

When I was a little girl, I found a tattered copy of MYTHOLOGY by Edith Hamilton at a used book sale. The subtitle is “Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes” and it has an image of Perseus with the head of Medusa. He’s naked, posed with a very phallic sword against a full moon (or setting sun) and oh wow, did I want to know what that was all about!

Yes, I was reading way ahead of my grade level. No, my mother never tried to stop me. Yes, I still have that book. (Published by Little, Brown in 1953.)

Of course I read the tiny print cover to cover, and I keep it because I use it for reference still.

While the tale of Perseus and Medusa turned out to be interesting – though I sympathized with Medusa, naturally – the one that truly seized my imagination was the tale of Persephone (or Proserpine).

Like most kids, I was fascinated by abductions of all kinds. In this book, Persephone is carried off – complete with a dramatic illustration that includes fabulous horses, a chariot, and her long hair streaming behind her – by a god described as “the lord of the dark underworld, the king of the multitudinous dead.”

What’s not to love?? (I’m also Team Loki. I have my themes.)

Interestingly, this tale is traditionally framed as her mother, Demeter’s. Not all that much focus is placed on Persephone and what actually happens to her – which, of course, led me to imagine all sorts of things.

In some ways, by writing PRISONER OF THE CROWN, I’m still working out that fascination. I always wondered what it was like for these young, innocent daughters sold or stolen away into marriage. While my dark fantasies lead me into tantalizing sexual territory (which I’ve explored in other stories), I also know that these scenarios were the last thing from romantic for many women trapped in them. That’s what PRISONER is about. It’s not a romance. It’s a story of a young woman with no power to save herself, who finally does.

She’s Persephone freed.