



THE WAY OF

THE RADICAL PATH OF
THE DIVINE FEMININE HIDDEN
IN THE ROSARY

THE ROSE

CLARK STRAND & PERDITA FINN

Mystery

For every ten beads of the rosary, there is a mystery . . .

The rosary comes to us from an oral tradition. The medieval people who embraced it as an expression of their heartfelt devotion to the Lady did not, for the most part, know how to read. These were not people who spent much time with the Bible. In some ways they were only nominally Christian. The monks and the priests recited the 150 Psalms in Latin, along with passages from the Old and New Testaments, as part of their daily office. Meanwhile, in imitation of them, ordinary men and women started saying 150 Hail Marys on their rosary beads, telling a story that they would visualize along with their prayers. That story resembled the biblical narrative, but it was fundamentally different in its vision and message.

The priests told a story that began with Eve, a woman who disobeyed an all-powerful God, bringing evil and suffering into the world. The rosary began with Mary, a teenage girl of extraordinary courage who chose to conceive a baby without a husband, in defiance of patriarchal law. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary tells her cousin Elizabeth that giving birth to this child is a revolutionary act that will bring down the rich and elevate the poor, upending the order of civilization itself.

If the Bible concerns itself with the construction of that civilization and the reinforcement of its laws, the rosary bears witness to its collapse. Jesus's crucifixion is told through the eyes of a mother who, unable to stop the unfolding carnage, watches as the life she has brought into the world is destroyed at the hands of empire, certain of its power and justice.

In the New Testament, that misguided sense of justice reaches its fulfillment with the nightmarish final reckoning of the Book of Revelation. The rosary rejects the fiery apocalypse of the Father, replacing it instead with the Coronation of Our Lady as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

In the fifteenth century, the Church tried to impose its own narrative on the rosary, insisting that it end with the Final Judgment. But ordinary people rejected that idea. Not in any official way—it just didn't take. The rosary wasn't about instilling fear or getting people to follow the Church's rules. The story of the rosary unfolded over fifteen episodes from the life of Mary that, on an almost subliminal level, subverted the authority of the Bible itself. Those mysteries were the antidote to the existential anxiety that was inevitable in a belief system that reached its fulfillment with the end of the world.

In the mystery religions of Greece and Egypt, which preceded Christianity, the stories of the gods and goddesses offered an initiation into the secrets of the Earth. The mysteries of the rosary tell the same circular story of the natural world, in which all things come into being . . . only to die . . . only to return to life again. In an era with few books, and few who could read them, most people still hadn't been indoctrinated by the scriptures. They were, therefore, still able to read in the natural world the signs of this far older relationship to life. Those signs lay all around them—in the fields and the streams, in the mountains and the flowers, in the phases of the moon and the seasons of the sun.

The circle of mysteries that makes up the rosary weaves a spell that awakens us to the healing wisdom of the Earth itself. In nature, resurrection isn't an exceptional event. Resurrection is everywhere. This isn't a tenet of belief but an abiding truth we discover for ourselves the more time we spend inside of the mysteries. Beginnings are arbitrary, endings are temporary. This is the fundamental teaching of the rosary. The end is just another beginning when a Mother is in charge of the world.