can't you just be here??" You explode at them. The two of you are silent for the next week.

The bathhouse complex is a maze, corridors branching and twisting, all hidden spots and shady corners. You catch tantalising glimpses of entwined shadows, the sound of shared breath. You can't find the source.

Warm water immersion

You ran in while everyone else was still staring, shocked. You were moving before you'd really decided what you were going to do. Somehow, you made the dash across. You weren't sure how to get you both back again, or how you were going to evade the punishment for being there in the first place, but that was a worry for later; for now, you were there to offer your hand, to pull your friend out of danger.

You see people dressed like Victorian policemen, chasing frightened looking men whose towels fall as they run. They catch them and pull out their batons. The steam rises, and when it clears, nobody is there.

Each time the world-devourer snake returns, you set out and slay it. Each time, it returns, larger and more fearsome than before. Still, you do your best, always improving so that you can beat it again. This time though, you are already wounded. But you cannot falter. One of your fellow Gods comes to you; at last you know its weakness. Together you set out to find the spear that will finally destroy the serpent.

A door opens out onto a rooftop garden. You see people exercising, throwing stone discs, wrestling with each other. Robed attendants bring them water. There is a mosaic of the sun beside an ornate fountain.

You don't understand. Why are they still complaining about the same thing? You'd have done something about it by now. You're so sick of people who wait for things to fix themselves, never even trying. You tell your friend as much. How can you help them if they won't try to protect themselves? You feel weak when you're with them, because you can't help, you can't make it better when you can't touch the enemy.

Ocean of possibilities

You dive into the realm of monsters, deep beneath the ocean. Your friend has been chained there, but you know who has the key. You hunt your foe relentlessly; wherever they go, whatever the obstacle.

You see a room containing an empty steaming pool. The surface is broken by tentacles that flow over it, creating a pattern of undulation that sends ripples across the water before vanishing. The ripples dissipate and the surface is once again still.

When the God of the Sun dwelt for too long in one place, the land withered and dried. When they stayed away, the land slept and became cold. You built them a chariot so that they could spend half the year in the overworld and half in the hereunder, according to the seasons which you bring. For all things must pass and the world must turn, and each battle ends in respite and each respite ends in battle so that living things will strive for more.

For a moment, you see a dragon. The dragon lands and becomes a river.

C: Was a young carer. Held the group together, made spaces feel like home. Resilient and tenacious in adversity, unsure how to reach beyond their circumstances. Dare they take a risk and grasp for more? Played the God of the Hearth, The Guardian, Harbinger of Chaos and Growth.

Entering the steam

The two of you were becoming close. You weren't sure where it was going to go tonight, but you'd got two tickets to your favourite band. Then you got a call; your Mum had had another episode and the neighbour didn't know what to do. You looked at your friend; you didn't have time for this. Probably not ever. Your Mum had to come first.

People lie on tables, towels around their waist, while someone's hands presses up and down, massaging away knots from slick backs. Their bodies relax. Sometimes, there is a whispered exchange, and hands dip furtively below the towels, just for a moment. The air smells like heated oil.

You were trying to take them to one of your favourite places, for a bit of fun. You knew it wasn't the cleanest club, but it was a great place to let go. Turned out the DJ had also decided to let go, by selling a few pills to the patrons. Your friend didn't know what was in the food, and you forgot to warn them.

In the changing areas, a group of women, all different shapes, help each other dry off and retrieve clothes. When they touch it's affectionate, caring. One of them sits, head back; her friends begin to braid her tight black curls.

Warm water immersion

You helped your friend redecorate their bedroom. You had an instinct for the details that would bring out exactly what they wanted. No need to mention how you got hold of that paint. It was a good moment, though you knew it wouldn't be long before they again asked to see your bedroom and meet your Mum.

People wearing breechcloths are visible through the smoke and steam inside the dome of a tent. They sing and chant together while they pour water on the hot rocks. A pipe is passed around and offered to someone out of sight.

You came across the village where the people were starved and miserable. Yet they had enough, if they would only share their skills and their pantries. You offered to make them soup. "I have a magic stone" you told them. "It will make delicious soup". It was the start of your plan to bring them together.

An intersex person floats in warm waters, their aspect shifting in the light as they drift. Tree branches dipping below the surface, cradling. They free-bleed, mingling with the red ochre of the earth and carried away by the rise and fall of the ripples.

"Come on! Why don't you just apply? You'll never get the job you want if you don't even try!" Your friend sounds exasperated. Well, so are you. You've already tried, many times, to get something you wanted. It won't work for you; you don't have what they're looking for, and you don't have time or money to go that route first.

Ocean of possibilities

The earth rumbles, and the storms gather. You ride out, sending your warnings, helping your people to fortify and prepare for what comes. It's not just about surviving; they must thrive. They must learn to be resourceful.

Two people stand on cliffs at either side of the water and jump. They hit the water and turn into birds.

You were not going to defeat the demon head-on. But you didn't have to. Your friend helped to hold on to your fortifications while you sought the lake and the Trials. You passed 3,000 trials, not through brute strength but through tenacity and the slow work of claiming the lake as your own. When you finally emerged, your friend was failing. You lured the demon into the lake, and it found itself in your home territory. And so you defeated it.

You see an island in a lake, obscured by mists. A man walks to the edge and the water forms an arm which passes gives him a sword.

M: Younger child trying to live up to a sibling. Flamboyant, charming, and always noticeable. The entertainer of the group, still hiding in the limelight. Can they shine if they're not performing? Played the God of the Sun, Muse of Music and Dance, Bringer of Light and Truth.

Entering the steam

It was a huge success. Everyone loved you. You danced off stage, smiling. But your friend had left already. "It was supposed to be my thing", they said later. "And you took over, like you always do. Couldn't you give anyone else a chance to shine?" "But your bit was good!" you protested. "Yeah. My 'bit'."

You see a group of naked men, kissing and holding each other tenderly, relaxed and smiling. The rainbows painted on their faces merge with the rainbows of the whirlpool bubbles.

"Why didn't you tell me?" The hurt and confusion. You hadn't tried to close them out; you wanted your own thing, something just for you. What did they want you to say? You couldn't figure out the answer to the puzzle. You take them out, faces close as you dance, filling the space, trying to express with your body.

As the door shuts, you see a swimming pool marked for a private party. It's covered with bubbles so tall all you can see is faint shapes. Shouts of laughter and pleasure echo off the walls, their creators hidden.

Warm water immersion

Your parents sighed as they looked at your grades. "Couldn't you be more like your sister?" You had the main part in the county theatre and a music prize. You felt low all the time. You were hungry. They didn't care. Your friend celebrated the first with you. You smiled the way they wanted as you ate pizza together. You made them happy and they liked you. Would they still like you if you stopped performing for them?

You see stone arches surrounding a large green volcanic pool. Each arch contains shelves of scrolls. Patrons lounge in the pool, reading poetry to each other beside frescoes showing the stories of lovers, parted and then reunited.

The world existed in darkness, full of fear and hiding. You were born full of light, and your presence gave hope and allowed those near you to stand tall. You sung until your throat was raw and your light blazed, then you took the heat from your blood and the light of your skin and finally placed your heart of molten gold in its centre. Your cold body was heated as the sun rose, giving you life again, stronger and brighter than before. Sacrifice and rebirth, the cycle: you give of yourself, and your creations give back to you.

A group of naked people rush outside from the sauna, jostling to be the first to break the surface of the ice on the lake. They seem to be enjoying the experience. Beyond, you see people soaking in a volcanic pool.

You spent so much effort trying to live up to their expectations. It was exhausting. But they always demanded more, always expected you to accommodate them. They ignored you when you tried to ask for what you wanted. Always pushing you, always wanting you to enable them. You couldn't do that anymore.

Ocean of possibilities

Your children are the ones who turn themselves inside out to tell their truth. The world is not kind to them, and they are burned by the light you gave them. So you offer them gifts; the setting sun so they can rest by moonlight, the shining helm that lets them be seen, the shoes that dance in harmony, the music that delivers from pain.

You see a room full of waterfalls. The light hits the drops and the room becomes filled with rainbows. You see a figure step out over the waterfalls on a translucent bridge and steal a rainbow.

You love fiercely and freely, and your loves are many; you take different form to express each new aspect of love. But your light became too much when you dwelt for long; the land withered and dried until you were banished. Then the land slept and became cold without you. So the Bringer of the Seasons built you a chariot and decreed that you would spend half the year with your loves in the overworld, and half below with your loves in the hereunder, moving with the seasons and bringing just enough of your light to both worlds.

You see a boat sailing at night on the ocean. The stars become dolphins, guiding the boat towards land.