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Linda Meadows
Cecily O'Neill
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Ann Roth
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SHE OF THE LOVELY ANKLE (First performance, 2002)

This play, written by WOMEN AT PLAY and set in a corporate environment, explored one of the great myths—that of Persephone's unwitting journey to the underworld and her return to earth every six months.

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ACT 1

SCENE 1

SETTING: The entrance to a corporation's lower basement, suggested by a stool, by which is a table, on which is a styrofoam cup of coffee and a telephone.

AT RISE: BRUCE, a three-headed dog/person, stands guard, all three of him. He has dog masks on his hands and head.

BRUCE 1

(Speaks to the audience, taking them into his confidence)
Watch, he says. Watch! Remain at the entrance and watch for her. Me! Head of security for a multi-million dollar corporation relegated to the role of night watchman.

BRUCE 2

Come on, be honest. You're not head of security for the corporation, just for this hell hole, this lower basement.

BRUCE 1

OK, OK, so I guard the lower basement. So, that's an important job, isn't it? I can't let anybody out. I can't let anybody in. That takes all three of us to accomplish, and now he wants me to waste my time lying in wait for one innocent female and then rush like an overeager law enforcement trainee to tell him that she has finally come his way, descended to our level. I won't do it. I'll refuse and demand to see--in black and white--where it says in my job description that I must immediately report the arrival of Persephone, so a certain male executive in the firm can lure her into his office for "late night business," as he put it with that smarmy style of his. I'm going to report Hayden's ridiculous command to my union representative.

(He picks up phone and begins to dial)

BRUCE 3

But, wait. How do I know the union leaders won't view this as a frivolous call, a petty complaint by a worker merely looking out for himself, not for his fellow union members? They might hold it against me when the time comes for elections or negotiations.

BRUCE 1

You're right. I won't call. I don't want to jeopardize my career.

(Hangs up phone)

BRUCE 2

I know what I'll do. I'll turn my eyes on him, Mr. Executive Testosterone himself. I'll watch him closely as he spends hours in his office devising ways to lure that poor girl here instead of working on making everyone here accountable as he's supposed to. I'll keep track of his every memo, his every phone call, his every move not directly related to business, but to his passion, his Persephone.

BRUCE 3

But wait. That could backfire. Employees might misconstrue my plan to unnerve him as a loss of trust in his managerial abilities. I might unwittingly instill paranoia, fear, and panic so that worker productivity plummets along with profits. No, I refuse to be responsible for financial disaster.

BRUCE 1

So . . . here I am again. . . watching. . . yet, not quite. I mean, there's watching and then there's really watching. I can intimidate when I *really* watch. It's a gift, actually. "Eyes in the back of his heads," my mother used to say. But I'll watch casually, not putting my heart into my work, sipping a cup of coffee.

(Picks up Styrofoam cup of coffee from table and sips)

Real coffee, of course, to which I am entitled, not this day old, overperked, reheated decaf stuff in this regulation 6 oz. Styrofoam cup from the lunch room. And it won't be that vending machine, pseudo-Columbian bean substance labeled "regular-light." I'll drink a deep, dark brew from a personalized mug and then, only occasionally watch for the woman of the hour.

BRUCE 2

Right you are. I'm refusing to *truly* watch as told; I'm only watching *my* way.

BRUCE 3

Hold on a minute. That won't work. Everyone will view me as some lazy, over-paid-for-little work, possible family member of the big boss--who else would dare to sit and sip coffee on company time, they'll all ask, not knowing that I am the Head of Security. I won't lower myself to become that kind of watchman.

BRUCE 1

Head of Security. Well, hell, security for what may be the most important area in the whole operation, depending on which way you look at it. I refuse to have my dignity, my training, my expertise trashed by less than full watching. I'll stand up right now. I'll dazzle the visitors, temp secretaries, and dignitaries with my keenness of eyes and investigative powers. I never refuse a challenge. If Persephone dares to descend, and Sam actually lets her out of the elevator, I'll lead her right into the lion's den. I'll assume the best damned watchman stance this firm has ever seen.

(He puts coffee cup down and assumes pose)

END OF SCENE 1