

Grσσk

Mythology



The Story of Persephone



The Greek goddess, Persephone, was the child of Demeter, the goddess of earth's fertility and harvest, and Zeus, the king of all the Olympians.

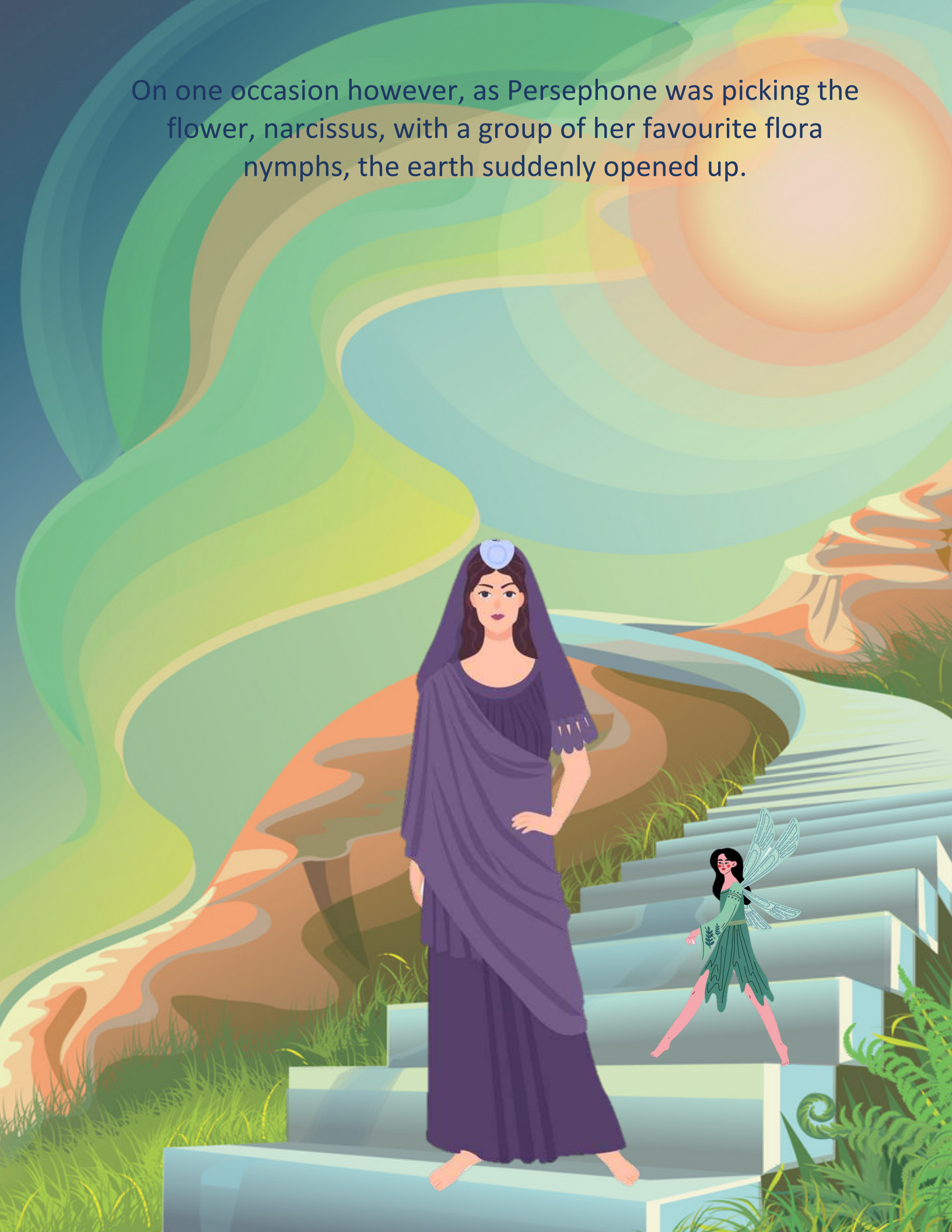


Demeter was the most nurturing of goddesses and, in turn, was the most nurturing mother. She cared as deeply for her daughter Persephone as she did the earth.

Persephone lived a happy, fruitful childhood, playing with the other Olympian children and spending time in the gardens of Olympus.

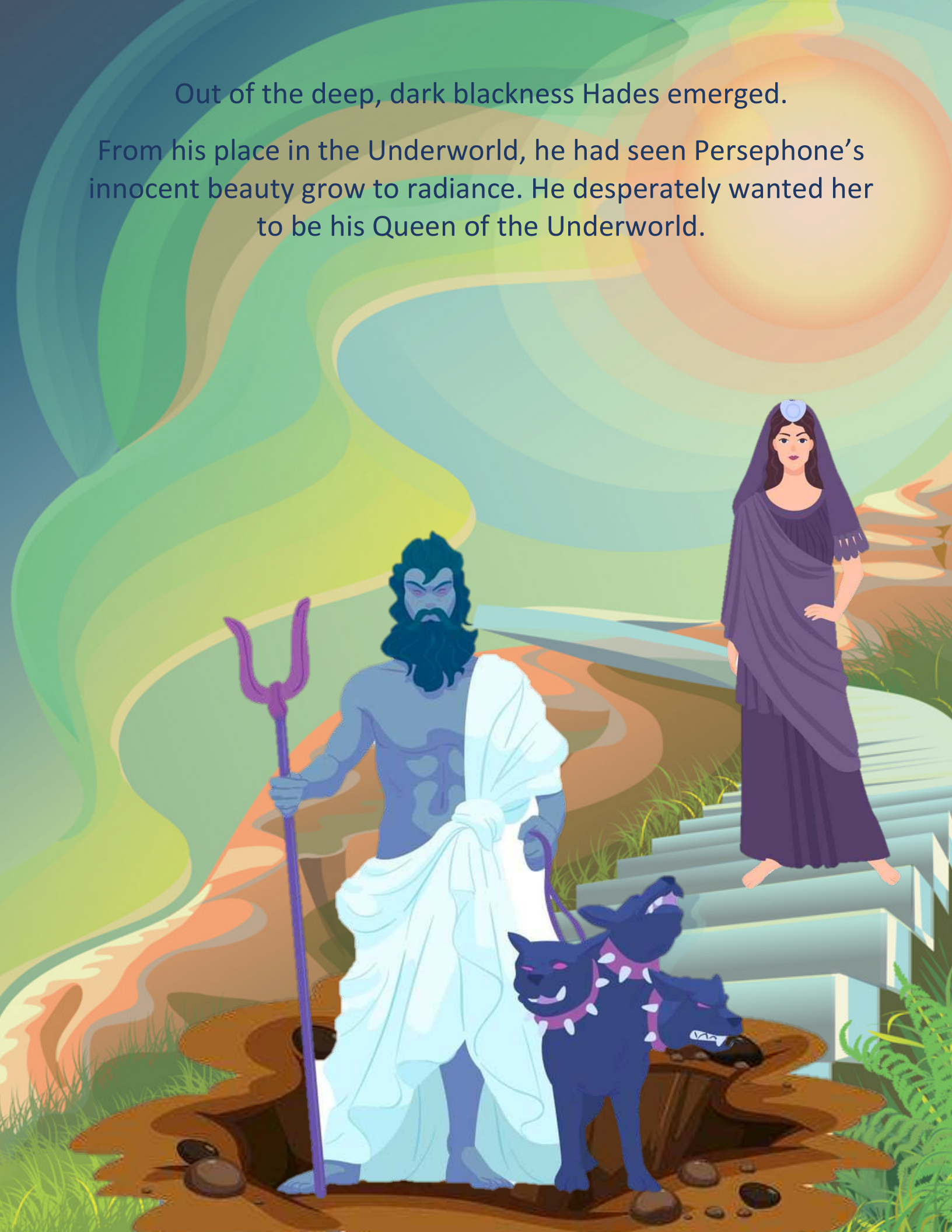


On one occasion however, as Persephone was picking the flower, narcissus, with a group of her favourite flora nymphs, the earth suddenly opened up.



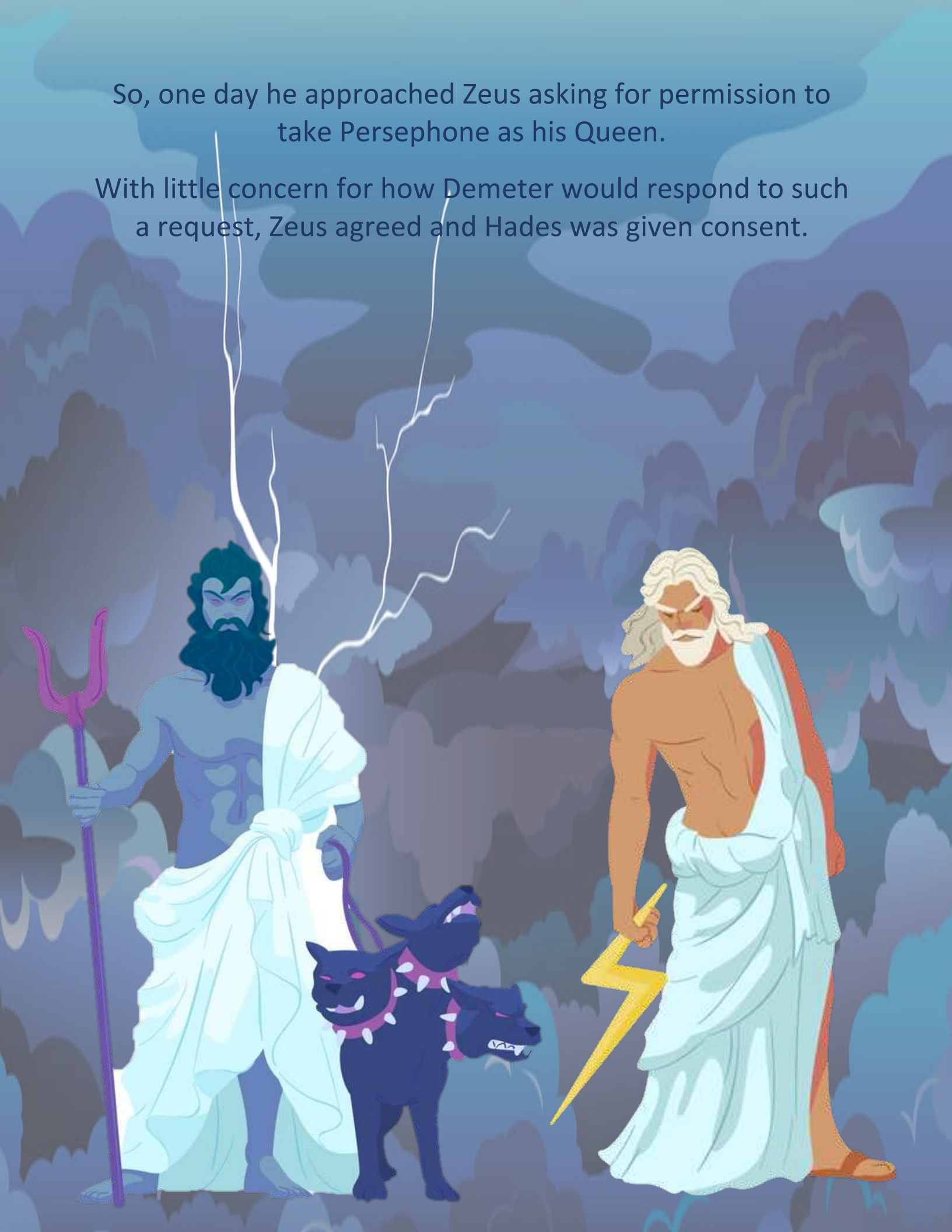
Out of the deep, dark blackness Hades emerged.

From his place in the Underworld, he had seen Persephone's innocent beauty grow to radiance. He desperately wanted her to be his Queen of the Underworld.

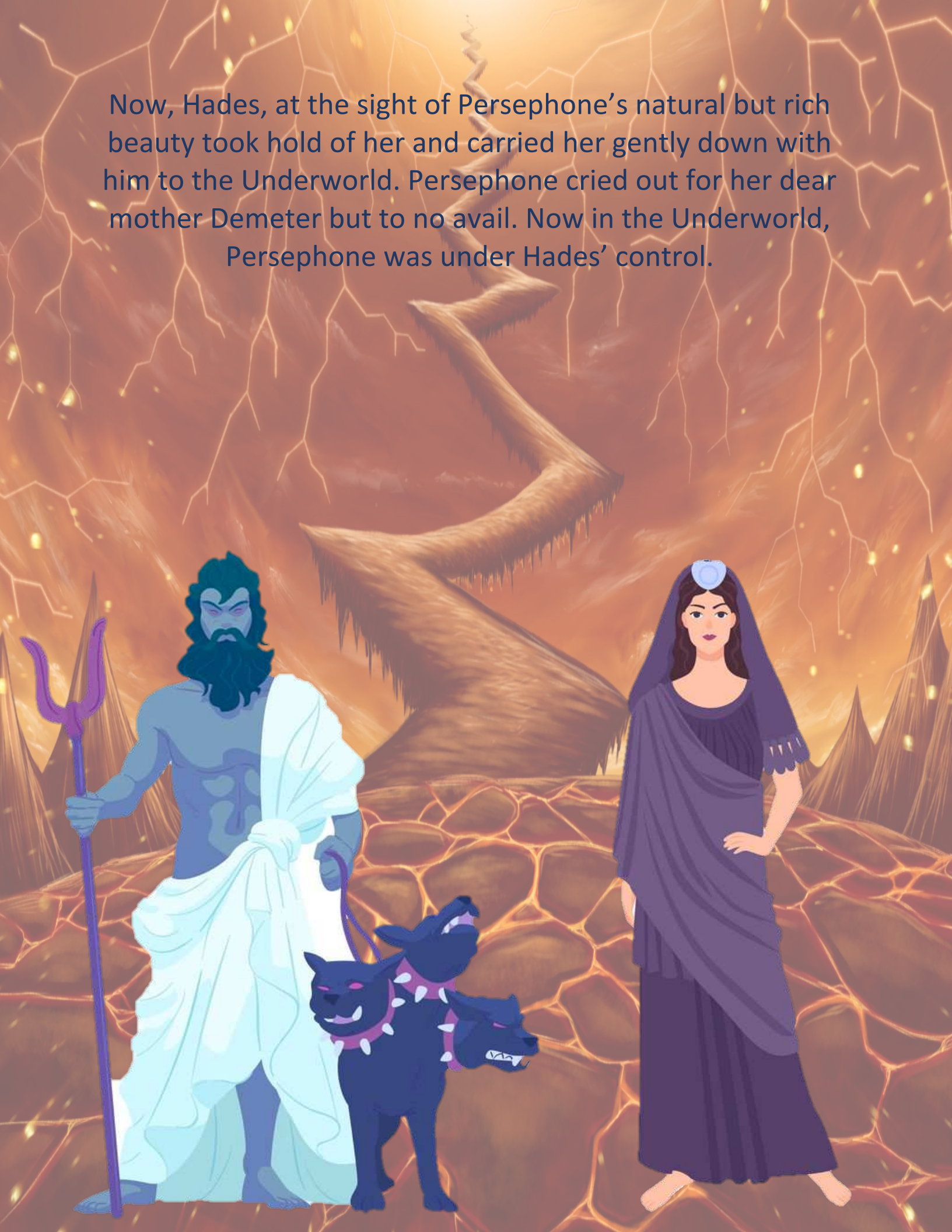


So, one day he approached Zeus asking for permission to take Persephone as his Queen.

With little concern for how Demeter would respond to such a request, Zeus agreed and Hades was given consent.



Now, Hades, at the sight of Persephone's natural but rich beauty took hold of her and carried her gently down with him to the Underworld. Persephone cried out for her dear mother Demeter but to no avail. Now in the Underworld, Persephone was under Hades' control.

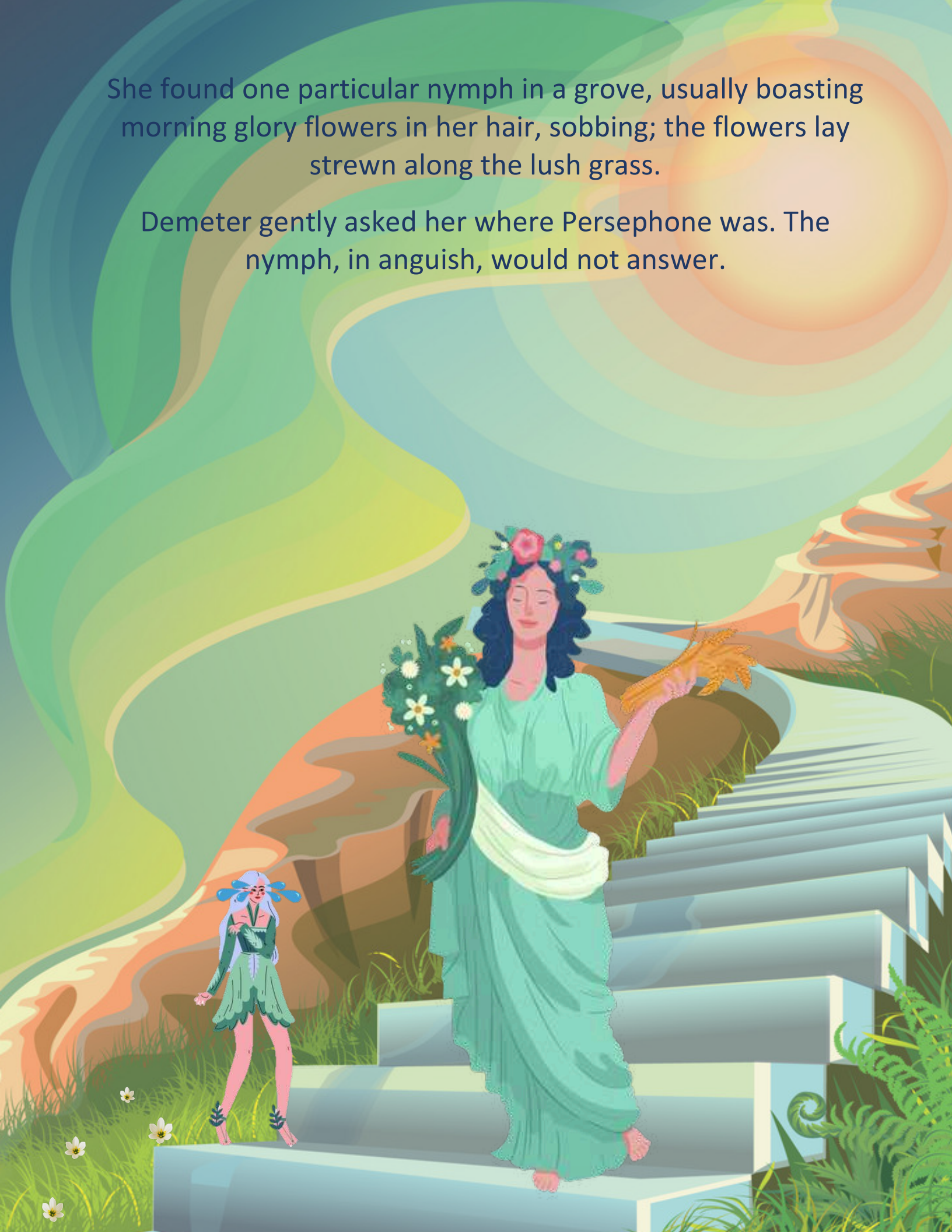


Demeter approached the gardens where Persephone usually played with the nymphs but could no longer find her daughter anywhere.

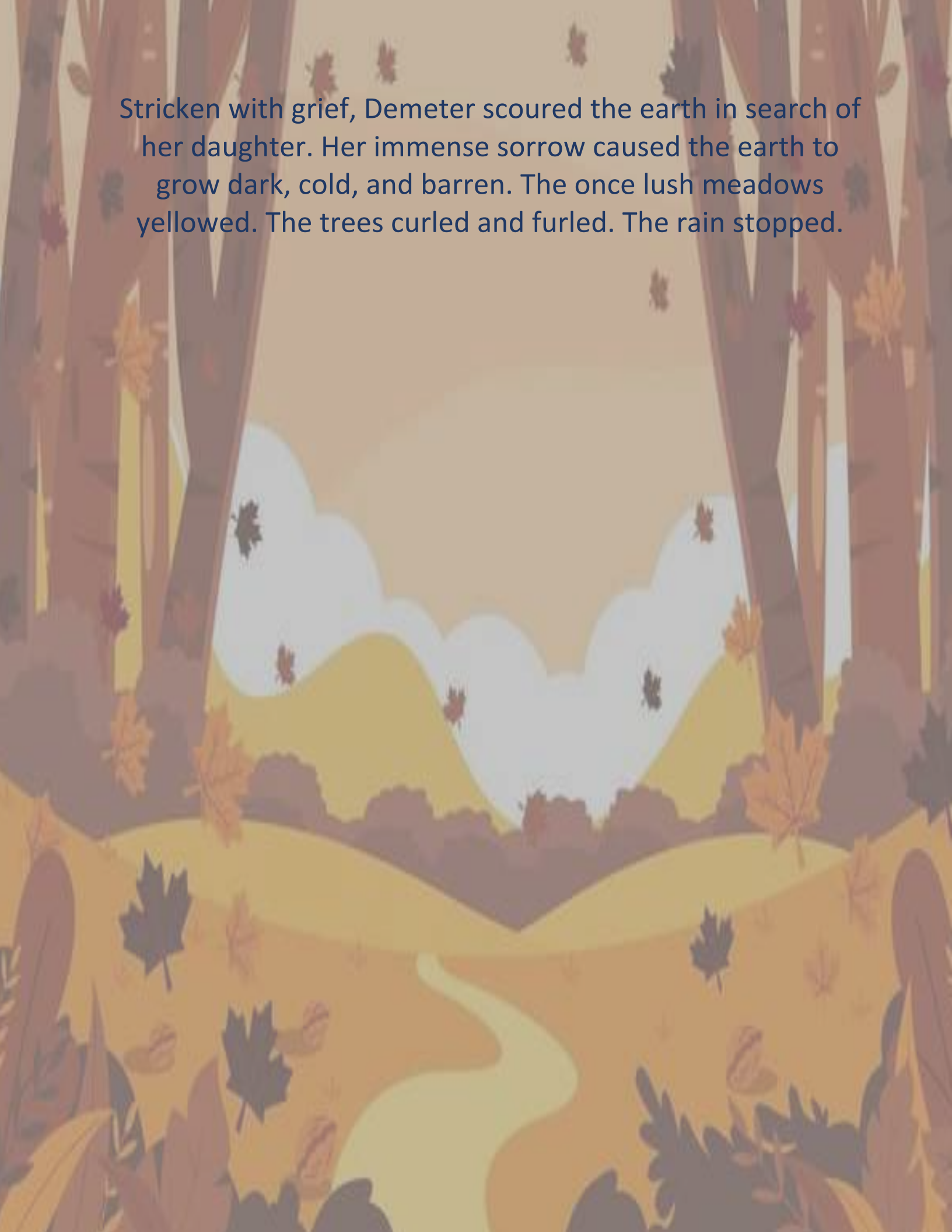


She found one particular nymph in a grove, usually boasting morning glory flowers in her hair, sobbing; the flowers lay strewn along the lush grass.

Demeter gently asked her where Persephone was. The nymph, in anguish, would not answer.



Stricken with grief, Demeter scoured the earth in search of her daughter. Her immense sorrow caused the earth to grow dark, cold, and barren. The once lush meadows yellowed. The trees curled and furled. The rain stopped.



Having searched the entire living land, Demeter finally contacted Zeus. He informed her of Persephone's marriage to Hades in the Underworld. Demeter grew into a motherly rage. She demanded Zeus to return Persephone to her care.

But Zeus refused.



A stylized illustration of a winter forest. Tall, dark, slender trees stand against a light gray background. Numerous small white dots represent falling snow or a snowy atmosphere. The ground is covered in a layer of white snow, with some small, white, bushy plants visible in the foreground. The overall mood is cold and desolate.

Demeter left Olympus and watched as the earth began to decay without her nurture.

She sought to punish Zeus for betraying her and their daughter. The now yellow meadows blackened and decomposed into dust. The trees began to shrink into the hard dirt. The rivers shrivelled up and the lakes froze over.

Zeus had no other choice but to agree to Demeter's demands.

He told Hermes, the messenger, to bring Persephone back up to Demeter's care.



In the Underworld, Persephone had grown to love Hades, who treated her with compassion and loved her as his Queen. As she would have up in Olympus, she remained eternally beautiful in the Underworld.

Hades admired her kind and nurturing nature. However, Persephone missed her dear mother greatly and wished to spend time on earth with her.



When Hermes reached the Underworld, he requested that Persephone come back to earth with him to re-join her mother and father.

Hades knew he could not refuse the commands of Zeus, but also could not part from his beloved Persephone.



Before she departed from the Underworld, Hades offered Persephone a pomegranate as a farewell. This was, however, a cunning move by Hades.

All the Olympians knew that if anyone ate or drank anything in the Underworld they would be destined to remain there for eternity, as the Fates had cautioned.

Even Demeter had warned Persephone of this fate and instructed her never to eat or drink anything.

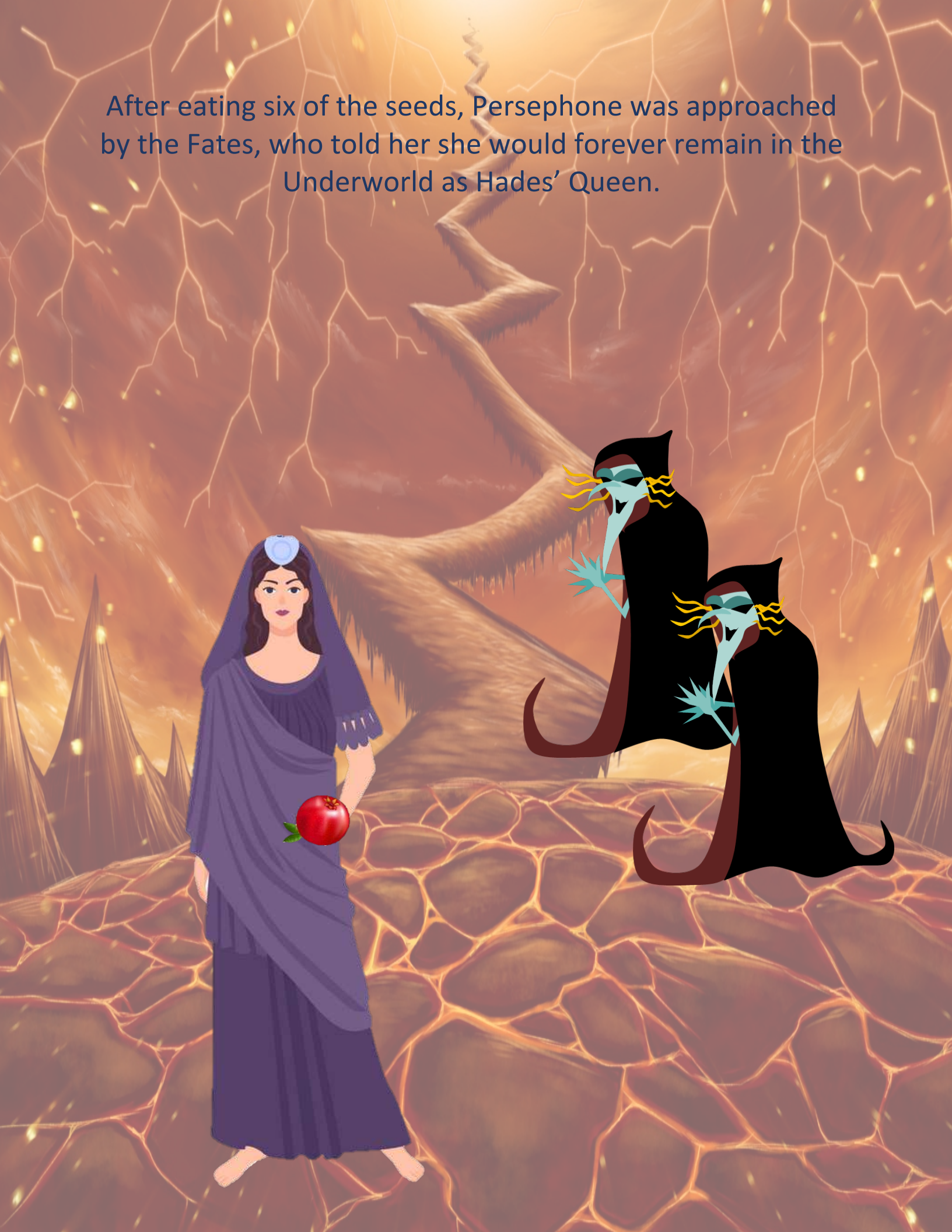


Thinking of her mother, Persephone decided to, instead, eat the small seeds of the pomegranate – assuming that these would not count as consumption.

Little did Persephone know but this was exactly why Hades had given her the pomegranate.



After eating six of the seeds, Persephone was approached by the Fates, who told her she would forever remain in the Underworld as Hades' Queen.



Hermes sadly went back up to Zeus and Demeter, who anxiously sat awaiting her daughter's return. Upon the sight of Hermes alone Demeter spiralled into a fit of immense grief and sobbing – she knew what Hades must have done to keep Persephone there.

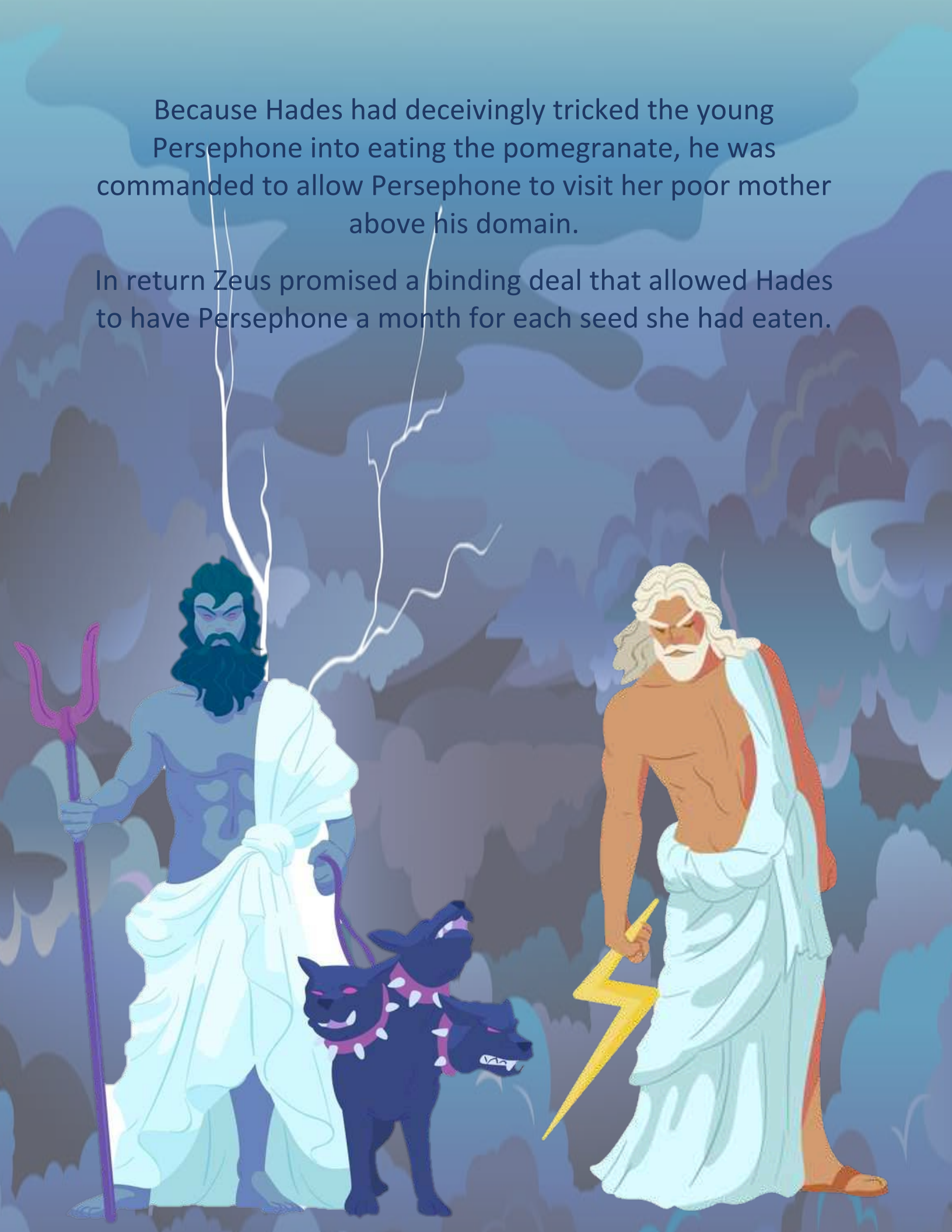


However, Zeus, being the mighty king of all gods, could not allow his beloved land to become decayed and barren; and so, he met with Hades himself. With the help of Hermes the infamous deal was struck.



Because Hades had deceptively tricked the young Persephone into eating the pomegranate, he was commanded to allow Persephone to visit her poor mother above his domain.

In return Zeus promised a binding deal that allowed Hades to have Persephone a month for each seed she had eaten.



Thus, for half of each year, Persephone was to sit on the throne of the Underworld beside Hades.



During Persephone's six months on earth reunited with her mother, the land was fertile, beautiful, and warm.

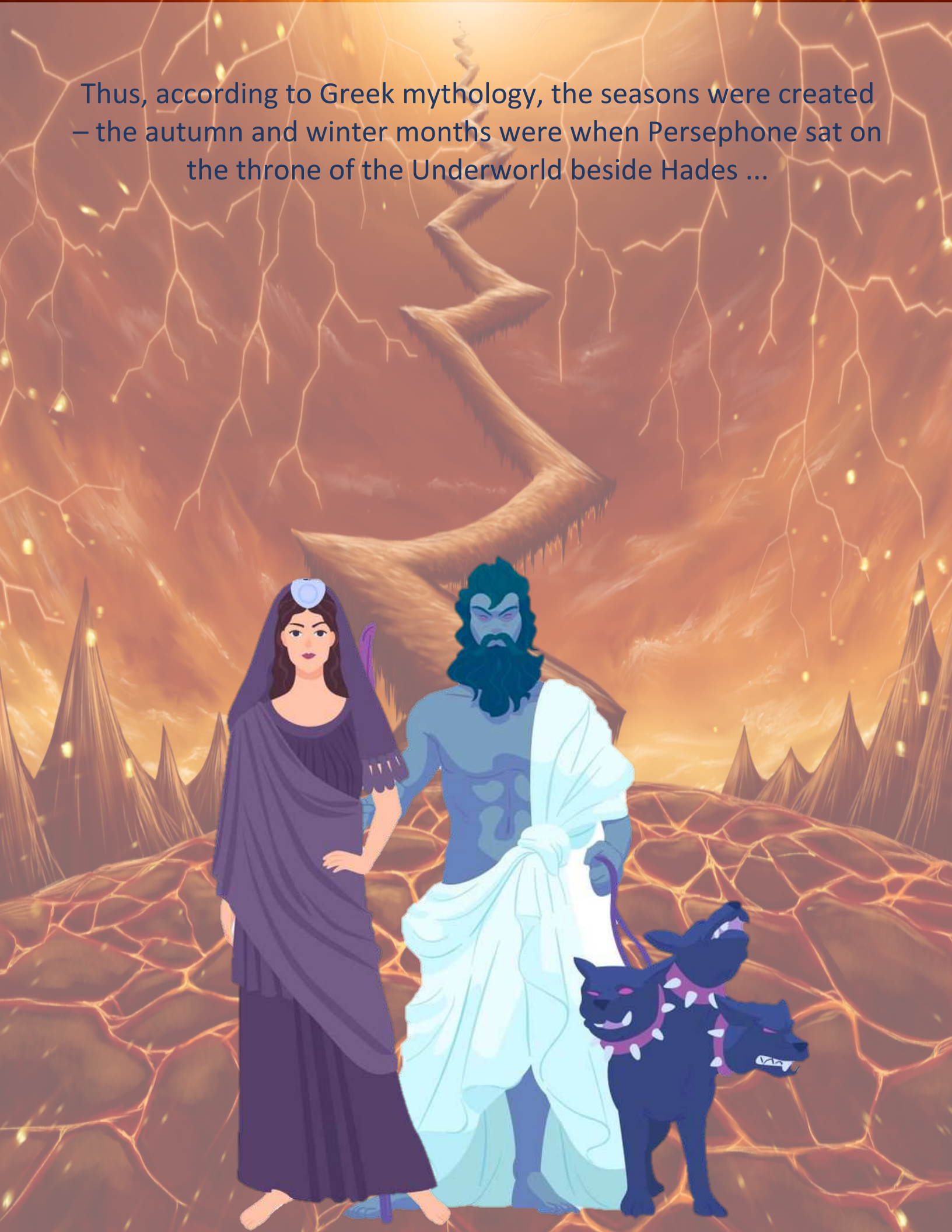
The meadows were lush and of the deepest green. The trees were tall, sturdy, and fruitful. The rains came often and drought was unseen.



However, when Persephone left the land and entered Hades' domain, earth experienced a cold, dark period with no growth. Demeter grieved for her daughter and had little time to nurture the land.



Thus, according to Greek mythology, the seasons were created – the autumn and winter months were when Persephone sat on the throne of the Underworld beside Hades ...



... and the spring and summer months were when Persephone was reunited with her dear mother, Demeter.





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