

King of Shadow, King of Shades by Clare Lauren Kelly

There is a musical that I have loved for some time since I first heard the music some years ago, the soundtrack is varied with the upbeat rhythms, softer melodies, sounds that make you feel like dancing and ones that make you feel like crying, along with some songs that just hit me in ways I can't fully explain, partially because the lyrics feel so true or real to me. A musical that takes Greek mythology and turns it into a more modern tale that while it is sad and a cautionary tale, the musical turns it into something that most might not be able to resist dancing along to for certain songs. *Hadestown*, written by Anaïs Mitchell.

I was lucky enough to somewhat recently get to see a traveling cast of the show perform it live and I loved getting to see it come to life on stage, hear the music and feel the energy around me, and it was one of the better memories and moments from this year. But now, I had the opportunity to go with a friend of mine who also really loves the show, to see a recorded version of it in theaters of the original Broadway cast, something both of us were extremely excited for. It is not all that often that I get to have a moment where I talk with someone about something we are both extremely passionate about, and it felt really good to get to share that experience with someone who appreciated the show and music as much as I did. When we got out after it had finished, we both immediately went to find somewhere to sit so we could just talk about the show, performers, music and more.

Now the both of us really enjoy the role and music that Hades has in the musical, and something that we both agree on is that if the actor playing Hades does not feel right for the role then it can be harder to enjoy the show as a whole. Both of us agree that for the Hades to be a good one, it's not just the presence that he needs to have, the big thing for us was him having a deep singing and speaking voice like the original actor for Hades, Patrick Page does. So us getting to see the live recording of Patrick Page as Hades was just amazing because getting to see him perform and hear him sing was amazing. And this performance was a bit different because Patrick Page actually was injured before this show, he suffered a full rupture of his Achilles tendon in his left foot and was unable to perform as Hades in the shows in London other than the one where they were recording the live-capture pro-shot, and he worked with with the director and the creative team to adapt his staging and costume to be able to still perform.

Patrick Page performed as Hades with limited mobility, wearing a stylized medical boot as well as using a cane that added to his costume even if it was mainly meant to be support for him when moving. No matter what the main purpose of it was, the cane looked awesome and I feel like it really fit the character and added quite a lot to the performance. He would hold the cane in his right hand and lean on it while moving or standing, using it to point at people, and when he needed both hands the silver handle that was curved like a tool and appeared to have the head of a dog on the end, possibly in reference to Cerberus, would be hooked over his left arm and hang there till he needed to move again.

There was also a part of a song where the way Patrick Page was moving, the emotion in his face and his body language combined with how he was holding the cane, where I thought that he literally looked like he was about to take a swing at another character with his cane. It put me on edge and I found myself getting even more into the moment because it felt so real to me, it wasn't hard to believe in that moment that Hades was really angry and might lash out with his cane. I've always enjoyed the little details, accessories and other things like that in shows and films, and all the different bits of costumes, accessories, props and other little details added a lot to the performance, not just for Hades, but for nearly all the characters.

The way they worked the medical boot into his costume and added the cane as well was interesting, and I feel like it actually added a good deal to his character in a way that the other versions or previous performances didn't have. With the limits to what Mr. Page could do, limits to how he could move in a boot that angled his foot a bit, it added a sort of grace and predatory feel to the way he moved about the stage, the way he stood was deliberate and it worked well for the character, with the cane just adding more on top of it all. If anything, I feel like he was more intimidating in the boot with how it made him stand, the way he moved gracefully, and how he seemed to loom over the people he was interacting with or moving around.

Watching the pro-shot felt so different from the show I saw live, not just because of the actors being different or one being live and the other in a movie theatre, and a big part of it was in the way Patrick Page was moving about the stage. The way he was playing Hades as a very careful and deliberate man, as someone who was tired, broken, a bit run down yet still very predatory, very intelligent and intuitive. This Hades was not someone to be underestimated in

any way, because he may have seemed a bit more run down, but Hades is still the King of Hadestown and shows just how clever and enticing he can be, spinning webs with his honeyed words. Also, the fact that Patrick Page still danced in the song where he dances with Persephone truly surprised me, he did so well and it looked smooth and natural, not awkward or stilted and I am amazed at his dedication and ability to adapt.

Now for this little essay I want to focus more on the music, the lyrics that Hades is singing because I feel like his parts of the songs usually hit me the hardest, and it isn't just because of his deep sultry voice that feels like it is worming its way in through my ears and seeping into my soul. It is what he is saying that really hits and stays with me, the opinions that Hades seems to have and the way he looks at life, at interactions, deals, the people that he interacts with and how he thinks you need to behave in order to get and keep what you want. Before I really get into the songs though, I want to say that Hades isn't the only character that I love in the show, there are some of the other roles I enjoy when the ones playing them do it well and feel right for that character.

The Three Fates are always a highlight for me, I like that they are the voice in the back of everyone's mind, and they have some truly wonderful songs that are catchy which I always enjoy. "When the Chips are Down" is one of the best songs of the show in my opinion, and the short but very deep "Word to the Wise" is one that I always really like to listen to. When played well the Fates also feel very sassy to me, which just makes it even more fun to watch with the added bonus of the three of them singing their parts together, moving in sync, and the harmonizing that happens which is always a treat.

Two other characters I enjoy are Hermes and Persephone, one because in a way they are the narrator of the whole show and are the one guiding us along through the story, while the other is at some points a sort of comic relief character. There are times when they are making fun of others and trying to bring joy in the moment, mainly for themselves because they are bored, but as the audience you feel included. The original Hermes, played by André De Shields, and Persephone, played by Amber Grey, were done so well by their actors and I found myself pulled into the story more than I expected. I was also laughing my ass off when Persephone was playing around. Or when she was just being a bit over the top to get laughs, but then when

Persephone became more serious, Amber Grey was able to switch so well from acting one way to acting another that it felt natural to me, like it was something she had done before. Never thought I'd say this, and my friend is the one who brought it up first and I fully agree with her, but Amber Grey is really good at acting drunk.

On to the music. Now I'm not going to go through the whole plot of the musical, so if you have not seen it and are not familiar with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice and Hades and Persephone, this might not make complete sense to you, so I do recommend learning more about the musical is about before reading the rest of this. And for the most part I am only going to be going through the songs that Hades sings, and the lines that are sung by him, so even if I love so many lines by other characters, for this I am only focusing on Hades.

Starting with the first song that Hades has more than only a few words in, "Chant" continues the story down in Hadestown, Persephone is discontent about the conditions there, and she and Hades fight which shows the audience their state of marital conflict. In the meantime, in the world above as winter rages the rift between Orpheus and Eurydice grows as Orpheus gives his full attention to writing his song while Eurydice struggles to find food and firewood for the both of them while a storm threatens them any everything in the world above. This is the first real glimpse that we as the audience get, not only at the state of things between Hades and Persephone, but at Hades himself from his own point of view, from his words, his thoughts, and not the things others say about him.

This is also where we get an idea of just how lonely Hades is. I don't believe the first thing we hear Hades say in the show is a coincidence. During the song "Way Down Hadestown" the audience hears Hades speak for the first time and his line is very simple, when Persephone tells him that he is early, Hades replies with a small smile saying simply, "I missed ya." (Anaïs Mitchell) And in the song "Chant" Hades literally admits to being lonely when replying to Persephone. "Lover, you were gone so long/Lover, I was lonesome." (Mitchell) Hades is missing his wife, he is lonely, and he is attempting to hold the loneliness at bay, trying to be productive, and at times it felt to me like Hades is trying to make Hadestown as close to the surface during summer as he can. Even though Hades knows and understands why Persephone can't stay with him year round, there is still some part of him that believes if he can make Hadestown into a

place Persephone wants to be, a place she enjoys, a place that she won't want to leave when it's time for summer again each year.

The thing about the loneliness Hades feels, is that it has been building for a long time and he also doesn't fully let it control him and does not succumb to it, Hades does what he can to keep himself busy with contracts, managing Hadestown, keeping things running and making sure the shades in Hadestown are working on the wall, in the mines and more. In the song "Chant" Persephone is commenting on the changes she notices in Hadestown, things that weren't there before she left when it was time for summer to start again, and Hades proudly responds with the things he has added and built. "So I built a foundry/In the ground beneath your feet/Here I fashioned things of steel/Oil drums and automobiles." (Mitchell) Later on in his second verse, Hades continues telling Persephone about what he has been doing in Hadestown since she left as a result of her having been gone so long, as a result of him being lonesome. "So I laid a power grid/In the ground on which you stood/And wasn't it electrifying/What I made the neon shine?/Silver screen, cathode ray/Brighter than the light of day." (Mitchell)

Hades is trying to make Hadestown more appealing to Persephone, like I said in a paragraph above I feel like there is a part of him that is trying to recreate the world above down in Hadestown with the hope that his wife will stay with him. "Then I kept that furnace fed/With the fossils of the dead/Lover when you feel that fire/Think of it as my desire/Think of it as my desire for you!" (Mitchell) Then in his second verse, it changes tone slightly. "Lover when you see that glare/Think of it as my despair/Think of it as my despair for you!" (Mitchell) Near the end of the song in the third verse Hades sings, it takes another emotional tone change as what Persephone has just said seems to have felt like a rebuke to him, he has put in work to try and make Hadestown into a place she would be happy to stay in, a place where she would happily stay with him, but that is not what Persephone sees when looking around Hadestown. "Every year, it's getting worse/Hadestown, hell on Earth!/Did you think I'd be impressed/With this neon necropolis?" (Mitchell) Persephone then continues to try and talk with Hades, to ask him what he has become and say that she no longer recognizes him anymore.

To this Hades replies that everything he does, "I do it for the love of you." (Mitchell) And after what Persephone said, after how it might seem like she rebuked him and the effort he had

been putting in to try and keep her with him so he wasn't lonely anymore, Hades is becoming more and more bitter, more lonely and not as able to keep that at bay. "If you don't even want my love/I'll give it to someone who does/Someone grateful for her fate/Someone who appreciates/The comforts of a gilded cage/And doesn't try to fly away." (Mitchell) Hades is trying to provide all the things that the women he loves could possibly want, but it isn't working so Hades pivots a little, I guess maybe he thought he just needed to try and make Persephone jealous and that it might bring her back to him. Not fully sure if that was what he might have been thinking, but in my mind I guess I think of it as Hades is lonely and his wife has pulled away from him even during the months she is with him in Hadestown. Then when she is in the world up above she is partying, living it up on top, while Hades is alone down in Hadestown with only his workers. What Hades wants is someone that will stay with him, someone that will appreciate the things he provides and what he makes for them, the security and more that he has to offer. "Someone who could love these walls/That hold her close and keep her safe/And think of them as my embrace." (Mitchell)

Then comes one of my personal favorite songs that Hades sings, "Hey, Little Songbird". Hades and Eurydice officially meet face to face and Hades attempts to basically seduce her into coming with him to Hadestown. And since Eurydice has been going hungry because of winter and the storm, because she has no money, no food and is so cold, she is enticed by the offer Hades makes, by the security and wealth that he can give her. As he said in the song "Chant" at the end, he is looking for someone who can love the walls he has made, who can see them as what is keeping her safe, and think of them as his embrace. A bird that won't try to fly away. And Hades refers to Eurydice as a songbird and a canary.

There is so much to love in "Hey, Little Songbird" and I won't go into it all, but there are a few parts that I will bring attention to or pull out that tell you more about Hades and about his state of mind, about the way he sees things. The verses that Hades has in the song are meant to try and entice Eurydice into following him down to Hadestown, and what he does is appeal to what every person wants and needs, to have what they need and to be safe. And Hades does manipulate her masterfully, he doesn't outright lie to her, but Hades isn't being completely honest with her either and in the end makes it seem like the idea to follow him to Hadestown is

Eurydice's decision. "You'd shine like a diamond down in the mine/And the choice is yours if you're willing to choose/Seeing as you've got nothing to lose/And I could use a canary."

(Mitchell) Hades flatters her, offers security, says things that make it seem like he can understand her, like he knows what she is going through and has been here which makes what he is saying feel more true, more like he can be trusted because he understands. "Hey, little songbird, let me guess/He's some kind of poet and he's penniless/Give him your hand, he'll give you his hand-to-mouth/He'll write you a poem when the power is out." (Mitchell)

Hades knows just what to say to put little seeds of doubt in the mind of whoever he is focusing on at the time, he knows how to manipulate, knows what to offer, and in a later song we see that Hades also knows how to take the things he feels, to take his own experiences, and weaponize them in a way. The ability to take his own experiences and emotions and use them to control or manipulate or trick others, to set tests that he knows they are unlikely to pass, makes Hades a lot more dangerous in my opinion, but there will be more on that later.

In the partially sung and mainly spoken "Papers" There is an interaction between Hades and Orpheus who has just made it down to Hadestown and found Eurydice where Hades is telling Orpheus he can tell that the young poet does not belong there and tells him to be on his way. Being a young poet in love, Orpheus boldly says that he is not going back alone, and that he came to take Eurydice home despite her trying to stop him. The reaction Hades has to this bold proclamation from Orpheus is always funny to me, because Hades just starts to laugh quite loudly. Hades really found Orpheus to be amusing in that moment, before Hades then responds to Orpheus. "Who the hell do you think you are?/Who the hell do you think you're talking to?/ She couldn't go anywhere, even if she wanted to." (Mitchell) Hades tells Orpheus that Eurydice can't leave Hadestown, not even if she wanted to because of the contract that she signed, the one that Hades manipulated her into signing by tempting her with what she wants. But hey, I believe that there is a part of Eurydice that willingly went down to Hadestown, because there is a part of her that did want what Hades was offering. To some degree, I believe that you can't force anyone to do something that some part of them didn't want to do, whether or not they admit it, and yes there are some exceptions to this as well but I won't get into that now. As Hades says in the song, he can only buy what others choose to sell.

On to the lovely duet between Hades and Persephone “How Long?”, where Persephone tries to convince Hades to let Eurydice leave Hadestown with Orpheus after hearing the young poet sing of his love for Eurydice. Something that I enjoy a lot about this song is that it is a mix of them speaking at the start then singing as the song continues, and while they each have their own verses where they sing then respond to the other, at the end they both sing the final verse together. For me, hearing Patrick Page and Amber Grey sing this together while watching them interact on the screen was just amazing with how well the both of them are able to convey the emotion that their characters are feeling in that moment while also moving around the stage and around each other.

Now back to the song, there is a lot of repetition that I enjoyed with the lines and at times it feels a little like a call and response between Hades and Persephone, with one of them saying their thoughts and posing a question, and the other responds by repeating the question and giving their reply. And one thing that stands out to me in this song, is how we get another really good look at Hades, we get a lot of insight into his mind and his emotions in this song.

There is a lot in the song that I really like but since this is already pretty long and there are still some songs to go, I'm going to pick just a few of the parts that really stand out to me as an insight into what is going through the mind of Hades at this moment. A few of the parts that I feel show how Hades is processing what is going on and what it means to him, as well as some parts that I feel support my thought that Hades is just really lonely and that is a main factor of what is driving him.

His verse starts as follows. “How long? Just as long as Hades is king/Nothing comes of wishing on stars/And nothing comes of the songs people sing/However sorry they are.” (Mitchell) Hades loves Persephone and to a degree everything he does is because of that love for her, but since she is needed in the world above for summer she has to leave him for six months of every year and this leaves Hades all alone down below. Hades sang a song of love long ago for her, and as the years passed and he felt more alone then his song would have changed to be more sorrowful, and then reached the point where he stopped singing for love at all. And when it comes to wishing on stars, it feels like all Hades wants is for his love to stay with him, for company that stays with him and is happy with him. But no matter how much he has wished for

this to happen, it never has so he is skeptical and wary of those who sing for love or wish on stars, since from his own experience, nothing good comes of it.

Then in the second part of his first singing verse, Hades now sings from the point of view of the king who is in charge of Hadestown and needs to make sure things are running smoothly, who needs to ensure the workers keep their heads down and don't stop working in the mines and on the machines. Hades sings as someone who needs to see the bigger picture of the possible consequences of the actions he makes, something that is pointed out in a song that the Fates sing called "Word to the Wise" a little later. Now for the verse Hades sings as the king of Hadestown, I feel like it does a very good job putting into words how there are times or people that take the bit of kindness or leeway given to them and take much more than they had a right to, or more than was being offered. How there are people who take advantage of the kindness of others, and how one action may be made with good intentions in mind, but others may interpret it as weakness or something similar.

"Give them a piece, they'll take it all/Show them a crack, they'll tear down the wall/Lend them an ear and the kingdom will fall/The kingdom will fall for a song." (Mitchell) To which Persephone immediately replies and rebukes his statement with the start of her next verse. "What does he care for the logic of kings?/The laws of your underworld? It is only for love that he sings/He sings for the love of a girl." (Mitchell) Hades is focused on keeping the workers in line and making sure that Hadestown continues on running as it should be, the well oiled machine that he has worked so hard to make. Persephone knows that Orpheus only really cares about his love Eurydice, that all he wants is to return to the world above with her, but Hades knows that if he allows that, then he will lose some of the power that he holds as the king of Hadestown, and losing power means losing control, which can not happen.

This is one of the songs that I really enjoy, and in part it is because it is slower, not as high energy as a good portion of the other songs in the show are and having this one slow down really works. It gives the audience a break from the fast pace high energy songs that make you want to dance along with the characters, but it is one of the more emotional songs in my opinion, one of the songs that is important in telling the audience what is going on in the minds of the other two lovers in the story. There is a lot more that could be said about this song, one part that I

really love is the chorus of it, the questions that both Persephone and Hades are asking and singing together in a duet. But for now, on to the next song.

Directly after the end of “How Long” the next song, “Chant (Reprise)” begins and I think that I may enjoy the reprise better than the original, even if the original is still a wonderful song that serves as a really fitting way to bring the audience down to Hadestown. In “Chat (Reprise)” this is where the rebellion really is going and will lead to Hades needing to make a decision that could end badly for him no matter which way he goes, but in this song Hades sings directly to Orpheus. There are a few different songs where the audience gets a look at the motivations and thoughts of Hades, and this is one of them for sure because you see his thoughts and stance on love to a degree, what Hades thinks needs to be done in order to keep a woman by your side as you get older. “‘Cause it seems your song made quite a strong impression on my wife/But it takes more than singin’ songs to keep a woman in your arms.” (Mitchell) Hades seems to believe that declarations and acts of love aren't enough to keep a woman with you, especially as you grow older as time passes. An interesting thought to come from an immortal god, but typically in the show Hades physically seems to be older, with Patrick Page having white hair and other men portraying Hades having grey hair. In several songs, Hades also refers to Orpheus as a young man, which continues to draw attention to the difference in age between them.

Then Hades continues, and this part of the verse is honestly one of my favorites that Hades sings in any song with the rhythm of it, the words and especially with the emotion and way that Patrick Page sings it as Hades.

Take it from a man no longer young/If you want to hold a woman, son/Hang a chain
around her throat/Made of many karat gold/Shackle her from wrist to wrist/With sterling
silver bracelets/Fill her pockets full of stones/Precious ones, diamonds/Bind her with a
golden band/Take it from an old man. (Mitchell)

To clear up a common misconception and contribute to why these lines feel really important in my mind, I want to briefly go away from the musical and over to Greek mythology, just in case there are people who are unaware or unsure of what exactly Hades is the god of. Contrary to what some may think, Hades is not actually the god of death, Thanatos is the god of non-violent death and the Keres were female death-spirits who personified violent, cruel, or bloody doom.

Hades is the king of the underworld and god of the dead, the one who presided over funeral rights and defended the right of the dead to due burial. He is also the god of the hidden wealth under the earth, from the fertile soil that nourished seeds and grain, to the mined wealth of gold, silver and other metals and gems. When it comes to death, Hades is only in charge of watching over those who have died, watching over the souls who have entered into his realm and making sure they are sorted accordingly. I guess you could say that basically, Hades is the manager of the dead and ruler of the underworld where their souls go.

So with Hades as the god of the hidden wealth under the earth, with there being so many precious metals and stones that humans go looking for and hold such value in, it makes sense that Hades would see some value in it as well. So having the verse focusing on how Hades believes to some degree that in order to keep a woman by your side you need to give them expensive and pretty things that are seen as valuable, it is pretty telling. Love on its own is not enough, it doesn't matter how much you love the other person or how much you express it, what matters is if you are able to provide for them and give them many beautiful things. One of the lines in that verse that stands out to me the most is the following. "Shackle her from wrist to wrist/With sterling silver bracelets." (Mitchell) Hades is not just saying that expensive metals and gems need to be offered to the one you love in order to keep them by your side, but he is also comparing the silver bracelets to shackles meant to restrict someone. And a few lines later, Hades continues with the theme of needing to restrain or clearly mark the other as yours to show how much you care or can provide with the line "Bind her with a golden band." (Mitchell) Wedding rings can often be made of gold, maybe more for the man than the woman, but a golden band typically can be associated with marriage, and marriage ties two individuals together.

Then in the second verse from Hades, he gives the audience and the other characters in the show more background on why he thinks the way he does, as well as how Hades and Orpheus are actually more similar than one might think at first, despite one being mortal and the other being a god. "Young man, I was young once too/Sang a song of love like you/Son, I too, was left behind/Turned on one too many times." (Mitchell) To me it seems like, at this moment at least, that Hades believes that to be so in love like Orpheus is with Eurydice, is to be a fool which can only lead to heartbreak, betrayal, and loneliness. And how once upon a time Hades did

share the same thoughts on love, the same way of expressing his love, but it is no longer the way Hades thinks. “Now I sing a different song/One I can depend upon/A simple tune, a steady beat/The music of machinery.” (Mitchell)

But despite how Hades seems to view Orpheus as a fool and a threat to the world and order that Hades has worked so hard to create, he does give the young poet a chance since Orpheus has charmed Persephone with his song and the love that he has for Eurydice, how far he is willing to go for her.

I'll tell you what young man/Since my wife is such a fan/And since I'm going to count to three/And put you out of your misery/One! Give me one more song/One more song before I send you/Two! To the great beyond/Where nobody can hear you singing/Three! Sing a song for me/Make me laugh, make me weep/Make the king feel young again/Sing! For an old man. (Mitchell)

The parts that stand out to me the most is how Hades is giving Orpheus a chance simply because Persephone seems to see something in the poet, and that to some degree Hades does consider Orpheus a threat and it is because of his songs. So much so that he is ready to send Orpheus to the great beyond where nobody is going to be able to hear him singing.

Before getting to the last song for this essay, the song that is essentially a soliloquy given by Hades while he is trying to decide what he should do, I'm going to quickly mention a song I feel is important Hades doesn't play a bit part in. It's a song the Fates sing called “Word to the Wise” and feel like it really sums up perfectly the dilemma that Hades is in. A dilemma that the other characters, not including the Fates, don't seem to understand since all they see is a poet in love and not the possible repercussions of the decisions made.

Gotta think quick/Gotta save face/Caught 'tween a rock and a hard place/Whatcha gonna do, whatcha gonna do/Whatcha gonna do, whatcha gonna do now?/ If you tell him no/Oh, you're a heartless man/And you're gonna have a martyr on your hands/If you let him go/Oh, you're a spineless king/And you're never gonna get 'em in line again/Damned if you don't/Damned if you do/Whole damned nation's watching you...Here's a little tip/Word to the wise/Here's a snippet of advice/Men are fools/Oh, men are frail/Give them the rope and they'll hang themselves. (Mitchell)

I'm not going to go very in depth into this, but the bit about damned if you do damned if you don't seems to describe the situation very well in my opinion, no matter what decision Hades makes it can be taken out of context or twisted so there isn't a way for him to really win this if he doesn't put serious thought into what he is going to do. And at the very start of this song when Orpheus asks if they can go, Hades simply replies with I don't know, then the Fates begin singing their song that can sound very upbeat for how serious and thought provoking it is.

The final song is directly after "Word to the Wise", and it is essentially the soliloquy Hades gives while trying to find a way to solve this problem that won't result in riots or a loss of control in Hadestown, but also won't push Persephone further away. During the song "His Kiss, the Riot" (Mitchell) Hades is lamenting about how things are changing because of Orpheus, how "All my children came here poor/Clamoring for bed and board/Now what do they clamor for?/ Freedom." (Mitchell)

Before Orpheus made his way to Hadestown in search of Eurydice, the souls of the workers didn't want, feel or think much, and Hades gave them work to do, a wall to work upon and laid out many plans for Hadestown. That is simply how things were. "Have I made myself their lord/Just to fall upon the sword/Of some pauper's minor chord?" (Mitchell) Now Hades is questioning himself, questioning the decisions that he made as well as all he has done for the souls and Hadestown, wondering now if it all was for nothing.

The final verse of this song is probably one of the most telling ones when it comes to Hades and his emotional state, as well as how the king of Hadestown thinks, but I believe that it also shows the audience that Hades is extremely intelligent. It shows that Hades is not one to let his emotions get the best of or control him. Instead, Hades finds a way to use his own experience, to take the feelings that he has been living with and suppressing for an unknown length of time, and use it to turn things as in his favor as he can in this situation where it seems like there is no right answer, like there is no way to come out on top or keep things as close to as they were as Hades is able to.

Only one thing to be done/Let them go but let there be some term to be agreed upon/
Some condition/Orpheus the undersigned shall not turn to look behind/She's out of sight,
and he's out of his mind/Every coward seems courageous in the safety of a crowd/

Bravery can be contagious when the band is playing loud/Nothing makes a man so bold/
As a woman's smile and a hand to hold/But all alone his blood runs thin/And doubt
comes, doubt comes in. (Mitchell)

Hades knows that he needs to let them go, but there has to be some condition he gives that needs to be met, otherwise Eurydice will have to return to Hadestown, and to determine what condition he will put in place, Hades takes the words of the Fates and his own experience into account. Orpheus and Eurydice will walk back out of Hadestown the way Orpheus walked in, but they won't walk side by side and hand in hand. Instead, Orpheus will walk in front and Eurydice will walk behind him, the condition being that the young poet is not allowed to turn around or look behind him to see if she is actually still following behind him. If Orpheus looks behind before they are both safely on the surface, then Eurydice will have to return back to Hadestown while Orpheus stays up on the surface, separated then forever.

Hades knows from personal experience how comforting it is to have a woman by your side, to be able to see her, see her smile with so much warmth at you, but since for six months of every year Persephone returns to the surface while Hades stays in Hadestown, he also knows what it's like without it. Hades knows from personal experience the toll it takes especially as more time passes, but this knowledge Hades has is what he uses to make sure that no matter the outcome, in the end he does not lose any power he holds over the workers or in Hadestown. I believe there is some part of Hades that did hope for Orpheus to be strong enough to be able to resist looking back, but there is another part of me that thinks Hades knew Orpheus would look back. I believe Hades knew that no matter how much they loved each other, Orpheus wouldn't be able to keep himself from looking back. And that it's because Hades doesn't think he would be able to resist the urge to look behind if he was the one put in that position, especially after having to live without his beloved for so long.

There is so much that can be said about how Hades is portrayed in the musical that may remain my favorite of all time, about the kind of person Hades is and the skills, knowledge and more that he has, but there isn't time for that now. If you've made it this far I hope you have enjoyed my thoughts and interpretations on Hades and what his lines might mean for him and the other characters of the musical, and thank you for sticking with me here.