

The Story of the Kidnapping of Persephone

as told by the three fates

Demeter, the goddess of the harvest, loved her joyful daughter Persephone - so much so, she could not bear to have her out of her sight. One day, however, Persephone wandered away from her mother - as daughters often do - and found herself in a lush meadow picking flowers. Suddenly, the earth split open and Hades, the god of the underworld, appeared. He too had noticed Persephone's radiance and was determined to make her his queen. He seized her and they crossed the river Styx, ferried by Charon, into a realm of darkness and death. The only witness was a nearby swineherd, who in our tale, is named Triptolemus.

Demeter, wracked with grief, searched desperately for her daughter and neglected her duties. The earth withered and died around her, echoing her despair. Eventually, she returned to the meadow where she met Triptolemus, who told her what he had seen. Persephone had not run away - she had been kidnapped. Despair turned to rage, and Demeter demanded that Zeus, the king of the gods, intercede for the safe return of her daughter.

Zeus, a pragmatist, did not want the earth to wither and die. He therefore ordered Hades to return Persephone to her mother. But it wasn't that easy - during the long months Persephone had spent in the underworld, she accidentally consumed three pomegranate seeds. Eating the fruit of the underworld bound her to it, and she could not now fully escape it.

A compromise was reached. Persephone would return to the underworld for three months each year, one month for each seed. During the months of her imprisonment, Demeter grieves their separation and Persephone endures. The earth withers and dies, and humanity experiences Winter with exhausting certainty. The cycle persists.

Demeter, in the name of her kind and gentle daughter, finds Triptolemus once more. She shares the secrets of agriculture with him - how to sow, tend, and harvest an abundance of crops so that humanity will have enough food for each winter. She gifts this knowledge as a thank you and Triptolemus carries it forward, teaching humanity how to survive the winters they know are coming.