**Orpheus and Eurydice**

**Adapted from http://www.greeka.com/greece-myths/orpheus-eurydice.htm**

**Orpheus, talented at playing music**

Orpheus is known as the most talented music player of the ancient times. It is said that god Apollo was his father, from whom took his extreme talent in music, and the Muse Calliope was his mother. He was living in Thrace, on the northeastern part of Greece. Orpheus had a voice that could charm everyone who heard it. When he was presented a lyre as a boy, he had it mastered in no time at all. No god, mortal, or beast could resist his music, and even the rocks and trees would move themselves to be near him.

**Love at first sight**

Orpheus spent much of his early years in pursuit of music and poetry. His skill had far surpassed the fame and respect of his music. Well into his youth he had mastered the lyre and his melodious voice earned him audiences from near and far. It was at one such gathering of humans and beasts that his eyes fell on a wood nymph. The girl was called Eurydice; she was beautiful and shy. She had been drawn to Orpheus…enamored by his voice and such was the spell of his music and appearance that neither could take their eyes off the other. Something unexplainable tugged the hearts of the two young people and soon they fell dearly in love, unable to spend a single moment apart. After a while, they decided to get married.

Their wedding day dawned bright and clear. The god of marriage blessed their marriage and then a great feast followed. The surroundings were filled with laughter and gaiety. Soon shadows grew large, signaling an end to the revelry that had lasted much of the day, and the wedding guests all took leave of the newly-weds, who were still sitting hand-in-hand and starry eyed. They soon both realized that it was time they were on their way and departed for home.

**The snake-bite**

However, things would soon change and grief would replace happiness. There was one man who was despising Orpheus and desired Eurydice for his own. Aristaeus, a shepherd, had plotted a plan to conquer the beautiful nymph. And there he was, waiting in the bushes for the young couple to pass by. He intended to jump on them and kill Orpheus. But as the shepherd made his move, Orpheus grabbed Eurydice by the hand and started running recklessly through the forest.

The chase was long and Aristaeus showed no signs of giving up or slowing down. On and on they ran and suddenly, Orpheus felt Eurydice stumble and fall. Unable to comprehend what had just happened, he rushed to her side but stopped short in dismay, for he noticed the paleness in her cheeks. Looking around, he saw no trace of the shepherd for Aristaeus had witnessed the event and had left. While running, Eurydice had stepped on a nest of snakes and had been bitten by a deadly viper. Knowing that there was no chance of survival, Aristaeus had abandoned his plan, cursing his luck and Orpheus.

**A supernatural plan**

After the death of his beloved wife, Orpheus was not the same carefree person he used to be. His life without Eurydice seemed endless, and he could do nothing more than grieve for her. This is when he had a great but yet crazy idea: he decided to go to Underworld and try to get his wife back.

Armed with his weapons, the lyre and his voice, Orpheus approached Hades and demanded entry into the underworld. No one challenged him. He played his lyre and sang out to King Hades and Queen Persephone that Eurydice was returned to him. Not even the most stone-hearted of people or Gods could have missed the hurt in his voice.

Hades openly wept, Persephone's heart melted and even Cerberus, the gigantic three-headed hound guarding the entry to the underworld, covered his many ears with his paws and howled in despair. The voice of Orpheus was so moving that Hades promised to this desperate man that Eurydice would follow him back into the world of the living. However, he warned Orpheus that for no reason must he look back while his wife was still in the dark, for that would undo everything he hoped for. He should wait for Eurydice to get into the light before he looked at her.

With great faith in his heart and joy in his song, Orpheus began his journey out of the underworld. As Orpheus was reaching the exit of the Underworld, he could hear the footsteps of his wife approaching him. He wanted to turn around and hug her immediately, but he managed to control his feelings. As he was approaching the exit, his heart was beating faster and faster. The moment he stepped on the world of the living, he turned his head to hug his wife. Unfortunately, he got only a glimpse of Eurydice before she was once again drawn back into the underworld.

When Orpheus turned his head, Eurydice was still in the dark, she hadn't seen the sun and, as Hades had warned Orpheus, his sweet wife was drowned back to the dark world of the dead. Waves of anguish and despair swept over him and shuddering with grief he approached the Underworld again but this time, he was denied entry.

**The death of Orpheus**

From then on, the heart-broken musician was wandering disoriented, day after day, night after night, in total despair. His songs were extremely sad. His only comfort was to lay on a huge rock and feel the caress of the breeze, his only vision were the open skies.

And so it was that a group of irate women came upon him. Orpheus was so desperate that he did not even try to resist their advances. The women killed him, cut his body into pieces and threw them and his lyre into a river. It is said that his head and his lyre floated downriver to the island of Lesvos. There the Muses found them and gave Orpheus a proper burial ceremony. People believed that his grave emanated music, plaintive yet beautiful. His soul descended down to Hades where he was finally reunited with his beloved Eurydice.