

Semele was kept for a more brilliant union, for already Zeus ruling on high intended to make a new Dionysos grow up, a bullshaped copy of the older Dionysos; since he thought with regret of the illfated Zagreus. This was a son born to Zeus in dragonbed by Persephoneia, the consort of the blackrobed king of the underworld; when Zeus put on a deceiving shape of many coils, as a gentle dragon twining around her in lovely curves, and ravished the maidenhood of unwedded Persephoneia; though she was hidden when all that dwelt in Olympos were bewitched by this one girl, rivals in love for the marriageable maid, and offered their dowers for an unsmirched bridal. Hermes had not yet gone to the bed of Peitho, and he offered his rod as a gift to adorn her chamber. Apollo produced his melodious harp as a marriage-gift. Ares brought spear and cuirass for the wedding, and shield as a bride-gift. Lemnian Hephaistos held out a curious necklace of many colours, newmade and breathing still of the furnace, poor hobbler! for he had already, though unwilling, rejected his former bride Aphrodite, when he spied her rioting with Ares; he displayed her to the Blessed and the woman thief who had robbed his bed, when by information from Phaëthon he had entangled them in a spider's net, naked Ares with naked Aphrodite.

And Father Zeus was much more bewitched by Persephoneia. When Zeus spied the virgin beauty of her shape, his eye ran ahead of him to guide all the Loves, and could not have enough of Persephone; in his heart storms of unsleeping passion raged without ceasing, and gradually a greater furnace of the Paphian was kindled from a small spark; the gaze of lovemaddened Zeus was enslaved by the lovely breast of the goddess. Once she was amusing herself with a resplendent bronze plate, which reflected her face like a judge of beauty; and she confirmed the image of her shape by this free voiceless herald, testing the unreal form in the shadow of the mirror, and smiling at the mimic likeness. Thus Persephone gazed in the selfgraved portrait of her face, and beheld the selfimpressed aspect of a false Persephoneia. Once in the scorching steam of thirsty heat, the girl would cease the loomtoiling labours of her shuttle at midday to shun the tread of the parching season, and wipe the running sweat from her face; she loosed the modest bodice which held her breast so tight, and moistened her skin with a refreshing bath, floating in the cool running stream, and left behind her threads fixt on the loom of Pallas. But she could not escape the allseeing eye of Zeus. He gazed at the whole body of Persephoneia, uncovered in her bath. Not so wild his desire had been for the Cyprian, when craving but not attaining he scattered his seed on the ground, and shot out the hot foam of love self-sown, where in the fruitful land of horned Cyprus flourished the two-coloured generation of wild creatures with horns. He—so mighty! the ruler of the universe, the charioteer of heaven, bowed his neck to desire—for all his greatness no thunderbolts, no lightnings helped him against Aphrodite in arms: he left the house of Hera, he refused the bed of Dione, he threw away the love of Deo, he fled from Themis, he deserted Leto—no charm was left for him but only in union with Persephoneia.

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Look for marvels in the sixth, where in honouring Zagreus, all the settlements on the earth were drowned by Rainy Zeus.

Not the Father alone felt desire; but all that dwelt in Olympos had the same, struck by one bolt, and wooed for a union with Deo's divine daughter. Then Deo lost the brightness of her rosy face, her swelling heart was lashed by sorrows. She untied the fruitful frontlet from her head, and shook loose the long locks of hair over her neck, trembling for her girl; the cheeks of the goddess were moistened with self-running tears, in her sorrow that so many wooers had been stung with one fiery shot for a struggle of rival wooing, by maddening Eros, all contending together for their loves. From all the bounteous mother shrank, but specially she feared Hephaistos to be her daughter's lame bedfellow.

She hastened with quick foot to the house of Astraïos the god of prophecy; her hair flowed behind her unbraided and the clusters were shaking in the fitful winds. Eosphoros saw her and brought the news. Old Astraïos heard it and arose; he had covered the surface of a table with dark dust, where he was describing in traced lines a circle with the tooth of his rounding tool, within which he

inscribed a square in the dark ashes, and another figure with three equal sides and angles. He left all this, and rose and came towards the door to meet Demeter. As they hastened through the hall, Hesperos led Deo to a chair beside his father's seat; with equal affection the Winds, the sons of Astraio, welcomed the goddess with refreshing cups of nectar which was ready mixt in the bowl. But Deo refused to drink, being tipsy with Persephone's trouble: parents of an only child ever tremble for their beloved children.

But Astraio was one of sweet words, who possessed mind-bewitching Persuasion and with great pains he persuaded Deo to consent while still denying. Then the ancient prepared a great spread, that he might dispel Demeter's heart-piercing cares by his tables. The four Winds fitted aprons round their waists as their father's waiters. Euros held out the cups by the mixing-bowl and poured in the nectar, Notos had the water ready in his jug for the meal, Boreas brought the ambrosia and set it on the table, Zephyros fingering the notes; of the hoboy made a tune on his reeds of spring-time—a womanish Wind this! Eosphoros plaited garlands of flowers in posies yet proud with the morning dew; Hesperos held aloft the torch which is wont to give light in the night, and spun about with dancing leg while he tossed high his curving foot—for he is the escort of the Loves, well practised in the skipping tracery of the bridal dance.

After the banquet, as soon as the goddess had had enough of the dance, she threw off the heavy goad of mindmaddening care and inquired of the seer's art. She laid her left hand on the knees of the kindly ancient, and with her right touched his deepflowing beard in supplication. She recounted all her daughter's wooers and craved a comfortable oracle; for divinations can steal away anxieties by means of hopes to come.

Nor did old Astraio refuse. He learnt the details of the day when her only child was new born, and the exact time and veritable course of the season which gave her birth; then he bent the turning fingers of his hands and measured the moving circle of the ever-recurring number counting from hand to hand in double exchange. He called to a servant, and Asterion lifted a round revolving sphere, the shape of the sky, the image of the universe, and laid it upon the lid of a chest. Here the ancient got to work. He turned it upon its pivot, and directed his gaze round the circle of the Zodiac, scanning in this place and that planets and fixt stars. He rolled the pole about with a push, and the counterfeit sky went rapidly round and round in mobile course with a perpetual movement, carrying the artificial stars about the axle set through the middle. Observing the sphere with a glance all round, the deity found that the Moon at the full was crossing the curved line of her conjunction, and the Sun was half through his course opposite the Moon moving at his central point under the earth; a pointed cone of darkness creeping from the earth into the air opposite to the Sun hid the whole Moon. Then when he heard the rivals for wedded love, he looked especially for Ares, and espied the wife-robber over the sunset house along with the evening star of the Cyprian. He found the portion called the Portion of the Parents under the Virgin's starry corn-ear; and round the Ear ran the light-bearing star of Cronides, father of rain. When he had noticed everything and reckoned the circuit of the stars, he put away the ever-revolving sphere in its roomy box, the sphere with its curious surface; and in answer to the goddess he mouthed out a triple oracle of prophetic sound:

"Fond mother Demeter, when the rays of the Moon are stolen under a shady cone and her light is gone, guard against a robber-bridegroom for Persephoneia, a secret ravisher of your unsmirched girl, if the threads of the Fates can be persuaded. You will see before marriage a false and secret bedfellow come unforeseen, a half-monster cunning-minded: since I perceive by the western point Ares the wife-stealer walking with the Paphian, and I notice the Dragon rising beside them both. But I proclaim you most happy: for you will be known for glorious fruits in the four quarters of the universe, because you shall bestow fruit on the barren soil; since the Virgin Astraia holds out her hand full of corn for the destined lot of your girls parents."

This said, he let the oracular voice sleep in his mouth. But when Demeter Sicklebearer heard the hope of coming fruits, and how one uninvited and unbetrothed was to ravish her beloved maiden girl, she groaned and smiled at once, and hastening by the paths of high heaven she entered her own house with despondent step. Then beside the dragon-manger she balanced the curved yoke over the two necks of the monsters, and fastened the untamed crawlers with the yokestrap, pressing their

jaws about the crooktooth bit. So goldenbrown Deo in that grim car conveyed her girl hidden in a black veil of cloud. Boreas roared like thunder against the passage of the wagon, but she whistled him down with her monster-driving whip, guiding the light wings of the quick dragons as they sped horselike along the course of the wind, through the sky and round the back-reaching cape of the Libyan Ocean. She heard the music of the helmeted Cretan troop resounding in Dicte, as they danced about with the tumbling steel thundering heavy upon their oxhide shields. The goddess passed them by, looking for a stony harbourage; and she alighted among the Pelorian cliffs of Threepack Sicily near the Adriatic shores, where the restless briny flood is driven towards the west and bends round like a sickle, bringing the current in a curve to southwest from the north. And in the place where that River had often bathed the maiden Cyane, pouring his water in fountain-showers as a bride-gift, she saw a neighbouring grotto like a lofty hall crowned and concealed by a roof of stone, which nature had completed with a rocky gateway and a loom of stone tended by the neighbouring Nymphs. The goddess passed through the dark hall, and concealed her daughter well-secured in this hollow rock. Then she loosed the dragons from the winged car; one she placed by the jutting rock on the right of the door, one on the left beside the stone-pointed barrier of the entry, to protect Persephoneia unseen. There also she left Calligeneia, her own fond nurse, with her baskets, and all that cleverhand Pallas gives to make womankind sweat over their wool-spinning. Then she left her rounded chariot for the Nymphs to watch, in their lonely home among the rocks, and cut the air with her feet.

The girl busied herself in carding fleeces of wool under the sharp teeth of the iron comb. She packed the wool on the distaff, and the twirling spindle with many a twist and jerk ran round and round in dancing step, as the threads were spun and drawn through the fingers. She fixed the first threads of the warp which begins the cloth, and gave them a turn round the beam, moving from end to end to and fro with unresting feet. She wove away, plying the rod and pulling the bobbin along through the threads, while she sang over the cloth to her cousin Athena the clever webster.

¹Ah, maiden Persephoneia! You could not find how to escape your mating! No, a dragon was your mate, when Zeus changed his face and came, rolling in many a loving coil through the dark to the corner of the maiden's chamber, and shaking his hairy chaps: he lulled to sleep as he crept the eyes of those creatures of his own shape who guarded the door. He licked the girl's form gently with wooing lips. By this marriage with the heavenly dragon, the womb of Persephone swelled with living fruit, and she bore Zagreus the horned baby, who by himself climbed upon the heavenly throne of Zeus and brandished lightning in his little hand, and newly born, lifted and carried thunderbolts in his tender fingers."