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# Persephone

## I.

What horror: to be dipped without warning into the waters of the Well of Experience! But this is the essential fabric of our lives, in endless renewal. For, in a sense, the Void does not exist. The Well is never empty; one cannot speak of Emptiness; . Supreme Reality of Existence , it need never fear deprivation, for it will always be filled, either with Love or with Hate. Yet never so full that it cannot hold more.

When once it was that Persephone walked,  
four seasons upon the Earth,  
gathering flowers from the hills, meadows and valleys,  
of the world,  
Sowing their seeds in desert wastes and on rocky heights,  
eternally youthful, ever with child,  
ignorant of sorrow,  
unknowing of guilt or shame,  
When the sunlight, shattering into golden shards ,  
fell,  
with the clinking sounds of metal coins,  
through the bristling leaves of the matted trees,  
and the sky was bluer then than now ....

I picture the scene!

Describe that tropical glade wherein all creatures came to birth?  
At the beginning of time , the early days, the land lay hidden beneath heavy canopies of huge primitive ferns, tall as hills that , rustling their great cavernous leaves, shed pearly sprays of mist throughout the teeming jungles.

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- while in other places they were dry, and tensile, and willowy, growing one above the other as overtones will pile atop anthems. And all things that, pregnant with life, dwelled in this jungle of paradox and form, rang with their reedy chorales.

What are those many voluptuous flowers,  
black petaled and of freakish stripe,  
falling like a shadow across that lurid deep purple eye,  
concealed in the depths  
of the tropical forest?

I see orchids dropping in manifold numbers,  
like calls and cries,  
I see plantain leaf and rhododendron leaf,  
I see incredible riot,  
and dense outlandish troughs,  
and wet sickness!

In the twenty-four hours of the moon did these exotic flowers luxuriate in extravagant inventive impossibility.

Behold!

Animals of strange eyes; birds with horns; the striped bodies, red tongues and wild eyes of terrified zebra in rapid passage; parrots; manticore; unicorn; the wyvern of the huge bat-like wings, of awkward gait and mien of; the hideous man-lion and the inscrutable chimera.

But contrasted,

as ever in beauty to these disfigured beasts,  
were there mermaid, and faun,  
dryads,  
elves and fairies,

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and the mischievous satyr,

Whose piping flute echoed everywhere in this Primal Wilderness,  
this festive, heedless, entangled Chaos,  
this Original.

Oh lovely abandoned Eden,  
so caringly tended by its kind mistresses .

Demeter and Persephone

both alike Mother and Daughter,

both Love.....

And of the winds that swept over Arcadia that bountiful land?  
From whence did they spring?

Those arising from the surface of waters were not unknown to  
them in that time,

and ever were the valleys and the great meadows enshrouded in  
mists,

making them appear infinitely distant ,

immersed in an ocean of crystal,

and ruby and pearl,

clothed in a perpetual morning to which all Creation arose, new  
born.

The heavy winds of Time had not yet entered onto the scene to  
blast

away the mists. Mankind thrived, unself-conscious, uncaring of His  
destiny, fulfilled, ever fecund, self-loving and ignorant of spite. Nor  
knew He aught of Evil and grew, strong with Love, tending to His  
simple wants, wishing neither for recognition nor understanding.

Nor knew He of Time;

today and tomorrow were the same,

nor any sign of what was past;

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and Eternity whispered, but deafly and to no avail.

I imagine this Original, this splendorous yet gentle Eden, as  
an

endless Maze from which there was no hope of nor wish for escape,  
inexhaustible of corridors, unique in fruits and flowers,

the Ever Promising,

where each day was equally provident in its renewed and  
unimagined delights;

yet forever unchanging ,

that the world Was,

Is,

and Shall be,

were all in the same breath,

that,

in the pure dream that was then the Earth,

was there nothing unseemly,

no realm devoid of light,

no object untouched by Love.

And the Sun was an eternal gladness.

Did Demeter and Persephone, twin goddesses of intimate  
relationship, possess the secret knowledge of entrance to this primordial  
unspoiled labyrinth of the world?

Indeed; and they alone.

Alone they traversed its length and breath, sowing, cultivating  
and culling flowers in woodlands and clearings, rendering all Surprise  
and Wonder by their careful surveillance.

A Riddle moved through the Maze, moving like an ocean, a  
vibrant hum,

soundless yet ever manifest,

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everywhere present,  
saturating all lush creation with the overtones of Enigma,  
imparting mystery and magic,  
resonating at the intersections of the knotted pathways,  
and with every subtle change,  
surging forth from the hearts of floral plants,  
and through the hissing sheets of hedge leaves.

By it was Creation stirred to its very heart.

By all beings was its' Wonder apprehended.

How was the Riddle perceived , grazing a man's face, its' strong heat  
moistening his brow with sweat? To what did his ear attend, as its  
Voice,  
over-brimming in its manifold ramifications , gripped heart and soul  
with its sadness and fear?

What he heard in his astonishment , must have been something  
like this :

*" I embody that knowledge of despair which you have yet to learn;  
though already my voice fills you with a wondering anxious  
yearning.*

*In my reedy hum,*

*in my vibrant murmur,*

*are tragedy, punishment and pain ,*

*of which you as of yet know nothing.*

*though my remembrance catches your soul in mid-passage ,*

*and you ache with the desire for the undiscovered . "*

Another voice interrupts , to cry out in shrill anger and love:

*" Cease! Cease! Speak no more ! For there will be a time for speech.  
Verily; behold! How beautiful are all those things to be discovered in  
this verdant paradise! How happy is all Creation! With what abundance*

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*of Joy does nature run riot with itself, overflowing in surfeit of ecstasy and voluptuous complaint! "*

A third and final Voice, intertwining with the others, emerges, saying:

*" I am a premonition of the Mystery of Self. Be anxious for my sake;  
confess your bewilderment in the meanderings of my churning streams,  
tremble for the Impossibility that struggles at the ground of your Being ;  
permit your consciousness to be invaded and nourished by my resonance  
:*

*now in the morning sun-filled glade*

*now in the sad wet evenings beneath the aged willow trees on the  
banks of the flowing streams,*

*sighing in the resinous barks of saplings and pines;*

*coursing through the black roots of sturdy oaks;*

*bursting from the breasts of flowering vegetation!*

*I return unto myself in contradiction :*

*and Lie and Truth commingle in my rhyme. "*

Of all these voices, it was this that most disconcerted him . Often, while crossing rivers, or in strange forest clearings, would he stop in confusion to ponder this message, that struck his ears always in moments when he least desired to hear it. And always afterwards would he experience an insatiable loneliness.

But then it came to pass, that the ground heaved and split,  
tossing up white-hot boulders from the blazing depths,  
laying waste the land for many miles;

There was a clap of thunder, as Pluto ascended in his chariot from the abysses of Hades, his evil retainers at his sides. His left hand

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gripped the straps of the Apocalyptic horses, the black-spurred whip in his right .

And in the May afternoon,  
when poppy covered the hills,  
    asphodel the fields,  
    and bounteous columbine carpeted the forest floors,  
when,  
    in the blue translucent sky,  
    each small billow of cloud rested,  
    suspended backwards , as if cresting the winds,  
        layer raised beyond layer,  
    out into the distance like many floating porticos and arches,  
- ( this very floating non-support detaching each cloud from its  
surroundings,  
    investing it with essence different and unreal ) -  
while,  
    on the horizon,  
many monumental whirlpools of substance stood poised,  
    suspended like stars;  
on a bright day,  
    when Love poured down from all the essences of Nature,  
        each in its own way ,  
    all activity reflected in the gentle movements of Persephone,  
        her head bowed as low as the many herbs and flowers  
harvested in the pockets of her apron,  
    gathering medicinal simples from their ample stores so that  
Demeter, her mother, should be no longer ill,  
    as she had been languishing now for many days ;

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her breast and body gently swaying, even as each subtle transformation,

and every delicate breeze, gave her up to its own suggestion,

all peace and beauty in the untarnished scene and pristine glade; that Pluto seized her from her labors, deep in the sun-filled pocket of the Rarian plains, and carried her off to the Land of Death.

Thus it was that all eyes were blasted by light, and Tragedy became the common inheritance of the creatures of the Earth.

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## II.

Describe the beauty which was Persephone's in that time? Have I the presumption to begin? Full sure her aspect must have afforded some rare foretaste of bliss, so to have touched the heart of Hades' king, driving him, against the will of both men and the gods, to such bold expedients!

Yet how little he cared for their opinions; he, Pluto, of all the gods the most hated, the most feared, and the most despised! Legend relates that he learned about events on the earth's surface through the fists that beat continually on the ground to curse him. Otherwise he had no cause or occasion to go there. (Yet stay; for there is an exception: did he not once quit the protection of Hades to deliver Persephone into bondage? Full certainly: and this the only time. Such tribute to Beauty is not easily rendered.)

I see her standing, warmed by the Sun, an eternal presence in the Arcadian fields. Her satin robes are bathed in the mists, as to her breast she presses the fledgling blossoms of the emerging spring. Time covers her with its shroud of confusion, wrapping her in Enigma. Her hair,

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finer than spun gold, falls to her waist, its inner glow visible as a halo for miles around in the flat countryside. Her flesh ripples with many delicate shades as from a rare silk, her eyes shine more keenly than diamonds.

Standing or kneeling, sowing or cultivating or reaping in her many gardens , so unconscious is she of natural grace that one might imagine,

( the source of her movements being incomprehensible to mortal intuition ) , that she is permitting her body to be moved by another.

Oh, Beauty! Thou vain, trembling image, dwelling ever beneath the decree of Fate, the ban of Doom inexorable!

Harp of Aeolus,

or lyre,

that sleeps in a grotto hard by the Lydian shore,

let their strings be swept by Time's nimble fingers,

to tell us

how it was

that Proserpine,

most beloved of all goddesses ,

exposed her Beauty without fear,

unto that prolix wilderness of infinite variety of form,

that hedgerowed land,

full of birdsong,

permeated by the Mysteries,

where each blade of grass held in its heart a gleaming sun, of skies bedecked with fleecy clouds,

like wool new shorn from sheep,

her body a crimson star, shining to the horizon,

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a beacon guiding travelers everywhere in that primal wilderness;  
How it was that she,

Persephone,

bewitching queen of vegetation,

daughter of the crop mother Demeter,

through no fault of her own,

( beyond that of perfection) ,

was rudely clapt away to Hades!

It being Fate's decree that the most beautiful should co-habit  
with the ugliest.

A jest of uncommon cruelty!

Tell how within this legend there is mystery, for the heart to  
ponder, and to learn.

And further, would we speak of Adonis!

he that was slain on Syrian shores ,

and of Aphrodite,

the stained anemone,

and the fullness of her woes.

But the Lyric has no need of us to speak for itself:

*" I am that voice which knows rebirth in all places and at all  
times. I speak to all who perish through hopeless longing . In my  
annunciation is death , and comfort , and liberation ,*

*even as fair Persephone suffered death through abduction to Hades,  
to be reborn in blackest reclusion."*

*" I proclaim further, of Narcissus! Chaste and vain, seduced by his  
own reflection in the stream's pale mirror,*

*his smile warped in the Infinite Enigma of Love,*

*his body loose and helpless in the contemplation of the object of his  
desire,*

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*day after day equally delighted and tormented by the unattainable  
beholding of perfection; this same Narcissus of Delphic fame:*

*He,*

*the vain and self-loving;*

*immolated in the passive dream of Self,*

*bound eternally in the cloud of his own desiring;*

*finding his pain yet more desirable even than life itself;*

*knowing that the object of his pain could yet be had by none  
other,*

*being none other than he, Oh beautiful creation!*

*What if,*

*one day in early spring*

*when the crop first shows its head upon the stalk,*

*and the blossom on the branch,*

*when the cries of returning birds are heard again upon the hills,*

*and mysterious voicings issue anew from the woods ,*

*that he should return once again to the banks of this stream ,*

*seeking once more his image,*

*only to behold,*

*rising from the troubled ripples of the waters,*

*the witch's face, the face of Hecate,*

*in her upraised hands the blossoming henbane,*

*shrouded in weeds ; creased, wrinkled,*

*ugly as stone with jagged nose and bent chin,*

*grim and hideous with reality and bitter truth,*

*yet truer even than he, Narcissus ,*

*though she appear for but an instant,*

*her shaggy head quickly dissolving, amidst the rushing of waters ,*

*down the current of the stream.*

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*Little didst thou know , Narcissus, in thy horror,  
that,  
even as thou didst confront this cruel apparition of thy soul,  
that all of Nature sang,  
and clamored about thee for thy love!  
That the trees shook and the leaves beat,  
and that thou didst reject her in thy conceit,  
who would have soothed thee in that time of calamity!  
Thus did he earn Nature's hate, this Narcissus,  
and though she could not hope for his love,  
curse him she could,  
and did.*

*Yet even her curse was done out of the bitterness of Love; and he did  
lose a friend, who would have succored him in need, but rather banished  
him instead to tread the way to Hades,  
to smile forever at his pale, translucent shadow,  
weak and helpless,  
sighing in the depths of the darkness.*

*Yet what can compare to this in sickness? Still to gaze upon one's  
image though it be in the waters of the Styx ! Choosing to foster the  
sewer for love of oneself, rather than regard another!*

**Thus did Fate deal with Narcissus . Concerning Pluto we have  
still more to tell, at a later time. But of Persephone again, and of  
Demeter. Well did they love to work together in the first Eden of the  
world. Their shared mysteries formed firm bonds of endearment. They,  
Mother and Daughter, loved one another. What need had they of  
anyone else ? Among all the ancient gods and goddesses , none of the  
others were so happy in companionship.**

**Mark the legends: Ares and Aphrodite in chains; the venom of**

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Hera; the rage of Zeus. Think upon Adonis; upon that grievance which divided Aphrodite from Persephone herself. Experience is ever the handmaiden to Tragedy. Know this and be silent.

They were happy in Arcadia; and happy did they make it. Tradition relates that Pan found no place on Earth sweeter to him; and after its disappearance, he died, unable to bear its loss. Often did Demeter and Persephone as they worked alone among the reeds love to hear the songs he played upon his pipes coming to them from over the distant hills. And they smiled, happy to have made such a haven for such a god.

They were indeed happy in their own country; and even Homer pays them honor.

Full sure such happiness was never made to last. And once lost it could never return.

For when the mists had cleared it was seen that Paradox had arrived, asserting its tyrannical will and not to be displaced; though Beauty reached a compromise, but harmful to herself.

God of Hell; Evil King! In no way can you be blamed for what had to be! Nor can you ever be brought to account for all that was locked inexorably in the mechanism of the stars!

For Fate would have its will.

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### III.

It was Demeter who bittered, she who had remained on land, childless in the blackened vales of Paradise . And she was not to be comforted. Did not Zeus himself try to console her with the gift of the golden apples of the Western Tree? And Orpheus, wandering through

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the Elysian fields , played his saddest note upon his flute, for well he knew to lose a loved one to Hades.

It was in this time, also, that Adonis would be discovered by Aphrodite nestled beneath the wide branches of the smoking almond; an event from which Persephone herself would not be spared.

And even Metaneira, upon whom , as is well known from the legends, untold sorrow had fallen through Demeter's meddling , forgave her in her time of suffering, and wept with her through the long night.

All of Nature echoed her lament. Rivers, swollen with rain, overflowed their banks in flood. Even the barks of trees burst asunder with grieving. The tempests roared, shaking the gaudy canopies of trees. Fruits spangled the ground, laying uncollected, festering in abortion. And it is even thought by some that it was then that, said that even the anemone, ill-omened flower of Aphrodite and harbinger of the horrible reprisal yet to come, blossomed for the first time. Oh it was a woeful day! And all of Nature was corrupted , and the corn was infected with Death.

But Demeter remained indifferent. Much as a mother will call upon her remaining children in grieving for her best beloved, she then summoned all of Nature to appear before her; and her commandment was promptly obeyed with solicitude and love.

Flowers of the fields,  
and of the meadows,  
and by rivers and by lakes;  
and those that cover the hills as thunder will rumble over the sky;  
and dusty pollens of the plains

Arise!

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No longer can you hope that you may be gathered up  
in Persephone's apron, now must you attend to your own harvesting  
,seeking warmth and comfort in the shadow of one another.

Draw your aromatics, potions, poultices, infusions, balms,  
ointments, elixirs, deeply from Nature's catalogues

Go to your ailing mother, feed the heart's hunger,  
and suck out the sickness in her breast.

Harry yourselves before sunset over the hills,  
that she may be quickly healed.

For can you not see that Demeter is sick?

Yet even you will not suffice to ease the aching bitterness of her  
heart; deep indeed is its source .

And soon she will reject you,  
neither calling for your aid nor loving you,  
and she will cause you to go to seed,  
neglecting the time of sowing and of harvest,  
and you will perish.

And you will curse her,  
and she will curse herself,  
and you and she will rot together in the Land of Blight.

And indeed it came to pass that , after a time, did she spurn her  
own creation,

and did not command again,  
nor would she.

And in a little while did she hie unto the company of the 3  
unholy sisters who dwell together in the barren wastelands nigh unto  
the Well of Experience. And it was with them that, wrapped in shrouds,  
she kept her company.

What is this Well of Experience of which we speak? Wide it is; and

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deep; and few there be that dare peer into its thickened waters, for fear of the reflection cast therein.

But whither shall we seek those earliest occurrences, those vanished echoes of the past, overcast though never annihilated by disillusion? Whence cometh that melancholy refrain which, still audible in the wide, dim expanses of the forested glade, haunts us continually? Full of Time is it, and grievous with recollection. And through the many circumstances of our lives do we hear its sound, time and again. And many things are changeable, and do change; but this never.

And at the lip of the Well of Experience did Demeter accept the hospitality of the three haggish widows; nor would she ever again entirely depart from them.

Though what could she have said such drear companions? She spoke to them of her misfortune; and they understood her. She allowed the ground to lay fallow; and in this they assisted her. Together they spurned all other company. And they took her part, and she theirs, and they wanted understanding from none besides themselves.

And of their toxic knowledge did Demeter greedily drink; and together they blighted first the corn, then the trees withered, and the wheat boasted nothing but chaff upon the stalk, and the springs were poisoned. Hecate despised her not, teaching her, as a woman teaching woman's lore, the blessings of the poisoned henbane, the virtues of the mandrake, spells by leaves and roots, the magic of shape and form, the arts of blight.

Yet it afforded some small relief to sit in the cool shadow of the Well. Here was it possible to forget things which seemed to have happened so very long ago, that grief only dimly remembered, to which

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her companions never made reference, as together they drew the black waters of the Well to initiate the soil into famine and blight.

Oh, miserable Demeter! How could you endure that ordeal of suffering, and of shame! Many were the tears that Nature should have shed, which now rather hated you, for your soul was sick and you neglected the fruit orchards, trod the olive beneath your bare foot, and burned out the vineyards with the sisters' arts.

Scorn, scorn fall upon their heads who have it not on their hearts to pity her in that time!

And at last it came to pass that the pear tree, symbol of her fecundity, wasted away.

For the pear was sick and festered in magic.

And the very soil of the fields was acid.

And she cursed her womb.

Woe, Demeter, woe! And the centuries ring your tears.

Demeter suffered and Demeter bittered . For such is the message of Time and of Reality.

And in the Land of Blight did Man first hear the message of desolation.

The Void reached out to him; Infinity gaped appallingly at him.

Then spoke the Voice of Tragedy, saying:

*" Suffering and sorrow shall be your lot for all the measure of your days.*

*And there will come a time when you will turn to me for consolation. "*

Points of flame flared up around the horizon, as, torn from the heart of vegetation, shrill cries rippled across the grasslands.

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*" I shall become the object of all your contemplations, investing even your solitude. And in the end my harmonies will be soothing to your ears, deafened by adversity. And throughout the Earth will you nowhere earn respect. "*

Its' utterance shattered against the rocks ,  
that crumbled before it,  
as Man wept,  
astonished,  
at the Voice of Tragedy.

The poisoned springs sang to him with a maligned voicing,  
saying :

*" There is a sweetness which you have not tasted, that of diseased fruit. But sickness has a sweetness of its own. "*

Man recoiled before so vile a strain!

*" And what will prove more bitter to you than the poisoning of Love?*

*And do you imagine that you will be exempted? "*

And then it seemed to him that he wanted nothing more than to die at once, and forever disappear from the face of the Earth.

Yet had no choice but to live; though suffering has since been his lot.

Demeter! By what right do we presume to accuse you of such cruelty, although it was you who poisoned the springs and blighted the harvest ? Ought we not rather be seeking to blame Pluto, god of Death and guardian of the Underworld, he who carried off your beloved daughter to his hateful, trembling kingdom ? Or does the judgment rightfully fall on Eros, whose pernicious arrow had so wounded Pluto' s heart that he could have no other desire?

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Or was it the way of Fate that, ground up in the pitiless crucible of Time, circumstance should follow upon circumstance, and that it was in truth the Well of Experience that thirsted to be filled?

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#### IV.

Things came full circle, as eventually they must. Unable longer to bear the spectacle of the barren Earth, Zeus demanded the return of Persephone to the land of the living. And Pluto had no alternative but compliance.

But what art can we invoke to relate the tale of Persephone's sojourn in Hades? Gloomy indeed was her throne, although that of her abductor stood no higher. Pluto's ways were coarse, those of the warrior, bereft of all refinement or humane consideration. For his part he idolized her, though seeming to hold her in contempt. The presence of Beauty beyond his powers of understanding must have indeed infatuated him to the point of madness.

But the problem lay deeper than that: he also loved her.

Then again: what is Beauty? Can we, in the final analysis, say that Pluto was less beautiful than his abducted queen? For nothing in the universe is so grotesque that it does not have some reason for being. Blinded by the rigid convention, it is easily said that Persephone was beautiful and Pluto ugly; the reality is far more complex.

And now we understand how we ought to judge him, this unkind lonely king, clumsy and crude, who stole the most ravishing creature on earth for his queen and suffered that she did not love him; though she gave him pity for his loathsome form.

Then Persephone struck his ear, saying:

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“ Pluto, truly are you are called the great host, the invincible, the judge without appeal; yet no more gifted in understanding, nor even in experience, than I!”

His response mixed humiliating mockery and forced laughter:

“Come now, contrary and obstinate queen! Let me hear something of your great experience! And do not forget to whom you are speaking: For I Am Death! “

What links Experience to Beauty? Does Experience do other than disfigure perfection? Yet without Experience, the sum total of perfection cannot be complete. Or does Beauty, perhaps, convey the foretaste of Experience? What is this Experience of which Persephone speaks?

“Surely you realize, Pluto”, she continued, “ that even with me, frail as I am, untainted by the world and ignorant of woe, you will be forced to strike a bargain?”

Pluto was startled : “ What are you talking about?”

“ Think not, my dear Pluto, that you are wiser than I for having carried me off to your insalubrious realm. Still do I know much that you will never know. Do you expect me to believe that you haven’t learned that on the plains of the Earth the crops are withering ? That , languishing for my return, my mother wastes away to a pale shadow, sick unto death ?

Surely you know of these things. You were ignorant of the powers of my mother when you kidnapped me ; but I was not ignorant of them.”

“ Well; all that is nothing to me. That of which I am ignorant I have no need of knowing. Existence has taught me how to suppress whatever I find hateful. Long ago did I cast the body of my woes in the

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great pool of Lethe. I fear nothing, I tell you! Life and Death alike hold no mysteries for me. Full well do I know of sorrow."

" Pluto! I am not so easily deceived. Nor am I unschooled in the ways of the heart. What need be revealed to you that you do not already know?

You vile and loathsome old man, filled with vanity and self-pity and cruel self-deception, your stinking body, old and disgusting! What I see you see, though you deny it . And let me tell you what I have learned, even from my short stay in Hades: even Death is not invincible to Love."

Pluto took fright at her words:

" Mark my scars!", he raged, " Over here! And here! And again here! Mark well my battle helmet! Withhold not your gaze from the dreadful motley of my battered face! Do not pretend to not understand what is written on this mask! Merely to look at me should fill you with fear. Am I not Pluto, Hades' king? "

" Indeed you are."

" By my own efforts have I conquered the lot of my woes. With a single blow of my fist can I dispel the last of your words!"

" Full well do you know of sorrow, Pluto: yet in a few days Zeus will be sending his messengers, and you will have to let me go."

Pluto started up violently: his breath caught in his throat. It was some time before he spoke again. When he did it seemed as if a certain tenderness had entered his heart, if tenderness could:

" Stay with me, Persephone !", he pleaded, " If nothing else, then the respect owing to age is due me. Zeus's messengers will not be long in coming, and I will have to give you up . Never can I hope to be able

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to restore to you what you have lost: neither the sunlight, nor the turmoil of life, nor the glory of the fields. I am no more than a wretched and lonely old king, ruling over a kingdom more barren and polluted even than his own soul. And yet: I know something of which even you, the paragon of innocence, are ignorant. I know of the crushing burden of guilt that will lay over your heart, because you once rejected someone that loved you, old and ugly though he be, and no better than a brute. And with all your righteous knowledge, you will have neither understood nor defeated me."

Persephone paused, regarding him with horror: for she knew that he spoke the truth.

"I grant you cause; but I cannot consent to it. You must give me leave to return to the care of my mother. So long as I am missing, her appetite for vengeance will never be gratified."

"Forget your mother."

"No. That I cannot do." And she thought some more.

All our thoughts and feelings, however solemn or capricious, spring from the loins of Love and Death; and who among us is wise enough to locate the first links of their infinite couplings? Tragedy itself, in all its finality, is powerless to undo them. In the heart's decisions it is Enigma alone which is determinate, it is Enigma that resolves all the antinomies: Beauty and Ugliness, Desire and Repulsion, Innocence and Experience, Fertility and Barrenness.

"You will have to accept the fact that I intend to live on the Earth's surface for most of the year. I will spend 9 months there and the remaining 3 months with you."

Pluto once again started up in outrage. Yet in his reply was there only helplessness and desperation.

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" Just three months? No! That is impossible !" Rendered inarticulate by heartbreak , he groped for words.

"Do you really wish it so ? Do you care for me so little ? I beg you, make it six months."

" Three months and no more. I cannot consent to anything else. "

" So let it be " And Pluto bowed his ancient head in grief.

Thus did they come to an agreement. In spite of which Pluto, not trusting Persephone to keep her word, employed the ruse of the pomegranate seeds, as is well known from the legend. What is not generally known is that everything had been decided beforehand. It was only that Pluto could not change his ways because he was old.

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And at the appointed time did Persephone ,

released from bondage in Hades,

appear once more,

a noble sight to behold,

within what was once known as Arcadia,

now a black and burning land,

more resembling the place that had held her captive,

than what she had formerly known,

each footstep taken anew replenishing the soil,

her winged sandals hurrying across the wastelands,

flying over the hills, the withered meadows, the rivers,

the barren deserts,

coming at last to the place of the weird sisters,

there, where her mother sat,

in the shadow of the poisoned Well.

Demeter beheld her approaching in the distance.

Persephone's golden tresses, ( they had grown long in Hades) ,

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gleamed like the gold dust quivering in mountain streams, while her livid face blushed pallid in the sunlight. Demeter arose with hesitation, unable to believe her eyes. Her heart bounded in her breast,

and her arms slowly opened,

and into them flew Persephone,

her daughter, returned from Hades;

and in their reunion,

witnessed by its three attendants with disconsolate regret

and not a little jealousy ,

was there much weeping and rejoicing.

Thus were Mother and Daughter re-united, and the Earth redeemed. Demeter was resigned to the conditions of her daughter's freedom and had reached an agreement with Zeus to leave the world barren for the three months of her absence.

What had been could not be recovered , and that vanished Paradise which they had shared together in former days of peace and bliss was gone forever. This being so, it was not altogether a bad thing that vegetation should perish three months out of the year. Life could spring anew from the ruins of the past. Nature , unshackled, was free to embark on the adventure of evolution, rising to ever higher levels of complexity . And though iron necessity could not be evaded, the cycle of the seasons provided a new harmony , and new ways of rejoicing.

Thus was Mankind obliged to seek new purpose in life. And has been seeking since.

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