

***This is an excerpt from my Senior Capstone visual novel, *Eros Purge*, written in Naninovel code. Here, the Pythia covers content that the player has chosen in previous in-game choices (set in Booleans). The content is slimmed down for expediency, with some choices left out.**

#LabelEnterTemple

Mist floats thickly through the air like incense smoke, floating to the high ceilings. Paintings of divinity dance across the tiles, bordered by both the sky and sea. Greenery wreaths the walls in boughs and wraps around the pillars lining the middle walkway.

You squint ahead, seeing a raised dais in the fog. In the center of it, you see the vague outline of a woman.

Walking closer, you notice that she has her face concealed by a long, purple veil.

She must be the Pythia that Eros spoke of.

You stop a few feet away from the dais, awkwardly shuffling your feet. You wonder if you should cough or try to scuff your sandal on the stone floor a little more purposefully to get her attention.

Oh...you might stand here for eternity, but you've already made the conscious decision to wait for her to speak first.

As you're deliberating whether to speak or to just remain silent forever and ever, a voice interrupts you.

Pythia: Long has this one awaited you, {PlayerName}.

You're certain you never told her your name. You're certain you don't like that she knows it.

Pythia: This one will draw upon the lines of fate and weave from a torn scrap of the divine future's cloth.

@if VariableLogos>=2

Despite the poetics and verbose language, you understand what the Pythia intends: to make you a prophecy.

@else

The words fly over your head. You only really catch the words "torn" and "future," which aren't the first words you'd choose to pair together.

Player: I don't know if tearing apart time is—

@endIf

The Pythia inhales deeply, the mist swirling around her as she takes the edges of her purple veil between her fingers.

Pythia: Of what shall this one speak? Of what shall this one weave?

Pythia: Yourself? Another, close to thee?

Player: I get to choose? Is that how that normally works?

Pythia: Yourself? Another, close to thee?

Player: Are those the only two options?

Pythia: Yourself? Another, close to thee?

Player: Right. Then, I want a prophecy about...

@choice "Myself." goto:.LabelSelfP

@choice "Narcissus." goto:.LabelNarcissusP

@stop

#LabelSelfP

Player: Myself.

Everything is silent after you speak. Everything, except the Pythia's deep, awed inhale of breath. The sound captures your attention and guides it to the Pythia's fingertips as she lifts her purple veil, hands outstretched with practiced grace.

All you see is her mouth. Sharp chin. Crooked teeth. The paint on her lips is cracked and ancient, shifting like cratered land during an earthquake as she speaks.

@if VariableMurder=true

Pythia: You carried twice your blood into the afterlife. Blood, spent by your hands.

Pythia: You deemed yourself worthy of dealing death.

@endIf

@If VariableRevengeHonor=true

@goto .LabelRevengeHonor

@elseif VariableRevengeRage=true

@goto .LabelRevengeRage

@stop

#LabelRevengeHonor

Pythia: Did you think your honor—scorned, defiled—would gleam brighter than the lies if smeared with blood?

Pythia: The tongue betrayed; the heart you hunted. Forever a legacy of flint and tinder; your flight-sick temper, your dragon's breath.

Pythia: It was never your right to give anger to your blade.

@choice "Where should I put the anger, then?" **goto:.LabelAnger**

@choice "I killed for a good reason." **goto:.LabelKillReason**

@stop

#LabelAnger

@set VariablePathos+=1

You think about the weight of your rage—how it choked you. How it demanded and writhed into your bones, echoing with each step, every impact of your flesh meeting the earth.

There was nowhere else to put it.

The days you think that the rage is gone, you feel like an empty house, devoid of furniture. When the rage returns, the furniture is broken, the floor full of splinters.

You spend days searching for a place to rest that won't cut you open.

Player: Where should I put it, then?

Where else would it fit, if not in your bloodied hands?

Pythia: Put it down.

Player: Where?

Pythia: Put it down.

Player: That doesn't answer my question.

The Pythia pauses.

Pythia: The rage doesn't have to be yours, forever. Put it down.

@goto .LabelProphecyEval

#LabelKillReason

@set VariableEthos-=1

Yes, there had been anger behind your violence, anger behind your decisions—but they were deserved.

You were right. It was an absolute truth; a bright, hallowed clarity.

It was for your honor. It was for your shame.

It was for neither. It was for both.

Sometimes the lines blurred.

Player: I killed for a good reason.

Pythia: It was never your right.

Player: They deserved it. They were wrong.

Pythia: It was never your right.

Player: I had no other choice!

Pythia: It was not your blood to take.

Pythia: Now you will carry it.

You look down at your hands. Between one blink and the next, the palms seem to drip crimson.

@goto .LabelProphecyEval

#LabelRevengeRage

Pythia: Careless and cruel, unworthy judgment.

Pythia: Hand tilting to the scythe on fiery whim, on child's wit.

Pythia: Momentary satisfaction. A breath before drowning.

Pythia: No revenge in this meaningless murder, hand guided by rage.

Pythia: Did you even know his name?

@choice "Try to remember his name." goto:.LabelRemember

@choice "It was worth it." goto:.LabelWorthIt

@stop

#LabelRemember

Grasping the memory is like reaching into hot coals—hand snapping back like a cornered serpent.

All around the edges, the memory is stained red with heaving, choked breaths. You couldn't think through your rage, so you acted through it. It was quick. And messy.

And gratifying, briefly.

His face remains beaten, uncradled, hazy. Death not yet wept for or grieved.

In your mind, he is still a corpse on the ground and the blood on your hands and the smile in your uncoiled mouth.

You can't remember his name.

Player: I...

Pythia: What was his name?

Player: I don't...

Pythia: What was his name?

Player: I don't remember his name!

Pythia: He most certainly remembers yours.

Pythia: He won't hear your regret. He won't hear your guilt. He won't hear you utter his name.

Player: Stop!

Pythia: Then remember, {PlayerName}. Never need another soul to beg forgiveness from.

@goto .LabelProphecyEval

#LabelWorthIt

@set VariableEthos-=1

The gratification washed away your guilt. Absolved you like your mother's hands cleaning wounds with cold river water. Shocking, immediate.

You didn't need his name. You needed him to be silent. Dead worked, too.

Player: I don't remember. But it was worth it.

Pythia: Was it worth it?

Player: I just said it was.

Pythia: Was it worth it?

Player: Yes. It made me feel better.

Pythia: Was it worth it?

Player: I wanted him gone!

Pythia: Shallow water runs dry quickly. Are you out of reasons?

Player: I don't need more reasons!

Pythia: All worthy pursuits are backed by endless rivers of belief. You will never move forward standing in a spill, in the mess you made.

Pythia: Was it worth it? Was it worth it?

The Pythia continues speaking before you can come to an answer.

@goto .LabelProphecyEval

@endIf