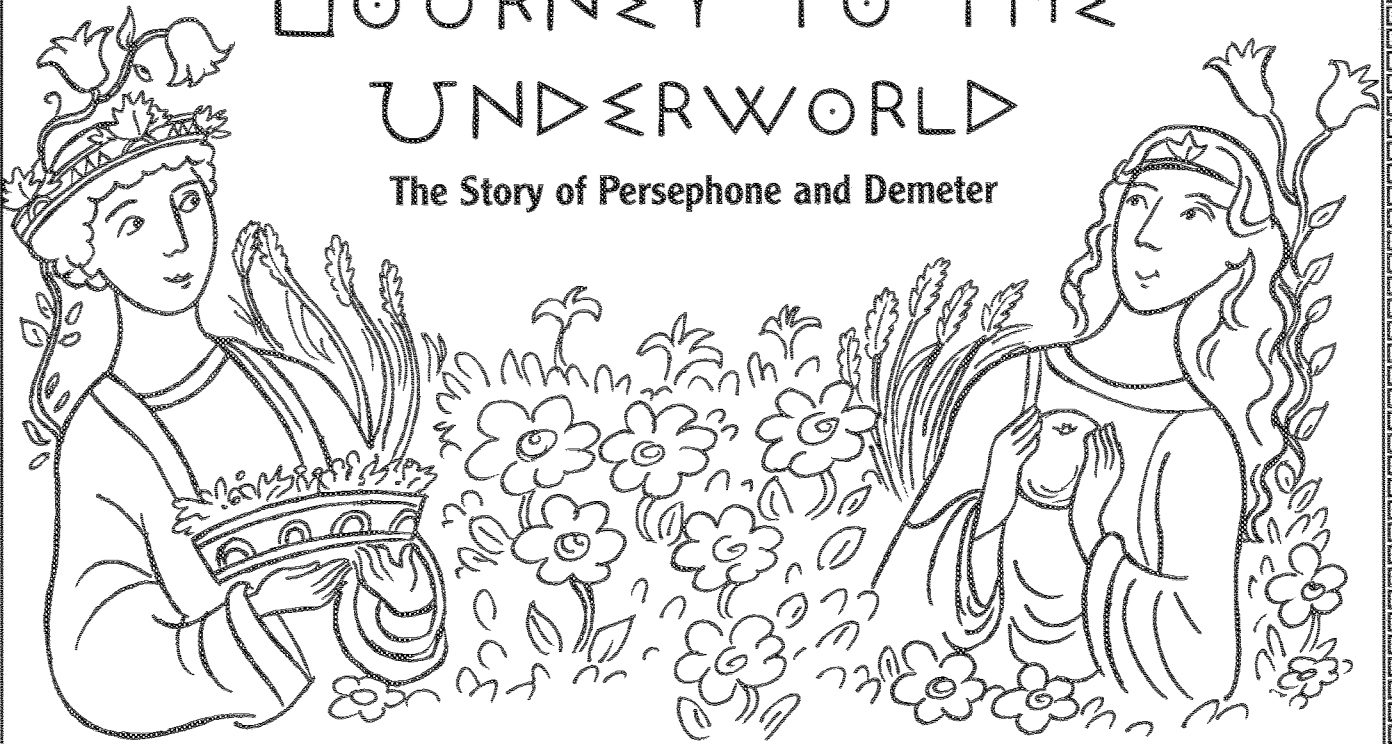
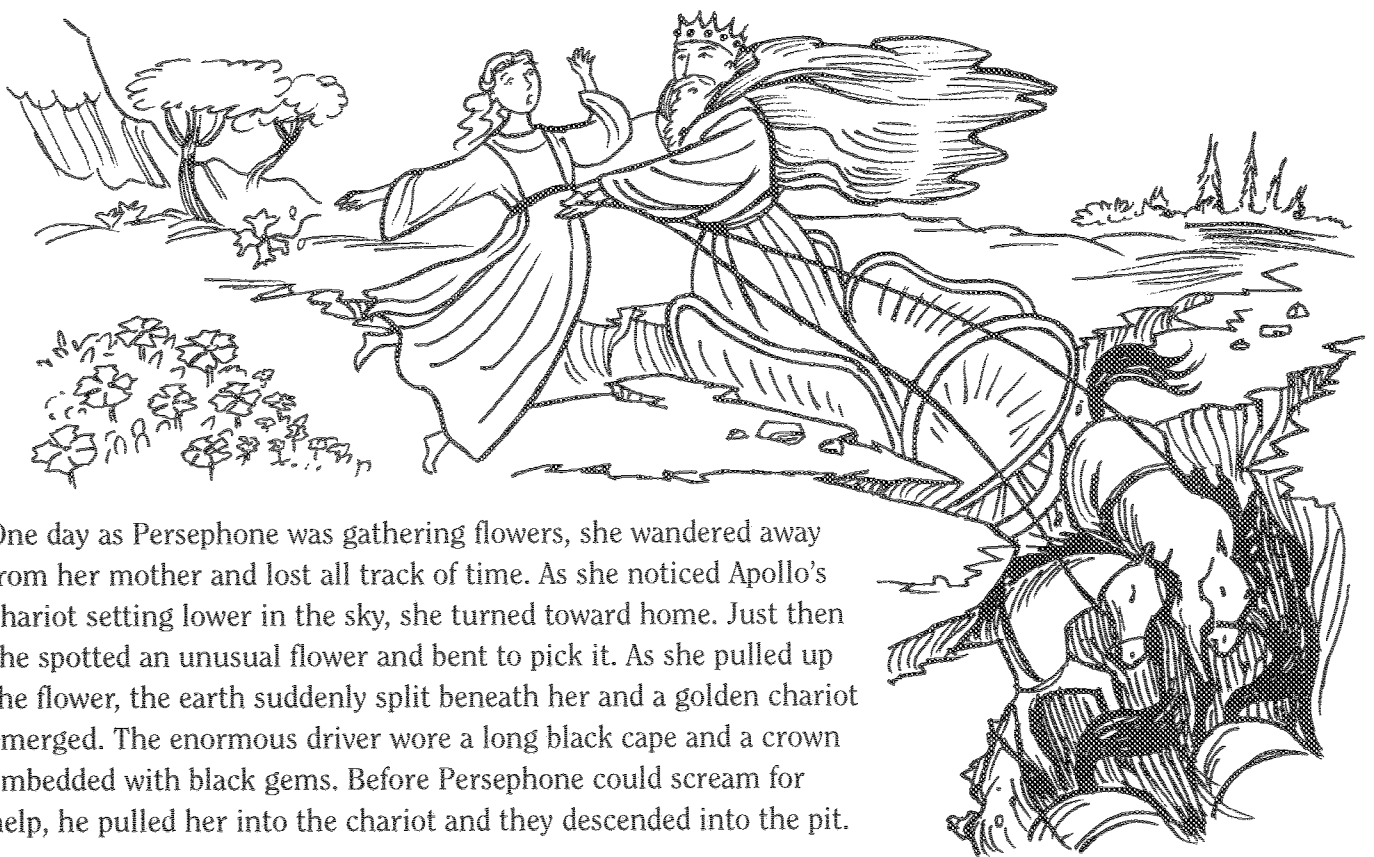


JOURNEY TO THE UNDERWORLD

The Story of Persephone and Demeter



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One day as Persephone was gathering flowers, she wandered away from her mother and lost all track of time. As she noticed Apollo's chariot setting lower in the sky, she turned toward home. Just then she spotted an unusual flower and bent to pick it. As she pulled up the flower, the earth suddenly split beneath her and a golden chariot emerged. The enormous driver wore a long black cape and a crown embedded with black gems. Before Persephone could scream for help, he pulled her into the chariot and they descended into the pit.

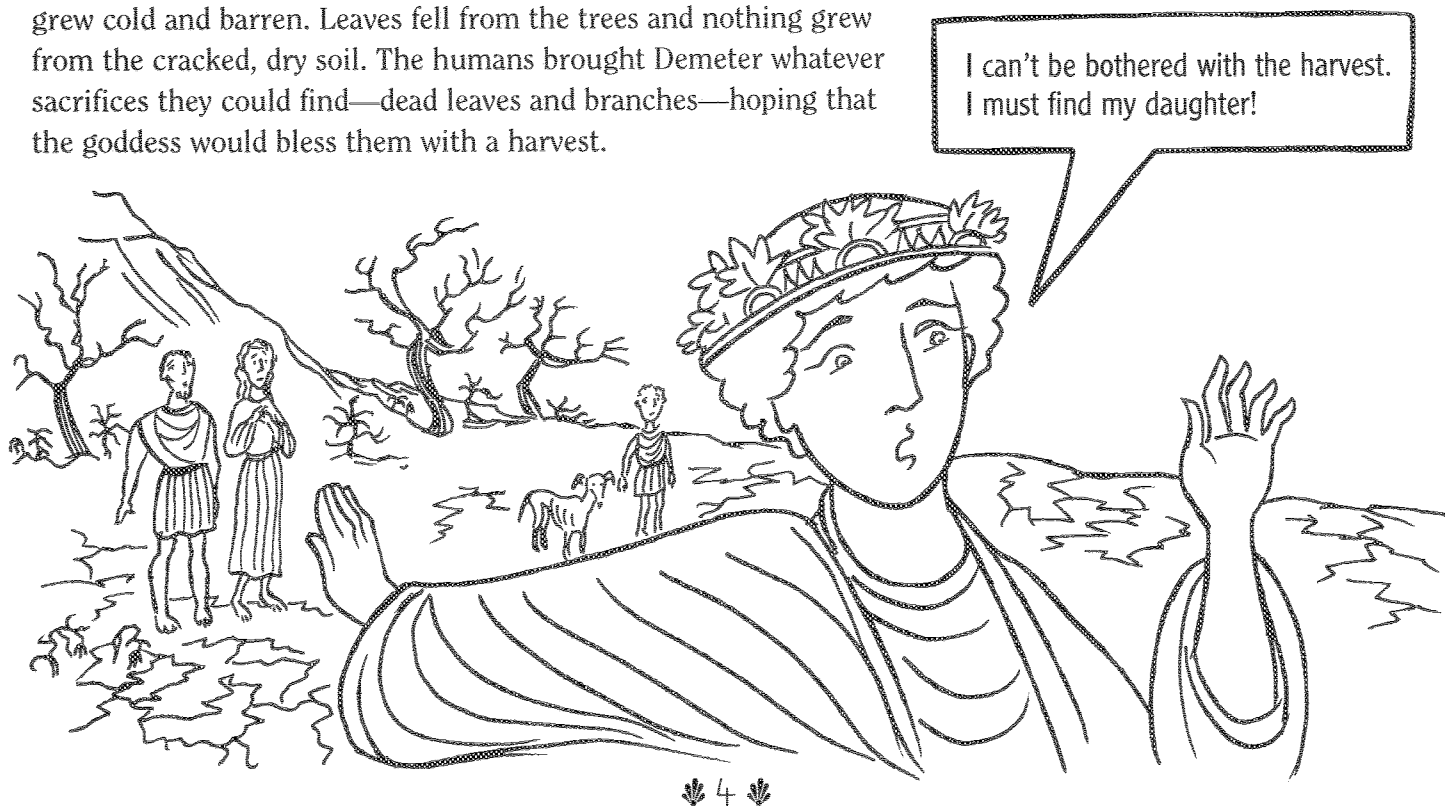


As goddess of the harvest, Demeter blessed the earth with all growing things. She loved the flowers, the trees, the fields, and all of her glorious creations, but most of all she loved her daughter, Persephone. Together they roamed about the earth, creating new kinds of plants, fruits, and flowers to suit their whims.



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Demeter searched everywhere for her daughter, but days and weeks passed with no sign of Persephone. As Demeter grieved, the earth grew cold and barren. Leaves fell from the trees and nothing grew from the cracked, dry soil. The humans brought Demeter whatever sacrifices they could find—dead leaves and branches—hoping that the goddess would bless them with a harvest.

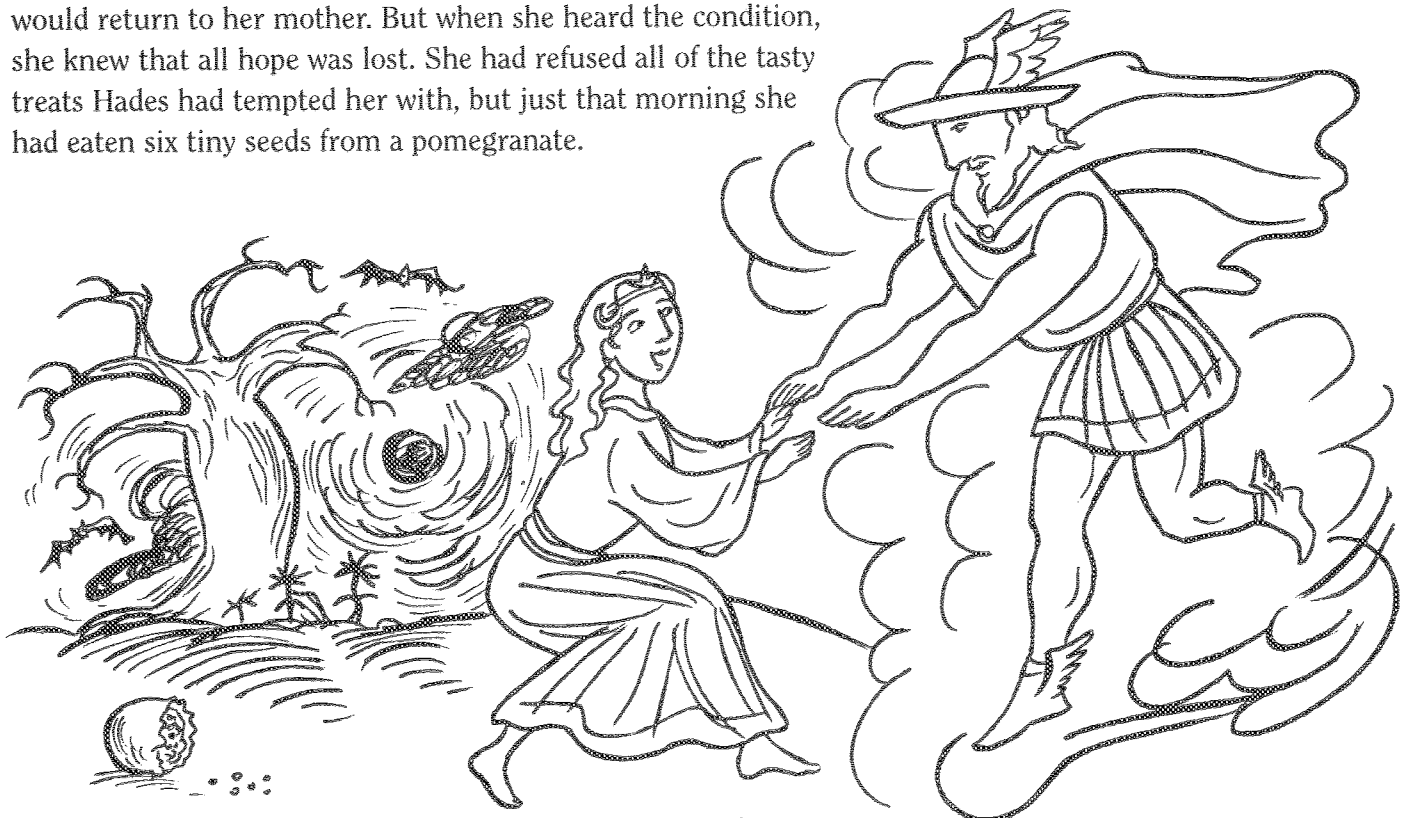


As Demeter continued to search, she came across a shepherd who had news of Persephone. He described what he had heard from another shepherd: Persephone had been kidnapped by a god driving a chariot pulled by four black horses. Demeter knew at once that the culprit was her own brother Hades, lord of the Underworld.

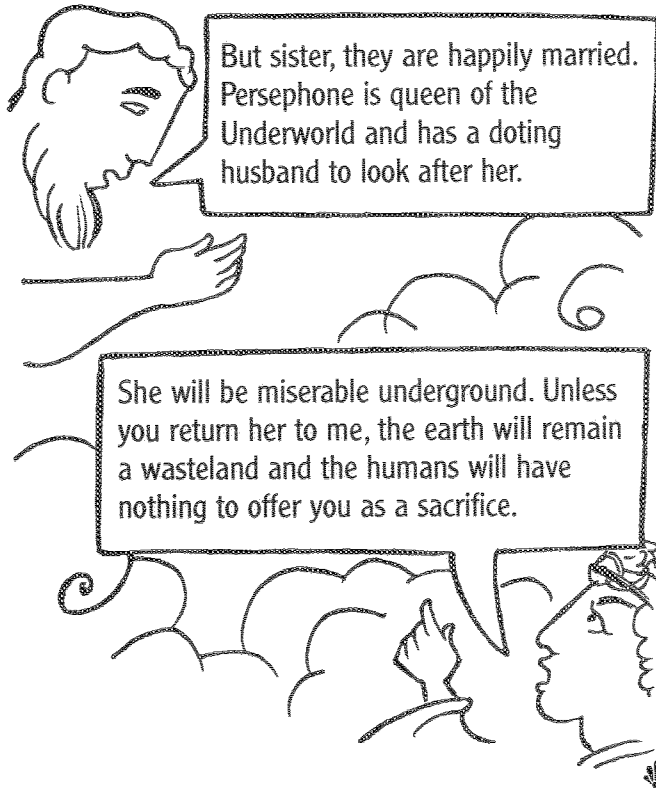
He has been getting away with his mischief since we were kids! Enough is enough!



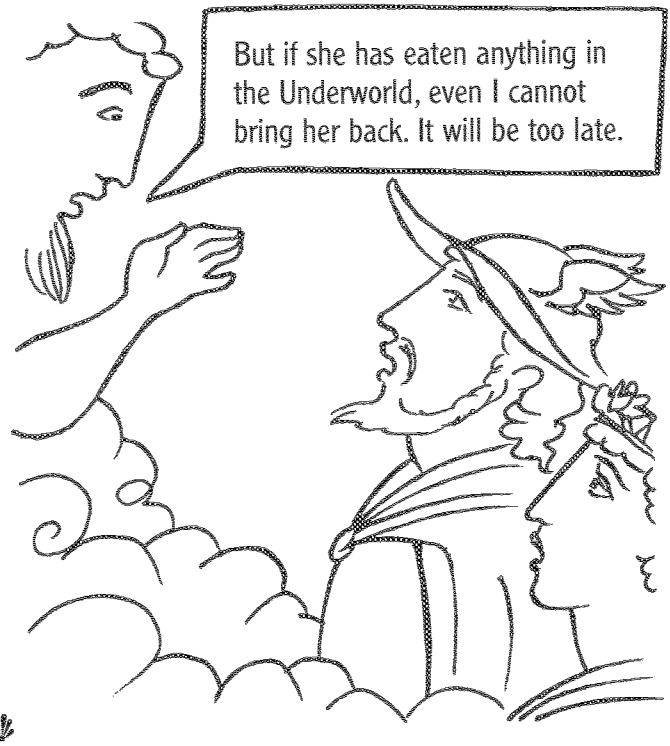
Persephone was overjoyed to see Hermes and learn that she would return to her mother. But when she heard the condition, she knew that all hope was lost. She had refused all of the tasty treats Hades had tempted her with, but just that morning she had eaten six tiny seeds from a pomegranate.



Demeter raced up Mount Olympus and demanded that Zeus return her daughter at once.



Zeus knew that this would not do. He called for Hermes, the messenger god, to fetch Persephone and return her to Demeter.



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Zeus decided that he would make an exception, just this once. He ruled that for every pomegranate seed she ate, Persephone must spend one month in the Underworld with Hades. During these months, Demeter mourns the loss of her daughter and nothing grows on earth. Each year when Persephone returns to her mother, Demeter rejoices and everything on earth springs into full blossom. And so spring follows winter year after year, reflecting the moods of the harvest queen.

