demeter in autumn (flowers on the frozen ground)

Eliana Lazzaro
Denison University

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Today, Persephone leaves; so begins the season for grief. Demeter braids her daughter’s hair with steady fingers, sets a fresh laurel crown atop her head, and does not cry. Sometimes she wants to scream out to the heavens for the unfairness of it all, for the daring of men who fill pomegranates with poison and call it sweetness. But she learned long ago: not even goddesses keep their daughters.

The world of men is often strange, all-too unkind. Still, she grips her scythe a little tighter: what she wouldn’t give to wield it on greater targets than golden fields of wheat.

Persephone kisses her mother and steps away, looks at her with contentment as the skeletal hands of her husband break through the earth. The ground swallows her. Demeter stands still. Around her bare feet, the first newborn patches of frost begin to bloom.

(Weeks later, I stumble across a wild strawberry flower growing fresh and young in the grass in the frozen height of November—I carefully sever the stem with my fingernail, and another flower blooms in the underworld gardens of dread Persephone: another precious gift molded by her mother’s sun-warmed hands.)