

Many moons ago, in a beautiful, luxuriant land, surrounded by sea, there once lived a powerful goddess with golden hair and many names.

One of her names was Demeter. She was the goddess of fertility and vegetation.

Back then, humans were nomads. They ate roots, leaves and fruit. There wasn't any agriculture; the land spontaneously produced everything.

Demeter had a daughter, Persephone, who also had many names. They were called the two goddesses: Mother Earth and her daughter, Korè.

One day Persephone was playing with her friends. They were picking flowers in a field when the earth opened up under their feet. Ade, the Lord of the Underworld, suddenly appeared and forced her on to his chariot. He kidnapped her with the help of her father, Zeus, making her his wife and Queen of the Underworld.

Demeter heard her daughter screaming but was too far away. Her heart broke like broken earth under her feet. She desperately started looking for Persephone and after nine days, searching in vain, she met the ancient goddess, Ecate, who had heard Persephone screaming but hadn't seen anything. She suggested that Demeter ask Helios, the Sun, the only one that could have seen from above everything that had happened.

Helios told her the truth. Demeter, angry and grief stricken, left Olympus and stopped caring for mankind. The earth no longer bore fruit. Both man and animals died of hunger. Famine ensued, causing great suffering, and the Gods no longer received sacrifices.

Demeter, wrapped in a mournful cloak,  
Threw herself upon the earth,  
Like a bird.  
She crossed cities and fields,  
Bearing burning torches,  
With her heart locked in pain,  
She hid herself.  
No-one recognised her,  
Among human beings.

Zeus talked to his brother Ade who agreed to let Persephone go back to her mother, but, before setting her free, Ade made Persephone eat the seeds of a magic pomegranate, forcing her back to him for some of the year.

Those who don't eat from their land, don't belong to it.  
In eating from this land, I'm from this land.  
And so the daughter has been returned to the Mother,  
And the Mother has returned to the Gods.  
Food, a gift from the Gods, has been returned to mankind.  
And sacrifices, the food of the Gods, have been restored.

Grateful Demeter teaches man the secret of seeds.

Three times born.  
Three times dead.  
In the earth.  
In the fire.  
In the stomach.  
Everything eats and is eaten.  
Life exists because it devours life.

Since then, Persephone lives some of the year in the Netherworld and some of the year with the living, like the seed in the soil and plants that die and are reborn.

Whoever gives food, is the giver of rules.

Thanks to agriculture, mankind is no longer constrained to wandering from place to place in search of food. They settled down, divided the land, cultivated it and founded the first civilisations.

I'm born in my land,  
I eat from my land,  
I die in my land.

This was the way to the return.

Ancient people used to bury their dead in terracotta vases.  
Ancient people used to keep seeds in terracotta vases.

Sleeping Beauty