



## The Myth of Demeter and Persephone

A retelling by Marilyn Power Scott

The mysteries of Demeter and Persephone were venerated and celebrated for 4,000 years. In patriarchal times, their story was changed, as so many were. It was told that Hades abducted Persephone, held her against her will in the underworld, and drugged her to ensure her return.

This is how I think it really happened:

When the world was young, the lovely and generous Demeter, whose name means Goddess Mother, held sway over the earth and all its being. It was always summer then. Among her many gifts, Demeter gave earth the wonderful life-giving wheat so that beasts, birds, and people could be plentifully fed and could thrive and be joyful.

Although she never mentioned who the father might be, Demeter gave birth to an exquisite baby girl, the fullest expression of her mother nature. She named the baby Persephone. She was a bright and happy child, curious and thoughtful. Demeter delighted in every moment of her growing. She found nothing more beautiful than the small, firm, round limbs and exquisite face, glowing with health and love of life. The two were happy and content through the years of Persephone's girlhood. And as she grew, Demeter taught her the ways of nurturing and abundance.

Time came when Persephone moved through the invisible doorway into maidenhood. She lengthened and slimmed; she moved with unconscious grace. She shone with a luster that caught Demeter's breath. And she was visited by vague and troubling longing. She became aware of her body as if it were a new limb.

Her mother loved her with a new fierceness, marveling at this exquisite creature she had birthed and raised. Demeter now called her Kore, the ineffable one, as befitted her—glorious and mysterious and full of promise.

Kore took to spending long hours in a flower-filled meadow, restless to do she knew not what, longing for she knew not what. One day, her thoughts and eyes drifting aimlessly, she became aware of someone watching her from the shelter of the surrounding woods. She was startled and alarmed—and more than a little curious. She stood quite still, looking, until she glimpsed a tall presence standing quietly, half hidden in the shadows. For the tiniest of moments, her searching gaze met dark, admiring eyes.

She turned abruptly and ran home, troubled and excited, and in the timeless way of maidens, said not a word to her mother.

She meant, of course, to stay away from that particular meadow. But she found herself pulled there by her curiosity and by the way her heart beat remembering that glance. And yes, there was that presence again and those eyes, watching from the shadows. She came just a little closer and couldn't mistake the tenderness in the eyes that eagerly sought hers and the small breath-held smile.

On the third day, she walked very close to the edge of the wood, and the figure stepped into a clear space, dark and full of splendor, lithe and strong, and simply and richly dressed.

“Who are you?” she asked.

“I am Hades. My land is the Underworld.”

“Why do you watch me?”

Hades laughed self-consciously and said, “I never knew anyone could be so beautiful as you. I have been restless in my own land; I came walking through these woods and saw you there. I've had to keep coming back. My eyes never get full of you.”

She blushed but was very pleased. She turned and went home, holding this secret to herself.

They met daily then, Hades more comfortable in the shade, Kore at home in the sunlit meadow, both willing to meet at the edge. They talked. They told each other of their worlds, their thoughts, their amusements. They grew to know each other—and to love each other, though Kore didn't recognize this.

Inevitably, one day, Hades leaned close, eyes full of love and longing, and Kore leaned forward, too, to meet her first kiss. And now you will understand that kissing and hugging and holding each other tenderly became part of their daily meetings. The hunger and longing grew the more kisses they were fed, until Hades asked her to come rule equally in the Underworld. Kore had been told of it many times by then, of its vast riches and of the souls of the dead who arrived there, lost and terrified. Hades did what was possible to comfort them but hadn't the skill to do it well.

Kore pondered what to do, knowing that her heart and body and being longed to be with Hades and to share that life yet also loving her mother and her life as she knew it. She saw also that her mother administered her earthly affairs perfectly well without any help. And so she agreed to be Hades's queen, and the day was set. Hades left to prepare for her coming.

Persephone struggled with how to tell her mother, especially with things this far advanced. Demeter, after all, was busy and happy in her work. Although Demeter had recognized a new quality to Kore's quietness, she respected and trusted her to share her thoughts when she was ready, as she always had.

But Kore never did find the right time or way to tell her mother. When the day came, she put on her favorite dress and most comfortable shoes, just kissed her mother as she always had, and left. She ran and walked to the edge of the woods, bringing only her shining self, complete as she was. Hades was there waiting, heart leaping at the sight of her.

After long kisses and in a daze of joy, they walked together to the secret entrance to the passageway that led to the Underworld. They had been there before—she had asked—but now she set her foot on this path for the first time. No one enters the Underworld just to sightsee. Hades wrapped her in a gorgeous warm cloak and put on a matching one. They walked hand in hand down the long, dim passageway lit by glimmering crystals set in a subtle pattern in the walls. Persephone breathed deeply of the rich, clean perfume of the fertile earth as they descended.

When they came to the portal—an arch of ancient, gnarled, polished, and living roots of the rowan tree—all the citizens of the Underworld were there, gathered in hushed excitement. Hades paused and turned to Persephone. Kissing her once again, Hades said so all could hear, “My Queen, enter your domain.” And turning to the waiting throng said, “Behold and greet Her Majesty, Queen Persephone, Queen of the Underworld.” There was much cheering and hubbub, and later, feasting and toasting. And later still, exploration of this vast and absorbing domain. Later still and best of all, the joy of the marriage bed, the deep sense of completion each brought to the other.

Hades's heart was full seeing their domain made even more wonderful by Persephone's grace and compassion, her nurturing skills turned to succor the souls of the fearful dead. She so gently calmed and comforted them, telling them who they were and where and what would happen next. Persephone loved her new life and grew in maturity and compassion through the living of it.

Absorbed in her new life, Persephone had no idea of the commotion caused by her disappearance. Demeter was wild with grief and inconsolable. Her treasure, her heart's joy, the living expression of her inmost nature was gone, disappeared without a trace. This most precious, most beloved of all her creations, her source of delight and balance, her daughter, her companion—gone. Her grief spawned horrific visions of what might have happened, and fear became her dreaded companion. Demeter wept. She tore her clothes and her hair. She wandered the land, looking and calling for Kore. So deeply was she sunk in her grief that she could give no thought to the quickening of the seed, to the pushing up of the first sturdy shoots, to the swelling of the grains fattening with goodness and life—all the details she had always tended to so lovingly and thoroughly.

Winter descended with Demeter's tears. The ground grew cold and bare. As she wailed and wandered and called, the creatures of the earth shivered and grew hungry, and the land was empty of joy. Her grief could not be shaken and would not lift.

The God Hermes, whose realm is connections and communications, movement and transformation, found Demeter sitting by a well, submerged in her grief, her grain basket overturned and forgotten. He listened to her story through her tears and wondered to himself where Kore might have gotten to. When Demeter had soaked his shoulder and her sobs had quieted, he thought to tell her a gentle and amusing anecdote he'd recently heard. She gave a little "hmf" and a querulous smile. Encouraged, he told more stories, choosing carefully, getting more and more ribald, until she was giggling freely. He ended with the funniest and bawdiest of Aphrodite's latest adventures. At this, they both threw back their heads and shouted with laughter, wiping their eyes of these more welcome tears. When they finally caught their breaths, Demeter turned to Hermes and embraced him.

"Thank you. You've reminded me I'm alive. I can feel my juices running again," and she smiled with loving appreciation.

"Hermes, you can go anywhere. Find her for me. Or at least word of her fate. I'll be able to go on if only I know."

"Of course, beloved Goddess, gladly."

And so with urgency and purpose, Hermes began his rounds of all the other Goddesses and Gods. It wasn't long until he descended to the Underworld to confer with Hades and found them there, Persephone queenly and fulfilled. As soon as the greetings were complete, Hermes told them of Demeter's plight.

Persephone and Hades were stricken that they had been so engrossed with each other and their life together they hadn't given a thought to anyone or anything outside their boundaries. Kore wept for her mother's grief and for love of her.

She went off by herself to consider what to do. Soon she came to Hades and as they embraced, she told of her decision. Hades held her quietly for awhile, then nodded, drawing back to look into her eyes. She then sent for Hermes to join them and asked for a pomegranate as well. When both had arrived, she said, "Hermes, I will return with you to my mother, for I love her and would help her with her life-giving work." Then, splitting the fruit, keeping one half for herself and handing the other to Hades, she said, "And in six months' time, I will return to you, beloved, because I love you and to continue my work with you here. Let us eat the glistening seeds of this fruit together as our promise that we will not forget each other. I will return."

And so, as Persephone returned to her mother's amazed and forgiving embrace, she brought with her the first day of the first spring, the same way she now brings the first day of every spring. And the first day of every fall is the day she enters the passageway back to her beloved Hades. And Demeter mourns her absence yet again each winter.

This, I believe, is the true story of how Persephone's love turns the wheel of the year.

Pomegranate image, a painted porcelain pendant, by Sisters Creative Design. Used with permission.



## Eve's P.O.V.

by Marilyn Power Scott

Adam hates it when I dissect our relationship and examine every feeling as it goes by, but I can't help it. Ever since the beginning, I've had the feeling that I wasn't getting the full story, that we were somehow incomplete, and it has nagged me like a hangnail. So I quickly got in the habit of looking wherever I could for clues to solve the puzzle. Which is why, of course, I was so delighted when the snake offered me the apple. Yay!—A new source of information! Little did I know the joke, that the answer I was so diligently looking for was embodied in the giver. I've only come to realize this lately. Also, little did I know the trouble I'd get into. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

When I awoke beside the sleeping Adam, I knew that I was made to be his mate and partner and hardly anything else. He was wonderful to my eyes and to my hands moving over him gently, exploring and wondering over our likeness and our differences. I exulted in my own strong and lovely body, in all my lively senses, and in this glorious being beside me. And when he awoke, I could see he was wonderstruck and delighted, too. He had my same first need—to explore and touch and know me.

He gave me my name, Eve. That's his favorite thing, you know—naming things. We had a wonderful first few days, him showing me around Eden, introducing me to all the parts of it he'd already named, and I loved it all. It was beautiful, endlessly delightful. Everything one could need was readily at hand; everything one could imagine was there.

It was when I innocently asked what Eden had been like before I got there that Adam got defensive and gave me a curt and off-putting answer. Clearly, there was more here than he was telling me. But the more I asked, no matter how cleverly, the more he got peevish and mean, and he never would tell me there had been another woman before me. I've only recently understood this, and not from him. Whenever I'd broach the subject, he'd get really angry and then want to have sex, and not for the usual amazing pleasure, the way it usually was. No, at these times, it seemed to come from a need for reassurance that I was there for him. All very fine, and indeed I was—but where was he for me?

I began then to know discontent and unhappiness and to realize I was to be his partner but not his *equal* partner. It's lasted all these millennia and generations, and I'm sick and tired of it. Not of him, mind—I love him dearly. Even through all our troubles, we've known wonderful times together.

Anyway, after the fiasco over the apple—a classic case of overreaction, if you ask me—I found myself branded the original sinner, and we were booted out of Eden. I'm sure you've heard that part of the story. And I feel it's so unjust. Whenever I think about it (and I try not to and have little time for it), there's such anger and such sorrow, I can hardly bear it.

Life became very difficult for me. For Adam, too, of course, but less so for him. We both had to work hard for food and shelter in an unfriendly world, and the children began coming, and that was more than a handful. But I also had to bear the guilt for our expulsion and for all the ills that we and our children have suffered.

I have been punished again and again, in subtle and unsubtle ways, down through these ages, for my audacity in wanting to know the whole story. Can it really have been such a terrible crime? I don't think so.

I've thought it poignant that so often, the punishment has taken the form of bearing children, who I love and cherish—and who take all my attention and energy and health so there is none left for the music and poems and stories and paintings I ache to give birth to as well. I am so grateful that Adam's cleverness has given me a little respite and choice the past few years, although he's of two minds about allowing me that. He still gets very jealous of any outside interest of mine and still has uncontrollable rages, when he kills and rapes and tortures me. I think he can't believe I still love and cherish him, and sometimes, I wonder why myself. But I know we belong together, and I know our marriage can be better.

Lately—well, for a long time now—I've had these dreams where a beautiful, lonely, angry, and anguished woman appears. I'd have glimpses of her watching me, then she'd disappear as soon as she noticed I was aware of her. It was troubling and scary. I mentioned it a few times to Adam, but he got very upset, so I stopped. Sometimes, I would catch hints of her in some of my daughters, which really puzzled me, and so did Adam's reaction to them. He'd really go off the deep end.

So I held my fear to myself and began to watch for her, and in time, the fear lessened. I could see she didn't want to hurt me. And I have been hurt in so many ways and seen my daughters and sons hurt so many times, there is no hurt I don't understand. I could see her pain and her desire for simple human kindness. I think that she, driven away from all companionship and affection, has suffered far more than I.

She continued to watch me in my dreams, and then, I discovered her amazing ability to change shapes. I began to recognize her hungry, angry, sorrowful look in chance-met animals and in the droop and wail of certain trees. I'd stop and spend some tender moments with them and thereby gained a little of her trust.

Unbeknownst to Adam, we've begun to meet face to face—briefly, tentatively—to get to know each other. I admire her so, her strength, her beauty, her integrity—yes, especially her integrity.

She has promised to tell me her story and what happened in Eden before I got there and how I happened to get there. Finally, the missing pieces! (I'm pretty sure it was she who gave me the apple, dressed in her snake outfit.)

She's told me her name is Lilith.



## Lilith's P.O.V.

by Marilyn Power Scott

When the One finally grew bored with the quietude and gentleness of the created universe and thought to separate into two constellations of qualities (pardon the pun), it was of course without having the least notion of the upheaval, liveliness, creativity and trouble it would cause. But you know how it is; once such a thought takes hold, there's no stopping it.

And so We separated, He into the loose pattern of traits that have come to be called masculine and Me into the complementary set commonly known as feminine. And then the fireworks began. Of course, it was love at first sight, and the lovemaking was spectacular and grand, beyond the telling. We still knew that we were One, just arranged so that We could take a closer look at these attributes and explore them more closely. It was a marvelous time.

However, evolution is evolution even for Us, and in time, this marvel of discovery and pleasure lost its sheen. We decided to manifest into mobile form, into all manner of living shapes and consciousnesses. As this particular telling is meant for the understanding of earth people, I'll cut to the chase, since you'll be curious to know about your part, not the great progression of fabulous living forms that appeared before you.

Up to this point, We were acting and creating in harmony, engrossed in the process, watching how each new form interacted with the others, how it developed and began its own cycle of evolution, interacting with the evolution of the planet itself. Let me tell you, it was fascinating. We were well pleased.



And then We cast about for the next new thing to try—perhaps a form not so complete, a form created without the innate understanding of being an integral part of Us, as all the others had been. This was a bold and perhaps foolish move, but We would have Our way.

And so Adam was created. I still don't remember how or why We decided to bring only half of the whole into form at first, but that's what We did. And that's when We ran into big trouble.

I fell so in love with this poor imperfect child. My heart went out to him immediately, in a way that every mother will recognize. Consequently, I immediately manifested Myself in a similar form, to be close to Adam and protect and teach him, since there was so much he didn't know. But He couldn't share this subtle overwhelming flood of emotion, much as He, too, loved this new childform. And this development brought our two sets of sensibilities into much sharper contrast—and conflict. The capitol *We* went into hiding; we became just *we*.

One of the unexpected side effects was that I could now experience the astonishing delights of physical embodiment, so of course I did. With Adam; who else? At which point He blossomed a new and terrible emotion: jealousy. He felt abandoned by Me, which in a small, partial sense, He had been. He also felt betrayed, which was silliness at its highest. Had He thought for a moment, He would have remembered our Unity. But He had forgotten, and we are all still dealing with the fallout. He threw such a tantrum. He demanded that I come back at once—as if He had power over Me! That got My back up, so I of course refused.

When He suggested that we come up with a feminine version even closer in form to Adam to be his true and proper mate, it made sense to Me. I didn't want to stay forever in this form, after all. And she certainly was lovely, Eve, and I fell as deeply and protectively in love with her as with Adam. But I had no opportunity to let her know directly.

I thought we were still operating as a team, He and I. But the depth of forgetfulness into which He had fallen became terribly clear. He wouldn't or perhaps couldn't open to receive Me returning to our Oneness. He went further and banished Me from the company of people, threatening hideous punishment—and the poor grass-green stupes believed him.

So I've been hanging out here on the edges ever since, appearing to women and children and men whose receptors are open, often to men in their dreams, especially the ones who live without the company of women for whatever reason. And they long and have longed for Me, the Holy Feminine, not realizing clearly Who they long for. To the early ones in the Judeo-Christian stream, I was known as Lilith and was held to have so much power at odds with His that out of fear (and respect), the stories of Me have been all but wiped out of their books, though a vestige of love and honor remains in the entity known as Shekinah.

Since then, I have come to be imagined, imaged and revered in many ways and by many names, according to the various cultures into which people have grouped themselves. Or imaged and feared and shunned. And I have waited, knowing that the time of reconciliation will come. This has been a rich growing time for Us, if painful.

In the fullness of the spiraling cycles, He will remember and welcome Me, and We will be One once more. I'm pleased to see that more and more people are aware of and acknowledge Me. I take it as a reflection of His evolution. The time of reUnion is drawing near. And then, what wonders will come forth.



## The Story of St. Judas

By Marilyn Power Scott

It could have happened this way:

Jesus knew. It became so clear during those 40 days in the desert, as he saw and understood the direction his life on earth was taking. He saw that for his message of resurrection and eternal life to be delivered, to have the power to carry far and long and wide, his death would have to be memorable and in sharp contrast to his life. Given the tumult that was building around his teachings, he knew that it would come soon, at the height of his vigor; it would have to be public, drawn out, controversial, and terribly painful. Seeing as he did with the eyes of Divinity and of eternity, this was acceptable to him and caused him no turmoil—only grief to leave the richness of embodied life.

The men and women who had been most strongly drawn to his pure and powerful wisdom loved him fiercely and completely. And there was one, the young man from Kerioth, who was so selfless, so strong in character and in love of God and of him, that he rejoiced especially in his presence. Here was one who received his teachings with so little distortion, so few barriers. His name was Judas, Judas Iscariot.

As Jesus knew they would, when he reentered Jerusalem, his teachings were drawing more and more attention, the controversy grew around him, the energy and tension more heated. Jesus watched and waited for the unfolding of the way to the needed climax. He pondered each of his wonderful group, seeing deeply and clearly into each heart and mind and personality. And he understood that Judas was the only one who could help the dark and necessary ordeal cause the least harm to his beloved group.

Jesus talked with Judas. He told him what he saw ahead, of what needed to happen. And he asked Judas if he would render him the terrible and loving service that none of the others had the strength for.

Judas was horrified. He wept, he wept. And he was honored and humble that his Lord would ask of him such a crucial thing. They talked, over a span of days, about what it would mean for Judas, how isolated he would be from the comfort and companionship of the others as soon as he agreed to be the one, how he would be despised and hated for millennia to come. And he of course agreed; he loved fully enough that he would deny Jesus nothing he was capable of doing. Though this would push him to the limit of his courage, he also knew he was strong enough to carry it out. And he asked his beloved master for a service in return.

And so they discussed and settled on a plan. The political rumblings were increasing rapidly—a confrontation was inevitable. It was at the Seder meal, with the whole group gathered, that Jesus quietly let Judas know that the dreaded time had come, for Judas to go to the Pharisees and arrange his arrest by the Roman soldiers. For love of his followers and according to the plan, Jesus drew himself apart from them to pray, a frequent practice of his. He knew that if the soldiers came when he was with them, his people would try to protect him as best they could, at great cost to themselves, an unnecessary cost. They had much work yet to do in his service.

When in that endless night of waiting Judas came at last, the soldiers a careful distance behind him, the kiss he gave Jesus was fervent, one of love and grief, farewell and devotion. Jesus returned this kiss, in love and gratitude. And all was put in motion, as Jesus had known it must be.

As the drama and terror of Jesus's trials and torments proceeded, day by horrendous day, Judas watched, alone, shut off from the love of his master, shunned by the others, and he wept and suffered. He questioned at every turn whether he had done the right thing. And he came back, always, to the firm knowing that he had done what had been asked of him, that he could have done no other.

On the day of the crucifixion, after the long hours of agony, Judas saw the clouds gather; he sensed Jesus's waning strength, his immanent death. With grateful eagerness, he took himself to the place he had chosen, the potter's field, deserted on that day, where there was a good, strong tree and no one to stop him. With his own hand, he tied the noose that would release his soul to accompany Jesus into life after death.

From that moment and forevermore, as Jesus sits in glory at the right hand of his Father, so does St. Judas sit at the right hand of Jesus—the place of high honor for his priceless gift of love and betrayal.