



# A Wiccan Reader

An anthology

of works by students of

The Mystery School

of

Lothlorien

edited

by

Rev. Paul V. Beyerl

**A Wiccan Reader**

**An Anthology**

Within the privacy of the educational program of The Mystery School, students are taught to unfold their own creativity. Not only are they introduced to Lothlorien, a Wiccan Tradition containing some of the more beautiful Wiccan literature in its Book of Shadows, but they learn to express their own, growing wisdom in words.

Introduction	i
The Wicca: What Is (Who Are) The Wicca?	1
Pathworking: Novices Working To Learn of Wicca	24 51
Images of Divinity: The Goddess and The God The	79
Four Elements: Wiccan Archetypes of Reality The	106
Athame: The Witch's Magickal Knife The Chalice:	126
The Witch's Ritual Cup The Witch's Pyramid: A	138
Training Tool For Magick The Wheel of The Year:	163
Wiccan Religious Holidays	

introduction & comments by Rev. Paul V. Beyerl edited by  
Rev. Paul V. Beyerl

author: A Wiccan Bardo  
The Holy Books of the Devas The  
Master Book of Herbalism Painless  
Astrology

The Mystery School of The Rowan Tree Church: serious study for those dedicating themselves to Initiation and Ordination.

**A Wiccan Reader**

**An Anthology by The Mystery School of Lothlorien**

My journey into Wicca began over two decades ago. There were few books available to us in those days. They were not easy to find and few were of a quality which would hold up for future generations. Not even the word 'Wicca' was in use back then. Witchcraft in the late 1960's was far different than it is today. In the 'old days' there were a limited number of Traditions and they were often very secret, hidden in the suburbs. Even today there are

few Wiccan books whose purpose is to inspire and enlighten, to entertain and be read casually. This book is a 'reader,' a book which will not only expand your views of Wicca but also give you pleasure.

The times have changed. Today we have a multitude of Traditions, so many that a new seeker is often at a loss to choose that Path which will be the best suited. No one Tradition is the best. Were you to attend a gathering of five hundred Wiccans (and there are a number of such annual gatherings) you might find as many as three hundred different Traditions plus personal variations by individuals within any defined Tradition. A Wiccan Reader is not a book about traditions. Rather it is about the individual experience of coming to the Craft, of opening one's own mysteries through ritual, through study, through Pathworking. How did this book come into being?

I began my odyssey as a Wiccan teacher in 1976. I had been trained and initiated, but differences between my Priest and Priestess led to the coven's demise before I ever worked within it. Within the year several people approached me seeking information about Witchcraft. I went to my Priestess and asked her if she would teach them. She responded that I had been 'trained to be a teacher.' I had not planned this. I had been studying in pursuit of a personal spiritual quest begun years before as I sought to understand my innate psychic skills and my desire to grasp the Mysteries of the Universe. Suddenly, I was thrust into the role of teacher. It took many years to develop skills yet some days I wonder if I've yet attained what is needed.

In my first years as a Wiccan teacher, I taught as I had been taught but soon began to feel that the coven approach was not the most workable for my methods. The Path unfolding around me included a variety of esoteric lores, required a varied number of occult sciences and required a multi-disciplinary approach. I sought an environment in which the solitary could have equal access to those seeking group experience; a framework which would not need to recreate itself everytime someone new joined in or an old friend departed. In studying the history of mystery religions, I continually encountered the concept of a 'mystery school.' Whether looking at the Essenes or at Tibetan Buddhism, at Pythagoras or Egypt, it offered me a more suitable framework within which to guide students not only into Wicca, but into related studies as well.

The Mystery School of The Rowan Tree Church is described in my earlier book, A Wiccan Bardo. which opens many aspects of The Tradition of Lothlorien to the public eye and provides an overview of the syllabus. Many of our Sacred Keys and rituals were published and, if we believe the letters we receive, many readers found that Lothlorien's rich literature added to their own practices. A "Sacred Key" refers to written tradition (we also have oral tradition) written *within* our Tradition, something which opens the Mysteries of Lothlorien to the student. But the written tradition does not stop with our existing Book of Shadows • it continues to grow.



Over the years many outstanding individuals have entered The Mystery School and, over the years, The Mystery School has continued to define its own Path. Part of the Pathworking has, since the early years, included students being required to write original materials. In recent years I have found these 'Personal Keys' to be very moving. As a teacher, reading my students' work is like starting my journey over again. Two years ago it was suggested that an anthology of these works be collected and made available. Today, this book is becoming manifest. This book is representative of our students' work. Some of these authors are Initiates within The Tradition of Lothlorien, nearing the day of Ordination. Some of these authors are no longer in The Mystery School, having found that their Path leads elsewhere. They remain friends of Lothlorien and their works are included as their support for what they experienced.

Who are the authors whose works you will find in this book? Mystery School students work in secrecy, so their identities remain 'mysteries' of their own. Secrecy provides a student with the space in which to make mistakes. It teaches a student the need to mature before announcing to the world that they have become a teacher. It provides temperance for enthusiasm and takes the students back to their roots, in the time when secrecy was essential for any student of any culture who was being trained in the Mysteries. With this in mind, I will take some liberty and speak for these Novices, these Priestesses and Priests of The Wicca.

We are women and we are men. We worship the Goddess, we worship the God and some of us believe in a Universal Divinity but worship neither Goddess nor God. We are lesbian and we are gay. We are happily married and struggling with a new divorce. We are mothers and fathers and single parents. We are pursuing college educations in psychology. We are creative. Our talents in music and the arts have been as professionals and amateurs. We work with animals. We love unicorns and dragons. We are novices and we are Initiates.

We are health professionals. We live with HIV and we provide counselling and volunteer work for our HIV brothers and sisters. We are old and we are young. We watch Star Trek and read Tolkien, hold advanced degrees and write fantasy fiction. We live from coast to coast in the United States and Canada. We live in the largest cities in the U.S. and in quiet, rural areas. Our horizons include the Mississippi, the San Gabriel Mountains, the Washington Monument.

We live openly as Wiccans and we live with daily caution, knowing that our chosen religion would subject us to persecution. We are of the Wicca. We are the beginners and we are the teachers. We are rookies and we are experienced. We study ritual skills and the history of all religions. We work with herbs, with astrology and tarot cards. We do our rituals when the Moon is Full; we do them when She meets the Sun and is New. We turn the wheel at the Sabbats and celebrate the Seasons. We are the novice and we are the elders. We shall live again and love again and, as the Goddess has promised, be reunited with our Wiccan sisters and brothers when we again walk upon the Earth.

Rev. Paul V. Beyerl Los  
Angeles, 1994 ce



# The Wicca

## What Is (Who Are) The Wicca?

"We were of the Wicca, gazing at the stars, feeling deep, unnamed secrets... Touching the Earth in joy and sensing life within... Seeing birth and knowing that it was a miracle, a mystery, a joy... Being still in the forest, being warm in the water... We are all lights and we follow the path through the God and the Goddess by all Their Names and, in growing, we grow in brightness, following the cycles of Sun and Moon and glowing in Divine Radiance."

[from The Ritual of Dedication, The Tradition of Lothlorien)

1 Am Wiccan	Ishan	3
My Heart Knew	aslan	5
The Water's Edge	Heronfriend	7
Listen To Their Counsel	Noonstar	9
The Wicca - Catharsis	Lucanus	14



## The Wicca

*It was in the 1970's that I recall hearing this word emerge, gradually taking its place as a word which better suited the emerging religions, earlier known only as 'Witchcraft.' When I first became involved in Wicca, in the 1970's, the word had not yet become popular. What we studied and what we practised was Witchcraft and there was little distinction between types of Witchcraft in which one's ultimate goal was dominance over others through manipulative spells or the pursuit of wisdom through the disciplines of a Mystery Religion.*

*'Wicca' emerged as a word more suited to media exposure. It began to set us free from the damage wrought by the stereotypes of evil witches whose only goals are to bring harm into the world. The word Wicca also implied an approach to religion which was more encompassing, for many of us came to the Craft through metaphysical studies, through time spent in Buddhist practices, through interests which began as an affinity for Native American practices, through interests in mythology, and any number of other interests which became gateways to the Path of Wicca.*

*Wicca is not a singular religion. There are as many varieties of Wiccan religions as there are of Christian religions, from the fundamentalist to the Wiccan who abhors any sense of order or hierarchy; from those who want ceremonies to be scripted with a text carefully crafted to those who love the pure spontaneity of spirit. In The Admonition within Lothlorien's Book of Shadows we find 'The Wicca means the Wise: the Wise Ones. We meet together to talk as wise people and celebrate our happiness.'*

*Conversion to Wicca is not always easy. Becoming involved in a Wiccan religion requires study. One must learn a new language. One must learn new ways through which to express one's religion. Wicca is not 'a' religion but a collection of Wiccan religions.*

*There are, literally, many hundreds of Wiccan Traditions scattered about North America, from coast to coast in Canada to the Ozarks and the swamps of Florida, from crowded cities to the far reaches of America's hinterlands. To become one who is Wiccan, one spends many years reading books, seeking out like-minded people, discovering sources through which to purchase items for ritual. The new Wiccan discovers a tremendous network of publications. There are almost a hundred, ranging from a few, crudely stapled pages to slick-covered magazines. It is a journey of self-discovery and a journey not suited for everyone.*

*For those who practice a Wiccan Religion the word Wicca becomes a reference to one's most personal and most profound beliefs. It becomes a word with great meaning. It is a word not used lightly nor, for most, publicly. The Wicca refers to all of our sisters and brothers who practice Wiccan religions, those we love and those whose personalities do not fit comfortably with our own. Wicca includes all aspects of Nature and, inevitably, all aspects of living in harmony with the Earth, it expresses our love of Nature, of Divinity and of the Universe.*

- Rev. Paul

## **I Am Wiccan**

Ishan

Know Ye this - I am Wiccan; that is, a servant of the Earth, a hidden child of the Ancients and not-forgotten Great Goddess...

How came I to know this? Those whom the Divine Mother has chosen; those upon whom She has placed Her kiss • may have no other. For in that kiss She does impart such desires, such longings. For you see, my friend, I seek to become more a part of Her, Her wisdom, Her ebb and flow. Yet don't misunderstand, we are truly one, yet in this incarnated form I seek the ecstasy of completion, of returning to the source, just as a river to the vastness of the ocean. And so, my friend, I become as the wind, I sing as the birds and I dance as the falling rain. For I travel onward in this life experiencing Her great love, a love that demands change; a most strict teacher wouldn't you say? Yet herein lies what I believe to be the greatest Magick, our ability to change, to transform, as the caterpillar to the butterfly, to fly and soar closer to our source to seek Oneness with this Soul of Nature.

Haven't you ever noticed, my friend, there are no churches nor great, gold inlaid cathedrals in Her honour? You can see how a fixture built by the mere hands of humans encompasses the awe of the Universe and Her magnificence. For as many as there are colours in a field of wildflowers does She have names and faces. So Her shrines, Her temples are the places of nature and in them does She truly reside. For it is here that we of the Wicca seek Her and Her wisdom. And in our Rituals we echo the song, the motion of the Universe - with a carefully choreographed dance of words and gesture designed to bring us into Oneness with the Universe and Her energies. Yet true ritual is experienced in the heart - the Soul and every waking moment is a testament to this ecstasy, and of this no more shall be written.

Now, my friend, know Her to be elusive - do not seek the forests and glades for some beautiful nymph to call "Goddess." Know ye, She is truly spirit or energy, if you like. She is the bond and connection between all and in all. Know and seek in faces around you, in simple things, and you will meet Her. And when in your heart She calls and weaves Her subtle magick, be not afraid, for Her other self - The God - will be with you; for in change something must die to be reborn. And, my friend, in the wintertime of your life when the Crone seeks you - fear not this change for this is the last Magick of this life - the ecstasy of reunion, the joy of a baby's first cry.

**My Heart Knew**

aslan

An author named Susan Cooper has written a series of "children's books" called *The Dark is Rising*; there are five books in the series. In these books, there are children involved in finding and using some sacred objects to keep the world from being overcome by the powers of darkness that would possess humankind's souls, utilizing greed, bigotry, envy and so forth. Before I even thought about joining the Church or becoming a Novice, I read through this series once a year, cycling with the Tolkien books, C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles* and with Madeleine L'Engle's books, adding others to fill in the year. The basis for choosing these books as my regular reading was in part due to my work with children in public school.

Many of the books mentioned, but especially Cooper's books, deal with the moving forward of life and with spiritual advancement as part of civilization. In Cooper's books, the children deal with a chalice, a Green Witch which is tossed into the sea annually, a crystal sword, holy trees, and many of the Celtic and Welsh beliefs and customs. The three children involved in the first, third and fifth book are helpers, innocents that are clean of spirit and unbiased, and thus able to accomplish things that other biased or "mature" people cannot. The true heroes of the books, however, are a group of beings called "The Old Ones," who exist through time. (Now you may see where this is heading and why I am including this as part of this Key.)

The symbol for the Old Ones is a circle containing an equal-armed cross (the astrological symbol for the Earth). They have been born at different times in Earth's history. Chief among them is a wizard named Merriman Lyon (Uncle Merry to the kids; Merry Lyon - Merlin). There is also a very important figure who is a woman, old beyond reckoning yet young and strong of spirit, who fades away yet does not die, who comes back to give power to the quests. Heme is part of the stories, as are powers and places outside of time.

My heart KNEW, from the first time I picked up the books to read to my classes (Yes, I got away with reading all of the above to the third and fifth graders and they loved it!) that these were not just coincidental materials in my life. That was why I would return to them over and over. When finally I was brought into The Rowan Tree Church and The Mystery School, I found myself face to face with the Lady and the Lord, on a path that would allow me to reunite with others as we worked at recalling past learnings and teachings, techniques and attitudes, so that we would be able to retake our places as "Old Ones" capable of aiding others on the Earth and through time.

The Wicca, then, means to me that group of spiritual/physical beings that guide and protect the Earth in a nurturing, loving fashion, that give good counsel or none at all, that bring healing (to those who request it) in gentle and natural ways, sometimes healing the spirit even though the body may give out. The Wicca are not the people screaming about the environment, but the people who talk to their neighbors about the trees and plants, that demonstrate by their actions that the Earth is our Mother and we must be protective of Her. The Wicca are the ones that understand that we are stewards, not owners, of the Earth, and that we will move on and the Earth

must be allowed to continue. The Wicca understand that the Earth WILL continue, no matter how hard humans try to change it. Mother Who Has Existed Since The Beginning must be amused when humans think they have control; a consistent amount of more than normal rain or snow, a slight movement of the Earth's surface every now and then, a wind that blows strongly across the land, a flash of lightening, and She reminds humans that She is still the One in control.

As do each of us in the Pathworking of The Tradition of Lothlorien, each of us becomes more aware of the spiritual being within which is subject to Her Laws. Old Ones, Wicca, understand and trust that we are moving along the Path which She intends for us. In Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, we allow our lives to change. Following Her guidelines as we come to know them, we communicate with others in and out of the Path, we are role models for others by our calmness and patience, our perseverance, our understanding of all types of problems, our joy in living each day.

The Wicca are those that we meet unexpectedly when we go to the astral plane during ritual. They enjoy our work with them, They are amused by some of our mistakes, They are kindly in forgiving our shortcomings and They encourage us at our low times. They lead us to specific tools or people, knowing that either they can help us or we can help them. They will be waiting for us in the astral Temple when we go there to learn between lives and review what we have and have not accomplished. We must be like those children in Cooper's books, willing, humble, learning, seeking, not for ourselves as much as for the good of our Mother and Father.

I am sure that other authors have written as much or more about this same concept, but being written so that children can enjoy these ideas makes Cooper's books accessible and easy reading instead of a chore. The Wicca, the Old Ones, are probably quite amused when something simple is kept that way. I will be interested to hear from Them about many things, and maybe there will even be time to ask about stories we heard when we were physical beings on the Earth. I hope so.

## **The Water's Edge**

Heronfriend

I come to the water's edge. I come to the place of the alder and the willow. I whisper softly, "It is I. I've come home. Would you welcome me? Show me the way back to the Circle, back to the standing stones."

"Home?" I hear a whisper. "Home? Who goes there? What would you seek? By what right do you dare to ask? Hasn't your patriarchy done enough damage? Dare you bring your usurpation even here?"

Aye there is cause for caution. No time for fear. There is anger here. I seek the Wicca. I seek the Mother. I have been to my Father's house. Not old,

I was taken away from the Mother, raised and trained in patriarchal ways. I wore a uniform. I marched to the drum under the noonday sun. I learned the dance with the spear-tipped lance, the step with the battle axe, the chorus of the ale barrel. I attended audience before the throne of the Patriarch.

I reply, "I come back from the land of the oak and the ash. I claim the right of a natural child upon the Mother. No usurpation here. Son has claim upon Mother as does daughter upon Father. Let us keep separate camps no more.

"I am a natural child. The magic of the Father is strong. But it is only half. Through all the drumming, the shouting, the shooting; through all the chorus I carry always the inner sound. I carry the sound of my heartbeat, the echo of the Maternal rhythm within me, within my maleness, the primal rhythm of my female side beats on. It ties me to the Mother, to the tides, to the waters, to the Moon. Even in the high rocky places it echoes of the mysteries of the cave. It echoes of life and of death.

"I am a natural child. Tell me of the other uses of my Father's magic - usurpation though they may be. Tell me of the fit uses of His symbols; Her symbols. I have heard it whispered that the spear shaft is also potent with a besom's head, rumours that the glyph of the thirsty oattle axe is ever more powerful as the butterfly of transformation. Songs in the halls hinted the ale barrel showed once as the Cauldron of Rebirth. It is hardly breathed that the High Priest is enthroned upon the birthing chair. Could it be so? How could it be so?

"I am a natural child. I make claim upon you, my siblings. I ask you to lead me along the path of moonglow across waters. Lead me to thy Circle among the standing stones. Let us compare mythologies. Teach me that I may be a fit consort to dance with thee in the woodlands, to live in the spirit and do the time-honored work of the Ancient Ones. Let us both make claim upon the Mother and the Father that They be reconciled and be Consort, One to the Other and Together be One, and we with Them, all One together. "

I hear a soft chorus of murmurs, "He heard! The words of Riane and Maria are about the land! This one has an open mind. He may be a natural child. Do we dare? ..."

Yes, my friends, I was led to the nether places. Under the fullness of the Moon, full in the fragrance of the woodlands and the perfume of the waters, I learned the wisdom of the Ancients.

We are the Wicca. Welcome.

**Listen To Their Counsel**

## Noonstar

It was in a journey that I met The Wicca. It was a journey through a wooded glade looking for that which would give me a hint, a tiny clue, to what my connection with the Universe is. What is it that makes me look up to the stars and wish for the touch of someone that I can't quite remember, yet I know it is someone that I love deeply? Why is it that I seem to know to cross running water to rid myself of a hindrance? It was for these answers that I journeyed into that glade; to uncover a hope, a glimmer.

I moved across the glade on a wondrous spring morning enjoying the smell of the young grasses as they were crushed under my bare feet. I would stop to chase a butterfly from one flower to another, but never actually impeding its freedom. Off in the distance I could see a forest and decided that I may find an answer there amongst the ancient trees.

As I approached the forest I glance skyward and notice that the sun has moved westward letting me know that lunch time has come and gone. Funny, but I had not yet hungered for food, I only wanted to satiate my hunger for Knowing. Slowly moving through the forest I realize that there is a steady incline that is taking me close to an area that I can not see for it is obstructed by trees. Moving closer and closer I am finally able to see that in the middle of this clump of trees is a cave. I fashion a torch out of an old limb laying on the ground and begin my descent into the cave.

Surprisingly the cave is not dark; a strange but lovely silverish-blue light is emanating from the walls. I extinguish my torch and allow the light of the cave guide me. There seems to be a pulsation coming from the very earth itself, sounding much like a mother's heart must sound to an unborn child. I see a door set into the wall and, as I approach it, I see that something has been carved into the door.

There in the top part of the door is carved a serpent swallowing its tail and twisted into the infinity symbol. There is a sun held in one half of the symbol and a moon in the other half. As I touch the etching it seems to shimmer and become fluid like. The door slowly opens and allows me to see into the cavern beyond. I gather my nerve and venture forward.

I was met by a bearded man wearing a tunic and pants. He tells me to wait until he returns for me. He is called Sylvan. After about 20 minutes, he returns to me. After he approaches he makes a motion with his hand and my clothing disappears and I stand before him clad only in the sky. He motions me to follow him down a side corridor which empties out into a smaller cave that is lit by candles. In the center of the area is a Circle and within the Circle are seven people robed and hooded. He escorts me to the gate in the north east. I am told to wait until my time has come.

After Sylvan enters the Circle, one of the robed figures picks up a sword that lies before the gate. Moving to the east point she begins to cast the Circle and Call in the Quarter Watchtowers. Once this has been completed they join hands and begin singing to call upon the Goddess. The

tune changes ever so slightly, taking on a masculine sound as they summon the God.

Sylvan approaches the gate which has six candles and a sword lying before it. He picks up the sword, touching the tip to the flame of each candle that blocks the gate, and fixes his gaze upon me in a way that feels as if my very soul is being examined; he points the sword at me. I am challenged at this gate and asked my intent for entering the Circle. I respond "I enter this Circle in Perfect Love and Perfect Trust, I enter this Circle open to experience." Sylvan slices an opening in the gate. I am told to approach the portal and hold out my hands. He places ice cubes into my hands and am told to focus on the sensations of the cold and the heat from the candles. Sylvan says "Feel the cold, feel how it chills even the deepest parts of you. Feel and sense how it contracts and tightens your skin. Feel the heat coming from the candles that rises up from below you as your body contracts from the cold. Allow the heat to expand your body, your mind. Allow the heat and the cold to meet and fill your body at the same time, allow them to fill your body as one. Balance these elements in you and when you are ready cross this barrier of elements and be welcomed in our Circle." I take a moment to assure myself that I am balanced and I step through the portal and join them in their Circle.

Sylvan turns to me and speaks. "Before you stand the Six Great Ones; Maid, Mother, Crone, Youth, Father and Sage. Go, listen to their counsel."

I approach the Maiden and she tells me of the wonder of play and joy. The Mother tells me of how she once held me and nurtured me and that I too can nurture. The Crone tells how She knows me on many levels and has known me before and will know me again. I move around to the Youth and He counsels me in the sensations and experiences of youth. I approach the Father and He tells me of guidance and counsel. Finally I approach the Sage and He talks of wisdom and knowledge.

As I turn from the Sage I find myself standing before the altar. Sylvan steps behind me and the neophyte, the one that cast the Circle, moves to be next to me and the altar. "Before you on the altar is a symbolic feast. The Feast of Truths. As you experience each flavor you will be asked a series of questions. With each taste you will be asked a series of questions; allow these questions to be a vehicle of exploration." informs Sylvan. The neophyte serves me my Feast of Truths which includes as its dishes Salt (Sea Salt), Sweet (fig), Sour (Lemon), Bitter (wormwood), Hot (clove) and Cold (water). With each taste is a chorus of questions that lead me on a search of myself.

Sylvan places a hand on my shoulder and guides me until once again I stand before the Six Great Ones. "Approach each one of the ancients and receive from them a Challenge and a Blessing."

From the Maiden comes "How have I left Her?" I respond that "I turned and walked away".



The Mother Challenges "Why have I denied her embrace." I respond "Because I turned my back".

The Crone asks "Why has your search lead you in a circle?" I respond "Because I have not finished searching within the forest in which I stand".

Moving to the Youth, He inquires "What is the difference between childlike and childish?" I respond to this by saying "Childlike is the realization of youthfulness within maturity while childish is the immaturity of youth."

The Father gives the bold challenge of "Why do you ignore me in yourself and I say to him "That I am caught in the game of imbalance like the rest of society."

And the Sage looks at me and asks "Why do you not listen to my advice when it is given". To this I can only say "It is because I want to do it my way."

I move back to the Maiden to have to begin the process of the Blessings. The Maid gives the blessing of eternal Joy. The Mother gives the ability to Nurture. The Crone gives the blessing of Death and Rebirth. The Youth bestows upon me the ability to recognize and enjoy Youthfulness in my Maturity. The Father grants me Stability that comes from age. Finally the Sage grants me the Understanding that Wisdom exceeds Knowledge.

Sylvan approaches me with the Sword and asks for my pledge to Wicca as my religion and craft. I say To my religion I pledge my faith and to the craft I pledge my experiences".

I am told to take my athame and my chalice, which has appeared before me on the altar, and perform an Inner Great Rite; to balance those six parts of myself that stand around me in this Circle. I lift my two tools one in each hand and focus upon those parts of myself that are male and those parts that are female. I slowly sink my knife into the chalice and bring these parts of self into alignment and balance, in recognizing that these six Beings are all one in me I realize that they also are the aspects of the Divine manifest in me. At this moment my energies seem to peel back and I go spinning through the Universe only to be returned to the same spot. This all happens in a matter of moments. I return my two tools to the alter and stand ready for the next part.

The Mother and the Father come forward and each ties a knot in the end of my cords to symbolize the male and the female, the God and Goddess, that share in oneness within me. Everyone resounds a So Mote It Be.

The neophyte retrieves the Sword and banishes the Circle. I am asked to join the Circle and the Circle is then opened.

When I awoke the sun had almost set, leaving behind in its trail a magnificent sky. Lying in the grass of the glade are my chalice and athame bound together by my cord. I realize I must hurry home for the night air seems so cold.

## The Wicca - Catharsis

by Lucanus

I stood within my Temple, working the Ritual of Lothlorien to place myself within the Twilight World. The Elements were raised, and the Archangels stood at their Quarters, silent witnesses to my ardor for the Lady & Lord. The world beyond my Circle was lost in a haze of blue light.

The Elemental Winds whirled about my Temple. I stood in the Circle's center of calm. As the Cone of Power grew to fullness, I raised my Athame and traced a blue flame star...

... From the Northeast, the Angel came. He held a flaming Sword in his left hand and a Chalice in his right. He was dressed in a white robe trimmed with black. He wore the symbol of "The Wheel" upon his breast. A yellow-gold Unicom pendant hung from around his neck. His face was the mirror of my own.

"Blessed Be, Lucanus," he said, greeting me with joined palms before his breast.

"Blessed Be, beloved," I responded, returning the ritual gesture.

"Are you ready for the Journey?" the Angel asked.

*I replied, "Aye, I am prepared. So mote it Be."* With these words, my

Guardian Angel invited me into his arms. "EDRO," he commanded in

the Angelic tongue, opening a portal between the worlds. He caught

the astral wind and together, we sailed through the stargate ....

... I opened my eyes to find myself in a world of darkness. I knew this place and I felt a great need to leave. Before me stood a large box, which was distinguished only by being composed of a darkness richer than its surroundings. My Guardian Angel sensed my fear and took my hands into his. We approached the box, "Lucanus," he said gently, "Open it."

A fresh wave of fear gripped me as I looked at the box. I placed my hands upon the lid to open it, but quickly withdrew them as if I was burned. I shook my head, trying to find my voice. "No," I managed to whisper. But despite my denial, I summoned courage and reluctantly reached for the box, trembling.

I felt the Angel's hands rest upon my shoulders. "Release him, Lucanus," he said. I raised the lid, and looked within to find a small child crying. The child was me. "Behold, the Gatekeeper to the Inner Prophet," the Angel said. "Embrace him, your Forgotten One."

I did as the Angel asked and gently took the Gatekeeper, my wounded child-self, into my arms. As I rocked this once denied, long lost piece of my soul, I found myself shaking with grief. Tears spilled forth, down my cheeks. I sang a song of purity and light taught to me by a Bear shaman, healing my wounded child-self, whose existence became separate from my own, long ago. I embraced the Gatekeeper with love, and was transformed with my acceptance of his tears, his anger, and his self-hatred. As I succored the Gatekeeper, he transformed into a column of red light. With the help of my Angel as soul-physician, the Gatekeeper and I returned to being One.

When the joining was complete, I turned to my Guardian. I took his hands into my own and with newfound strength, spoke the Angelic word that opened the stargate, "EDRO."

... I found myself in the land of Lothlorien, riding upon my Guardian, who assumed his Unicorn guise. We sailed above the Old Forest and landed in a grove of rowan-trees. I was about to question my Guardian of this choice, when I spotted an Ent, whom I recognized to be Quickbeam.

Quickbeam resembled the rowan-trees, of which he was shepherd. He was tall, with smooth, shining, grey-brown skin. His hair and mossy beard was green like the rowan leaves. His grey eyes twinkled with merriment. A crown of orange berries sat upon his head.

"Blessed Be, Quickbeam," I said.

"Hoom, hoom, horn. By the manner thy speech, thy dress and the company thou holds," Quickbeam said, indicating my Unicorn, "Thou art not of this kingdom."

"You are correct, sir. I come from a world different from this Elvish kingdom. My world contains great cities fashioned of metal, stone and silica. We have machines that assist humans to provide many needs with great speed. But, despite our science, we are still subjected to the Elements, the rigors of time, the rhythms of the planets and the decay of our bodies."

Quickbeam listened carefully and after a thoughtful pause spoke. "I have heard of thy world from others who walk the Path of Lothlorien. Hoom," the Ent said, peering at me closely. "Let me have a look at thee." He held my chin up with his woody hand. "Hoom, horn. Yes, thy countenance agrees with Mithrandir's description. Merry meet and Blessed Be, Lucanus," Quickbeam said, making the sign of the Horned One with his right hand.

The Ent laughed at my surprised expression. Before I could reply, he became sober. "Pray tell, Lucanus...dost thou take the time to honour the

rhythms of the Mother, sing our Lady's songs, and dance the spiral dance in the company of our Lord?"

"Aye Quickbeam, ever since I dedicated myself to the White Lady and Green Lord. I have honoured the cycles of Anar and Isil, since Lugh's Day twenty-four seasons ago, retelling the tales of our Goddess and God. I have played minstrel to the Lady, singing and playing Her songs upon my dulcimer. I have invoked the Four Unicorns and sang the eight Godnames to awaken my Inner Prophet. I have learned to celebrate my Self in the Child of Light. I have even begun to appreciate the prayer of holy silence to heed the voice of the Divine."

"Hoom, hoom, horn. Thy words are true, Lucanus," the Ent replied. He laughed, shaking his rowan-berry crown. "In haste thou came, in haste, I have questioned thee. In haste, thou responded. And in haste, thou shalt take thy leave. Merry meet and merry part."

"Merry meet, again," I said, smiling. I climbed upon my Unicorn mount, who spread his wings and leapt into the sky.

We sailed over the Old Forest, past the Mountains of Mist to the Grey Havens. My Unicorn and I circled the harbour in which three Elven swanships were docked, gleaming white in the Sunlight. One ship flew Galadriel's ensign, the second Elrond's ensign and the third Gandalf's. The sight of these three together caused me concern. It could only portend trouble ... I beckoned my mount to land upon Elrond's ship.

I found myself upon the deck, before Lord Elrond. The handsome Elf lord stood upon deck, looking West into the waves of the Great Sea. His raven hair was stirred gently by the ocean's breeze. He wore a grey traveller's cloak, over a silver blue tunic. As a sign of his rank, he wore a gold circlet, which held a white star jewel that sparkled above his brow. Vilya, the sapphire, elven Ring of Air sat upon his index finger.

"Blessed Be, my Lord Elrond," I said.

"Greetings and Blessed Be, Lucanus," replied Elrond. "It is good for you to come and bid us well before our departure."

"Departure?" I said. "But where are you going? What of the Dark Lord and the War of the Ring?"

"It is over, friend," Elrond said and sighed. "The powers of the West have prevailed, under Elessar's leadership. The One Ring was unmade, leaving the powers of darkness in confusion and impotency. The Dark Lord and his Nine Ringwraiths have faded from our world. We, the caretakers of the Three, and the Ringbearer himself are departing for the Immortal Lands."

"Without the One Ring, the Elven Rings have no power here," I said. "I remember now. But my lord, I've only had opportunity to speak to you once. There is so much yet for me to learn." I paused and swallowed back the

sadness I felt at the Elf lord's departure. "I will be unable to visit once you've crossed the Sea."

The Elf lord seemed confused by my remark. He took a moment to look deep into my eyes. Elrond smiled gently and took my hands into his own. "We will have opportunity to meet, Lucanus. My past is your future."

"I understand now why you are here, Lucanus," Elrond said. "I see that you are on the threshold of completing the First Ordeal."

"Aye, my lord, it is true," I replied. "I have learned much since I've dedicated myself to the White Lady and Green Lord."

"Is that true? Pray tell, in what manner does Magick function in your life?"

"I have utilized Magick to create a Circle, a space between the worlds. Within the Circle, I have invoked the Ancient Ones • the Goddesses & Gods, the Elementals, the nature spirits and the beloved dead. I laboured to create a deeper connection between myself and the spirit world, in order to better understand the Mysteries of the Starlight Realm.

"I have raised Magick to initiate the forces of change, to heal myself and loved ones of sufferings that took shape in mind, heart and body. Sometimes I was successful, and felt joy for the blessings made possible by Magick. But for those times I failed to initiate healing, I was reminded of my humanness, and the importance of pain in our karmic lessons.

"Magick has allowed me to temporarily set aside my humanity and allow Spirit to enter me, thus giving me the ability to shapeshift into a Godform or animal-ally. In such a union, I gain insight into the complex levels of my own being.

"I have learned that within the Circle, I can let down my defenses and allow myself to learn without fear of failure; to give expression to who I truly am. Such is the blessed freedom we gain as children of the Goddess.

"I have learned that Magick is a natural aspect of my life and can be initiated outside the bounds of the Circle. However, when I strive to perform Magick within the Circle, I endeavor to do so conscientiously, timing it to best utilize the energies of the Unseen. In this manner, change can manifest more readily, since it is worked into the natural flow of the Universe.

"I have been delighted when Magick provides my desires. But I've learned that there are times when desire should remain within the confines of the mind.

"I have come to appreciate the Magick power of words. Words contain the power to build or destroy. Experience has taught that words can cause change within myself and the world I inhabit. Even the act of putting words to paper can initiate the forces of transformation. I better understand the significance of choosing my words carefully, as I see them as an extension of my will. As I understand the importance of my word, in relation to Magick, I better understand the maxim, 'As I do will, so mote it Be.'"

"You have answered truthfully, Lucanus," Lord Elrond said, as I fell silent. "Your words reflect your experience. Yet there are new seas to cross,

and new worlds for you to explore. So much more," he said wistfully. Elrond smiled, "My dear friend, it is time for you to depart and speak with my kinswoman, Galadriel. But fear not, we will meet again." Elrond placed his hands upon my head in blessing. After exchanging a farewell kiss, my Unicorn and I left the Elf lord's presence.

I found myself on Galadriel's ship, below deck in a darkened cabin. The Elf lady sat before me, her soft beauty was like the Full Moon's light. Her eyes which reflected the candlelight, spoke of a secret Wisdom, known only to those who have seen the Blessed Isle. Upon her finger sat NENYA, the elven Ring of Water, whose adamant stone glittered like a distant white star. Lady Galadriel sat before an altar, which contained a candle, a rounded object covered by a dark silk and a burning censer. The incense reminded me of the scent of Mallorn tree blossoms in the Spring.

"Blessed Be, Lady Galadriel."

"Blessed Be, Lucanus," Galadriel said. "I have been expecting you." She removed the midnight coloured silk, revealing a crystal ball beneath. "Gaze into the palantir, Lucanus. It will disclose your kinship with the Divine."

I looked into the palantir, past the candlelight into the crystal depths. A blue-grey haze appeared and solidified, forming into an image...

... I found myself in a sacred Circle, the main ritual of last year's Gathering. A blond-haired priestess approached, her nakedness covered by a black cape. I recognized the priestess to be a dear friend of mine. Her being was filled with the power of the Earth and Full Moon. She stood before me, reciting the Charge of the Goddess.

Suddenly, my priestess-friend paused in her recitation and looked into my eyes, leveling her finger at me. "You. Do you know the Mystery?"

I was taken back by the question, for my friend and I never discussed my personal relationship with the Divine. My heart leapt with a mixture of fear and awe, for I realized that my priestess-friend was the Lady Herself! The Lady knows me! Startled, the image from the Gathering suddenly ceased.

... I removed my gaze from the palantir's depths and looked into Galadriel's face. She took my hands into hers and said, "Recall the words of the Star Goddess, 'If that which thou seekest, thou findest not within thee, thou shalt never find it without thee. I have been with thee from the beginning.'"

I smiled recalling the Lady's Charges. I calmed myself and returned my gaze into the depths of the palantir...

... I stood over my baby brother, pretending to be his Guardian Angel ... The scene shifted and I was in the backyard, pretending to be a priest. I raised the Chalice above my head in adoration...

... I stood before the high priest of the Sacrificed One for confirmation into adulthood. I looked into his eyes and was filled with wonder, for I saw Light... I met an aged master of the Enlightened One, whose teachings I held in high regard. Meeting him face to face for the first time, I felt a renewed sense of reverence as I felt his spirit pour forth the Light... At an interreligious gathering, I found myself attracted to a young priest from Nihon. I did not fully understand his language, but I was captivated for his eyes sang with the Light...

The Goddess returned, wearing the visage of my priestess-friend, "Lucanus, do you know the Mystery?"

My heart brimmed with love, as my heart found the words my tongue could not utter.

"I am the Virgin," She said. Her breasts and belly swelled. "I am the Mother." Her face became wrinkled with age, Her blond hair became gray and her breasts and belly shriveled. "And I am the Crone."

The Goddess' features became male. The God's eyes were red from tears, His dark hair was matted, and his sweat drenched face was contorted with anxiety. "I am the Sacrificed One." The God's face transformed. His face seemed ageless, but thin from hunger. His eyes were half closed in deep meditation, but shined with unleashed Spirit. "I am the Enlightened One." The God's face altered once more, becoming young and bearded. Horns sprang from His head, and his eyes danced with playfulness. "I am the Fecundity of Earth."

Simultaneously, The Sacrificed God, the Enlightened God, the Horned God, and the triple Goddess appeared before me. The heavenly assembly was surrounded by Light. The Light radiated from Their eyes and mouths - the same Light which I saw emanate from the eyes of the human priests & priestesses. This glorious host all joined Their palms before Their hearts, and spoke in unison, "All the Gods are One God, and all the Goddesses are One Goddess."

I returned the gesture, and bowed deeply in reverence...

The celestial vision faded and I found myself once more sitting before Galadriel. The Mallorn incense had been expended, but the candle burned, echoing the tranquility of my soul. Reverently, the Elf lady covered the palantir with the midnight coloured silk.

"Lucanus, you have passed my test," Galadriel said. "Take your leave with my blessing. Merry meet and merry part." With these words, she kissed my brow.

I bowed, "Merry meet, again." I placed my hand upon my Unicorn's neck and we left Galadriel's presence...



... I found myself back in my Temple, with my Guardian, who returned to his Angelic guise. I placed a spoonful of resin upon the censer, watching the incense rise, gathering my thoughts.

"My Journey was most instructive, beloved," I said to the Angel. "I have spoken of the importance of ritual and Magick in my Pathworking. I have reflected upon my faith and relationship with the Eternal, the Goddess & God. I even found the courage to embrace my Shadow, knowing him to be an integral part of my Self. Now returning to my Temple, I am faced with the future - the possibility of becoming a Priest.

There is much to learn, for I acknowledge that I am still a Novice. I need to learn to divine by the stars and to see the inner worlds through Tarot and crystals.

"I know that only a small part of Truth can be found in lore books and sacred texts. I need to look beyond the safety of my Temple, with its collection of statues, Magickal tools and books. I need to go outside and mingle with Nature. I need to acquaint myself with the spirits of Nature, and the children of the Gaia, to listen to their voices.

"My Path to Priesthood, like the journey through the Bardo of Death is a solitary one. But I have the benefit of signposts left by Lothlorien's disciples, both past and future. With the guidance of Goddess' Charges and those of the Poetryman, under the tutelage of my Mentors, I will complete the Ordeals and one day count myself among those who serve the Ancient Ones - the Wicca."

# Pathworking

## Novices Working To Learn of Wicca

A novice does not only walk a spiritual path, s/he must also do work along that path. There are stones to turn, weeds to dig, winding turns to explore. Only a novice knows what it is like to take those first steps along a spiritual journey. To the neophyte, a spiritual path will lead to a bright and happy future. The realities of spiritual evolution have not yet been woven into the bright ideals. Only one student can truly speak of Pathworking to another. We elders have lost our perspective as decades of memories accumulate.

As 1 Reflect	Gaelen	26
So Much to Learn, So Little Time	aslan	27
The Light	Aryn	30
Secrecy	Raven	32
The Challenge of The Novice	Lucanus	34
The Book of Shadows	Vivianne	37
The Amulet	Heronfriend	38
What Had 1 Gotten Myself Into?	Ladyhawke	40
Lothlorien, My Home	Aryn	42
1 Have Learned About Life and Death	Gaeien	43
Anatomy Of A Novice	Brin	44
You Have Not Arrived Here By Chance	Raven	47
Journeys Through Black and White	Heronfriend	49

### Pathworking

*In my 'educational years' of high schooling and college - even when I first entered the adult world teaching school - I was inevitably considered bright but was obviously an underachiever. I managed to get passing grades with very little effort. In honesty I did not know how to study and the subjects I was obligated to learn rarely stirred my interest.*

*In the early 1970's I began to develop a deep, spiritual hunger. One night, sitting around after work with some coworkers, younger friends of mine, I was asked if I believed in god. My response was based more upon the Laws of Thermodynamics ( $E=mc^2$ ) and an intermittent history of psychic awareness than any intelligent thinking beforehand. Yet, the*

*outcome of this dark-houred discussion was the realization that I did, in fact, have very strong beliefs. I knew that our energy, that same energy which could explain auras or ghosts, precognition or telepathy, was an energy which could not be destroyed at the body's death.*

*It was more than coincidental that this change of mentality occurred at the same time that, through a mail order book club, I acquired a biography of Aldous Huxley, a superb book written by Sybille Bedford. She carefully chronicled his conversion from being a bright young cynic to a deep thinking sage, one who studied Eastern religions, explored metaphysical disciplines, and Bedford showed how Huxley's view of reality changed in wondrous ways, documented by the changes in his essays and fiction. This book provided me with a reading list.*

*Beginning with books like the Bardo Thodol, the Baghavad Gita, the Tao, my studies truly began for the first time. By the time I celebrated my Third Degree Initiation at Eostara in 1980, I had read more books than I could have ever imagined, written papers, and lived, twenty-four hours a day as a student. One does not truly become Wiccan without effort, without extensive study, without many long hours of work. It is not work without joy, but it is work, nonetheless. We do not call our religion the 'Craft' for nothing, for one must learn skills and hone them, acquire tools and prepare them, and above all else, learn the ethics of our religion. No one can ever fully explain to the brand new student, whose eyes are glazed in a bright, rosy colour, the extensive work which lies upon this Path.*

*- Rev.  
Paul*

## **As I Reflect**

Gaelen

As I reflect upon my journey toward the Wicca, I realise that I must not ask whether I am worthy. It is not a question of my worthiness, but a question of whether my level of dedication and commitment will suffice as I follow this Path. The demands of the Path increase in difficulty, building upon prior experience with each step taken. Without proper commitment and dedication to progress, the Path »comes a burden; an indicator that some action must be taken to expand my efforts or accept

that the time has not yet come for this imey to be undertaken. Yet, I have a goal. And I feel a determination lin me. My love and yearning for the God and Goddess hold me to the 'ath and direct me to seek ways in which I may persevere. Advice is ren me, put into practice, and small successes bear proof that the is not impossible.

There have been many times when I have felt inadequate to iplete my journey along the Path of Wicca. And then, many times ft! I have been proven able to bring my desires to fruition.

The tasks I :e here are a true test of my abilities; for, if I fail here, I cannot even of reaching whatever end there may be to this journey. The ventures on the Path toward Priest/esshood are many and varied and mch worth the extra effort it may cost to experience them. I must keep in mind.

I have learned that I cannot continue to incorporate my desires both on the Path of Lothlorien and within my mundane life without structure, without first planning the many movements of which to keep track. As in Tai Chi Ch'uan, there exist many subtleties of form which are essential if mastery is to be achieved. When the student fails to consider each shift in movement of each joint and every fluctuation of the Ch'i while keeping perfect form, the goal will not be realised. It's as though we perform our tasks on the surface, but the true meaning behind them is without any accomplishment: a lack of dedication and structure. The Path requires this dedication and structure. If I am to succeed, I must put my efforts toward developing these requirements and to incorporating them into my daily lifestyle.

## **So Much to Learn, So Little**

### **Time On Being a Novice**

aslan

"So much to learn, so little time!"

Wait a minute. Wait several minutes! As I recall, my vows at Dedication did not include time lines with specific due dates; those were left up to me to set and achieve as I felt possible.

As a Novice, yes, I have a lot of reading, writing, memorizing, studying, practicing to do. However, my vow is to do my best work. If that means spending several years to complete everything, as long as I d\_o continue to work and make a consistent effort to have at least one step taken each turning of the Wheel, I am moving forward and keeping my word.

"A Witch is as good as her/his word." If I say I will complete a specific Sacred Key transcription for my Book of Shadows, a study guide, a quest, or a personal key, I need to do it. And I need to keep my word or be able to give VERY good reason why I am unable. If I can only finish 1/2 of a study guide, part of a transcription, a start at a quest or personal key, I need to convey this information, maybe even send the part that is finished, to my Mentor as evidence of my desire to continue teaming and of keeping my word.

Am I able to listen to Mystery School tapes on the way to work or in place of TV some evening? Do I read the Mystery School mailing each month and do my required reading? Am I participating not just in Mystery School activities and rituals, but also in Rowan Tree Church activities as much as possible? I am working, at least in part, toward my priest/esshood for serving the Church community. What example am I setting to others as a Wiccan? a Novice? a human being? Do I judge others as "slow" or "show-off" if their pace is different than mine? "Each of you has your own timing. You learn at your own rate." That is part of the Admonition^<sup>^</sup>. I must honor all who are making an effort, no matter what speed. I may judge only my own progress, not that of others.

Recently, I read (and saved) an article about exercising and why people don't stick with it. The article reminded me of Pathworking and Ritual. Allow me to quote (Substitute "Pathworking" or "Ritual" for "exercising" and I think you'll understand.):

"Begin slowly. Overdoing your first few workouts may lead you to quit." (Sound like burnout?)

"Remember that exercise does not have to be intense to be valuable. A moderate workout that lasts 30 minutes is beneficial."

(Got the time to practice ritual or study two or three times a week?)

I. *The Admonition* is part of the Book of Shadows of Lothlorien. You can find a published version of this in [A Wiccan Bardo](#) by Rev. Paul V. Beyerl, published by Prism Press.

"Find a role model who can support your efforts." "Find a workout partner for mutual support." (Communication with others in the path was required before I was ritually Dedicated as a Novice; why should it change after Dedication?)

"Don't expect to be good at your chosen activity right away." (Reviews of your work and practicing of skills are essential!)

"Set time aside to exercise and don't let other things interfere." (Setting priorities!)

And so on...

Our spiritual bodies need work just as our physical bodies do. Not too much, not too fast. "No pain, no gain" is not true for physical or spiritual work!

I think being a Novice means being joyful, not dutiful or pressured, to complete tasks and move forward. **THIS IS EXCITING!!** I want each step to mean something special and to bring new insight into the life I am leading. I am a Novice, a learner, not a champion (yet). I am joy-filled to be learning, serving, growing as I am able.

During all of this, I must show faith, imagination, will and secrecy. In other words, I must be as solid in this Path and my desire as a pyramid. Personal keys will be places to let imagination spark. Faith will show in ritual work. Will is something I can show by sticking with my tasks, not sloughing things off because they're not "flashy" or "showy" or because they will need attention for a long period of slow, steady growth. Secrecy means that my work, my abilities (and short comings) are not something I discuss, like the weather or current events, even at a pagan gathering. Humility and discretion are imperative.

Being a Novice, my questions and questioning need to be monitored closely. Am I whining? Do I have a "stiff neck" about some things? My encounters with my Mentor are times to express myself;



however, am I expressing growth and interest in The Tradition of i.othlorien or in my own ego-bound skills to show my "knowledge"? =espect for the Path and, especially, my Mentor is essential.

As stated back in the "exercise" section, communication with others in the Path is also necessary. Encouragement, accomplishments, fun- these are great to share.

A Novice - not yet Priest/ess

growing, learning, sharing when appropriate.

Preparing to move through this life and the lives to come in

Perfect Love and

Perfect Trust. Honoring  
the Lady and the Lord.

A great way to live!

## The Light

Aryn

I do not yet know where I  
am going or even just who  
I really am. I do not yet  
know if I am destined or  
even if I am to make the  
plan. But there is a light,  
I can see it faintly within the distance.

I continue to grow and struggle  
with every ounce of my being.  
I continue to learn and seek knowledge,  
trying to interpret just what I am seeing.  
But there is a light,  
I can make out a figure surrounding it.

I ask and seek with answers  
not always there.  
I ask and learn  
and through others I share.

And there is a light,  
its name I'm told to be Lothlorien.

I watch friends and lovers  
come and quite often go.  
But I also feel a brother/sisterhood,  
its beautiful face beginning to show.  
And there is a light,  
the figure draws ever nearer.

I find myself now  
looking into my own  
face. The light is  
blinding but I look  
and it is the heart of  
my twin. And there is  
a light,  
its name is Lothlorien and it is truly within me.

*ma&am.*

## **Safe Space**

*The mystery schools of ancient times required secrecy of their students. In these modern times, secrecy is often perceived as old-fashioned, but there are many virtues in having a novice maintain secrecy when pursuing a Path which leads toward Initiation. There is such an abundance of enthusiasm when one has first begun Pathworking. A novice is filled with the desire to tell everyone how wonderful this new awareness is. Most novices fall prey to the mistaken belief that this new, exciting Wiccan Path would be just what their friends need.*

*Secrecy does not require living in seclusion. What it does provide the student is safe space. One has the ability to make mistakes, to explore and to do things in privacy without anyone observing and making detrimental comments. It does not create isolation, for there are others on this shrouded path, and one learns the balance of speaking openly with fellow students, exploring the differences of speaking with one's sisters and brothers without restraint with that of learning to express one's spirituality in the terms of the 'outer world.'*

*These skills have given me many advantages, those which, when a novice, I could not grasp. Over the years I have*

*found myself in circumstances among those who would be both horrified and hostile upon discovering that my credentials as a clergyman were as a Wiccan minister - a Priest of Witches. But my experience with secrecy gave me skills in learning to express the religious mysteries and metaphysical wonders in terms acceptable even to the most conservative Christian.*

*- Rev. Paul*

.warm.

## **Secrecy**

### **Raven**

The main difficulty I have encountered in maintaining secrecy is finding the balance between keeping silent and in not offending my husband who, being unfamiliar for the most part with Mystery Traditions and being cautious by nature has been used to terms like 'cult,' 'deprogram' and 'Moonies.' A real concern exists when your partner and oest friend suddenly feels like he's on the outside because you're involved in something that you cannot discuss openly in every aspect. The best way I have come up with to explain this situation to him is that although The Mystery School does require secrecy, it is only secret in the sense that it must be actively sought out along the proper avenues, and the same options are open to anyone willing to make the effort. The very best way in which to avoid such a conflict would probably to be manage somehow to completely conceal any activities so that the existence of The Mystery School in one's life never would come to light. There are many instances and relationships that are not so intimate as marriage where this could be easily accomplished and should be adhered to. Silence regarding this training is a continual source of humility for me. Even among my friends who I think might be open-minded or perhaps interested, I must not let on that I am involved in something which will certainly have a profound affect on my life. I must entirely forego this opportunity to be interesting and special in the eyes of my friends who, for better or worse, would see me as being on the cutting edge of the New Age. If I were to break my silence, I would never be able to make others see this Path the way I see it, because their perspective is not mine. They are not here.

The maintaining of secrecy will serve to protect me in my formative years when I may be full of enthusiasm, but not of

wisdom. I will not subject myself to the negative energy, heckling or baiting of those who would wish to be destructive. I will not find myself trapped by my own lack of experience when attempting to teach that which I have yet to learn, thereby reducing the validity of the School as a whole. I will be surrounded only by those who have been there already, or who are travelling the Path along with me, and therefore I will feel safe to examine myself openly and honestly. Every success at Secrecy will make me stronger and more in touch with myself, and in silence may I find the atmosphere to best learn from the Universe.

### ***Mourn***

## **The Challenge of The Novice**

Lucanus

I entered my Temple, with tablet in hand, considering how to begin. To assist my writing, I made offerings to the Mother & Father - a lit candle, a Chalice of water, and burning incense. To calm myself and open up to creativity, I took up my Athame and performed the Ritual of the Lesser Banishing Pentagram...

...Through the Northeast portal, the Angel came. "Hello, Lucanus," he said, his voice filled with loving warmth. The Angel's face was a mirror image of my own. He wore the symbol of *The Wheel* upon his breast. A yellow-gold Unicorn pendant hung from a chain around his neck.

"Hello, beloved," I said, greeting my Guardian Angel with joined palms before my heart. He smiled and returned the ritual gesture.

"Another Key?" the Angel asked, looking into my eyes.

"Yes," I sighed, "On being a Novice."

"Surely this should be easy," the Angel replied. Seeing me shrug in response, he directed my attention to my Book of Shadows. He opened the Book first to *The Admonition*, followed by *The First Ordeal*, *The Attributes & Abilities* and *The Charge of Lothlorien*.

**"IQRAA" the Angel gently commanded, speaking in the Angelic tongue. He placed the Book in my hands. As I read through the handwritten passages, I reflected upon my Novitiate and began to write:**

***What is it, to take up the Challenge of the Novice?***

**It is to awake in the morning and feel joy in the sacredness of Sol's light; to lovingly embrace the cycles of Gaia; to retire in the evening, giving thanks in the soft glow of Luna and Her stars.**

**It is to bring the sacred into daily life, celebrating the self through the Child of Light and the Lesser Banishing Pentagram; to honour in ritual the living, as well as the dead.**

**It is to learn the Mysteries of the Witches' Pyramid; following the council of the Watchers, and the advice of one's Mentors, in the realms of Magick and mundane.**

**It is to keep that which is taught secret; for only in holy silence will the Novice grow in wisdom and strength.**

**It is to contemplate the meanings of 'Perfect Love & Perfect Trust,' and the Hermetic Principle; balancing these truths against how one interacts with himself, and other beings.**

**It is to embrace change; to love the Shadow, as well as the Angel, in self and others; learning to forgive failure with love, with as much fervor as one embraces success.**

**It is to understand the power of one's word; working to keep it pure, knowing it is capable of wondrous beauty.**

**It is working the Ritual of Lothlorien; raising Creation's Elements; understanding Unicom lore, and the Herbe Devas' Mysteries; weaving the Witches' Rune; and celebrating the Rite of Holy Cup & Sacred Blade.**

**It is holding sacred the Earth and Her resources; seeing the purity of Her flora & fauna; learning to live in harmony with our Mother Gaia.**

**It is looking with reverence upon one's Book of Shadows; filling it with Scriptures, Keys, Spells and Prayers; knowing that like the Circle, it is a Key to the Starlight World.**

It is learning to heed the Scorpio Moon Oracle; to observe the movement of one's birth stars; embracing the insights that will help guide the Novice along his Path.

It is honouring the Goddess and God, in Their many Names and forms; learning Wisdom through Their myths, as expounded in sacred texts and spoken word.

It is completing the Ordeals; knowing the joy of doing, as well as the joy of accomplishment.

It is living in the belief that one day soon the Novice will be embraced by the Wicca, the Wise, as one of Their own.

### **Working the Path**

There is much work along the Path, but not all of it is intellectual. Students of Wicca create a Book of Shadows, they are given magickal projects working with herbes and incense and amulets. The amount of work may sometimes be daunting when the student realizes that a commitment to hard work is necessary but, if the Path is right for the individual, it feels like one has come home.

## The Book Of Shadows

Vivianne

*I'm the one who writes my own story I  
decide the person I'll be What goes in the  
plot and what does not Is pretty much up to  
me*

### My Turn on Earth - A Musical

It is difficult for me to remember what things were like in the beginning. There was the void, the darkness from which I awoke. I awoke from the deep forest sleep into a world of sights, smells and feelings. The emotion was the real beginning. It always is.

I grew slowly at first, ink upon the page, separate pieces becoming a collective whole. I had form and substance... "And the word shall become flesh". Soft light, loving hands, whispered words, bound within black covers and time and space.

What is this world I have arrived in? I suppose no one knows for certain, who can say what reality is anyway? The light grows around me. I hear the voices of the others through the mist. I feel the stone of the temple altar and can perceive the others around me, others that are people who are unseen to the human eye for here on the astral all are magick.

I live in the shadows, I live in the light. I am a collection of knowledge, hopes and dreams. I am a method of expression, a reflection of a Tradition and an individual. I am a compilation of paradoxes and parallels. I am a Book and I am a being.

## The Amulet

Heronfriend

Here I sit. The Moon is full.  
The time has come to fill my amulet.  
Remember, "The amulet which is made  
is better than the one which is never constructed."

First is the leather - the skin of my creation.  
I trim it round. I mark it mine:  
I trace my feet which have brought me here,  
I trace my knees upon which I kneel,  
I trace my hands which fashion my Tools,



I mark my heart for Love,  
I mark my mouth for Truth.

I take the leather Circle to the East. I pass it through  
smoke of sage And open it up to Winds of change. I  
gift a feather to my amulet.

I take the leather Circle to the South. I pass it  
through the flame so hot. Enthusiasm I ask, like as  
not, And gift hot peppers to my amulet.

I take the leather Circle to the West. I sprinkle it with  
Water there, mindful of the journey I am about to  
take. I gift a water shell to show the West.

I turn the leather Circle to the North.  
Earth from the Jar I now bring forth,  
And sprinkle it for my return –For I know this is my  
Path, my Way.

To the East I turn and then the South. I place the  
leather Circle upon the altar. I sing for the Blessing of  
the Goddess. She grants me the sign in the Apple. I  
chant for the blessing of the God. He boons me the  
tooth of the Lion.

And who am I who stand thus blessed? One learns  
from kin before the rest: Leaves of Tea for  
Grandmother's Magick, Rings of Tobacco for  
Grandfather's Wisdom, Fresh strength of Pine for  
Father's Guidance, Warm Heat of Cinnamon for  
Mother's Love, Scale of Fish for Her Father's Craft,  
Forget-me-not for Her Mother's Lore.

How I've travelled since I left the nest! I place leaf of  
oak for recognition, I place robin egg shell for what I  
know best, Mistletoe for Magick stands, and  
Nightshade Counts .... for the Unknown.

"Full," you say? No, not yet. I've a  
few more things For my amulet.

Leaf of the Rowan I cannot forget. For the Pool  
beneath it -- a Pearl. Postage stamps from all about  
And Moon-gathered Bergamot Favored by Unicorns  
and hummingbirds ...

Self Heal I'll add -- three sprigs of this,  
For what I seek must be within,

If e'er I seek to find it there without ...

I chart my course to find my place, Where I  
stand and where I'll sit, 'Neath the Rowan Tree in  
company there --A Circle of Love and Trust in  
Sacred Space.

And I take you up, my amulet, I wrap  
you round about With string so very  
bright and red. So mote it be now all is  
said!

### **What Had I Gotten Myself Into?**

Ladyhawke

My first thought on this matter is one of owing an apology to our Tradition, The Mystery School, myself, and whomever else feels deserving of such wishes. Being a Novice is much more of a commitment than might be expected if one evaluates the work load based on the requirements of a Novice Supplicant. Was this a surprise? No. Was the degree of increase in the work expected of a Novice a surprise? Most definitely. I suddenly began to question my own sanity! What had I gotten myself into? Could I really handle the work in front of me, much less whatever would come with the Second Ordeal? I was really beginning to wonder. The feeling was somewhat as I would imagine being thrown into graduate school right out of high school might be. O.K. Time to step in and take a closer look at this seemingly endless and formidable stack of papers. First step, smaller stacks - one for the Guided Meditation and trancework, one for the Ritual of the Lesser Banishing Pentagram, and one for everything else. Suddenly, one overwhelming Ordeal became three smaller ones with less chaos than had been perceived previously. Manageable organization - I had conquered the first hurdle! Now I could proceed with much less apprehension.

I suspect that the determination which prodded me over the first hurdle was founded in the Ritual of Dedication. It is an extraordinarily beautiful ritual filled with love, hope, and the promise of becoming of the Wise Ones. How can we allow ourselves to dissatisfy our Divine Parents in any way when They give so freely to us? We have only to work to learn Their lessons, honor Them in all we do, and use responsibly that which we are taught. Our first step is to conquer the first hurdle.

Upon transcription of "The Novice" into the Book of Shadows, we begin to look at the personality and character traits that must be developed as part of the First Ordeal and continuing through the Pathworking. These traits and skills are those which will help us to better help others, to be better in touch with ourselves and thus better able to defuse the negative in

ourselves, to be more responsible for ourselves and our actions, and to begin to form a truly solid basis for our own Magickal development in all its manifestations.

By definition, a novice is one who is just beginning to learn or to do something. That is what we are doing - just beginning. We are taking the first steps on a lifelong path - one which can take us through many lives to come as well. It will be a path of joy, sorrow, hard work, mixed emotions and, yes, even some really wonderful times.

"You have not arrived here by chance. You have put yourself on this Path long ago.... We follow the path through the God and the Goddess, by all Their Names, and in growing we grow in brightness following the cycles of Sun and Moon, and in glowing in Divine Radiance."

## **Lothlorien, my home**

**Aryn**

For years I have been alone, For years I have been  
restless Always seeking a place to nest A place  
such as Lothlorien, my home.

Long before I found the Ways, Or should I say  
before they found me I had no clue to who or  
what I should be And now I live the brightest of  
days.

I studied my own death with no hopes of return, I  
lived day after day hoping it would all end Yet not  
until an almost was it found around the bend  
Within my own heart did the stirrings ever burn.

I needed guidance, spirituality and a need to love,  
I knew not of these things or where to find them. I  
had problems and knew the need to change  
them And soon I was enveloped with Blessings  
from above.

I chanced upon some folk who worshipped the  
loam, The winds and flames and waves upon the  
seas They told me of a place and whispered  
"Blessed Be's" It was then I met Lothlorien, my  
home.

And now I can think of nothing as so great As to  
commit myself to a Path of ritual and study To  
look upon in awe the powers of the Lord & Lady  
And to seek the road to be an Initiate.

Where once I did constantly roam,  
I now have a family so dear to my heart  
That I know can never be torn apart  
These folks, these Ways, these vows are  
Lothlorien,  
My Home.

**I Have Learned About Life and Death**

**Gaelen**

I write this having spent nearly two years working on the First Ordeal. Completion is not far away; a few more months of more dedicated work than I have been able to provide my studies until now will see the First Ordeal finished. It has been a time of growth, and a time of despair. Experience is not always enjoyable when on a path toward wisdom; but, those times which brought great amounts of joy to my life were as valuable as those times which brought disappointment and pain.

Aside from the lessons I have gained through the Mystery School itself, I have learned about life and death, and illness and recovery, from a more personal perspective. I have learned about family, and its importance; I have learned quite a lot about relationships, between lovers, friends, and relatives.

Had I not been a Novice within the Mystery School of Lothlorien, and of the Rowan Tree Church, I would not have been as apt to have acted in as responsible a fashion as I have. My experiences have presented me with extremely demanding moments which required an understanding, not only of people and of life's idiosyncrasies, but the Universe in its all-encompassing wonder as well, in order to help pull myself, and my family through.

My practices have been at the mercy of time allowance and my own scheduling inabilities; but this is now in the process of change, and I have been able to arrange to move myself in the direction of proper fulfillment of these requirements. Rituals have been one of the practices which suffered greatly, but I am now correcting that fault of mine.

Over all, the dedication to being a Novice is a serious and demanding dedication. There are truly few areas in which one can be lacking if they are to benefit from this first leg of the journey toward the Wicca. And, further along, I expect, those areas must disappear entirely, if the goal of becoming *of the Wicca* is to be met.

Serious dedication is exactly that. The requirements placed upon the students of Lothlorien are not few; however, the profit to be gained is enormous. My experiences these past years have brought me to become infinitely better as a person, and as a novice minister. I have learned an incredible amount about interaction with others, as well as interaction with myself on spiritual and mundane levels. It has been an experience which has indicated to me that this Pathworking is the direction my life must take for now.

### Anatomy Of A Novice

Brin

*"you're blinded by romance, you're blinded by science"* Ansalong -

"Shock Treatment"

I have found that the first obstacle facing people who are interested in Witchcraft is learning to deal with illusion. There are those who allow themselves to become trapped by the figments of the mind's eye, enthralled with the romantic picture of magic found painted in books. They ignore reality while striving with rose-colored glasses to see something that isn't there. And on the other end of the spectrum are the intellectuals who feed strictly on

books and facts, imprisoning themselves with self-imposed chains. They will never expand their horizons with creativity or imagination as they are bound by only what they can see and prove with facts.

*"Only the penitent man shall pass "*

'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade' One of life's most difficult lessons is learning to be humble. Humility is not being weak, nor is it submissive to the point of degradation. Humility with one's self is learning how to be a gracious winner as well as a good loser. Never denigrate another in order to lift your head higher above others. It is a love of self and selflessness. Humility with others is learning to respect, listen to and recognize those who have more life experience than you. Learn from them and show them respect so you will be respected in turn. Humility with the Gods is a respect for a power which you can not, at this point in your life journey, fully comprehend. Never deal for power. Dreams have a way of coming true and becoming nightmares.

*"Sometimes things are best said in silence"*

Brin

There are times when the best thing to say is nothing at all. We tend to forget that just a touch, a hug or a presence speaks volumes. A large part of ministry is counseling. Counseling is more listening to what someone has to say than dropping great tomes of wisdom in their lap. Knowing when to keep silent is a virtue we all need to cultivate. Words can be awkward and often hurtful things. Learning to listen and giving yourself time to consider the effect your words have on people is a true gift.

*"Though lovers be lost, love shalt not and death shall have no dominion"*

Eulogy in the Country

Love is forever. It crosses time and space, carrying with it the memories of lifetimes. However love does have its limitations. We must understand that life is not perfect (with perfection there would be no need for growth and change. See: Sharks, Evolution of) nor is life a movie with pat endings and easy solutions. The fact is, love does not conquer all. Sometimes evil wins. This is the way the universe maintains balance. Love cannot solve all the world's problems or even your own personal ones. Some problems need to be worked out by individuals and no amount of personnal love can fix them or make everything better. However, any act done, with no strings or ulterior motives attached, is never wasted. Situations might not have resolved themselves the way you wished but love sent out into the Universe is always returned - we just can't dictate the form it will take. Loving is also knowing when to let go and leave things in the hands of the Universe. There are things you cannot see and pieces of the puzzle that you do not have. I believe that things happen for a reason and sometimes you just have to believe that someone knows something you don't.

*"J\bw it's time to say goodbye to all our company"*

## The Mickey Mouse Club

The only constant you can count on in life is inconsistency and death is the great equalizer of both high and low alike. It is the one ultimate certainty of life and one of the most misunderstood. All through our life we say good-bye to people, some we see again, some we do not. In death we say good-bye to people we love and grieve at their passing. But to grieve for one who has fulfilled their destiny is taking honor from the dead. We should rejoice in their accomplishments and be grateful that we were able to walk with them on the road of life. Learning to view death for what it is - the soul renewing itself, a time of rebirth - makes us less fearful of our own mortality and better able to fulfill our destinies for this life. We need to learn not to say "good-bye" but "see you later and good journey". It is time for us to light the darkness of our life with the torch of true understanding, not to hide in fear of the darkness.

*"I must not fear. Fear is the mind killer. Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration..."*

## The Bene Gesserit Litany Against Fear

Fear. One of the strongest emotions of humankind and one of the most difficult to control. It is a primitive response that originates within our reptilian brain which sits at the base of our skull on top of our spinal cord. This lump of tissue about the size of your fist controls the parts of our personality which make us unpredictable and bring us closer to our animal brothers. Fear, anger, territorial jealousy and also nurturing love and the will to survive. When working with magic, one needs to be able to put fear on a short leash and keep it there. As the Litany says, fear is the mind killer. If you succumb to fear, you are helpless. On an astral/magical plane there are critters out there that feed on fear. Now you might say, "If I'm working white magic I won't have to deal with anything nasty, right?" Wrong. Just like in a Stephen King novel, the scariest monsters are the ones in your mind. As you plumb the depths of your subconscious you will have to meet the monsters of your mind including the most terrifying of all, yourself. There is an ancient myth that a warrior was only considered worthy for a quest if he could pass the most ardent of tests. He had to look into a mirror that showed his soul, pure and unadulterated. Anyone who could look and not run in fear or go mad was considered fit. Everyone must ask themselves what they would see if they looked into the mirror of their souls. Are you afraid of what looks back at you? Of the deeds you've done to yourself and to others? The strength in magic is trust, especially trust of yourself. Before you can move beyond being a Novice to becoming a Master, you need to face your personal demons and deal with your fear. Once you have fear under your control, the way is open to you to explore and reach your full potential.

## You Have Not Arrived Here By Chance

## Raven

There is much said about change. Since my beginning within the training, I have been made ready to look for and expect change, to accept and welcome it as a sign of growth... as an indication that I am progressing in my Pathworking... that something is happening. The very first study guide question that I encountered asked me about how I might already have changed my views regarding Magick & Ritual. And soon afterward, within the passages of The Admonition, I was told that I must "work at growing positive, even if it requires change..." and that I have demonstrated the capacity to make that change. "Each of you has earned that change allows you to be happier: to learn the Craft of Wicca, you must make changes."

*(And now a familiar, cliché'd phrase comes to mind: "the only constant is change." I was bound to change, no matter what Path I chose, there was no possibility of remaining static & unaltered. As a Novice of Lothlorien I have turned toward a bright future and, in the cherished atmosphere of service, countless gloomy alternatives have slipped away from the possibilities that make up my life.)*

As a Novice of Lothlorien, I am asked to contemplate change -cyclical change, linear change, Initiatory change... and I have been presented with a list of Attributes & Abilities that are no less the stuff of which saints are made. I have been worried that such change is beyond my capabilities. How have I changed? I must begin soon, surely! What if I fail to notice any change in myself? I know that I wasn't perfect to begin with, so if I haven't changed at all, then I'm in big trouble! Change! But wait... the state of being "without change" is impossible. I have been on this Path, in a conscious way, for several years and in The Tradition of lothlorien for a year and a half. I must trust the Universe that there are signs of growth... that I am progressing in my Pathworking... that something is happening.

*(Another cliché' comes to mind: \*the more we change, the more we are the same." I always vaguely had an idea that this means that we come Full Circle in our lives. A rather pagan concept! However, a passage from the Dedication of Lothlorien adds a further dimension:*

*"You have not arrived here by chance. You have put yourself on this path long ago. "We shall walk some of it together and rejoice. We first began in past sorrows, in past lives... We were of the Wicca, gazing at the stars, feeling deep, un-named secrets..."*)

The changes generated by our chosen path bring us closer to the truths about who we really are... and have been. There is a web of continuity throughout our incarnations that exists along side of, in tandem with and enhanced by the changes in the lives that we live. The work of a Novice, as we formulate our Highest Ideals and stumble toward the Attributes & Abilities, will serve us, even as we serve the Lord & Lady. The work of a Novice is a labor of change which ultimately will bring us back to ourselves...



and each experience will be the evidence of who we really are. Being a Novice is having the Earth as a looking glass.

■nam,

## Journeys Through Black and White

Heronfriend

Early in life, I was instructed in the necessity of Severity, Seriousness, the Reality of the physical universe, the Power of Force. I rebelled against the military career of my father and grandfathers. I chose a path of Mercy. I followed a Way of care-giving. I avoided the exercise of Force; but, I gave too much of myself. I did not keep enough for *me*.

In The Tradition of Lothlorien, I found pause and rest. I climbed the Middle Pillar of Healing. I look again at the White Pillar and the Black.

Our Tradition honors both the Masculine in us and the Feminine. Our Tradition rejoices in the relationship between the two Polarities. Their relationship is a Middle Way.

Observe the Mystery. Mercy and Receptivity are honored for their

merits. Severity and Action are honored for their merits. The Middle Way is celebrated because Here, the Attributes add to one another and interact with one another to create more than the sum of the Parts.

Think of this: If black and white mix entirely, all becomes grey. If some of the Black and some of the White mix, then the picture is enriched with grey as well as the original Black and White.

Think of this: Strive for balance. Any one Pillar represents balancing on a pogo stick. Any two Pillars represent relying on stilts. The Three Pillars, together, form a tripod. Rest upon the stool.

On the first page of my Book of Shadows, I wrote:

"Journeys through Black and White  
And reflections upon the Shadows  
in between..."

# Images of Divinity

## The God & Goddess of the Witches

Perhaps the question is not 'who' are the God and the Goddess but, rather, 'what' are the God and the Goddess. Those who come into Wicca from a Judeo-Christian background of monotheism (in which the word god refers to a humanized type of being) frequently have a difficult transition.

Our Earthly Mother	Mithrandir	53
Frogs & Snails & Puppy Dog Tails	Heronfriend	55
King of the Forest	as Ian	57
Lady of the Cauldron	Aryn	61
Morrigan [Or the Symbol of Initiation]	Heronfriend	62
Born of She With Many Names	Ishan	64
The Ram Snorted	Heronfriend	65
The Goddess	Ishan	68
Reflections Upon the Charges of the Goddess	Raven	70
A Big Floppy Hat	as Ian	72

## Images of Divinity

*/ was raised in a Roman Catholic environment, one with a strong emphasis on the feminine archetype, which maintained the old celebrations to bless the harvest. Our local church was Saint Mary's and she was a strong presence. Many years later, after more than a decade as a 'profound agnostic,' my childhood experiences lent themselves to an acceptance of the Goddess as an archetype for the aspects of Divinity which embraced the feminine.*

*When young, I almost always had altars to Mary, although I thought of her less as the Christ's mother than I did in a vaguely romanticized approach to something spiritual. At the time I could not have put words to this at all, but merely followed the forms and practices which I saw among my elders. There was something which simply seemed 'right in having a statue with flowers and candles. I also collected birds' nests, special rocks and stones and many things brought home from nature which seemed sacred to me.*

*As a young adult in the Sixties, I embraced ecological awareness and, in the Seventies, when I became part of the Wiccan religion, the concept of Mother Nature as an archetype was easy to accept in my life. While many relate to the Goddess in anthropomorphic symbols, such as Diana or Artemis, for me the Goddess remains as She is in our own version of the well-known Charges of the Goddess. In Lothlorien, these 'Charges' are also our laws:*

*I am the beauty of the green earth And the  
white Moon among the stars And the  
Mysteries of the waters And the desire in  
the hearts of humans...*

*Having never completely accepted the images of 'god' which were put before me when young, my love of nature gave relevance to the Wiccan symbols used for the God. Images of male deities, antlered and horned, balancing a spiritual, loving compassion with strong sexual energies. Now, these were images I could relate to.*

*In Wicca we have enormous personal freedom in choosing our symbols for Divine imagery. It is not necessary to relate to a Pan or Cernunnos, it is not necessary to worship an Isis or a Great Mother. Yet we are all born of mother and father and can elevate those archetypes to represent our own Divine Imagery, those symbols by which we personally extend our inner self to feel that wondrous connection with the great Universe. It is through these symbols that we open our understanding and recognize that the world is a manifestation of the Divine, that we are an intrinsic part of the Universe. 'God' is nothing without us, but we are nothing without our own personal definition of Goddess and God.*

*- Rev. Paul*

## Our Earthly Mother

Mithrandir

For most Pagan and Wiccan groups there is a consensus that the Earth is Sacred. Some may view it, simply, as the plane upon which we live this existence and some may view It as being the direct manifestation of the Ancient Goddess. The last statement, however, has deep and far-reaching implications. There is a deep mystery involved in Earth-oriented religions, for if this is the case, the very Earth becomes Sacred, an Altar and vehicle for Divine Insight and joy. And if there is a Mother, then there must be children. Those of us who call ourselves children of our Earthly Mother ought to strengthen this relationship as we would hopefully maintain mundane ones. This can most certainly be accomplished by aligning ourselves to the various cycles of the Earth through ritual and meditation on the wisdom encompassed in the seasons. It is from our Earthly Mother that we are born; it is She in whom we move and live and have our being; it is She Who feeds us and it is to Her that we shall again return, for the Earth is the womb of all life and the cauldron of the seeds of tomorrow.

*"Mama!  
From my heart,  
From my blood, Mama  
I will call you...  
My heart of your heat  
Limb of your Northwind  
Water of your Water  
Cunt of your Hillside  
Cock of your Springtime  
Eyes of your Stars,  
Mama  
Eyes of your sun, Mama  
Of your Sol, Mama My  
soul of your Sol  
Mama...<sup>9</sup>*

S. Stern

The convenience of the period of time that we are presently living in has most certainly influenced our lives which are now very fast paced and basically quite hectic. The advancement of technology at such a rapid rate has produced some wonderful inventions for today's population: there is scarcely a house that does not have a microwave oven, a VCR or some such thing. Yet amid all of this advancement there has only within the last five years been an active awareness that, in our pursuits of convenience, we have been polluting and destroying the very Planet upon which we live and, in another perspective, we have been spreading disease throughout the body of our Earthly Mother.

For those of us who hold a spirituality based upon the Earth and Her cycles and gentle ways, this should be unacceptable and, to go one step further, our own needs should be subject to those which are benevolent to our Earthly Mother and ALL Her Children - including those not of human form. For myself, I am basically middle-class, city dweller, two-car apartment renter and I have extensively looked at my daily actions and how they will affect the Planet in the long run. A lot of changes have been made using just common sense, yet some will also require a little effort and time. The city in which I live has an excellent recycling program for paper, glass, tin and such. I am also fortunate to have a chemical disposal program in effect for things like batteries and nail polish as well as car oil

I have looked into the alternatives for household cleaners and strictly use things which break down into natural, non-toxic byproducts such as vinegar and baking soda. Within my house even the cats are getting in on the action with cat litter made of recycled newspaper. The thing that requires the most expense to maintain is the regular upkeep on my car. The other factors I have considered are the amount of water that runs so I am not running to the phone while that tap is on and I have had all my washers replaced. I also try as much as possible to recycle my use of plastic bags and I monitor the places which offer plastic or paper.

I have personally found that, with a little common sense and a little research, I feel pretty good about the changes I have made in my lifestyle. I would not go out and order food from a restaurant which would make my body ill, so why should I do this to my Mother's body -for I must inevitably return to Her.

## **Frogs & Snails & Puppy Dog Tails**

### **Heronfriend**

I have seen few nights as dark as the one when I stood on the shore of the lake. It was the time of the dark of the moon. A light drizzle fell. I didn't feel any colder or wetter as I swam across the lake toward the noise of the small waterfall. I probably scraped my knees on the rocks as I clambered up beside the base of the falls. I felt my way along the rock face, walking a narrow ledge into the falling water. My feet and hands were numb by the time I fell forward into the cave behind the waterfall.

I took a moment to catch my breath. The waterfall still roared loudly but there was another sound as well - chanting. My eyes detected a faint light across the cave. I followed a tunnel coated with a pale green glow. Another bend, and the tunnel opened into a cavern. I blinked at the roaring fire with a

great black cauldron bubbling upon it. Circling around were three figures in black.

They turned. One said, "Look! Just what we need! Some frogs and snails and puppy dogs tails for the pot!"

"How did you come here?" questioned another. "He told you where we were, didn't He?"

"So, now you've found us, what do you want?" challenged the third.

"I come in Peace to ask your Company and your Blessing," I petitioned.

"Our Company, does he!" they chorused.

"Do you want me to be your dancing girl?" asked the Maid.

"Do you want me to be your mother?" asked the Woman.

"Do you want to tell me what to do and to pick up after you?" asked the Crone.

All things have their season and their time," I replied. "A Man no more wants a Child as a Lover than he wants his Mate to be his Mother. I can pick up after myself. Walk your own path, but there are times I value Companionship, even 'when I'm sixty-four.'"

"Fine words!" said They. "What token have you that this be true?"

"Words!? You, who can see my heart, ask for a token?" I guess I yelled as I threw my Book of Shadows into the Cauldron. (Yes, it did come out of thin air.)

The contents of the Cauldron bubbled and roiled. A dense steam rose filling the cavern.

The three were gone. In their place stood Bridget, with the freshness of youth, the wisdom of age, the form of a mature woman. She embraced me and planted a kiss.

"You are hasty," She said. "You will be needing this."

She handed me my Book of Shadows, whole and dry. "I give you my blessing," She continued. "I also tell you again, remember, just as the people and the Gods are One; so too, the Land and the People are One. Go and heal the Land. Heal the People."

"Now, I have work to do tonight. I will meet you in the orchard under the Full Moon, my Verger."

## King of the Forest

aslan

This overcast evening in March, i was feeling restless, i decided to take a walk to the back of the property. Since it was not raining, a rare occurrence for this time of year, i headed toward the back in just a sweatshirt, jeans and a pair of gardening boots.

First, i walked past fruit trees that were just starting to blossom; in a few nights, they would seem to be fluorescent with their white and pale pink blossoms. Past the garden beds, where the soil was still too damp for anything from seed; the herb perennials, however, were already covered with new small green shoots. Past the compost bins, now after Winter so much lower than the Autumn when filled with the last of garden refuse.

Now, i was in the back field. The grass growing higher and higher. When would there be enough dry, sunny days in a row to be able to mow it? The hawthorne trees were just beginning to bloom, the flower beds beneath them starting to color even in the evening semi-dark. The blackberry vines were also sending out their first shoots. Life, strong and surging, was apparent in every direction.

Finally, i reached the woods. Less light under the trees, especially as the Sun had recently gone down. The path, however, seemed clear and apparent, well worn from many such walks. My imagination was active if i thought i detected a slight glowing to it; there were just less bushes with leaves hanging over the path. Right?

At the back end of the property, where it had been for more than ten years, protected (barely) from weather by overhanging evergreen branches, was my stone Circle. It had been a project which had been inspired by a former relationship, but which had remained as an important part of my spiritual life, i always left it 'protected' against others who might decide to cut across the property, i walked to the East side of the Circle and, using my hand, cut an opening in the protective energy. After passing through the 'gate,' i reseated the Circle, i walked deosil around the inside, invoking the Watchtowers to come and join the Circle, asking the Elements to assist me as i sought to look within myself and still the restlessness of spirit. Finished, i knelt at the center of the Circle, facing the North, eyes closed, seeking balance.

He was there, i didn't need to open my eyes to feel the change in the atmosphere, the difference in the energy of the Circle, the sudden cold-sweat and goosebumps all over my body, i could still here a bird singing goodnight somewhere in the treetops, but here, in the Circle, i could also hear His husky breathing, as if He had just come running through woods to this place. His musk was in my nostrils, the rustling of last years leaves on the ground under His hooves louder than the breezes working in the branches overhead.



As i opened my eyes, i was surprised that He was not a giant, His presence was so commanding. He was smiling a half-smile as He regarded my kneeling figure, almost as if checking to see how i would react. In fact and in Truth, there was only one way that would be appropriate for me in His presence.

Putting my head lower, i was at a place where i could see the cloven hooves i had pictured in my mind for so long, their surface looking like polished leather, exquisitely rounded and delicate, yet sturdy enough to dance through the ages of Time, i touched my lips to His right and left hooves, murmuring, "Blessed be Thy hooves that have brought Thee to this place and which will lead me in the dances of all my lives." i heard a sharp intake of breath above me, but, when He did not step back, i continued.

Lifting my head slightly, i touched my lips to the warm fur covering His knees, first right, then left, my nose was tickled by the bristly hairs of His thighs. The words were coming from deep within my heart. "Blessed be Thy knees which have bent in dance and merriment for ages past, which may bend in Her Honor when needed, which will teach me lessons in humility." This time, a grunt of ... what? Approval? i could only hope that was the sound.

Up to His groin next, i gently eased forward to honor the phallus hanging there. "Blessed be This, the Center of so many Pleasures and the Co-creator of the Universe." This time, it was an animal growl, but not to frighten, more to show enjoyment. The phallus lengthened slightly before my eyes.

Rising full onto my knees, i was now looking at a muscular chest. Leaning forward, this was a kiss to the left and right pectoral. My murmured praise was of utter love and devotion. "Blessed be Thy chest, wherein lies Thy heart, full of Passion and Love, which shall beat through the Eons and inspire Life." Out of the corners of my eyes, i was sensing the trembling of His hands and arms, as if He were holding Himself back.

Rising to my feet, i was actually face-to-face with Him. i was surprised that He was my height, but maybe He is everyone's height when they meet Him, i thought quickly. This would be the most forward of blessings. Would He tolerate it? Lips met lips, briefly. The words came out: "Blessed be Thy mouth, which speaks eternal truths and sings the songs to which She dances, which plays the melodies of the woods and drinks of Her Elixirs of Life."

i took a step back as He studied me, looking deeply into my eyes to see what was there, i felt as if He had undressed me and i was naked to my soul before Him. The smile was gone, replaced by a serious look of questioning; the arms and hands were indeed shaking slightly, as if only by great will could He control them. The phallus had risen, the head emerging from the foreskin. Now, indeed, He looked a King of the Forest. The branches shadowed behind his head seemed to give the image of antlers rising, though He had a pair of up-curved horns already growing from His forehead. The heat and musk of Him was stronger than ever.

Now, in answer to my step back, He took a step forward. His arms encircled me. Indeed, i must have somehow lost my clothing, for i could feel His chest and legs brushing against my skin, His phallus closed between us like a knife pointed upward. In my ears, i could hear His breath coming deeply, along with a deeper purring rumble. Then, though i could not tell if He actually spoke or simply entered my mind, there were Words: "Be careful what you ask for, boy. you might get it! you have honored Me deeply; truly i will keep you all of this life and in the lives to come, you are Mine for Eternity."

How much later, i could not tell, i was alone, i felt as though i had been with Him for years, yet i felt the ache of having to let Him go so soon. But had i let Him go? That sounded too much as if i could order His comings and goings. No, He had left when He was satisfied, sated, completely my Lord and God. i arose from my knees, left the Circle intact, and returned in the dark to the house. My mind was whirling, spinning with images of years to come, lives past. He would have me as His servant as long as He desired. Knowing the choices were no longer mine, but my Lord's, i was at peace.

### **Lady of the Cauldron**

by Aryn

Oh, Cerridwen, Lady of the Cauldron, To  
Whom I sing my praise in ritual Her  
strength I raise 'neath Her Moon shall I run.

Oh, Cerridwen, Lady of the Cauldron, so  
Blessed now is my life She took away my  
pain and strife She fills my heart with Her  
song.

Oh, Cerridwen, Mother of the Bard, of  
Whom shall show me death and in rebirth  
will give me breath for the Initiate's Path is  
often hard.

Oh Cerridwen, Goddess of Light,  
to She will I turn when I need to know  
upon which fork of the Path shall I go when I  
am blinded by the darkness of night.

Oh, Cerridwen, Lady of the Cauldron, to  
Whom I sing my praise in ritual Her  
strength I raise 'neath Her Moon shall I  
run.

## Morrigan [or the Symbol of

### Initiation]

#### Heronfriend

*7fs dangerous to invoke the Goddess as you conceive Her to be," said Tav, "and more dangerous still to invoke Her as She truly is."*

*"Right enough," said Airu. "Breathing is dangerous too. But necessary..."*

Tales from the South

x, 1 1 8

in The Door into Shadow by Diane Duane

I was driving to work. It was a fine, bright morning with the dew lying heavily on the long grass beside the country roads. I saw something black on the shoulder of the road ahead. As I passed, I saw that a crow had been run over. Mentally, I opened a passage in the West and wished the crow safe journey toward the Summerland.

On my way home, I saw that the body of the crow was still there. I stopped and took a pail and a shovel from the trunk. The black feathered form was ripely fragrant from the day in the sun. I buried the crow in soft soil that evening under the moon and stars.

I slept that night and dreamed. I felt a determined pulling at my hair. I tried to brush whatever-it-was away. It came back and pulled again. I opened my eyes. I was lying on a cot in a small hut. The crow jumped toward me as though to tug on my hair again. I mumbled something about getting up. I followed the crow out of the hut. It cawed, strutted and hopped down a well-worn path toward a stream.

The night was dark. Light from the stars was spare. I did not see the moon. I followed the crow as much by sound as by the starlight glinting from its feathers. There were sounds at the water - a low singing, splashing. A figure in white was washing something in the water. The crow perched on the figure's shoulder.

"Who have you brought me?" She asked the crow as She turned and saw me.

The crow squawked.

I made a similar noise as I took my breath in. Her presence was overwhelming. Her raven black hair framed moonwhite cheeks and grey eyes - such grey eyes. But Her presence wasn't so much the Vision She was as Her aroma. An enveloping aura of depth and textures of scent. Scent? No, the word usually used would be "stench" and that does far from doing justice to Her awful atmosphere. Her breath was septic; Her perfume - compost; Her sex had the sharp edge of decay. And yet, I felt no terror, no revulsion. I felt so intensely aroused that I would have put the Cerne Giant to shame.

"Be with me," I said.

She opened Her arms and Her robe and embraced me. She murmured in my ear, "Mmmmmmmmm. So you do remember a little. That must be why the crow brought you here. I could take you now... If you want... But you would have to walk this path another time before we meet again. You are not yet mine."

"I have been yours since the beginning," I countered.

"So you have," She smiled. "I give you back your memory then."

I felt my heartbeat pound in my ears as she drew my heat from me. Such drumming and crashing as though the very mountainsides trembled, the valleys reverberated, caves echoed, The rhythm was picked up by pyramids, transmitted by volcanoes, reverberated through the roots of dandelions and the Rowan trees, and focussed at the core of me Earth. In the end the sounds in my ears came into phase with the humming of the Cauldron producing a profound peace and quiet...

"Remember, I am also the peace at the end of desire. Since you can remember, meet Me these New Moons. Join our Work. I will teach you more of your memory, the Earth, and the Cauldron."

## **Born of She With Many Names The**

**God**

by Ishan

Born of She with many names. With  
cloven hoof and crescent horn, Feel  
the power of the untamed One, Feel  
the depth of desire.

Eternally orbiting the Mother and the Maker He the  
traveller of the Seasonal Wheel, He the life force and the  
cycle of that life itself, He the Oak and the Holly Lord.

She is the Mother and the Mark, He is  
all that is born and that dies, He the  
sacrifice to life, That life may continue.

God of the Hunt, eyes as flame,  
Lord of the Quest, He who  
teaches the Mysteries, And dies  
imparting wisdom.

Death Lord is He, Guardian  
of the Holy Gates Consoler of  
the wanderer, Giver of rest.

Brother yet Lover,  
Father yet Son,  
Seed yet Grain, Sky  
yet Sun,

He is the Dancer of the Cosmic fires,  
He change in motion, Look within He  
is you.

6^

## **The Ram Snorted**

### **Heronfriend**

The words of the old Beatles song repeated in my mind, "Pleasant Valley Sunday-ay-ay." The weekend squire goes out to mow the lawn . . .' Or was it, 'cut the grass?'

Anyway, here I was, having refused to spread 'Weed'N'Feed' on the lawn or contract 'The Weed Man' to spray poison on the back yard, faced with an expanse of dandelions. Most of them had gone to seed but the grass was still sprinkled with the bright sunny yellow flowers. As a concession to the public works department, I was in the process of mowing the grass. No noisy power mower for me this year. I had decided to go back to the push mower and get some exercise.

The grass was so wonderfully lush after the Spring rains! Push! Again! Push! The grass had dried enough under the early spring sun to begin to look like a patch of lawn, shaved turf, after a couple of passes with the mower. Did that look after the dandelions though? No way! The bed of grass cushioned them just enough for them to lie down under the mower ready to spring up again.

I found that after the couple of passes needed to cut the grass, I could push the mower quickly forward to spin the blades fast enough so that as I drew the machine back, it would send the dandelion heads and stems flying. It was a shame, but this was beginning to look more like a lawn. The afternoon blurred into a mantra of, 'Push, Push, Push, Whirrr... Push, Push, Push, Whirrr...' They talk about how hard life is and the kids just don't understand..." Lawn mowers and Beatles - what a combination!

Well, by the time it was getting dusk, I was feeling wonderfully exercised. I decided that I had created enough mayhem among the dandelions as the mosquitos started to come out.

It didn't take me long to fall asleep that evening. It was probably even less time before I began to dream... Push, Push, Push, Whirrr... Push, Push, Push, Whirrr... The grass was becoming a dark green carpet as the sun was setting, so dark it looked like the black night sky. The dandelions caught the last of the setting sun's rays, looking like little suns themselves. I was holding the handles of the lawn mower, pushing, pushing it over the night sky.

Pushing, and it was pushing back! This must be a patch of long grass, I thought to myself. I pushed harder. It pushed back even harder. The lawn mower handles were more curved now. They pushed against me. I was holding the horns of a great beast. Push and Shove. We were engaged in a shoving match in the Milky Way. The dandelions had become stars, each a little sun. Push. Shove. The Ram was getting impatient. Push. Shove. I was no longer the one cutting dandelions. The Ram was trying to eat them. This huge animal was trying to eat whole suns! I was holding it back, trying to save suns and planets. Push. Push. Shove. I was beginning to tire. My feet slipped. The Ram kicked my shin.

"Owww! That's not fair!" I protested.

The Ram snorted, "Who said anything about fair, little one?"

"It's You!" I exclaimed, "Leave the stars alone. Eat dandelions."

The scene changed.

Cernunnos chuckled as He sat down under the apple tree on the freshly mown lawn. "Well done, little one. I wondered how many suns you would let me gobble before you saw through it. You put up quite a tussle. Better still, you saw through it. I remember the first time you were high flying. You slipped out past the moon toward the Milky Way almost before I saw you to herd you back."

"With all the gentleness of a fly swatter," I complained.

"Gentle? If you only knew the dangers of high flying without the sight... Never mind now. The stars are fine. They are our heritage and our origin. But we did not stay there. We searched for ages before we found this Earth, the goal of our travels, your Mother's Jewel."

"I thought that was the Moon," I contradicted.

"The Moon does help to set the cycles. Let me show you something," Cernunnos gestured. Then we were standing in a lunar landscape.

"What do you see?" He asked.

"Bare rock," I admitted.

"Look over your shoulder," He continued. "Behold your Mother's true Blue-Green Jewel, the Earth. Remember this. Just as the Gods and the People are One, so too the People and the Land are One. You are nearly ready now, Little Lion. Go and make your peace with Her."

## The Goddess

### OMNI DELECTAMENTUM IN SE HABENTUM

Ishan

Here in the solitude of my devotions I kneel. In the darkness I find much comfort; by the light of the Moon I sing my hymns, deep tribal chants long forgotten by most. I feel Her tides, the Luminous One has almost come to ripeness. In the darkness I know that the Tribes of the Moon are gathering all around: to seek visions, dreams, to cast the bones of insight and inner knowledge. I am a part of this ancient Rite - I am devoted to the gentle and mysterious ways of the Great Goddess -Mother Earth, Sister Moon.

I can remember my childhood and adolescence and the deepness of the feelings that so much set me apart from my peers. I recall being outcast for my strange ways of singing to the trees and dancing in the lustful rain. My only concern was for completion, though at that time I was still very naive as to what these desires that ran in my blood were, and I had no Name for them.

And later in my life, again I was set apart from those with whom I had some interaction. I realized that I was the Lavender Prince - he who walks between the taboo of designated sexuality and here I stand a wanderer in the world of the erotic. My life mirrors the purple dawn, for I am neither night nor day. I am the mysterious twilight, in a place 'twixt two worlds. And this much you may know - in my heart I do sing the praises of Aphrodite Urania. Yet through all the experiences of this life, I come now to kneel in the solitude beneath what the sum of this life's experience has brought me to and I chant my lonely and wordless hymns as the Moon rises; for it is here that I find completion - and now I name it as the Great and Mighty Goddess of the Earth and of the Moon, and in Her breast I find all of my deepest desires realized, I have drunk from the salty waters of Her Womb and find my thirst for Her growing greater. Can you feel the sensuality on the wind? Do you sing its song as I do? Do you feel the same awe as I in the early morning mist? Do you follow the Mother's love through the seasons as I? My life is truly chained to this quest that my feet have been placed upon long before my conception.

It is truly at times like this that I dance the spiral dance to Her -the Center of All Things. And even when the trials of ordinary matters weigh heavy upon my aching shoulders, I still find the strength to hold my Athame in one hand and continue on with my journey. I have realized that I have unknowingly brought this life into alignment with those of the Tribes of the Moon. I have connected to this world in Mother Earth and implicitly become a part of the swirling of the Universal Machine. I have come to realize that I cannot speak of just one aspect of Sister Moon, for She exists for me in more aspects in this life than I could possibly name, and I find Her also within for I too encompass all the elements of Her very nature.

All that I am permitted to say as I kneel and chant in my ecstasy is that I hear Her voice singing with mine in the distance.

### **Reflections Upon The Charges of the Goddess**

by Raven

Allow me first, to define the word 'law': "All rules of conduct established and enforced by authority, legislation or custom of a given community, state or other group." [This is from Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd College Edition.] As for the word 'charge,' this is my own expression of the most appropriate set of definitions from the same source: to burden with a task or duty which includes the assumption of responsibility ... to instruct or command with authority ... to place liability upon someone.

To be a Witch, to be someone who would have his or her lives be in the service of the Lord and Lady, requires a process by which an individual learns to live by a specific code. The position of utmost significance given to Trust, Honor and One's Word in this religion means that the 'laws' by which we order our lives are of the highest imaginable import. The Charges of the Goddess are our Laws and, when we read or hear them, we are meant to internalize the essence of each statement. They are True, and these Truths are what we find at that bright center of the Self. This is how it is that the Divinity dwells within each of us.

That these Laws are Charges as well is a reflection of their source. The Universe provides ... inspiration, challenges, quests, laws. These Laws & Truths do not come to us from the minds of great men. They come from the Life Force. We may call them Universal Laws ... we may say that they come from the Collective Unconscious ... we may say that they are divinely inspired ... but it is this which burdens us with the task of living the Charges of the Goddess.

If Wicca were a place, then the Charges would be the Law of the Land and the Lady would stand at the gate and bid welcome to all, but with the understanding that to dwell in this place is to abide by the Laws. And with that knowledge is responsibility for one's own conduct and liability for all outcomes which may result. And Wicca is a place...

Regarding the etiology and evolution of our Sacred literature, it would surely be nice to be able to trace parts of our ritual poetry and prose to paleolithic nature worshippers or even medieval Witches. But, because our particular Tradition is so full of modern literature, we of Lothlorien have overcome a good deal of the sentiment which equates antiquity with validity. Much of the ritual and mythology of our own Tradition is, as yet, unwritten... therefore how can I be disappointed to learn that our Laws may have been put into words by a modern Witch? Doreen Valiente is a poet... she has the ability to recognize our deepest beliefs and those essential truths to which the oldest and innermost parts of our being respond. And so, she plucked them from the Four Winds as they blew by, sweet with the scents of Wisdom and Magick. Because she (or whomever) put them on paper, are we to assume that she tossed them upon the Winds in the first place?



Let us then, for a moment, set aside the discussion of from whence and by what means we come by such a treasure as The Charges of the Goddess. Let us revel in the depths of its honesty and be moved...

*/ am the beauty of the Green Earth,  
and the White Moon among the Stars,  
and the Mysteries of the Waters, and the  
desire in the hearts of humans...*

I will tell you why these words are so painfully beautiful. They are that which has made each of us different from those around us, as we have travelled toward this Path for the space of a lifetime. We are the lucky ones... that vestige of our primordial past ignored, shunned or denied by others, remains alive and vital within us. And, when we were different from our playmates and fellows, when we were sensitive to that which was lost to the rest of the world, these words... this Goddess... was the Love and boundless Willingness to Be which set us apart.

And then we learned of the Wicca, and had that marvelous experience of 'coming home,' and of having found a place where we belonged. We came to know that it was She Who had been there all along, when we were confused... when we were different... when we were misunderstood. It was the beauty of the Green Earth, and the White Moon among the Stars, and the Mysteries of the Waters, and the desire in the hearts of humans... in our own hearts... which had been our longing, our comfort and our Mother. When we were children, lost and errant, our Mother was calling to us. And now, home in Wicca, we recognize the voice we had always heard calling, and see in our Goddess the face we had always loved.

I do not know how to describe a personal relationship with the Goddess, nor would I presume to say 'I know Her well.' But, I love Her well. I feel Her in everything that makes me happy... the seasons, my children, lovemaking, all of Nature. I know She is there, also, behind sadness, grief, and loss. I would have to say that, although my small understanding of such things is slowly expanding, or changing at its own pace, I have sought for the Great Mother for most of the years of my life. And, happily, when I speak the Charges of the Goddess, I do not feel small or unfit... I feel beautiful and old and wise. They are only words, but somehow they are more... in the Magick of the Circle, when I read the Charges as an Invocation, I am not looking to ask the Goddess to step daintily into the Sacred Space from somewhere out of the darkness of the night. I am looking for Her in myself... I am giving myself permission to manifest the Goddess in ME... knowing that the energy is everywhere but that She wants to be with me in the circle. And, it is my hope that with much practice, in time this energy may be with me at other times... that I may see the world through eyes that have greater vision than my own and with a better understanding.

## A Big Floppy Hat

aslan

"Good day, Sun shine, dum-de-dum-de, Good day, Sun shine ..... "

Yes, i'm old enough to remember. Yes, i still enjoy some of their music. Yes, that is how i feel sometimes.

This particular morning seemed to fit the song, i had been awakened by a cacophony of bird song; they like to sit on the telephone wire that comes to the house, which just happens to be right beside my bedroom window. The sun was already up and shining in through the South window; i had slept later than i thought, but that was alright, since this was Saturday. Maybe my body was trying to catch up with the hectic schedule it had been pushing all week. Wow! i could actually spend some good quality time in the yard today.

Late March, and this was the first dry, sunny weekend that i didn't have anything else planned. The grass needed mowing, but that would need to wait until a day following several non-rain ones - unfortunately, probably mid-April. Ah, well, it will get done eventually. As i walked into the bathroom, warm from the sun shining in through the West window (its ONLY window), i glanced out at the beds, thinking about how to organize the day to get the most done.

Wait a minute! Who was that out in the yard? What would someone be doing in my yard? It wasn't one of the neighbors, that was obvious. Too tall, hair too long, and none of them would dress like that, i quickly finished what i was doing, hustled to the back door where i keep my gardening clothes, threw on jeans, an old t-shirt, an even older sweat shirt (at least until the air warmed a little), a pair of gardening socks and work shoes. Grabbing a pair of gloves, i scooted out the door and around the corner. Now, whoever-it-was was in the raised beds, fiddling with the heroes. Of all the nerve!

i tried to stay calm as i walked over to the garden. A big floppy hat, the kind women have worn in old garden pictures, the kind that can be tied under the chin with a ribbon (the way it was now) or left loose as a broad-rimmed sun-shade. A dress that was deep forest green, long enough to cover the feet and drag on the damp ground or the wet grass (yet it appeared quite dry). A belt which looked more like a yellow-green cord tied around her waist to keep the dress pulled together. Hair that was long enough to hang down behind her back and on her shoulders; hair that looked as if there were a few strands of silver in it, but mostly a golden brown color.

When She looked up, i can't remember now what i felt, but there was no indignation, anger, concern left in me. Curiosity, amazement, those types of feelings. She looked as though She belonged there. Yes, that sounds cryptic, but that was what i felt. All that i wanted to say to an intruder would

have been incorrect to say to Her. The lines around Her mouth and eyes gave the impression of someone who has laughed a lot, squinted some of the time, seen several Summers. The way She moved seemed much younger, with assurance and agility, bending and touching and straightning up (truth be told, easier than i can straighten up after weeding or working on my knees!) and even walking with a young graceful movement. But Her eyes when i first saw them - like the hobbits when they described Tree beard, in the Tolkien books. Do you remember? "One felt as if there was an enormous well behind them, filled up with ages of memory and long, slow, steady thinking; but their surface was sparkling with the present - like sun shimmering on the outer leaves of a vast tree, or on the ripples of a very deep lake." (The Two Towers. J.R.R. Tolkien} Now, i could see those same eyes regarding me with slight amusement, slight questioning, slight reproach.

"There is so much old growth that should be cut back to keep them healthy. And the wild plants will soon take over in many places if not dealt with promptly."

The sound of Her voice was like water splashing in a stream in its musical quality, again making me puzzled because of its deepness which i would have thought meant older age combined with its lightness which made me sense youth, i stood entranced, embarrassed at my inability to speak some word of excuse to tell why the garden had been left so long. It was obvious that to Her, this was the priority and She seemed to remind me that it should also be mine, as i had said so many years ago, so many workdays ago, so many people ago.

As she gracefully bent to touch one of the sage plants, she continued. "These older branches must soon be pruned or the new growth will not be as strong, the roots will not be as energetic. And the mint over here," She turned, "needs to be reminded of its place, reminded it is a member of a community, not the sole inhabitant."

At this i was finally able to breath again, and to smile at Her remarks. Was She reading my mind or putting thoughts into it? "Yes, i have planned that this day will see many changes. Have you any other suggestions?" Oh, no. That sounded almost rude. Luckily, She seemed to know that i was not being fascetious.

"Yes, I think it's time to move some of the plants. Would you like some suggestions?" Now, i could not be certain that She was not teasing me. But i decided to take Her as genuinely interested. After i nodded my head, She led me around my\_ (?) yard, pointing to certain plants, naming each one in familiar and unfamiliar names as if speaking of old friends by their nicknames, giving suggestions about how to assist them in their growth so that they might, in Her words, "fulfill their potential." That sounded like the stuff i had read so many years ago about Findhom, in Scotland, and working

with the Devas. i worked to listen, remember, pull up old knowledge and memories, observe Her.

"I notice that you have already worked with several of the Trees in the yard." i was yanked out of my thoughts. When She said "Trees," it sounded like a proper name. "How did you decide what to do with them?" (Curious, that she would say "with them" instead of "to them"; that gave me a little bit of comfort. She didn't think i had done damage to them, i hoped.)

i related my reading about Findhorn (She smiled.) and about their relating to the plant Devas. i told how every year, in January or very early February, in the rain if necessary, i came out to talk with and prune the trees. She did not chide me when i used the word "pruning" and seemed not to be offended that the tool i used was steel. (Some naturalists have said that one should never take steel to a plant; i've never figured out why.) She nodded slowly as i told of checking with the tree as i worked and letting the tree know why each branch was removed; i even thought i heard a small chuckle when i told of counting buds on each stem and making sure there could/would be growth before any removal of a branch. She definitely smiled when i related that, many years, the cut branches were given to friends to use as wands.

We continued to walk around the yard, seeing the red-hot pokers starting to push up their flower heads, enjoying the brightness of the narcissus blossoms, looking at the iris to see if they were doing well. Eventually, We wandered into the back field. She was naming the herbes and flowers constantly, and She seemed pleased by the variety which was in the yard. At one point, She talked about the soil in the gardens and the darkness of it, asking how that happened when so many places have lighter soil, i shared my way of mixing in compost, manure, peat moss, sand and a little lime to give more vitality to the soil. She asked about insecticides, and i was relieved that i could tell her that only things like insecticidal soap and pyrethrine (a natural plant derivative) were used in the yard, i also explained how i had purchased lady bird beetles a couple years and now they seemed to be permanent residents to get the aphids that might come. She mentioned that She felt chemicals in the yard were like chemicals in a body; medicines did kill the bad things, but might affect the good things too.

She questioned me about my feelings towards the insects in the yard, the ones that i felt needed to leave or be banished, i told Her of trying to eliminate them in their egg cases before they hatched, of meditating to try to contact the slugs and let them know that they would not be pursued in the field and woods, but were to stay out of the garden and front yard, i told Her of using beer to trap the ones that decided to come where they were not wanted; She smiled again. "At least they enjoy what happens to them," She said, chuckling again.

By now, the Sun was well-up in the sky, and it was getting fairly warm for the sweatshirt i was wearing, i asked if She minded if i took it off. She said no and untied the ribbon holding Her "bonnet" down. What a difference! She seemed so much younger, now that her full face and hair were opened

up. The grass was still short enough beneath the hawthorne trees in the field that it had dried quickly, so We sat down. We talked about how the coming year would show growth in most things, even though some branches might die.

"It's much the same concept with each plant and its leaves. Each leaf is actually a separate entity, but contributes what it can to the large community, the entire plant. When it has fulfilled the need, as the wheel turns and it can no longer participate, its life is recycled through the soil to help the plant even more.

"Even insects," She continued, "work together to help. I am not simply referring to the most obvious means of pollination. I speak also of the fact that each insect is a part of the long food chain that does not end with humans or other animals; remember, all life will return to Me eventually."

my skin prickled at Her words; at last She had actually spoken clearly enough that i had no doubt about what was happening. My astonishment and wonder at actually meeting and conversing with Her were breath-taking. She sensed this in me and laughed softly at my unhidden amazement. It seemed so natural for Her to be here, sitting and talking with me. She said softly, "I always am here talking with you. Remember My Words; if you don't recognize Me within yourself, you would never be able to recognize Me outside of yourself. The balance you have been striving for, the inner knowledge that has been growing for so long, all of that is apparent to Me and to the Ancient Ones. We have always been with you, as you have always been with Us."

After a very short pause, She picked Her hat up from the grass and stood, i remained on my knees on the grass, as i had been when We first sat down. It seemed appropriate. "You have work to do here, and the afternoon is beginning. Enjoy this and all of your days."

"Will i see you again, Lady?"

"I'm always here," She answered calmly. "I just decided to be a little more obvious this time." Again, and for the last time during this meeting, She laughed softly. Turning, She walked away from me. She did not, however, walk toward the front of the property where i had first seen Her. Instead, She followed the path leading back into the woods at the back of the property, the woods which held within it a stone circle sacred to Her.

After She had disappeared into the shadows, i rose and walked back to the garden. Time to get to work.

# The Four Elements

## Wiccan Archetypes of Reality

Throughout all cultures humankind seeks metaphors which explain the relationship between the human and manifest reality and between the Divine and manifest reality. In every culture we find similar approaches. Although not all cultures work with the four elements of air, fire, water and earth, the basic theological premise remains the same.

The Kingfisher	Heronfriend	8 1
Air - A Dream aslan		8 3
The Dreams I Build With Magick		
	Raven	8 5
Fire - An Experience aslan		9 0
I Sit in the Circle	Heronfriend	9 2
Water - A Journey aslan		9 4
Four Elemental Fantasies		
	Lucanus	9 6
Earth - A Song of Praise To Our Mother		
	aslan	1 0 1
Travel Into the World of the Elements		
	Noonstar	1 0 2
The Four Elements		

*When teaching a workshop in which I refer to the four elements, I always get a good chuckle when I describe them in generic terms as the Four Whatever's. My own spiritual journey which brought me to Wicca was one which first spent time in the Bardo Thodol or Tibetan Book of the Dead. The cosmology of this Tibetan Buddhism is intricate and, in the basic ritual, provides us with a richly embroidered collection of symbols through which the four elements are depicted. Each element shines as a brightly coloured light, is described as a realm of psychological qualities. There is the presence of the Deity, ritual tools, and additional symbols.*

*When one begins studying a specific Wiccan Tradition, the bottom line as far as personal affinity for that Tradition is often found within the Four Elements. It can be a matter of preference. Do you prefer associating the ritual knife with air? Or are you more comfortable thinking of it as a tool of*

*fire. Do you prefer relating to water in the east or in the west? Every Tradition has its 'correspondences.' When one is learning to work with the Tradition's rituals, part of the training involves developing an affinity and innate sense of symbolic direction. One of the ritual goals of a Wiccan group is to work in mental unison. This does not mean that everyone's mind processes the identical thoughts at every moment, but it does mean that when all members collectively choose to acknowledge the element of fire, they share the same approach to the symbols. It would be pretty chaotic if, when facing South and extending an invitation to the Universe, a pretty curious assortment of incompatible symbols were called forth.*

*But what are the Four Elements anyway? I have spoken of them as symbols, but symbols of what? Religious cultures have sought to differentiate between the unmanifest (usually the more powerful Divinity) and the manifest. But manifest reality is not all the same. While we can view Divinity as cohesive, it is difficult for the mind to perceive the wind blowing against one's face as being the same as the rock which, when you fall upon it, tears at your flesh and causes bleeding. It is difficult for the mind to relate to ice and fire as merely a different way that molecules are moving. The Four Elements are the human approach to perceiving a Divine order to all which is physical.*

*Perhaps the most common collection of the Four Whatever's in the western world are air, fire, water and earth. But don't think this is the only way. Some native peoples do not attach physical elements but, rather, call upon the Four Winds. And what about the Four Archangels? Then, we must remember that some cultures find it more appropriate to include ice as an element. In one of the oldest cultures, metal is an essential element. But there are often more than four elements. Common thought holds that, when all four elements are merged and brought together in a perfect balance that we have the creation of yet a fifth element, described as spirit. And this is but a perception from a different direction, for the four physical elements are actually the manifestation of the Divine, which is, in the beginning, the source of all creation.*

*Rather than confuse you with further metaphysical gymnastics in this discussion of things symbolic, let me gently bring you back to your reading. Here are five different approaches, each a personal expression of how a novice begins to express a personal relationship with the Four. Beginning to write creative material to interpret the Four is often a deeply profound, yet enlightening experience for the student. You will find songs, poems, meditations and wonderful experiences moving you into other realities and other dimensions.*

*- Rev. Paul*

**The Kingfisher**

**Heronfriend**

It is the morning of the spring equinox. I arise early while it is still dark. I walk the quiet streets. I leave the town. The sky begins to lighten as I travel East with the breeze in my face. I pause as I reach the edge of the water. I fold my robe. I wade into the stream toward a small point where the stream flows into the river. I feel the cool fresh water gently pulling on me on its way down stream. I am lifted by the buoyancy of the water. Nearly across, my foot slips on a green rock. My head bobs under the water. My hair swirls like the water plants in the slight current. I stand again cool and fresh. I pad onto the sand beach reaching the other side of the point just in time to settle on a log to watch the sun rise. The sun's rays warm and dry me. I am in balance with the Elements; the Air, the Fire of the Sun, the Water, the Earth.

The cry of the kingfisher startles me.  
Silhouetted against the sky, Perched in Her  
arms, The kingfisher rests in the Ladytree.

The kingfisher drops,  
Falls free through the Air,  
Plunges through the Orb of the rising Sun,  
Splashes into the water.

There is silence for a moment.  
Nearly as quickly -The kingfisher  
emerges From the Water.

It wings free into the Air, Is  
transformed by passage Through  
the Fire of the Sun, Rests again on  
the Ladytree.

There is a fish in the kingfisher's beak  
-Reward of transformation!

[I gratefully acknowledge influences of Thomas Berkham's poem  
'Ladytree' and another Mystery School students "A Kingfisher."]

Air - A Dream

aslan

(Create a melody for this which sounds something like an Irish ballad, probably in a minor key;  
chords are noted below the words in each line. The rhythm or meter should be 6/8.)

I called to the East, "Oh, Come to me!"  
dm c  
And morning breezes blew,  
dm am dm  
I called again, "You I would see!"  
dm c



An eagle o'er me flew, dm  
am dm

I said, "Your voice I long to hear."  
dm C  
The whispering leaves I heard,  
dm A7  
I said, "A song would I hold dear."  
dm C  
Nearby, soft sang a bird,  
dm am dm

The rising Sun shone on my face,  
F C  
The Sun of a new day's birth,  
F C  
Reminding me of my humble place  
F C  
and eventual return to earth.  
dm A7

Imagine coasting on a breeze,  
 dm C  
 Belonging to the sky,  
 dm am  
 Flying long across endless seas,  
 dm C  
 On winds that never die.  
 dm am dm

The only sound that you would hear  
 dm C  
 While floating on the air  
 dm am  
 Would be the sound of bird calls near,  
 dm C  
 those whom this great wonder share,  
 dm am dm

The Eastern Watchtower we will see  
 F C  
 As this Life's work is done,  
 dm A7  
 We'll feel, we'll see, we'll hear again,  
 dm am  
 In the Light of that Rising Sun.  
 dm am dm  
**The Dreams I Build With Magick**

An Elemental Meditation by

Raven

I stood upon a craggy cliff side of cool, beige stone. It was an escarpment which towered over a river valley; and the valley sparkled with a multitude of natural hues. These were made pastel, and a bit impressionistic, by the vast and dizzying height. Before me was the sky, without end, the colors blown & blended by the East wind. Pale yellows & pinks swirled among a plentiful expanse of aqua and blue ... it was like a spilt rainbow, dashed across the heavens and swept with clouds.

At first, I sensed only a little breeze on my face and I turned toward it, toward the East, and felt a gradual swell of power as the wind increased; and I saw before me bright, dancing leaves tossed about in random dervishes and a chevron of geese sailing with handsome purpose. I stood on the windy cliff with my athame in my right hand. Before long, a fabulous bird, a roc, lighted beside me on the stone. Without hesitation, I scrambled upon the bird and it swept me off of the ledge and into the cool air with all of its swirling treasures ... the leaves, insects, pollen, conventional birds, seeds and dust. I clung with my left arm to the great creature, holding my dagger high with my right, and marveled on the edge of ecstasy and hysteria as I watched the valley below, a masterpiece of form and color, turning slowly under the sun like a gem in a showcase. I was airborne, miles from the earth and, at that moment, there was no one thing of greater significance than the air ... it sustained me, supported me ... it was a new world.

After a time I became aware that I could leave the back of the roc, and I slid from it, still holding my athame up. I was in the air, gliding and swooping, without wings, and yet somehow aloft with the great bird flying alongside of me, a companion. I was in the air, and the air was in me ... the currents of it were not unfamiliar to me, and I could travel with them ... it had become my element, and I pulled the wind through my body, propelling myself along invisible pathways. I saw the steel blade of my dagger reflecting the Sun, and I thought of words that were once sooken to me ... "The athame cuts only air! It is the magickal tool of the East, working its ways in the realm of the Air." Then, the bird took my athame from me with its beak, and veered off toward the cliffside again, i knew that it would return this possession of mine to a place of safekeeping. I headed toward the valley, losing altitude as I sought to return to the land and ended my wondrous flight upon the shore of the nver which made its way around the base of the towering cliff.

Now on my feet once again, I was a bit wobbly and stumbled up r>e beach feeling heavy and awkward. I was aware of the Sun beating down upon the top of my head, and I lifted my face toward it and felt tne radiant heat on my skin. From somewhere within my clothing I oroduced a wand of wood and held it in my hand. The coolness of the air was a memory as the sun washed over every contour of my face & :>ody. It was magnified, somehow, baking me. I looked toward the green wood beyond the sand, which had now become so hot that I was continually shifting my feet and, as I thought to take refuge there, the foliage exploded into flames. Soon, the heat from the fire assaulted me as well and I was made curious, really, like an odd, insane moth of a person, walking away from the edge of the river toward a forest inferno with a wand in my hand. I sensed that much of what I was experiencing as I approached this blaze, hotter than reality, was an hallucination - the stan bubbled on my arms and the bubbles boiled and burst, but I watched without pain ... still hot, though ... and entered the fire, at which lime I pretty much roasted where I stood. The sounds of the blaze surrounded me ... wood snapping and popping, sap making minor explosions, the continual roar of a tunnel of wind as the flames fed upon me air. And these were the thoughts that I had ... the fire was consuming the trees, actually gobbling them up ... transforming the ~atter of the trees into pure, dynamic energy. Fire was transformation -change - and it hurt. There is no transformation without pain, there is no rrange without sacrifice. And the wand is an instrument of magick, of change. It draws upon the transformative powers of fire, and is, therefore, associated with the South ... but that there is no change unless there is some sacrifice ... this was the lesson of the burning woods.

I did, then, emerge from the blaze, and left it behind me as I walked toward the river's edge. Somehow, I was whole again, but still sought the relief of the healing water. I put my wand away and splashed into the river where it sped steadily past the banks. Such was the delight, to submerge my hot skin beneath the surface, that I simply played and splashed about for a time in a relatively peaceful spot which was like a pool. I listened to the lyric sound of the water as I dove in and out and kicked my feet behind me ... a mirthful, tinkling song of dark and ageless wisdom. It was so beautiful to be in the water and such a relief! But soon I felt the need to go exploring on the river bottom, which was shallow here, and so I breathed deeply to oxygenate myself and then took a long breath and dove down. I looked around in the

suddenly quiet & distorted world ... darkness, and then patches of light which fell in continuous beams from the surface above. In the shafts of pale green illumination were hundreds of tiny, watery things, indistinguishable, swirling about willy-nilly, subject to the small motions of the pool. Then I would return to burst above the surface for air, only to delve below again. I came to an underwater beach, where the sun shone through with much more purity, such that the beach glistened brightly of gold and, although the pretty sparkles caught my eye, I did not stop there because next to it was the mouth of a cave. The opening was low and long, and I entered into it, even though I felt that I must breath or burst apart. Once inside, there was some light and I stood up ... my head popped above the water and I was breathing before I even realized that I stood in a large pocket of trapped air at the roof of the cavern. It was not a huge place, but there was a ledge a few feet away from me, toward the back, the top of which was flat. It stood just above the water level and upon this ledge, in the center, rested a cup.

I took it in my hands and studied it. The vessel was of the bowl and stem variety, made of fired earthenware and glazed in a flowing pattern of blue, grey and coral. It was cold and heavy, and really very lovely ... thrown with affection and purpose. The chalice held water and I drank from it without a thought for caution. After this draft of pure water, I reentered the lake water, having replaced the cup upon the ledge. I swam out from the cave and back to the river proper, where the light filtered brightly through upon the nearby golden sand. Soon the time came to breath again ... and I did so ... without leaving the river. I was drawing the fresh water through my body. It filled my lungs, but they were able to extract the oxygen from it and circulate it to nourish my cells ... I was breathing the water! There was no discomfort, no panic ... and behind me I took note of the fact that my feet had taken on the form of tail fins. I was something of a mer-person and took delight in exploring my surroundings without effort. The slightest and most graceful motion propelled me through the water with ease. There was great beauty here - almost an animated river, with bright colors and delicate shapes ... slick glinting fish, lazy trailing leaves and crystal formations on the bottom. Soon, a very round and speckled fish approached me and I felt compelled to follow him. He swam aownstream, in the main part of the river where the currents were stronger. Sometimes I held onto his fins ... he was a more accomplished swimmer than I, certainly! We came to the place where the river led into a sea and the water was darker here ... the sky above had become dark as well. There was a churning in the sea and I swam to the top to look around. Above the surface, the waves were tumbling about as though they were working up to a good squall. It was night in this place but the fish and I could still see how the waves crashed, grew taller and tumultuous ... not the laughing sounds that the water had made back in me pool. We were tossed about and disoriented in the darkness ... I knew that I wasn't in any real danger but I didn't like it, just the same. The fish and I swam upstream to the place where the river was light and caJm again ... he turned to look at me and his thoughts said "Let the current take you ... go with it. Do not be battered about by resisting, .et the current take you ... it knows where it is going." Then, he swam away.

I made for the far bank ... the opposite side from which I had entered the river and crawled upon the sand. I found that I had returned to my human form. Towering over me was the cliff that I had stood upon, that fantastic

height from which I had gazed across this beautiful valley. This was a shallow stretch of sand and the base of that same great cliff was only several feet away from me ... and I noted the graceful patterns in the stone ... the blending of russet, beige and grey. Shortly, I would be walking north along the shoreline, as there was the edge of a deep wood there, which continued as it skirted the sea. But, for a time I remained stretched out upon the sand.

The Sun was waning, comfortable on my shoulders and then gone, all together, as I entered the shadows at the edge of what was mostly a pine forest. A few feet into the woods I found the sounds of the running water behind me silenced. The light was filtered and did diminish with each step further from the border of the forest world. In little time I was in a rich, moist dream of soft browns & greens, with moss and pine needles beneath my feet. The air was pungent with the aroma of pine sap and accompanying that came the memories of creatures ... chipmunks, squirrels, woodpeckers, crickets. It was a living place which looked and smelled and sounded of natural magick ... and the blessings of the Lord and Lady.

I took time to examine the earth beneath me. I sat down and crumbled some of the soil between my fingers ... it was dark, moist & clumpy, and smelled fresh. There was a richness to it, something that was nourishing and very basic. Something that was irreplaceable, fundamental, that could in no way be reproduced. I recalled the phrase "sensing life within..." The element of earth is organic, perhaps more so than the others. A stroll through this vibrant kingdom brought me to the mouth of a cave. It was like the cave that I picture Auriel emerging from when I open the quarters ... a graceful arch, all adorned with growing things, and wild blossoms about the ground. Above the entrance was carved a pentacle ... as if this were the doorway to a deeper earth realm.

I stepped into the dark cave, initially seeing nothing. My hands groped about and found the walls, which were cool & hard. As my vision adjusted I did note a faint sparkling quality to the stone. It smelled like stone as well, if you can imagine that. From the unseen back of this place was a source of light, and I followed it, stepping carefully. There was such solidity here, and strength. It occurred to me that the Earth Mother must be solid, firm and dependable in order to be a foundation upon which Her children may grow. She is Mother ... She nourishes, nurtures and provides for us a place that has the capacity to meet all of our needs, while offering challenges and room for growth. The Earth is a foundation upon which all of Her children build their lives ... an organic, living element that gives of Herself in endless cycles of sacrifice, devotion and acceptance because She is our Mother, and She loves Her children. And I remember that on my altar I place my pentacle and rest atop it ... the desires that I care to build upon ... a little foundation for the dreams that I build with magick ... a microcosm of the life I am dreaming upon this earth, in this incarnation. That is the significance of the pentacle, and the way in which it symbolizes the earth.

And I can go no further, now, because the floor drops away. There is some large, almost swirling tunnel before me that disappears in the depths of the earth. The light is coming from here, somehow, and yet I cannot see far enough below to make anything out. Surely there is something down there, some great Mystery, but it is not for me today. I turn and walk out of the cave, into the forest which seems so bright by comparison. I am standing under the pentacle ... and I feel pretty good.

## Fire - An Experience

aslan

"Welcome. Come within. Find out that which is our true nature, -earn of us. Be one with us."

*Us?* I had heard the call before, but had always been warned away. "You'll damage your body. It's dangerous. Be careful. Don't get too close."

This time, I decided to enter Fire's lair, to find out why '*us*' instead of '*me*', to experience the transformative dance of the flames. (Well, of course! Flames - *us*!)

It had always seemed to my senses of sight, sound, hearing and touch that the flames moved so quickly, that the Fire changed from instant to sub-second instant. But as I moved within the Fire, I realized that what I had been taught, not what I perceived, was true - that is, time is relative. As I became a part of the Fire, I experienced a complete, full, giving, knowing and learning life. It began at the instant of my birth from the fuel as an offspring of my progenitors, grew through my own parenting of new flames and continued with the passing on of my knowledge of "Fire life" until, as I reached upward, my life was completed and I passed to flame "spirit"- heat and warmth.

During this existence, or "Fire life," other "life-forms" were revealed to me.

The living fire-rock of the Earth that moves out through the pores of the Earth's skin as lava, regenerating the Earth's surface just as a human skin is regenerated from within.

The glowing coals in the heart of a fire, glowing with their desire to keep the energy in existence, holding their secret heat, waiting for new fuel, to teach it the way to continue the life-force.

Lightening, sky-flame, which springs upward, downward, from and to Earth and Sky. Brilliance in a flash of light, heat of a thousand Suns.

Heat spirits of the desert, enjoying their games in the creation of mirages, bathed in warmth of scorching Sun, hiding just beneath the sand-skin for the night.

These and many other forms of "Fire life" I learned of as I participated in the joy of energy, the desire of heat, the delight of existence as a dance.

"Humankind has come to cooperate with us to help them accomplish goals, but we are not really controlled. No matter where we are, we are living and free spirits!"

Youthfulness, energy, excitement. Vibrancy, brilliance, passion.

As I emerged to my human form, I knew that Fire wished me no ill, that any times when something of the Fire nature had hurt a human, it was

because the human grew arrogant about its control over another being. We will know each other in a better and more fulfilling way as I continue along my journey of learning.

### I Sit In The Circle

Heronfrien

*d Air*

I sit in the Circle. I face the East. Incense rises before me. I concentrate on the currents of air of my breathing. I feel the currents of the air surrounding me. I begin to rise on these currents of air. I rise and join the cool breeze into the starry night. I am with the Air, of the Air. I am the upper ocean of the Earth. I envelop Her. I shield Her children from the ultraviolet excesses of the Sun. I give the oxygen of their life's metabolism; the carbon dioxide for Her herbs' growth. I hold the clouds and direct the weather. I enjoy the times when I can be still and dally. I exalt in the times when She calls for Her waves to be raised, Her sand to be swirled, Her Fires hurled; none does thus but I. No one can lay a hand on me ... yet I am always there. I am Her servant. I am always there. I fill your lungs anew. Remember me. I am with you. Always.

*Fire*

I sit in the Circle. I face the South. I set the candle to flame. I feel heat radiating from the candle. I add the candle heat to my own. I am becoming warmer, hotter. I see a movement at the cedar stump just inside the Circle.

"Come little friend," I call as I recognize a small, red salamander coming toward me. "Take me with you on your travels tonight."

The salamander only brushes my leg as it hurries past. We scamper toward the campfire at the middle of the Circle. We dance in the flames with the flame folk. They crackle tunes of the forge and the hearth. They hiss histories of wildfire. They whisper secrets of releasing the stored energy of the Sun. They reminisce about their relatives of heat at the heart of the Earth, the center of the Sun, the Stars of the Galaxy. They brag of flights as swarms of meteorites, as spews of lava. They extol their clever disguises - cold *foxfire*, *firefly light*, the warmth of ~ metabolism of beings such as myself. With giggles of delight, they discover a pocket of pitch in the pine log at the center of the fire. Pop! Crack! I hear the pitch explode as I feel a hot cinder land on the back of my neck. I jump up and exclaim, "This journey's over! I'm warm enough, thank you! But ... I do thank you."

I'll put no more pine on the fire tonight.

Wafer

I sit in the Circle facing the West. I lift my blue glass pitcher with its silver colored handle. The water in it flows back toward my fingers before I tilt the pitcher to pour the water into the blue glass bowl on its silver colored base. I listen to the water falling into the bowl. I see it sparkle in the candle light. I feel the drop of water which spilled onto my finger.

I look at the drop of water on my finger. I move my concentration into the drop of water. I can feel its roundness. The water is tepid. I can feel the heat of my body entering the drop. I feel myself, as the drop, warming and beginning to change. I am evaporating. I am becoming water vapor. Before long, the finger is dry. I cannot be seen. I rise in the air. I waft out the window. I sense other water vapors. We rise. We cool. We condense, joining together into tiny water droplets. We have become a cloud. The cloud sails on the wind. We near the mountain. We are crowded together and, bumping, coalesce into larger drops. We fall as rain drops onto the Earth. We quench the thirst of Her herbs, Her animals, Her children. We join again and trickle into the stream, the river, the ocean. We are together in the Great Bowl of the Ocean. We are together in my blue bowl. We are together in the drop of water in my finger. We are together always.

I breathe deeply, I stretch, and I give thanks.

### *Earth*

The evening is quiet under the Full Moon. I have just finished casting the Circle. I complete the invocations. The North candle blows out. I turn to the altar. I light a taper from the candles of the God and the Goddess. I relight the north candle. I stare at its reflection on the

brass plate before it. All is quiet, a bit too quiet. I am feeling lonely. I hear a rustle of robes behind me. I turn. I see three figures. "Who are you?" I ask.

The young maid on my left speaks first. She holds a willow branch and wears apple blossoms in her hair.

"You know me. Remember now. I am Persephone. We have met. I am here with you tonight."

The woman in front of me speaks next. She holds a basket of apples and a loaf of bread.

"You know me. Remember now. I am Demeter. We have met. We shall celebrate tonight."

The crone on my right speaks up quickly. She holds a dry twig and a small skull.

"You know me not now, yet you've seen me about. I am Hecate and I'll have my due."

"Welcome Ladies. Welcome all. Welcome to this rite." I reply. "I remember now. I remember all Three."

"Not so fast young fellow," a voice comes from the North. I turn as, with a flourish of pipes, Pan leaps into the Circle, clad only in His belt holding two amulet pouches - seed of apple, seed of grain.

What a Cone of Power we raised that night and every Full Moon since!

May the Goddess and the God be with you.

### **Water - A Journey**

aslan



A drop of water from melting snow high  
on the mountain tops.

Snow that may have been stored for ages in glaciers, that may have  
come down in that past winter's blizzards, that may have fallen from  
the heights in an avalanche.

Many such drops will gather to trickle, splash, pour down from the steep  
slopes,  
creating cascades, falls of Water whose mists seem  
to be veils of Mystery filled with rainbow refractions  
of the Sun. Streams sing of Spring's new life, old life  
reborn after the silence of frozen winter. Many  
streams will join to make rivers.

whose waters lend their power to the mills, wheels, dams.

Water channeled and piped

to encourage the Earth to bring forth bounty.

Rivers filled with life,

of plant and animal, newborn, growing, mature,  
decaying. Finally, most rivers flow to the ocean which  
encircles the solid globe, holding deep within itself the  
Mysteries of Life's Beginnings-creatures that need no  
light plants that grow in sulphurous jets of hot gas and  
water

heated deep below the Earth's surface. This is how life  
spawned, cell by cell. The call of the seabirds,  
the ever-renewed, ever-changing, ever-lasting sound of waves moving upon  
the shore. Heart's longing to sail away, to be free of cares and worries. The  
waters of the oceans move like giant rivers, currents that subtly heat and  
cool, that stir the elixir in this great cauldron. And, as Sun's energy descends,  
Water evaporates, moves into Air's space to form clouds that, moved by the  
wind,

push against mountain solidness,  
rising to fly above the earthen walls until,  
cooled on high, they may again shed  
crystalline droplets, snowflakes on the mountains,  
as another of the Lady's grand cycles is completed.

#### Four Elemental Fantasies

Lucanus

*The East*

I called the wind Eurus, and felt him blow upon my face. I raised my  
athame and invoked the Archangel of the East. Golden light shone through  
the Pentagram I had carved. Through the stargate, Raphael came - a  
blond-haired, winged youth whose smile brought the morning Sun into my  
Temple.

Knowing my intention, Raphael offered his Sword. I placed my hand upon the hilt and he covered it with his. His face shown with the joy of knowing the journey we were to share. Raphael enfolded me in his arms and spoke the Angelic word for Air, "EXARP."

in response to the Angel's voice, Eurus whirled about us. Raphael spread his wings and caught Eurus' breath. Together, we sailed through the yellow-gold stargate.

In the World of Air, I found myself riding Raphael, in his Unicorn guise. Beating his great wings, he took me to the Kingdom of the Sylphs. We landed before the Kingdom's wall, which was built of the strength of storm-winds. In response to our presence, a small portion of the wall spun free, forming an opening. The whirlwind metamorphosized into a falcon-headed guard, which challenged us with raised sword. I raised my Athame, cut an Ah\* pentagram, and chanted the Hebrew God name: YHVH. Satisfied, the guard saluted us and, with a gesture, bid us enter. My Unicorn mount carried me through the opening into a garden. I turned and watched the guard dissolve into a whirlwind and return to his place in the wall.

I turned my attention to the garden that lay before us. The Kingdom of the Sylphs was filled with the soft light of eternal dawn. The birds sang their sweet morning songs, as they greeted the Sun. The ground was carpeted with young grass and newly-sprouted herbs, all sprinkled with dew. The trees and flowers were alive with young buds and tender leaves. The atmosphere spoke to me of the joy of new life.

As I breathed in all the beauty the Kingdom had to offer, I heard music and laughter in the distance. I gazed towards the source of merriment and saw a large company of Sylphs in the distance. Silently, I beckoned Raphael to take me to the music's source. Raphael leapt into the air and, with two sweeps of his great wings, we found ourselves above the Sylphs' ritual site. Below us a large group of Sylphs danced around a Maypole, entwining it with ribbons. An outer circle of Sylphs danced, swung their swords and sang songs praising the Spring. But as I listened, their words changed to songs of welcome. Raphael and I landed as the sylphian ritual came to an end. The two sylphian circles opened to admit us to the center. As we approached, the Maypole and its ribbons metamorphosized into two whirlwinds. The Sylphs bowed to the pair, as they solidified into the King and his consort.

I spoke, "Blessed Be Paralda, the Sylph King, whose wisdom I seek."

"Blessed Be the Seeker, whose faith leads him to my Kingdom. The East is the Realm of the Intellect. The power of Elemental Air is the power to know. The key to knowledge begins when the Seeker gains an understanding of his inner Self. As the Seeker looks within, he will gain knowledge of his own divine nature and see his interconnectedness with all things.

"Knowledge is the realm of all possibilities. Nothing comes into existence before it is conceptualized. All manifest reality began in the mind of the Goddess. Existence began when the Goddess looked within Herself, saw Her own inner beauty and visualized what could be."

### *The South*

I called the wind Notus, and felt him blow upon my face. I raised my Athame and invoked the Archangel of the South. Red-gold light shone through the pentagram I carved. Through the stargate, Michael came - a copper-haired warrior whose strength brought the noonday Sun into my Temple.

Knowing my intention, Michael presented his Staff. I placed my hand upon the Staff and he covered it with his. His face shone with pleasure in knowing the journey we were to share. Michael enfolded me with his cloak and spoke the Angelic word for Fire, "BITOM."

In response to the Angel's voice, Notus whirled about us. Michael spread his wings and caught Notus' breath. Together, we sailed through the red-gold stargate.

In the World of Fire, I found myself riding Michael in his Unicorn guise. Beating his great wings, he took me to the Kingdom of the Salamanders. We landed before the Kingdom's wall, which was built of the strength of a raging fire. In response to our presence, a small blaze broke free from the wall, forming an opening. The blaze metamorphosized into a lion-headed guard, which challenged us with raised Spear. I raised my Athame, cut a Fire pentagram, and chanted the Hebrew God name: ADNI. Satisfied, the guard saluted us and, with a gesture, bid us enter. My Unicorn mount carried me through the opening unto a desert plain. I turned and watched the guard dissolve into a blaze and return to his place in the wall.

I turned my attention to the desert that lay before us. The Kingdom of the Salamanders was bright with the light of the eternal noonday Sun. The desert was filled with rock formations which were alive with rainbow colors and rose to dizzying heights. Cacti and small trees grew sparsely throughout the plain. Most of the vegetation reached out to the Sun, absorbing the light. But some ignited and shrivelled up brown in the heat. The air was arid and still, but crackled with the strength of Summer.

As I breathed in all the beauty the Kingdom had to offer, I saw a great truncated pyramid in the distance. Atop the structure I saw a large company of Salamanders and heard the sounds of chanting and drums. Silently I beckoned Michael to carry me to the gathering upon the pyramid. Michael leapt into the air and, with two sweeps of his great wings, we found ourselves circling above the Salamanders' ritual site. At the center burned a great bonfire with unquenchable flames. A large circle of Salamanders danced about the bonfire, taking turns leaping in and out of the blaze. An outer circle of Salamanders danced about with burning wands. They playfully sparred with one another, chanting the praises of Summer. As I listened, their chants changed to words of welcome. Michael and I landed as the salamanderan ritual came to an end. The two salamanderan circles opened to admit us to the center. As we approached, the bonfire and its fuel metamorphosized into two small blazes. The Salamanders bowed to the two as they solidified into the King and his consort.

I spoke, "Blessed Be Ojin, the Salamander King, whose wisdom I seek."

"Blessed Be the Seeker, whose desire leads him to my Kingdom. The South is the Realm of Transformation. The power of Elemental Fire is the power of change. All manifested reality is ever-changing, ever-transforming into new being. The key to understanding change begins when the Seeker learns to affect his environment by creating change within himself.

"Within the will lies the power of creation. The ability to create form lies in the power of the Seeker's will, energized by the Fire of his spirit. The ability to realize ideas into form is the bridge which links humankind with the Ancient Ones."

## C

### *The West*

I called the wind Zephrus, and felt her blow upon my face. I raised my Athame and invoked the Archangel of the West. Electric blue light shone through the pentagram I carved. Through the stargate, Gabriel came - an auburn-haired nymph whose love brought the setting Sun into my Temple.

Knowing my intention, Gabriel raised her chalice to my lips. I placed my hands over hers and sipped the holy wine. She looked into my eyes and my heart leapt with joy with the knowledge of our journey. Gabriel tenderly kissed my lips and spoke the Angelic word for Water, "HKOMA."

In response to the Angel's voice, Zephrus whirled about us. Gabriel spread her wings and caught Zephrus' breath. Together we sailed through the electric blue stargate.

In the World of Water, I found myself riding Gabriel in her Unicorn guise. Beating her great wings, she took me to the Kingdom of the Undines. We landed before the Kingdom's wall, which was built of the strength of tidal waves. In response to our presence, a small wave broke free from the wall, forming an opening. The wave of water metamorphosized into a crocodile-headed guard, which challenged us with raised Chalice. I raised my Athame, cut a Water pentagram, and chanted the Hebrew God name: EHIH. Satisfied, the guard saluted us and, with a gesture, bid us enter. My Unicorn mount carried me through the opening onto a great ocean. I turned and watched as the guard dissolved into a water wave and returned to her place in the wall.

I turned my attention to the ocean that lay before us. The Kingdom of the Undines was warmed by the light of the eternal setting Sun. Gentle waves were stirred by a cool breeze which blew from the West. The sky around the Sun was awash with violet clouds which flowed into a calm, peaceful blue. At the horizon, the sky and the ocean were joined as lovers: separate, yet one.

As I breathed in all the beauty the Kingdom had to offer, I heard soft music which floated gently upon the wind. I closed my eyes and allowed the sweet strains to fill my spirit as a cup fills with the clearest wine. Silently, I beckoned Gabriel to take me to the music's source. Gabriel leapt into the air and, with two sweeps of her great wings, we found ourselves above a tropical island. In the center of the island was a great gathering of Undines who surrounded a coral altar. The altar was piled high with the harvest fruits, gathered from the sea. A chorus of Undines, accompanied by conch-horns and reed pipes, sang songs praising the Fall. Gabriel and I landed among the Undines, who welcomed us joyously with gifts of anemone and starfish. The Undines parted before us and we were beckoned to the altar. As we approached, the harvest offerings metamorphosized into two columns of water. The Undines bowed to the two as they solidified into the King and her consort.

I spoke, "Blessed Be Niksa, the Undine King, whose wisdom I seek."

"Blessed Be the Seeker whose love brings him to my Kingdom. The West is the Realm of Emotions. The power of Elemental Water is the power of feeling. In the search for wholeness, the Seeker will learn to accept his emotions and embrace the masculine and feminine feelings within as an integral part of his being. The Seeker's ability to love himself gives birth to his love for others and the Universe around him.

"Within the Self lies the power of gestation. It is within the vessel of Self that idea and desire must gestate and gain momentum for the moment of birth."

### *The North*

called the wind Boreas, and felt her blow upon my face. I raised my head and invoked the Archangel of the North. Green light shone through the pentagram I carved. Through the stargate Auriel came - raven-haired lady whose face brought the Full Moon into my Temple. Knowing my intention, Auriel offered me her Pentacle which rested upon her open palms. I placed my hands over the cool, copper disk, covering hers. Her mouth formed a secret smile with the knowledge of our journey. Auriel looked into my eyes and spoke the Angelic word for Earth, "NANTA."

In response to the Angel's voice, Boreas whirled about us. Auriel spread wings and caught Boreas' breath. Together, we sailed through the green late.

In the World of Earth, I found myself riding Auriel in her Unicorn guise, ting her great wings she took me to the Kingdom of the Gnomes. We landed re the Kingdom's wall, which was built of the strength of mountains. In >nse to our presence, a boulder broke free from the wall and rolled down the forming an opening. The boulder metamorphosized into a jackal-headed , which challenged us with a raised Pentacle. I raised my athame, cut an pentagram, and chanted the Hebrew God name: AGLA. Satisfied, the guard ted us, and, with a gesture, bid us enter. My Unicorn mount carried me |h the opening onto a great plain, covered with snow. I turned and watched the guard dissolved into rock and returned to her place in the wall. I turned my attention to the snowy plain that lay before us. The Kingdom the Gnomes was cool in the light of the eternal Full Moon. The Moonlight glinted the snow, which drove back the darkness of the night sky. The tilled earth under a blanket of whiteness. Beyond the fields, the forest trees were raced by a thin coating of ice glittering with reflected Moon light. The world frozen, but life had not abandoned it. Like the butterfly in a cocoon, it was in chrysalis that held the promise of rebirth.

As I breathed in all the beauty the Kingdom had to offer, I saw a great henge of standing stones in the distance. The henge was composed of a ring of stone slabs which towered high above the Gnomes that stood within it. I heard the sound of a gong whose deep voice rung with solemnity. Silently, I beckoned Auriel to carry me to the gathering within the stone henge. Auriel leapt into the air and, with two sweeps of her great wings, we found ourselves circling above the Gnomes' ritual site. In time the Gnomes took note of us and beckoned to join them. Auriel and I landed just as the gong rang out into silence. Once we were settled, the Gnomes began their wordless chant. The chant started low and soft but slowly built in strength. As I listened, time had lost its significance and seemed at a standstill. But as the Gnomes chanted, I realized that this simple chant was a song praising the Winter. Soon the standing stones glowed with energy. The Gnomes bowed as the glowing stones metamorphosized into the King and her consort.

I spoke, "Blessed Be Ghob, The Gnome King, whose wisdom I seek."

"Blessed Be the Seeker, whose knowledge leads him to my Kingdom.

The North is the Realm of Manifestation. The power of Elemental Earth is the power of stability. In his quest for knowledge, the Seeker looks for stability in the world around him. The key to perceiving his inner world is held in his perception of the cyclic order of the manifest world.

"Within the laws of physical reality lies the power of form. Through understanding the limits of the physical, the Seeker is able to find the foundation upon which to build."



## Earth - A Song Of Praise To Our Mother

aslan

We give thanks for vine leaves in the Springtime, We give  
thanks for the grapes in the Fall,  
We give thanks for the juice the whole year through, Earth  
Mother gives it all.

We give thanks for the grasses of Springtime, We give thanks  
for the grain in the Fall,  
We give thanks for the flour the whole year through, Earth  
Mother gives it all.  
*Praise to Earth Mother;  
On Her our lives depend.  
Praise to Earth Mother;  
Her bounties never end.*

We give thanks for the blossoms of Springtime, We give  
thanks for the fruits of the Fall,  
We give thanks for our food the whole year through, Earth  
Mother gives it all.

With Her gifts we can build our bodies  
Which we will return at Her call; We  
will love and protect Her all our lives.  
Earth Mother gives us All!

## **Travel Into the World of the Elements**

Noonstar

*The time has come to travel into the World of the Elements. A  
journey in which body and mind are to join and truly know what it is to  
be the Elements.*

I circle around my altar and stand in the East. Lifting my athame, feeling the energy coursing through my body, I scribe the Pentagram of Air. There is an explicit change in the pressure of the room as the Invocation is completed. I reach out with my mind and summon the Lords of the East. I wait in silence. What begins as a gentle breeze blowing against my skyclad skin turns into a surging wind issuing forth from the open portal blowing my hair into my eyes. A vortex of wind, swirling and turning, appears out of the portal before me and surrounds my body, making me succumb to its intense force. Slowly I feel my body becoming Air, totally saturated by the wind. As I breathe in its nature I feel as though every pore of my body is like a little mouth, breathing & absorbing. I touch myself and feel as though I have substance but am at the same time no substance. In the distance can be heard the ever faint sound of a flute being played. The sound gets stronger, filling my mind and spilling over into my body, until the music becomes life itself. The music disappears just as quickly as it appeared leaving my mind to feel reborn just as the sun is reborn each morning bringing with it new enlightenment and understanding. I lift my athame and scribe the Banishing Pentagram of Air. As the Invocation is completed the vortex moves back through the portal leaving behind a Sword whose blade is inscribed with my magickal name. As my body returns to its normal state, the realization that the mind is like air and can easily be moved through, is left with me.

I circle to the South and stand ready for the next journey. I lift my new sword and scribe the Pentagram of Fire, moving the energy through the sword as if it were quicksilver, leaving a trail of blue/silver fire floating in the air. Reaching out to the universe, I summon the Lords of Fire; their response is instantaneous. My Circle is filled with a heat that causes sweat to moisten my skin. As the beat of my heart quickens, so does the movement of the energy around the Circle. Within the flowing energy I can see those mischievous Salamanders moving all about me, leaving behind little fiery footprints. The passion consumes me and I can feel a transformation taking place. Changing, forming, activating those ties that connect me to the Earth. I lift my sword and scribe a Banishing Pentagram of Fire. As quickly as it appeared, the heat disappears. There on the floor is a cauldron with etheric flames issuing forth. As I watch them jumping and flickering I realize that they are eternal. Realize that these flames are the astral double to the blood that courses through our veins, giving life and consciousness. It is through this cauldron that we can feed our magickal selves and allow exuberance to keep us connected to all those things that we call God and Goddess.

I vine-dance to the next quarter. West, with it's blue candle burning bright within the dark quarter of my temple, it is the quarter

that intimidates me the most. Spacing my feet so that I am well supported I pull energy into my body and send it down my sword to scribe the Pentagram of Water. I call with the Great Voice to summon the Lord of the West. I hear something ever so faint; I cock my head so that I might hear better. It is the sound of the sea much like it is heard through a conch shell. The waves lapping at the sandy beach while seagulls sound overhead calling to their flock mates. I can feel a light mist cooling my warm skin, coating the hairs of my chest with its aampness. I feel flooded by all the emotions that I have kept hidden deep inside myself. One by one they float to the surface of my being, drifting on as if I were but another cove of the Universe. As I face each one I see myself as others truly see me. Acknowledging each one I set it adrift out into space allowing it to return to the Primal Source. I feel a tear rolling down my cheek. I cry in joy at the new person I look forward to being one day. I collect my self and stand, not realizing that I had sunk to my knees, and scribe the Banishing Pentagram. As the mist clears I find oefore me an ornate Chalice, filled with a liquid that is not just water but a universal elixir. Cupping the Chalice in my hands I let my gaze drift across the surface. The liquid shimmers then clears leaving behind an image. It is of a people from an ancient time, dancing around a bonfire beneath a pale full moon. I can see that these simple people are very nappy in their celebration and worship. I know that this is a vision of one of my pasts and I embrace it knowing that I am still happy in my celebration and worship.

My body moves in its own way, twisting and undulating, to the North point. Raising aloft my sword I scribe the Pentagram of Earth in big bold movements. My mind gropes forth to connect with and summon the Lords of the North. As I look through the portal that is before me, I can see another land on the other side. It is a pleasant field with a mountain in the distance. In the field playing like children are what appear to be fairie folk, gnomes and

dryads; dancing and frolicking in the sun and rolling on the earth. Through this image I can feel my own body, its sturdiness and the nurturing that I have to give. The energy coming from the portal seizes my body, holding me, nurturing me, healing the parts of me that are sad. Can it be that the healing that I need to do can be



accomplished through the nurturing of others? Can I heal myself by healing others? The Earth makes me feel childlike, leaving me wanting to run and frolic in the fields. Wait, there is a sudden change. The sun is disappearing and the air grows cooler. The season is changing and winter is setting in. So, it seems that the Earth is not only the giver of warmth and bounty, but the bringer of cold and severity. In this severity we learn of sustenance through restraint. It is by this that we can learn to live without ever wanting or being without. I lift my sword and dismiss the portal with a Banishing Pentagram. There on the edge of my Circle is a Pentacle, made of a beautiful agate slice; sitting upon the Pentacle is a wonderful crystal point. These gifts will travel with me on this path to teach me how to heal and to share the child within me with others.

I pass back to the East to complete the	circle that I have begun,
much like I continue the cycle that was begun in	another time. As we walk
hand in hand through the forest of our Gods,	we learn together, share
together and love together, just like many of us	have done before.



# The Athame

## The Witch's Magickal Knife

There are many ways to express the Mysteries of this Witch's tool. Whether one takes the traditional lore, that of the athame as symbol of the male archetype, or explores it as a gateway to some of the wonders of Wicca, there is perhaps no ritual tool which quite compares with the athame.

Have 1 The Strength?	Raven	1 0 9
The Keen Cutting Edge	Heronfriend	1 1 2
Behold My Blade, My Athame	Ishan	1 1 4
A Circle Scribed in Perfect Love	Noonstar	1 1 5
It Is A Thought Form	aslan	1 1 6
The Mysteries of the Athame	Lucanus	1 1 8
My White-Handled Knife	Vivianne	1 2 3
Famous Swords	Vivianne	1 2 4

## The Athame

*It was nearly twenty years ago that I began my search for an athame. Having only weeks before begun my first classes in Witchcraft, it was a strange and wondrous quest. What was I shopping for? We had been told that an athame was one of the ritual tools needed in order to do ritual. We were also told that it was basically a straight, two-edged blade and that it should have a blackened handle. A thorough Virgo, I went searching to find further definition about this unfamiliar ritual tool. The dictionary bore no fruit and there was scant literature available. The few books on the Craft to be found in those primitive days of Wicca made reference to the athame, but there was little more. Considering the great number of books which have since come into print, few even today are able to provide us any extensive history regarding the Witch's knife.*

*The athame, no matter how you pronounce it (and there are many delightful variations), is easily one of the most perplexing ritual items to a novice Wiccan. Fictionalized images of crazed witches dancing in a frenzy, naked bodies glistening in the firelight, all brandishing sharpened knives is a stereotype which, when coupled with news reports of ritual murders and sacrifices, force a student to confront personal fears and stereotypes in acquiring a ritual knife. The fact is that ritual knives are found in cultures world-wide.*

*I set out on my own journey, seeking high and low. It was not an easy quest. Even today the novice must be creative in her search for an athame. There are knives in hunting catalogs which meet the literal requirements: handsome, straight blades sharpened on both sides with solid, black handles. There are wonderful (often magickal) blades at the many Renaissance festivals and fairs held throughout our lands. Over the years I have watched novices find blades in antique stores, military stores, flea markets and shopping centers. Some have found a suitable knife made by an artisan at one of the fairs and a very few novices have actually made their own knives.*

*Quickly I realized that it would not be an easily quest. Having looked in cutlery stores and the seemingly obvious locations, I took the expedient route and found a convenient knife at an occult store in Saint Paul, believing (correctly) that this would serve my needs for several years until I found the knife I longed for. While attending a major pagan gathering in the late 1970's I found a hand-made athame crafted by a Wiccan Priest.*

*The original knife with its plastic handle has since been given to the Mother. It was laid to rest within sacred soil. But the special athame I later acquired is that blade I hope to have waiting for me when next I walk the Earth. It's blade is no longer quite as shiny as it was when new. The blade has seen the fire of burning coals, has been dipped into herbal elixirs and wine, and continues to touch the Earth in reverence every time I bring it into my Circle.*

*Since those early years as a novice I have learned much about ritual knives. Sacred knives are found in the majority of religions, from the phurba of Tibet to the ceremonial sword of Christianity. It's true! During my career as a professional chamber musician, we had the opportunity to perform at the occasion of a Cardinal's visit to the College of Saint Thomas. There, in the lobby outside the auditorium, were a number of stunning swords on display, bequeathed to the College by religious dignitaries.*

*With the ritual chalice, the athame ranks as one of the most personal tools belonging to a Wiccan. The Pathworking within The Mystery School requires a student to express her or his personal feelings. What we offer on the athame range from the stark poem of Ishan, which examines the potent symbolism in all its male energy to Raven's story of Robin's first grasp of some of the athame's meaning.*

*If you have an athame, bring it out, read these words aloud to your blade as you hold it in your hand. Look within it and you will find the wisdom within its blade, a true reflection of the wise words of these students.*

*- Rev. Paul*

## Have I The Strength?

### The Athame

by Raven

"Have I the strength, Master?"

"You have... you must."

The old man and the youth stood together, out of doors, in the time of the setting sun.

"Hold your athame outstretched, and face the East. Now, close your eyes and tell me what you feel."

Several moments passed, and then the boy spoke. "I feel nothing. Nothing but the gentle breeze upon my face."

"Is the breeze nothing?"

He waited a moment, and then his inner vision began to sense a lightness... "It is... no." He felt the breath of the East as it caressed him. "It is youthful and pure. I think that I could stand in it forever and not grow old!"

"It is Eursus."

"Eursus," the youth whispered.

"Now, use your imagination, my boy." The man stood behind the youth and closed his eyes, too.

He said, "Feel the energy within you. Feel it and let it raise up."

"What does the energy feel like, Master?"

The old man frowned slightly, but there was no impatience in his voice. "It is power... it's virile. You must recognize the virility of the God within you... the Male Principle, it is the might of your own moral courage, lad... your intellect... all of your knowledge. You must feel it. Feel it, Robin!"

The youth stood firm, and sought deep within himself to recognize, and free the power of his mind. He held his athame before him and grasped it with both of his hands, fearful that he would lose his grip when the power overtook him. He parted his feet to the distance of his shoulders, and waited as though the athame were holding him, instead of the reverse. Behind him, his eyes still closed, the old man smiled affectionately.

"The gift of the athame is that of discrimination," the Master said. "With the force of your mind and with the power of Air, you will direct the energy to define the limits of the Sacred Space." And, after a pause, "You throb with the Divine Masculine... do you not?"

"Yes." The boy's voice was raspy, and he was afraid that he would cry out.

"Feel the handle of the blade within your grasp, Robin. Let the rising God Force surge to overflowing. Direct it through the tip of the athame. See it, Boy!" The Master moved in a little closer behind him. "It is a stream of naked, pure energy. It is both the radiant gold of the God, and the searing blue of the Goddess, at once."

Nearly trembling, Robin stood and, like a lightning rod, he bade the Force to sweep through both himself and the dagger and streak into the astral world. He stood frozen, exhilarated and momentarily immobilized.

"Define your space!" the voice behind him commanded. "Scribe the Circle."

The boy slowly turned, without allowing his outstretched arms to relax. He moved toward the South, drawing a line of light which would delineate the boundaries of the space that he was preparing between the worlds.

His teacher continued to speak, softly, but with a firmness that came from countless years of knowing... "You are persuading, with your mind, all friendly and benevolent spirits to remain gathered here with you, to honor the Lord and Lady."

Toward the West, he turned.

The old man continued, "You are banishing all malevolent beings and influences of the Otherworld beyond the limits of your Circle."

To the North...

"You are making a place for Magick to grow, and gather strength. The athame is double-edged. See the poles of it gleam in the ethereal light. It has the power to both banish and attract." The old man turned from the center of the Circle as the boy slowly scribed through all of the Quarters.

When the Circle was complete, they continued to stand close at hand, each taking something from the other. The youth was buoyed, not only by this wondrous act, but also by the Love that he felt from his teacher and the confidence that the old man had in him. The Wise One was made youthful by the sheer, palpable exuberance of his student. For a moment they remained still, and felt together the timelessness which existed within their temple... newly cast, and yet ancient beyond understanding.

Robin turned in the night to light the candles.

## The Keen Cutting Edge

by Heronfriend

The Athame is one of the Key Mysteries of the Tradition of Lothlorien. There is rich symbolism associated with it and a paradox.

Physically, the Athame takes the form of a weapon and a tool. It is the power of the blade as a knife or 'short sword'<sup>1</sup>. It is the keen cutting edge.

Ritually, the Athame also takes the part of the Male principle in the symbolic enactment: of the Great Rite. It is the masculine portion of the yin-yang duality. It is a symbol of the God.

Both symbolisms are valid, beautiful and powerful. The paradox occurs when the symbolisms are mixed. If the Athame can represent a weapon and the Athame can represent the Male principle, then it may seem to suggest the symbolism of the "Phallus as Weapon". While this concept has been seen within the Patriarchy, it is not here. It arises only out of the fact that both symbolisms are approximations. They are attempts to explain by different means the Magickal nature of the Athame. When the two polarities do join here, they meet in love and with joy in accordance with the Charge.

I sat down to meditate. A yellow candle burned before me. I closed my eyes and quieted my thoughts. The light in the room faded as the sun was setting. My surroundings seemed to become misty. I arose. The mist became more dense. An arm extended toward me from the East. It held a sword upright in its hand. I accepted the blade. The arm withdrew. I scribed a circle with the blade. I stood before the altar. I raised the blade in salute to the God and the Goddess. The sword descended into my upraised arm. The sword merged with my arm. They became one. I stood this way for some time. I sat and meditated.

My athame is the material manifestation of my magical tool which has its primary existence on the astral level. I sought it out after this experience. I look forward to the time when I will be ready to draw the sword to me on the material plane. The athame as a magical tool helps me to focus and to concentrate my attention and will. It acts as a lens or a conductor between the seen and the unseen worlds. It "cuts" between the two realms to join them. It is "generative" in that it helps me to focus my imagination. It is a "weapon" in that it helps me to assert my images and to alter those which

must be changed "For the good of all". It is an "active" tool rather than a "passive" one.

Why then, if the athame is indeed, primarily, a tool of the astral, is there a need to have a corresponding physical object? I did read, "There is no power in the sword that is not in the arm which wields it." I took some satisfaction in this quote. It took some thought to work on the other part of the puzzle. The athame is a magical "tool". The magical part seemed evident.

A tool though, even on the physical level, is a device designed to make a given task easier or more efficient. The athame as a tool provides me with a physical point of concentration. It helps me to build the ritual and is an aid to move "between worlds". As a lens, a condenser, a conductor, I feel that with repeated use, my athame will become a more effective tool. It will become more efficient and more "powerful." My athame may become such a "focus" that it could aid another using it depending upon how closely their orientation and intentions resemble my own. It takes practice, ability, and skill to use powerful tools safely. I practice to be worthy of my athame and to prepare for my sword.

## **Behold My Blade, My Athame**

### **The Athame**

#### **Ishan**

Behold my blade, my athame,  
tempered in my will, engraved in my  
blood, an inseparable part of me,  
throughout time.

Behold my blade, my athame, the  
double edge, razor sharp as my virtue,  
my word.

Behold my blade, my athame, spilling  
the seed of energy to cut through  
unseen veils that I may walk 'twixt  
worlds

Behold my blade, my athame, symbol  
of the throbbing God force, energy



without form, awaiting the receptive  
Cup.

Behold my blade, my athame, weapon  
to entice and banish, upon my  
authority.

A Circle Scribed in Perfect Love

The Athame by Noonstar

I kneel before my altar in a Circle scribed in Perfect Love. The darkened temple is to remind me of my inner self. Finding my center, I open myself to the Universe, allowing my mind to travel up and out through my crown and transpersonal chakras merging and experiencing an undescrivable closeness with those that we call God and Goddess. At this time of oneness, I offer to them a wish. I ask of them for a tool; one that will allow me to serve them as They deserve to be served.

My body moves, my eyes open. Igniting the candle that represents the male principle, then carrying fire to the candle that represents the female principle, the temple becomes enflamed with light. There upon my altar, a knife lies gleaming in the candle light; oh how it is a most wondrous sight to behold. It's silver blade shining with its own inner light; a blade that is double edged to remind me that there is a polarity to every act of will. Not only will I be able to banish negative energy but I will attract positive energy as well. It also represents my personality; on one side there is the part of me that works and interacts with the everyday world and on the other side there is the magickal being that is me. The blade of the knife shows how they are two sides that exist in balance as one.

The handle is of a strange wood; not a light wood but at the same time it is not a dark wood. It seems to have its own highlights and lowlights much like my inner self. It seems to comfort me and protect me so that I may have the strength to be strong.

I reach out to touch the knife and it lurches into my hand. As I examine it closely there is a feeling as if we have been together once before in another time and another place. I try to lay it back upon the altar but it refuses to let go. It asks me to stand and scribe the Circle with it so that I can once again claim it as mine. The moment that the Circle is cast I feel a strange sensation. It is a feeling of pain and at the

same time a feeling of pleasure. It is a feeling of two becoming one. As I cast my Magickal Sight at my right hand, I see that there is no longer a division between my hand and the knife; where my fingers end the knife simple becomes. We are one once again.

As I raise my hand to rest the knife against my forehead I feel the energy burning through my mind, unlocking and enlightening those centers that have been asleep for so long. It is at this moment that I realize that this is a Magickal Knife of the Wicca. It is an ATHAME.

## It Is A Thought Form

### The Athame by aslan

Not Just... Not just a knife dipped in Water, Salt, Wine, Earth. Not just a piece of metal to wave in the air to attempt to separate the mundane from the spiritual. Not just a symbolic way to mark space as consecrated. Not just something bought at a store, from a catalogue, given as a gift or created by a smith for a specific person.

(i have read about and have experienced using the first two fingers of the right hand as the tool for all of the ceremony, i have touched my fingers to my, or another's, forehead to scribe a pentagram or a circle, quartered, or to bestow a blessing, or to anoint with sacred fluid.)

*The Athame* is not an athame. It is a thought form. It is a way to channel concentrated energy from the Ritual Worker into the Cosmos, to allow a joining of Form and Idea, of Physical and Astral. While "Tradition" in most ways dictates how an athame should look (Black handled, silver-bladed), *The Athame* is in the Mind of the User and in the watching of the Goddess and God.

A Tool to cut the Physical world away from the Ritual Worker, to allow the Ritual Worker to disengage the noises of the street outside the window, the playing or noises of children, the pet noises, the radio or TV that may be on in another room of the building; to float free from the carpet or wood floor that may be rough or cold, free from the heat of the season, free from the discomfort of clothing worn or insects buzzing around one's head; to move the Ritual Worker away from the work at the office, the bills that arrived in the mail, the news in the newspaper. *The Athame* allows that to be cut away by the focusing of the Ritual Worker's mind on the work to be performed.

A Tool to consecrate tap water, table salt, grape juice, garden soil. The *Athame* turns these into Sacred Representations of the Elements of Life.

A Tool to scribe Pentagrams of Respect and Awareness of the Forces which exist around the Physical and Astral planes; Breath of Life, Fire of Knowledge, Water of Mystery and Birth, Earth of Growth and Plenty.

A Symbolic Tool representing the Male aspect of The One. A Phallic Symbol sending its "Seed" via the Ritual Worker into the Astral to join with the Female aspects and create new awareness and manifestation.

In times past, it is possible that an athame was also a handy weapon to have, to defend against attack during a Ritual. Many of the European witches may have had to use their athames to either end the life of another who would harm them or end their own lives. As in the First Degree Initiation, the point of an athame could have been a way for a witch to leave this incarnation while still in Perfect Love and Perfect Trust.

Yes, i am planning on holding this athame which i use during ritual again when this spirit chooses to be reincarnated, i will, however, always be holding *The Athame* which is my tool of power and which allows me to separate the necessary Spiritual Times from those that distract me.

## The Mysteries of the Athame

### The Athame by Lucanus

On my return home from the Gathering, I decided to visit the site where the Whitewater River branched off from the mighty Mississippi. After a few polite inquiries, I managed to locate the place. As it was already becoming dark, I decided to make my visit in the morning.

Rising early, I retraced my way to the sacred site. The morning air was sweet and Sunlight glinted off the dew-covered grass. I listened to the birds sing as I carried my ritual bag down to where one of the Daughters of Mother Mississippi began Her separate journey.

I selected a clearing which was surrounded by a copse of trees, protecting me from the view of the highway. I closed my eyes and calmed myself, listening to the songs of the two Rivers.

After a short period, I took my Athame and carefully traced my Circle. Satisfied, I began the Lesser Banishing Pentagram Ritual. I spoke the ancient Godnames, filling the clearing with Divine energy. I wove the energy with the Rowan Tree Chant and sealed the Circle. My Temple was complete.

A calm settled and the trees seemed to be more vigilant than before. I saluted my silent guardians and I turned toward the East. I raised my Athame and carved an Air pentagram, calling out to the Quarter's Archangel, "Raphael."

Through the stargate the Angel came, dressed in the airy yellows of a new dawn. Raphael greeted me with a smile and a salute with his Athame, a mirror reflection of my own. I looked into his eyes and suddenly lunged at him with my drawn blade. The Angel parried my Athame with his own and spoke the Angelic word for sacred blades, "NAZPS." As our blades made contact, a great flash of blue light leapt from them which formed an astral gateway. Together, we stepped into the light....

....I found myself in a great hall which was Magickally fashioned inside an ancient, living Mallorn tree. Raphael was at my side in his Unicorn guise. The room was furnished with rich tapestries and lit by Sunlight that streamed in through stained glass windows. At the opposite end of the hall, a lone Elf Lord looked out an open window, deep in thought. Tentatively, I approached with Raphael in my wake. As we came closer, my eyes drank in this handsome vision whose aura was akin to Moonlight. I took notice of the lord's sapphire ring, which he wore upon his index

finger. By its description, I knew the ring to be Vilya, the elven Ring of Air. A fresh sense of awe gripped me, for I suddenly knew who stood before me. I gathered my courage and approached, daring to breathe his name, "Elrond."

Elrond turned and greeted Raphael and me, "Forgive me, my friends. I did not notice your entrance," the Elf Lord said as he took me in his arms and embraced me warmly. "I find myself consumed with worry these days, for unhappy times approach. But, for now, I shall let go of these concerns." Suddenly Elrond's face brightened like the Full Moon appearing from behind the clouds, "I see you have an important question which has brought you across worlds. Speak, then."

"Yes, my Lord," I replied. "My Lord Elrond, I have come to learn the Mysteries of the Athame."

Elrond smiled sadly. "It is significant that you come at this time with such a question: an irony brought to us by the White Lady." He motioned me to a chair and sat opposite. "The Athame symbolizes the power of discrimination, the ability to make choices in spite of doubts which arise from the fear of failure. Through its use, the Wise can cut through deception and illusion to the core of Truth.

"It is a Magickal weapon of force which has the power to influence others, tempered by moral courage. For this reason, this sacred tool symbolizes the power of the word which banishes evil and attracts only good." The Elf Lord was lost for a moment to his thoughts, which seemed to darken his aura, "The Dark Lord grows strong in the East, with designs to rule our world in his shadow. Soon the Enemy shall rally his troops and we shall feel the dread power of his blade. Thus is the power of intellect and desire fueled by fear and unchecked by love."

A shiver ran through me. Elrond took notice and placed his hand upon mine. His aura brightened once more when his gaze met mine, "Hear not, my friend. Your question gives me new hope for the Truths of Aie Athame are the key to preserving what we love. In time, the sword Andruil will be reforged and our champion will rally the forces of the West to defend our homeland. Your appearance here is an augur that the West shall prevail, despite the doubts which haunt my soul.

"But your appearance portends another meaning," Elrond said, and looked deep into my eyes. "It confirms to me that this world of mortality is no true place for Elvenkind. Through the power of our Rings, we have kept back the curtain of Time from touching our lands. But the Magick which keeps back the hand of Death is fading. The Elves who remain will become weary and long for the light of the Immortal Lands. Therefore, it is meet that I share this lore.

"The Athame helps the Wise to shape the Holy Fire of the White Lady and Green Lord. Directed by will, such Fire can create a sacred space in which the mortal world and immortal world intermingle.

"The Athame is a channel of creativity. Through it, the Wise can greet his imagination, shaped by the fire of will to manifest desire in the physical.

"The Athame is a Magick weapon that can banish the darkness from within and without, thus attracting only that which is good for our well-being.

"The Athame represents the male current of the Universe. Within the sacred Circle, this Magick tool can be used to call down the power of the Sun God, to manifest our Lord in His priest or priestess. Thus in this fashion may flesh commune with Spirit.

"In the Great Rite, the Athame is joined with the Chalice, which symbolizes the sacred union between our Lady and Lord, the creative powers of the Universe," Lord Elrond said. He held out his hands, and the Ring Vilya flashed blue fire. A Chalice appeared in his grasp, which he held up in offering to me. I took hold of my Athame and sunk it into the mouth of the Elven Cup. Elrond smiled, "The Great Rite also symbolizes our Covenant with the White Lady and Green Lord, to be caretakers of our world and to strive ever toward reunion with Them. Let us renew our pledge to Them, in the presence of Their messenger, Raphael."

I withdrew my blade and accepted the Chalice with the words, "Blessed Be," drinking deeply. Lord Elrond accepted the Chalice back and spoke, "Blessed Be," finishing the sacred elixir.

"Now, my dear brother," the Elf Lord said, "I must bid you adieu for I must meet with my Elven kinsman in Council. Merry meet and merry part."

"And merry meet again, my Lord." We embraced and exchanged a kiss. I climbed aboard my Unicorn and left in a rush of wind.

My heart was heavy with our parting, but the beauty of the two rivers below caught my attention. I smiled with wonder as I noticed that the land of Lothlorien was nestled between the River Celebrant and Her mother, the Anduin. Thoughts of the Whitewater River and the Mother Mississippi brought me home....

#### Other Magickal Blades

*There are other ritual blades as well. One which is used in a more mundane manner is the boline. Traditionally considered a white-handled, single edged knife, its use is highly practical. Although finding a boline is far easier than the quest for an athame, mine came to me in a most unusual manner.*

*When I was preparing for Initiation, there were three of us who worked together as students. One, a Capricorn friend of mine, asked me if I would go shopping with her as she was going to set out to find her athame. Strong of mind, she was not receptive to my suggestion (she was already frustrated at not finding one in the preceding months) of just heading across the Mississippi River to St. Paul to the trusty occult stores. We trudged all through Minneapolis, finally ending up walking along Nicollet Mall. We neared an antique shop whose window indicated it was filled with all sorts of goodies. As we had spent the day touring any store which could conceivably have any type of knife, it was unspoken and we went right in. My friend was looking about and finding nothing in frustration. On the other hand, I looked in a*

display cabinet and there, fust out of sight, was a beautiful, white-handled knife which I knew was to be my boline.

I said nothing and, instead, went back the next day, not wanting increase my friend's frustration. The boline which I've now had for ten years is one carved of deer horn. What I found profoundly moving was the manufacturing information stamped upon the blade near the hilt, n says, "Bohlin" and also says: Bolingen, Germany. It appears that Boiingen' is the name of the location where the manufacturer would have Deen, but none of my atlases have any location even close to the spelling Bolingen' which appears on the knife. This information and fascinating coincidence remains one of my blade's mysteries.

- Rev. Paul

## *My WhiteJJandled JCNife*

*The Qoline by Vwianne*

*I take my knife in hand  
Smooth, familiar, worn  
JTandle of white bone  
Sharp edged, flat blade*

*tyverently I kneel  
JCNife at the ready  
To slice stems, dig roots  
Carve sigils in wax*

*Practical but no less magickal  
The magick of the mundane Jierbs,  
candles, pieces of cord  
I slice the threads between the astral*

*Ever present, ever waiting my call  
Small sickle or straight blade To  
serve my needs  
My <oline, my white handled knife.*

## **'SD**

The other ritual blade is the sword. Traditionally the sword is used when one 'speaks' or wields power for all present. In many Traditions, an example of this is found either when one addresses the Circle and gives it purpose. The sacred space has already been 'claimed' by the athame, but is now empowered by the sword. In many Traditions the sword is used in conferring Initiation, in bestowing honours, in functioning ritually when a group or community is represented rather than the 'solitary' nature of an athame.

- Rev. Paul

## Famous Swords

by Vivianne

In comparing several famous swords from myth and literature, I was amazed by the similarities. All the swords seem to have supernatural powers in their own right as well as imbuing their wielder with them also. I have my personal favorites such as Albion: one of the seven swords of Weyland the Smith, Terry Brook's Druid-forged sword of the House of Shannara or any of the many God-forged swords in Fred Saberhagen's Book of Swords novels. However the paragon of all swords has to be the infamous sword of Arthurian legend, Excalibur.

The legends surrounding Arthur and Excalibur are many and varied. There is the account of young Arthur's life when he had to pull the sword from the stone to prove he was Uther's heir and the rightful King of Britony. Some stories mention magical healing properties either of the sword or the scabbard that sheathed it. The most mysterious are the stories surrounding the Lady of the Lake. Legend says that when Excalibur was thrown into the lake at Arthur's request, a hand shot out of the water, caught the sword and pulled it back under.

Did Arthur possess a sword with all of the qualities and powers as Excalibur? Probably not. Like all other mythos, things grow with the telling and with the passage of time. Everyone puts their own spin on events and adds things to make the story better.

To understand the significance of the sword, you have to understand the man who wielded it. Arthur was probably in actuality a clan chieftain. The romantic chivalry story with the lovers' triangle was added later. What is important to remember is not what an actual Arthur might have done but what he became. Arthur has become a God in much the same way that other men and women have become deified over time. He became a symbol of strength and a hero in the true Joseph Campbell tradition. He is the sacrificed king who will come again in

greatest need or rise from the dead (sound familiar?) and save his people from disaster.

The sword is a symbol of divine kingship. The supernatural powers only add to the Arthurian mystique and legend. Surely such a great king would have a great weapon to match. Remember that a warrior's weapon is synonymous with the warrior himself. In the telling of these stories over such a long period of time and having so many people take them as fact, if only in their own hearts, it has created that very sword archetype on the astral. In the same way that we create our own reality on the material plane, we create our own mythos.

On the other end of the spectrum is a sword as malign and evil as Excalibur is good. Stormbringer is a vampiric sword created by Michael Moorcock for his albino elfin hero Elric of Meliborne to wield. The sword gave strength to the frail Elric but it exacted a dreadful price. The sword ate souls, usually of people that Elric was close to. It not only destroyed Elric's enemies but both of his women, his best friend and in the end the sword turned on Elric himself when everyone else in the world was dead and the sword had nothing left to feed on. Stormbringer was an entity in and of itself. It conferred strength and false power on Elric but hooked him on a dependency of the life force that the sword needed to survive.

Good and evil, black and white, power and compassion. Wield it as a symbol, wield it as a weapon. Two edges to a blade, decisions to make in every facet of life. The choice is ultimately yours.





# The Chalice

## The Witch's Ritual Cup

A ritual goblet is a ceremonial item even more universal than the athame. The ritual sharing of drink is a communion that many religions and many traditions find empowering. Within the Craft, the Chalice represents the depths of the sacred feminine mystique.

I Have Been A Chalice	Raven	128
The Magickal Cauldron	Heronfriend	
	130	
The Womb of the Mother	Vivianne	
	131	
The Chalice Is Like Unto Our Bodies	Gaelen	
	133	
The Twilight Mind	Lucanus	
	134	

## The Chalice

*The quest to obtain a chalice is far easier than the search for an athame. The image of the ideal chalice most people seem to hold is an item easily found. My first chalice came into my life over five years before I began my studies. I was an amateur collector of antiques and a shop in the next neighborhood had a set of silver Victorian wine goblets and champagne goblets. I had a strong case of the 'covets' over them. With patterns of grapes and leaves twined about the cup and upon the base, they were magnificent. Imagine my surprise on Christmas Eve when my roommate, Carole, caught me completely off guard by making me a gift of a pair of each. More than five years later I returned to that shop to purchase yet one additional goblet. In the winter of 1976 as I was nearing the time of my Initiation, I met with four others on a regular basis, one of whom was our teacher. It was with great joy that I was able to make gifts of the other chalices to those kindred souls.*

*As the years passed, I have ended up with a small collection of chalices. In fact, this past winter we purchased a small, wooden cabinet with glass doors. Attached to the wall with a bracket, a tiny, decorative padlock keeping the doors safely shut, our chalices were safe and secure when we were violently jolted into awareness of Mother Earth needing to adjust Her surface this past January 17th. My silver chalice is one of my favourite, once frequently used for the symbolic Great Rite, holding the ritual wine. I learned that wine and silver are a tricky mixture and it became necessary to have the interior of this chalice replated. For the Ritual Cup I now use a beautiful, crystal goblet. When first given the quest to obtain a chalice within which to mingle the salt and wine, I found a beautiful pressed glass antique candy dish. That chalice remains with me today, although used infrequently. My water chalice is a cobalt blue, glass antique of rare beauty. Originally made to be a footed punch bowl, one could only guess that function when I purchased it: three miniature cobalt cups came with it. Those I gave, many years ago, to the daughters of the woman who was the Priestess with me in Circles. There have been many more: chalices make wonderful gifts and, if we are lucky, our lives are blessed with gifts and will manifest the Ace of Cups.*

*Chalices have many uses in our rituals, from that which represents the sacred Womb of the Universe to that which is utile, holding water which will aspurge the Circle. Then there are those which celebrate, like the chalice which holds the drink we share at the ritual feast. Chalices can be as unique as the students who have written about them...*

*- Rev. Paul*

*I Jiave < & eenjl Chalice...*

*The Chalice by \$ {aven*

*I have been a Chalice... standing in front of my mirror being both amused and horrified at the surrealistic distortion of my pregnant body ... the womb, jlned the nurturing of these souls, possibly ancient, in their own new little bodies took place at the Chalice of my breast. JSestled warmly to their mother, milk trickling from the corners of their pink mouths, they dozed in the security of abundance.*

*I picked a large glass goblet  
off of a crowded, dusty table in an antique shop...  
the kind of shop where nothing has been polished,  
nor do the treasures shine from behind glass doors.  
They must be retrieved from among  
dozens of toppled, tarnished objects.  
I held this glass in my hand, and felt the weight of it... it was  
thick, heavy, unadorned...*

*but, it did not want to be set down again. "Those have some age to them,"  
the man with the pony tail said*

*Clean, upon my altar, and full lo the brim with melted snow,  
I lifted the Chalice gingerly, and slowly turned within my Circle.  
delighted, I saw my surroundings reflected in the bright bowl...  
They appeared to travel in the opposite direction,  
and pass before me like a partner in an old country dance.  
Hie Cup seemed to be full with more than water.  
I thought upon the nature of a vessel...  
feminine, fertile, bursting with the potential to perform  
a miracle... that of birth, which is rebirth, which follows death...  
which follows birth. The magick of the Chalice is the gift of life,  
of sustenance, and regeneration ... the gift of the Goddess.*

*T)\e Magick of the Chalice, when empty, is a promise... that which is wanting  
shall return. When full... the knowledge that all things pass in their time... like  
the Moon... like the Wheel of the year. The Cup is empty, the Cup is half, the  
Cup is full The Chalice is a working representation of the cycles of the feminine  
principle, and all of the emotion therein... the loss % fulfillment, the creativity  
and love of life... "Come fill the Cup... the bird is on the Wing!" h i s a vessel,  
which, when gazed into, becomes without end., for the Mysteries of the  
QJniverse, the depths of the ancient memories of our race, the furthest limits of  
the journey into our own divine selves will take the seeker beyond the illusions of  
time and space. The Chalice is Eternity ...*

*it is the comings and goings of all things.*

**The Magickal Cauldron**

The Chalice by Heronfriend

The Chalice is one of the two great mysteries of the Tradition of Lothlorien. Look at the Chalice. Does it seem passive, empty, fragile? Is it the symbol of the feminine? Is this the Yin, the counterpart of the Yang which is the Athame?

Sometimes the best way to hide a Secret is to leave it in the open and not to comment upon it. If others choose to make assumptions, let them. They will believe that a Great Secret would be hidden away.

The Chalice is indeed the symbol of the Goddess, the Feminine principle, the Magickal Cauldron. Look at Her again.

She is far from being passive. She gives and She takes back again. Hers is the Active Mystery of growth and of generation. Hers, too, is the Active Mystery of decline and decay. Hers is the Cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. She is the Feminine principle of all life and inspiration. Empty? She is the cradle of imagination, hope, and eternity. Fragile? She embodies all the resilience of the Universe.

The Chalice is the True Partner of the Athame; for what is the value of assertion and action without imagination, growth and renewal?

I sit in my Circle at the water's edge. A light breeze raises ripples on the lake. Moonlight glistens from the ripples between silver-white water lilies. Lilies, ... I recall listening to my biology teacher, Lily.

She shows the class a human skeleton. She demonstrates how the feet rest firmly on the ground and how the legs support the body. She emphasizes how the "most important" parts of the body are protected by strong bone.

"Look," she says. "See how the pelvis, 'the baby basket,' cradles the reproductive organs; just as the skull, 'the brain basket,'<sup>1</sup> cradles the intellect. See, as it is above, so it is below!"

It seems as though I can hear her continuing, tonight.

"I see you've found your Tradition. Have you come for your Chalice?"

"I have been searching," I reply. "Could I have one of those?" I ask, pointing to one of the lilies.

"They will be yours and more when the time is right. This is what you need now."

She hands me not one of the lily blooms but an entire lily plant -root, stem, leaf, and bud!

"Learn the lessons of this and you will realize your own bloom," She foretells.

A cloud passes before the moon. When moonshine again lights the waters, I am alone. No, not quite alone. My Chalice rests before me.

**?**

## **The Womb of the Mother**

The Chalice by Vivianne

I stand upon the sandy shore and gaze out into the vastness of the deep blue waters. The waters are the womb of the Mother; they are another world, separate from ours. They are the representation of our emotions and our subconscious dreams. We place the Chalice on our altars and remember the principles of creation. I look to my daily life for illumination in what this means to me.

I stand in the ruins of an infamous turn-of-the-century bath house, not far from the wide expanse of the Golden Gate. All that remains of this once opulent structure with its glass dome are concrete foundations now turned to tide pools. No one bathes here anymore. The air is biting, full of salt & smog & the smell of the sea. The waters are grey and bitterly cold. The undertow is fierce and the shore line craggy with boulders, inhospitable when compared to the beaches of Newport, its southern California cousin. I come here in the fog, huddled in sweaters from England, another cold & foggy place, watching gulls wheel and cry. No one comes here to feed them. They steer towards the wharf with its people. I gaze at the sea, the sea that still gives of its bounty to the fishermen who make their living from its waters.

I stand upon the cliffs and gaze into the crystal clear waters of azure blue. I know that the sandy bottom is more than sixty feet from the surface yet it seems as deep as a mirror pool. So clear and pure are the waters that I can see small fish, divers and plants. The waters of Jamaica are still pure. I cannot help but wonder if this is what all the tropical waters were like before the waste of man. The fish are the most incredible that I have ever seen. Colors so bright they look painted by children's hands.

I stand by the sewage pipe and look out over the expanse of Santa Monica Bay. Raw sewage pours into the sluggish waters. The surfaces of the waves are shiny with the rainbow lights of oil residue. The fish float belly up and white. The air is fetid. The tidepools died years ago. Any fish you catch, you cannot eat because of the radiation, waste & lead. I've seen birds and sea mammals dying in the sticky goo of oil spilled upon the once pristine beaches. McDonald's wrappers, Coke cans, broken beach chairs populate the sand now. I only came here once before. Now I know why I come here no longer. The cup of life is filled with garbage.

To the unobserving eye, the sea looks dead. However, the Mother reminds me of a valuable lesson. Life started in the oceans with bacteria and here bacteria thrive in abundance. We are not the only life form on the planet. We are arrogant to think that we really make a difference in the great cosmic scheme of things. Save the Earth! Preposterous. The Earth can take care of herself. A human being conceives of a hundred years being a long time, but for the Earth, a hundred years is nothing, a million years is nothing. Even if we nuked every corner of the planet and it was clicking hot for millions of years, life would continue. What is a million years to an entity that is billions of years old? The planet is not in danger of destruction; we are. We don't have the power to destroy the planet or to save it, but we might be able to save ourselves. The Mother is kind and cruel. Are we of value to the web of life or are we just another of Her failed species that are ready to be put back into the chalice of rebirth?

## The Chalice Is Like Unto Our Bodies

Gaelen

The Chalice is like unto our bodies. Within it is held the water or wine as our bodies contain our energies. It is a symbol of the container of our emotional lives. Within it can be held all good and bad emotions; however, during ritual, we put aside the bad qualities and focus on the positive.

The waves within the upheld Chalice reflect the movements which our emotions may be subject to. The soft undulations made by a seemingly steady hand reflect the natural fluctuation about the point of balance in our lives. The Chalice disturbed by movement is filled with the greater disruption in our lives. Deliberately moved, and quickly so, the Chalice holds the waves of anger or anxiety, and so on...

Light bounces through the water within, illuminating it and bringing it another facet we discover within ourselves. Excitement. This excitement changes with the changes in the waves. The playful sparkle of the light through the pattern in the cut glass Chalice instills the feelings of joy and happiness. Even giddiness, panning out in all directions. The wondrous, ever-changing feeling of joy.

Even the temperature of the water reveals something about emotions - warmth and cold play their parts in human emotions as well.

As it is like to our bodies, the Chalice has a figure. The base represents our feet and the stem our bodies while the bowl can either represent our heads, filled with the rapture of such remarkable experiences as our emotions provide us; or it may represent our spirit, engorged with such wonders in the same way. The water, of course, being that happiness which flows to all parts, conforms to all shapes of being within us.

## The Twilight Mind

The Chalice by Lucanus

The Temple was illumined by a candlelit altar, which sat just north of the center. Incense wafted gently in the air, mingling with the electric-blue haze of the Circle. Upon the altar sat a tall silver Chalice, resting upon a polished brass Pentacle.

I became the Middle Pillar, basking in Divine energy. The atmosphere of the Temple seemed to crackle with expectancy as I took up my Chalice. Turning toward the West, I carved a Water pentagram and called out to the Quarter's Archangel, sending my voice to the astral realm, "Gabriel".

Through the stargate, the Angel came, dressed in the flowing blues of Water. Gabriel greeted me with a smile and a gentle kiss upon my lips. I looked into her eyes and offered up my Chalice. The Angel raised hers, a mirror reflection of my own, and touched her Chalice to mine. Gabriel spoke the Angelic word for the Magickal tool, "TALHO". A light poured forth from our joined Cups, which created an astral gateway. Together, we stepped forward into the light ...

.... I found myself in a twilight world with tall trees, whose leaves shimmered gold in the breeze. Gabriel stood by my side in her Unicorn guise. The evening sky above was filled with stars, the like of which I never saw. But when my eyes rested upon the Lady, I forgot all else. I dared to breathe her name, "Galadriel ..."

Galadriel looked up from her Mirror and met my gaze. Her immortal eyes were filled with love, but seemed touched with sadness as if she understood the lot of humankind. I managed the courage to speak, "My Lady Galadriel, I come to learn the Mysteries of the Chalice."

My voice seemed lost in the gentle breeze which rustled the great Mallorn leaves. At last, Galadriel spoke, "Seeker, remember the Mother's

words, For mine is the secret door which opens upon the Land of Youth, and Mine is the cup of the wine of life, and the Cauldron of Cerridwen, which is the Holy Grail of immortality With that she raised her right hand, pointing her first two fingers toward the sky. Narya, the Elven Ring of Water, rested upon her index finger. Silver light seemed to spill from the sky into the elven Ring. Galadriel directed the silver light into the Magickal pool which sat before her. Once satisfied, she returned her attention to me and gestured for me to look into Her Mirror.

I suddenly felt frightened, but Gabriel nudged me gently with her muzzle and Galadriel smiled in reassurance. I stepped forward and looked into the black liquid depths of the Mirror ....

.... I found myself in a great void, but realized that I was no longer contained within a human frame. I held a sense of individuality, and knew the many names that I had/have/will to call my "self". But I did not experience the feeling of separateness as I had/have/will in a physical frame. I stretched out my awareness, and felt the infinity of the Oneness that I was a part. I understood that I was the very essence of life, but a minute part of a greater vessel of Life. This knowledge set me aflame - I was One with the Source, a part of the universal flow of the Great Mother!

...

.... It was time for me to separate from the Source. I coalesced my awareness, tighter, tighter and tighter until I became as brilliant as a white hot star. My attention was focused like a bright beam, searching for a realm into which I would become manifest. In time I found the physical plane, where I would *be* once again. My awareness spanned that realm. I found two human beings in physical union, a special joining in which for a brief few moments their essences become one. I broke from the Source, trailing a silver thread that would always connect us. My being flashed as I touched the two. Contact was made! In that instant I became flesh, a physical presence which slowly and carefully grew inside my mother's womb. We were two, yet for now one....

.... A couple of years passed and I grew from infancy to childhood. I knew happiness for Mother and Father provided a good home and met my basic needs. In time, my mother gave birth to my brother, who would add to my happiness for he would become my playmate. I remembered the times my mother, brother and I would go to the park and play.

I was a small child when I was first offered the one Chalice and felt the Lady's Call. In response, I mimicked the rituals of the priests, but the significance of my play was lost to all but my watching parents ...

.... The time came when I was initiated into adulthood and chose the Archangel Michael as my patron. But unlike my peers the ritual held more meaning for me. My interest in the tales of the Lady grew and I found comfort in meditating upon the Mysteries of the Lady and her Lord.

As all children, I thought about my future and considered my life's profession. It was then that I began to understand the Lady's Call. The Chalice loomed before me and I contemplated the sacred life of the Priesthood. But discontent settled upon my soul, for I knew my ideal was not considered a popular Path ....

.... Conversations among my peers settled upon our individual goals for livelihood. When it came my turn, I revealed my Calling. But to my dismay, the children laughed and scoffed and exclaimed that the Priesthood was not a proper Path to Manhood. I hung my head in shame and sadness, for I saw the brimming Chalice of my plans spill before me. Still, I carried the Chalice of Faith and the Lady's Call within my heart. But the voice of the one Chalice became a whisper which I buried deep within my heart ...

.... I was an adult now, earning a livelihood, but not quite settled upon a life's profession. The old discontent began to surface. But my musings were forgotten when love was offered to me by one who I would take as my partner. I was happy then, for I felt I possessed all the Chalice I needed, to find contentment in life. I revealed my faith and that hidden desire, the Lady's Call to my love ...

.... I was faced by the Chalice of Dreams, but the dreams were actually choices I must make. Some of the Chalice were sweet, and others bitter. Life bound me to sip from each. But, the one Chalice, the Lady's Call bid me to drink. I did so and only then began to realize the ordeals I would face. But for the time being, I was happy and continued to live my life as before....

.... As time progressed, I partook of the one Chalice, and my knowledge grew. Despite my material needs being met, and all that life had to offer, I was filled once again with discontent. I donned the grey cloak of the Pilgrim and sought to find how I could quench my thirst in the one Chalice, answering the Call of the Lady ...

.... I was taken from my visions and found myself looking once again at the blackness of Galadriel's Mirror. But this time, the holy waters reflected the stars' light. I looked up, and my gaze was met by the Lady Galadriel. She held out her hands and I saw the Ring Nenya flash like the fabled silmaril. My Chalice, the one I kept upon my altar, appeared in her grasp. The Lady turned to her Mirror, and I saw an electric-blue fish leap from its sacred waters into the Chalice.

Galadriel offered me the Chalice and I accepted it. From her elven robes, she produced her Athame and sunk the blade into the cup's opening. Words came to me spontaneously, and I found myself giving new oaths to the White Lady, our Great Mother. I pledged myself to Her with renewed fervor, and made an oath that nothing would deter my Quest for the one Chalice.

The Lady Galadriel spoke, "As the Athame joins the sacred waters and becomes one with the Chalice, so too must the Way of the Daylight Mind become one with the Way of the Twilight Mind. Such is the eternal Quest for Cauldron of Ceridwen, whose Truths are not given without sacrifice. Drink and begin again your Quest for the Holy Grail of immortality."

In renewed faith and love for the Great Mother, and the Path of Priesthood, I raised the Chalice to my lips ...



# The Witeh's

## A Training Tool for Magick

In our Tradition it is written that "You must learn the Witch's Pyramid: Will, Imagination, Secrecy, Faith. A pyramid is a symbol of Magick, built upon four sides." With no more information than this, the students are sent off to acquire a 'working model.'

A Study of the Magickal Self	Noonstar	
Glass Bead Games		15
Tens of Thousands of Workers	1	
My Secret Place	aslan	
Each Side A Window		15
A Reminder	2	
My True Nature	Planter	
The Council of the Watchers		15
Ishan	5	
Heronfriend	140	
Gaelen	142	
Lythande	145	
	148	
	Lucanus	15
	7	

### The Witch's Pyramid

*As a teacher of Wiccan students, I find the pyramid study one of the most enjoyable tasks through which to guide a student. There is, in fact, little guidance. Nearly all of the information available to the seeker is found on the preceding page. Where does one look for information on pyramids? There are*

*books in the library which describe, sometimes in great scientific or questionably esoteric detail, the wondrous architectural structures of the Egyptians. There is far less information on the pyramids of Western Civilization. But nowhere is there found anything on what we call the "Witch's Pyramid."*

*Where did this concept come from? In my early training - what we would now affectionately call 'Wicca 101' classes - we were taught the concepts of Magick through the 'pyramid.' Each of the four sides represented an essential element in making your Magick 'work.' After two decades, I no longer remember if we actually had to construct a pyramid or not. I seem to remember my first pyramid was well-situated in my temple by the late 1970's but don't recall it being made when I was a novice.*

*By the late 1970's students in The Mystery School not only had to study the concepts but they had to either construct or to acquire and adapt a pyramid. The requirement is that it is a 'working model,' one which the student uses to make Magick work. Models which have been shown me included a scale model of the Great Pyramid, down to carefully chosen sand with which the facing was made. This student carefully measured all of the angles and it was beautiful. More than one student went searching and found a piece of stone which roughly approximated a pyramid and then painstakingly worked it by hand until it more closely suited the students ideal. And, to make the model 'work?' Some use their pyramids within which to store ritual jewelry, under which to place written wishes, or as a tool to provide balance in their lives. Others use their pyramids as a tool to empower magickal tools, as a source for healing energy, or as a portal into the Otherworld.*

*What insights into Magick are learned from this process? These are the lessons of Magick which are not formulas, which are not memorized. These are the principles one needs in daily life. But let these students speak for themselves.*

*- Rev. Paul*

A Study of the Magickal Self

Witch's Pyramid by Ishan

The Witch's Pyramid is a study of the magickal self, unlocking Mysteries from deep within.

Consider ancient pyramids - tombs of great souls, standing for centuries - holding mysteries within yet standing as an epitaph for all to behold.

Consider now a small, crystal pyramid with another molded inside - pyramid within pyramid. This small pyramid is a mirror of my magickal soul.

A pyramid is a figure of four equal sides. It relates to the four directions, the four elements and the four keys of the Witch's Pyramid:

<i>East</i>	<i>Air</i>	<i>Imagination</i>
<i>South</i>	<i>Fire</i>	<i>Will</i>
<i>West</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Secrecy</i>
<i>North</i>	<i>Earth</i>	<i>Faith</i>

All of these encompass our magickal ability to bring about the manifestation of change and creation.

The four directions encompass the whole of the Universe as an infinite possibility. The four elements relate directly to manifestation on this plane and the elements of the pyramid are a direct channel from our mind to manifestation mirroring the Divine descent from Kether to Malkuth.

*Imagination - Air*

Consider the haunts of the mind, the raging thoughts passing as wind every second. Herein lies our childlike quality to dream, to bring forth creative images. In the pursuit of Self Magick we must have the ability of "mind play," the ability of visualizations - creative mind control -to step into and become a fantasy.

*Will - Fire*

"As my word so mote it be" must be a most powerful statement. We must be able to see, feel, hear, taste and become our intent Consider fire; the passion in which it burns always wanting to exist. This must be the state of our minds.

*Secrecy - Water*

We must learn to have the ability to treasure and ponder energies being sent forth or actions being put into motion. What we gain from secrecy is an energy as we wish it put forth and not changed nor challenged by others' thoughts. Consider water as a carrier or receptor; near the shore it may be full of foreign matter and pollutants but in the deepest most secret depths of the ocean it is pure.

### *Faith - Earth*

We must have faith in our ability to influence the Universe for change and be thereby changed. "So Mote it Be." Let your faith be as strong and unmovable as a mountain, or as unbreakable as a diamond. Faith must issue forth as hot lava, always growing and evolving.

The pyramid itself points to Kether, the Crown, and manifests itself in Earth. And as such grows narrower toward the top as inaction occurs, 35 pure 'spirit' is gained. And so as the Novice's Magickal Self evolves, the path s/he treads becomes more focused as s/he reaches the goal of communion with personal Kether energies; the higher Qod/dess Self.



### **Glass Bead Games**

#### **The Pyramid by Heronfriend**

I imagined making a pyramid, a glass castle, from glass spheres. The sides match the colors of the four directions. Each direction has its corresponding attribute: Imagination in the East, Will in the South, Faith in the West, Secrecy in the North.

I climbed the stairs to the attic and brought my boxes of childhood marbles down to the table. I measured sides, sorted colors, glued triangular arrays of marbles together. I slept.

The next morning, I found the epoxy bonds on the marbles half-hardened. The resin had not set. Frustrated, I sat and scraped the jelly from one marble after another. The chemical smell of the glue reminded me of hair dye. With the repetition of marble cleaning, my mind wandered. I imagined seeing a Mage.

"Who are you?" I asked. "Where did you come from?"

"I am one of the Watchers. You summoned me when you began to work on the pyramid."

"The marbles?" I said. "What about them?"

"Come now," he reproached, "You who play with spheres within spheres; you know better than that. Remember what you learned about the pyramids at the ancient centers of civilization. Remember Atlantis. Remember the deserts of the globe. Any time pyramid work is begun anew, I am called to investigate."

"So, you're like some sort of Atomic Energy Commission for pyramids? What can I use to stick the marbles together so they will stay?"

"Glass bead games!" he snorted. "All you're doing is playing glass bead games!"

I thought for a minute. Glass Bead Games. Magister Ludi. Hermann Hesse. I had read the book so long ago. I started to remember. The learned people devised a game using glass beads to fashion patterns according to the principles of an art or science. The winner was the one who could make the most elaborate pattern according to the laws of, say, music or architecture or religion. The game was finally mastered by a contestant who designed a pattern which showed that all bodies of knowledge are interrelated.

"So, you do remember," the Mage said. "Stop playing glass bead games and tell me what you've learned recently."

"Well," I said, "we haven't been talking much about pyramids, but there is the Circle."

"Yes, the Circle," he said. "Take some wire from the drawer and make me a Circle."

I took out some copper wire. I shaped a four inch diameter circle and bent hooks in the ends of the wire to fasten them together.

"Now you have a Circle. What can you tell me about it?" he said, using some effort to show patience.

"There are the four quarters," I said. I took lighter brass wire and set two pieces at right angles across the Circle. "There are the four quarters and the Cross we've been working with."

"O.K.," he replied, "what is the next geometrical figure that comes to mind?"

I took more brass wire and joined the ends of the arms of the cross, forming a square within the circle.

"I know what that is," I said. "That is the base of the pyramid. This is about Power after all. If I complete the pyramid, that is the Cone of Power!"

"Well, I had hope," said the Mage with just a little sarcasm. "What else did you learn about the Universe?" "As above, so it is below."

"Can you show it to me here?" he asked.

I had completed the pyramid with the brass wire. I made another copper Circle and fastened it at right angles to the plane of the first Circle. I used the light brass wire to make another pyramid pointing down from the base of the first pyramid. I strung another wire from the apex of the first pyramid to the apex of the lower pyramid, completing the three-dimensional cross.

"Not bad," allowed the Mage. "I see you've learned some of the basics. Keep learning. This is your working model. Now, you may build a pyramid to help power

your Church. Remember, you're not playing glass bead games, you're working with the substance of the Universe."

"No more marbles then?"

"I think you've learned something. Use the marbles to remind yourself what you're really doing when you find yourself being drawn into flashy games. Bond them together with the Earth. She is your Mother. Protect Her and help to heal Her."

I took some thread and hung the wire sphere containing the square, three dimensional cross, and pyramids in the window. I shall fashion the pyramid for the health of the Earth and the Church tonight. It seems that I have the 'Pyramid Permit!'

## K

### Tens of Thousands of Workers

#### The Witches' Pyramid by Gaelen

I stand alone in the vastness of the desert. My toes fondling the grains of sand and soil as I stare in wonder at the massive stone structure before me. The pyramid, in its majestic beauty, takes me beyond what my eyes can see. To that place within us no one else can see. I begin to feel the presence of thousands of people; ancient rhythms within the air emanating from instruments I've never heard before; the ground before me, suddenly a vast stretch of desert occupied only by the thousands of fervent workers sweating in the desert sun.

As I stand, no one seems to see me. I feel invisible in the hot air, like a wisp of humidity floating above the reflective sand. I hear nothing, except the heartbeats of the thousands of workers; swift, strong heartbeats, some filled with pain, others with determination, all with a sense of life foreign to me. Thousands of people toiling in the heat in the vast expanse of desert before me. Their energy spent on moving huge blocks of stone to a pile on the sand before me. Their minds emitting a powerful sense of desire; but somehow that desire seems separate from the work they perform. They seem to resent the task. But strive to complete it nonetheless. The determined heartbeats are loud; the heartbeats of pain, almost hidden. My feelings grow clearer, yet my hearing is not limited to the heartbeats of the workers.

The workers begin forming a square upon the desert sand of vast proportions. The stones, large blocks in rectangular shapes, connecting end-to-end, side-to-side; hundreds at first, steadily growing in numbers as the workers slave to bring them from ends of the Universe to this one place in the desert. The heat bearing down upon them, dry, and forbidding. But the workers persist at their task despite the pain. Almost knowing that their dedication is not without reason. But their pain seems to compel them to resist, as though they suffer, not for themselves, but for something outside of their vision. Each one's desire adding to the desire of the rest; each one's pain adding to the pain of the rest; each one unknowingly building upon the stones a power which transcends their understanding, which surpasses their entire existence.

The stones are laid, one atop the other now. Much time has passed, or so it seems to me. Yet, I remain in my invisible state, standing alone upon the desert sand. Time seems not to affect me. But to the workers, whose faces have changed many times, whose bodies have grown old, withered, and have been replaced so often, Time is a burden placed upon them by demons. Yet they persist. Their dedication unwavering. Their heartbeats stronger than ever. And the power building higher upon the stones. Their pain, still, almost hidden completely from my sensations, but ever present. And the energies emitted from their minds contain thoughts of hope, images of far away places, notions of freedom - complete freedom.

The stones are piled in layers of lessening width, one atop the other. Neatly arranged with extreme care; so precise that patterns develop within the interior of the mass of stones. Intricate pathways which become buried as the layers are added. And thousands more workers grow old, and are replaced with younger, stronger bodies. And with each worker's passing, the powers building upon the stones increase; expanding outward in all directions, while simultaneously coming to focus above the mass of stones.

Duty seems to fill the workers heartbeats unfailingly. Duty, not to their work, but to their fellows; a sense of strength which holds them together, faith which extends to the community of stones over which the workers toil endlessly. Their pain still a secret among them. Their task continues unwavering.

In the heat of the sun, and the brittle, dry air, their minds wander again. To a place far beyond their dreams, governed by angels; where their pain is less than a memory, and their powers are magnificent. The stones grow higher and higher, one atop the other; the layers lessen in width. A pinnacle is soon to be reached. Hundreds of years, tens of thousands of workers, and an immeasurable quantity of pain and suffering have combined to create the wonder of the structure almost at completion. Such an accomplishment. Such a wonderful manifestation. Such an end to the suffering of so many dedicated souls.

It seems, again, that years pass. It seems again that thousands more grow withered and old. Thousands more contribute to the powers of the stone formation. Thousands more die from the pain and suffering; they are replaced.

The pinnacle has been reached. So many dedicated souls spent upon its completion. So many have experienced nothing but pain for the entirety of their lives. If only they knew the outcome. If only their masters knew the outcome. If only they could comprehend the awesome powers which have been imbibed by the pyramid. Their souls. Their dedicated energies. Every thought, emotion, fascination, and desire has become a living entity within the molecules comprising the stone structure. The pyramid itself has become alive. The torment and torture those people have suffered has led them to a higher existence, a greater power. They have become one with the elemental forces which comprise the magick of the pyramid. They are the magick. They are the essence of the stones themselves. Their effort, combined through effort, dedication, and patience has brought them to embrace the Cone of Power itself; and the four elements of their nature, are eternally reflected upon the four sides of their pyramid.



## **My Secret Place**

### **The Witch's Pyramid by Lythande**

It is a morning time. It is the time when all those who dwell around me have gone off to work or school.

This is my time, to use as I wish, without the needs of others bleeding on my sleeves.

This is the time when I go alone to my Secret Place.

To others, it merely looks like a tiny, grass and weed covered hill, no bigger than a house.

I have heard the farmers say it should be plowed down.

I have heard the farmers say this in whispers, because, if they say it too loud, the Good People might hear them.

I know there is no farmer that is actually brave enough to do the deed.

All around the hill grow weeds and I know them each by their names. There is Cypress, the Tree of Death. There is Willow, and Wintergreen. There is Garlic, Chamomile, and Hyssops. On the North side grows Mugwort, and, on the South side grows Wormwood.

Also in the North, there is Woodbine. This is the place I seek, for here, between this tangled Celtic Knot of branches, is the entrance to this Faerie Mound.

There is a darkened tunnel leading in, and I have to bend just a little to enter. At the end of the tunnel there is a stone blocking the way. It looks like a dead end, unless you know the secret. However, if you know how to squeeze between the stones, first one way, then the other, you find yourself in a large room, lit with a glowing blue globe in the center.

The four walls are each flat and triangular shaped, and meet at a point in the center of the ceiling. The globe hangs from a woven grass rope from that center.

I go to the center of the floor and face the East wall. I draw my athame from its secret scabbard, point at the East wall, and say:

"Hail, Guardians of the East, Powers of Air. Only the Penitent One shall pass, for this is the Sword of Nuada, from Findias, which is the

Power of Imagination, and it will shatter to pieces in the hands of the unworthy."

Before me, suspended in the air, a bright glowing silver and gold sword appears. I draw the Air Invoking Pentagram with my athame, and turn towards the South.

Facing the south, I say:

"Hail, Guardians of the South, Powers of Fire. Only in the Path of the Lady & the Lord shall I proceed, for this is the Spear of Lugh, from Gorias, which is the Power of Will, and has the Power to Hurt as well as to Heal."

Before me, suspended in the air, a glowing silver and gold Spear appears, dripping with blood. I draw the Fire Invoking Pentagram with my athame, and turn towards the West.

Facing the West, I say:

"Hail, Guardians of the West, Powers of Water. Only with a leap from the Lions Head shall I proceed, for this is the Cauldron of The Dagda, from Murias, which



is the Power of Faith, and It will shatter to pieces if three lies are told over It, but will reunite if three Truths are told."

Before me, suspended in the air, is a beautiful silver and gold Cauldron, boiling and steaming, the scent of cooking herbs filling the air. I draw the Invoking Water Pentagram with my athame, and turn to face the North.

Facing the North, I say:

"Hail, Guardians of the North, Powers of Earth. Choose wisely, the Cup of the Carpenter, for this is the Stone of Destiny from Falias, which is the Power of Secrecy, and, if I become too ego-involved in the Great Game, then surely I will lose my Way, and it may take me Lifetimes to find It again."

Before me, suspended in the air, appears a beautiful silver and gold Gwyddbwyll Board, glowing with Power.

I draw the Invoking Earth Pentagram with my athame.

I put away my athame, and look around at the Four Treasures which surround me, and I am overtaken with awe, and with gratitude. After so many years of searching, I have finally found them.

Tears begin to stream from my eyes, and, I raise my arms in evocation, and turning slowly to the right, I say these words...

"By the Sacred Blood of My Mother, the Queen of Faerie, which flows in my veins...

"By the Sacred Blood of my Father Aengus, Son of Ogma, God of Poetry and Song, which flows in my veins...

"And, by my own Sacred Heart that pumps that Blood and sustains my Life, do I vow these three things...

"To Worship the Lady & the Lord...

"To do no evil... "And, to be Strong & Courageous."

Suddenly, a voice booms out of the shadowy walls, from all directions at once, a voice that is both Female and Male, both Merciful and Severe, and this Voice says:

"You are a Child of the Earth, you are a Child of the Gods, you are a Child of your Self.

"Know then that there are only three things that can hinder you.

These three Things are: "Ego

& Pride-Ties...

"Unnecessary cruelty.

"Now, go, and take with you these Four Sacred Gifts... "Imagination, Will, Faith, and Secrecy.

"You will know what to do with them." Exhausted, I face the East and draw the Banishing Air Pentagram with my athame. The Sword fades back into the darkness.

I face the South, and draw the Banishing Fire Pentagram. The bloody Spear fades into the darkness.

I face the West, and draw the Banishing Water Pentagram. The boiling Cauldron fades into the darkness.

I face the North, and draw the Banishing Earth Pentagram. The glowing Gwyddbwyll Board fades into the darkness.

Now I am alone in this empty Pyramidal Room, with the glowing blue globe and the stone walls.

I turn towards the North, where I know that the invisible door must be, but I feel something bump against my toe.

On the floor, at my feet, there is a tiny green and red Apple.

I pick up the Apple, and with my Athame, I cut the Apple crosswise. Within I find the Goddess's Eternal Promise of Rebirth... The Seeds arranged in the shape of a Pentagram.

Carefully, I remove each of the five seeds and put them in my pocket. I know that these seeds are mine to plant and to cultivate.

Smiling, I eat the Apple. It tastes both sweet and sour.

And then I go, for the Journey has begun.



### Each Side A Window

The Witch's Pyramid by Noonstar

I

The pyramid has always seemed to me to be so male in its expression. Yet as the dictum says "As above so below, yet in another way" I realize that though its expression is male here on the physical plane, I see that its astral image, which is usual depicted as being upside down and appears below it, as being its female counterpart.

Gleaming copper Four  
sides are made,  
Receptive, storing  
Goddess touched Solder,  
male Binds the corners.  
Blending, joining Making  
strong. As the two  
metals meld so I learn of  
balance.

Each side  
a window.  
Each window  
a different view.  
To the East I find a gem  
Whose brightness sears Imagination.  
To the South the window shows  
A stone of red from where Will doth grow.  
To the West I peer and see  
a treasure holding Faith for me.  
To the North and through the window  
Granite that teaches Silence.

So the Pyramid with four sides  
and prizes adorns my Temple  
to teach and learn.  
Reminding, affirming. A  
Portal, a doorway to a land of  
knowledge a place of power.

### A Reminder

#### The Witch's Pyramid by aslan

The pyramid which i have acquired is made of a solid piece of stone, i believe a large agate. Its base and comers measure 2 inches. The natural "grain" of the stone gives each face a distinct appearance, which allowed me to define its "correct" orientation when it was selected.

The East side of this stone pyramid gives me the impression of the Sun rising, for the face is relatively blank except for a section of a circle (about one-eighth) showing at the bottom right corner. The South face reveals a series of inverted "V's," the lowest of which is very pale and resembles a tongue of flame. The Western face resembles the surface of a pool of water with concentric circles (two of them) as if rain were falling. On the North Face is a series of lines which much resemble the bark of a tree, or the grain of a piece of wood.

Well, so the selection of the pyramid and the facing of the pyramid have been decided. What does one do next with the "marvelous toy," as some skeptics might call it? Next, one decides for oneself which side represents which attribute of the four: Secrecy, Faith, Will, Imagination.

On the East with its "Sunrise," i have chosen to place my Imagination. As the Winds of the East bring the dawning of a new day, as they clean my mind from foggy thinking at the end of a long task, as a breath of fresh air will bring inspiration, so to this novice does the East represent Imagination. The marvel of the natural fliers (eagles, hawks, sparrows, hummingbirds) and created fliers (kites, balloons, gliders, jumbo-jets), the aromas of nature (flowers, herbs, rain-dampened soil) and of humanity's creations (fresh bread, chocolate, even polluted air), the feel of the wind (standing on train tracks, riding on the motorcycle, in an open field, at the top of a mountain pass), the sounds of moving air (grass rustling, leaves whispering, branches creaking, windows rattling, even violent thundering air movements like tornadoes or hurricanes) - af of these Air aspects inspire not only this novice, but have inspired writers, painters, engineers, inventors and philosophers for endless years. Dreams and visions come on the wings of Air, just as smoke rises from the censer.

To the South with its "tongues of flame" do i ascribe Will. Will keeps the spark and fire of wisdom growing and flaming within. Knowledge and Learning are points which are taken from the all-consuming fire and passion to do the best that this novice can possibly do. Will is present even in the "banked" coals of rest which are taken to restore the fuel, coals which can be fanned into flames anew with full heat of growth. Will keeps plants facing toward the Sun, the source of light and the ultimate FIRE for planet Earth. Will keeps the marathon runner from surrendering to the fire which has consumed so much energy along the way. Will is the difference between the child who grows tired of a task and the mature being that sees a task through to completion.

In the West, where She brings forth the Mysteries and The Mystery of Life, Secrecy is the characteristic. Deep oceans that hide sunken treasures, the ocean floor that is in so many places unexplored, the water in the amniotic sac which holds the physical body as it grows to enter this incarnation, the primordial soup in which scientists believe life first evolved, the essential fluid that carries nutrients to all living creatures, the difference between this planet and the others of this solar system, the tears of sorrow and joy, love and grief. So much is hidden in the Water. Divination includes looking into tea leaves, pools, cauldrons, crystals (and what are they but liquid slowed down to a state where it may hold its shape for a longer time). Secrecy about the Mysteries learned and Secrecy about the hopes we have of what will be learned. Learning the "lessons" of Secrecy from water, which might be "chattering" in a brook to anyone who listens, which might be "roaring" in a waterfall, which might be whispering as the waves come to the shore. Water also teaches silence; "Still waters run deep" and the way sound travels underwater remind us that Mysteries are to be kept with one's mind and shared only if one is certain of the person with whom one is conversing ("Whisper to a friend, shout to all the world.").

Finally, the North. Earth, the strong, the persistent, the enduring. So should be our Faith. Faith that Spring will come again. Faith that the Sun will rise. Faith that as we believe, so it shall be. Faith that we can accomplish what the Goddess and God have put before us. Faith that we will be reunited with those who have gone before. As the roots of a tree which hold it in place when storms would blow or wash it over, so our Faith must hold us in place, not letting us be blown from place to place, from ideology to ideology. If a plant is moved from soil to soil too often, its roots do not get a chance to develop and it stops growing; so our spirits and minds do, unless we keep Faith with something in our lives. "If you have faith as a grain of sesame seed, all things are possible to you" (or something pretty close to that). Keeping never-wavering Faith, as solid as the Earth, may even allow one to move "mountains" that seerr to be in the way of success.

So, then, this "Working Model" of a pyramid, this Witch's Pyramid, this energy collector-condenser-transmitter symbolizes (embodies) four essential elements of Life and works with the Elements of the tradition as a reminder and a tool. In place beside my bed and resting on a drearr pillow which i constructed, it collects and channels my night energies anc ambitions. My own pyramid will soon become useful and functional -definitely a WORKING Pyramid!

## **My True Nature**

### **The Witch's Pyramid by Planter**

The latest decision for a model of the Witch's Pyramid was to find a rock on the land and cut it into a pyramid. This was after many moons of thought about the project. At one time I considered making one out of clay that would hold a candle in its center and possibly some stained glass for color. But in my dreams and my thoughts, before sleep, it was made from stone so early morning of 25 March 1991 ce found me climbing the hillside and looking for the perfect rock.

I found a small rock already in a rough pyramidal shape and the idea came to me to use this as the model without cutting or artificially shaping it. On the way down I found a larger rock also in a pyramidal shape with crystals on the bottom and a top that looked like snow. I brought it along as a possible alternative in case I needed it.

On Monday I spent a lot of time looking at both rocks. The larger one has now become the one I will use because the sides lend themselves so well to the four aspects of the Witch's Pyramid and now I realize that the purpose of the model is to use it to reflect and reflect well on these four facets: Will, Imagination, Secrecy, Faith.

Faith: This is the most easily identified side of the pyramid. At the bottom of one side is a crystal cross. A line runs from the top of the cross to a large void or cave that must be entered to reach the top. One of the messages from this is that to reach true faith (the top of the model), I must leave behind the icons of the past and go within.

Imagination: A large face of the pyramid is covered in calcite crystals that can be used to form pictures with the mind. There is also a small round opening in the side where my imagination sees all sorts of animals living. This side is fun and many hours can be spent here and, since an active imagination and the ability to visualize are easy for me, that leads to a lesson. I must be careful not to let my imagination ramble on too long or I can lose sight of the goal. What looked easy at first was deceptively difficult. It is too easy and I became sidetracked and trapped. There are stories of heroes entering a palace of delights and forgetting the quest.

Secrecy: One face of the pyramid is small, almost hidden. Yet there is a line running from it to the top. This is an integral part of the structure and the lesson here is that secrecy is best when it is done in a small, quiet way. One does not announce that they have a secret. That was a child's game. Here we are careful not to do things which tell those around us that "we have a secret" and so we do not have to spend a lot of energy in denial or avoidance. "An ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cures."

Will: The fourth face of the pyramid is tilted so that if climbing that face, it would be difficult. Where Imagination looked easy, Will appears difficult. But if one really wants to attain the goal, if the will is strong enough, then the journey can be made. Now I see, having started up the path, that this is the most beautiful side and there are paths that were hidden when I started. So that while the journey is still difficult, it is not impossible if I have the will to succeed.

One last side, the bottom. The "other side" of my spiritual self: when I pick up the pyramid and look underneath. The bottom is made of beautiful, clear crystals. The lesson here is that the goal was there within me when I started the journey but the journey is needed to attain the realization of my true nature.

### **The Council of the Watchers**

#### **The Witches' Pyramid by Lucanus**



I sat before my altar, holding my model of the Witches' Pyramid. I gazed upon its wooden surface, recalling the Key, "... You must learn the Witches' Pyramid: Will, Imagination, Secrecy, Faith. A Pyramid is a symbol of Magick built upon four sides..." I returned the model to my altar, setting it upon the Pentacle, before the statue of the Father and Mother I turned to the East, raised my Athame, and scribed a Circle moving deosil, finishing in the South. I called the Archangels, and became the Middle Pillar. Filled with Light, I called for my Guardian Angel, using his secret name.

The Four Winds blew about my temple, and out of a stargate, the Angel came.

He was dressed in the colours of the dawning light, and in his left hand he held a Staff. His likeness was my own.

"Welcome, beloved," I said, "I seek to understand the Witches Pyramid."

The Angel smiled, "The Mystery of the Witches' Pyramid is found within you. Therefore, I will take you to the heights of Mount Sumeru, to seek the council of the Watchers."

"So mote it be," I said. I placed my hand upon my Guardian Angel's Staff and he enfolded me with his wings. A drum began to sound with a quickened beat. In response, the Four Winds rose in power and spun about us. The drum's beat became my own. I felt my consciousness slip within myself. Darkness....

The world opened around me as the light returned. I found myself upon my Guardian's back, in his Unicorn guise, hovering above the pyramid-shaped Mount Sumeru. I surveyed the scene below, taking note of a temple, which formed the

mountain's peak. It was the Temple of Union, where dwelled the Four Watchers. Below the temple, each side of Mount Sumeru contained an Elemental world.

Silently, I directed my Unicorn mount to take me to the temple below. With a few sweeps of his great wings, we flew to the Temple of Union's South entrance.

### *Will*

Within the South Hall, the Watcher Regulus sat upon a dragon throne. The Watcher's likeness was that of a young man, and his tunic was the colour of starlight. A blue-white star burned at his third eye, sending a beam of light which focused down the mountain's side upon the Kingdom of the Salamanders. Above the Watcher, upon his throne, was carved / *Will* in the Angelic tongue.

"Greetings, Seeker, and merry meet," Regulus said, his gaze focused outward.

I greet the Watcher, joining my palms together before my heart, "Greetings and merry meet Regulus, Watcher of the South. I come to learn the Mystery of the Witches' Pyramid. Oh, *Little King* speak to me of Will."

"Seeker, the Will is what makes an act Magickal, for without it nothing shall transpire. Will is the spark which brings life to Magick.

"What is your desire which you seek to fulfill? Desire is Will's sibling. Therefore, examine from whence it comes by listening carefully to your heart. Is this desire fueled by the smoldering fire of selfishness? Or is it fueled by the bright flames of selflessness? The heart knows and, if you listen, she will tell you.

"If your Will be one with True Will, let your passion flame up! Infuse your Magick with the Fire of your Soul."

I stepped forward for the Watcher's blessing. Regulus placed his hands upon my head and I felt my spine fill with blue light. I thanked the Watcher silently, joined my palms together before my heart and took my leave. My Unicorn and I walked widdershins to the East Hall.

### *Imagination*

Within the East Hall, the Watcher Aldebaran sat upon an owl throne. The Watcher's likeness was that of a youth, his tunic the colour of starlight. An orange star burned at his third eye, sending a beam of light which focused down the mountain, upon the Kingdom of the Sylphs. Above the Watcher, upon his throne was carved / *Imagine* in the Angelic tongue.

"Greetings, Seeker, and merry meet," Aldebaran said, his gaze focused outward.

I greet the Watcher, joining my palms together before my heart, "Greetings and merry meet, Aldebaran, Watcher of the East. I come to learn the Mystery of the Witches' Pyramid. Oh *Follower*, speak to me of Imagination."

"Seeker, the Imagination is the creative facility of Gods and humans alike. Thoughts are the beginning of that which is made manifest in the world of form.

"Consider with care the forces which you will call upon, both Magickal and mundane, if what you imagine is of imperfect construction, it may manifest as such

in form. Can you clearly visualize that which your heart desires? If you cannot see your goal, your Magick will miss its mark, like an arrow released by a blinded archer.

"Reach out and create the form upon which to shape your Magick. Experience it with all your mind's senses. Imagine its reality! Infuse your Magick with thoughts strengthened like Air's Winds."

I stepped forward for the Watcher's blessing. Aldebaran placed his hands upon my head and I felt my brain fill with orange light. I thanked the Watcher silently, joined my palms together before my heart and took my leave. My Unicorn and I walked widdershins to the North Hall.

### Secrecy

Within the North Hall, the Watcher Fomulhaut sat upon a tiger throne. The Watcher's likeness was that of a Crone, her tunic the colour of starlight. A white star burned at her third eye, sending a beam of light which focused down the mountain upon the Kingdom of the Gnomes. Above the Watcher, behind her throne, was carved / *Observe* in the Angelic tongue.

"Greetings, Seeker, and merry meet," Fomulhaut said, her gaze focused outward.

I greet the Watcher, joining my palms together before my heart, "Greetings and merry meet, Fomulhaut, Watcher of the North. I come to learn the Mystery of the Witches' Pyramid. Oh *Fish's Mouth*, speak to me of Secrecy."

"Seeker, Secrecy is that which separates the Wise from the profane. It is within silence that the Seeker will gain knowledge.

"The Seeker who desires to become one of the Wise must learn to keep silent regarding her Path. Speaking to the uninitiated invites confusion and disbelief, causing a loss of power and dissolution of one's Magick.

"As the Seeker walks her Path, she must learn to still the noise of the inner and outer worlds. With this discipline, she will become receptive to the forces of the planes, both seen and unseen.

"Within the power of Secrecy, align your energies with the Universal Law! Infuse your Magick with the forces of form."

I stepped forward for the Watcher's blessing. Fomulhaut placed her hands upon my head and I felt my tongue fill with white light. I thanked the Watcher silently, joined my palms together before my heart and took my leave. My Unicorn and I walked widdershins to the West Hall.

### Faith

Within the West Hall, the Watcher Antares sat upon a panda throne. The Watcher's likeness was maternal, her tunic the colour of starlight. A red star burned at her third eye, sending a beam of light which focused down the mountain, upon the Kingdom of the Undines. Above the Watcher, behind her throne was carved / *Believe* in the Angelic tongue.

"Greetings Seeker and merry meet," Antares said, her gaze focused outward.



I greet the Watcher, joining my palms together before my heart, "Greetings and merry meet, Antares, Watcher of the West. I come to learn the Mystery of the Witches' Pyramid. O *Rival of Ares*, speak to me of Faith."

"Seeker, Faith in one's self is the path in which to awaken the God/dess within. As a child of the God/dess, such an endeavor leads to aligning one's Magick with the God/dess' Work.

"How does the Seeker develop such faith? By keeping her words in troth. If the Seeker feels she cannot fulfill her words, she must not offer promises. Thus the God/dess will heed the Seeker's rune and humans will seek her counsel.

"Through an outpouring of Faith, alchemize your self to be One with Truth! Let your word Be."

I stepped forward for the Watcher's blessing. Antares placed her hands upon my head and I felt my heart fill with red light. I thanked the Watcher silently and joined my palms together before my heart. I climbed upon my Unicorn's back as he spread his wings to catch the Winds. With a leap, we left the West Hall and the Temple of Union.

§§§

My Guardian Unicorn and I lazily circled upward, away from the Temple of Union. I watched Mount Sumeru drop below us and recalled the Key, "... a Pyramid is a symbol of Magick built upon four sides... Circulate the energy, flowing the energy through ourselves in a Circle of love, moving in harmony with the Earth..."

Notes:

Guardian Angel/Unicorn: From my readings in Ceremonial Magick, I understand this figure to represent the magician's Higher Self. Hence the Angel's resemblance to the magician.

Mount Sumeru (aka Mount Meru): Originally, I encountered Mt. Sumeru in my studies of the Buddhist scripture, *The Lotus Sutra*, which was extolled as the "Summit of All Being," the dwelling place of the Gods at the center of the Universe. I once heard the Eldermentor make reference to Mount (Su)Meru as having a pyramid shape. I connected these ideas to the Ceremonial Magickal cosmological view that the magician is at the center of the Universe. Hence. Mount Sumeru is not to be found *outside* the magician, but within...

Four Watchers: I found reference to the Four Watchers in a neo-pagan journal, *Moon Shadow*, as names of the 'Four Watchers.' I searched for additional information but only found a brief entry in The Magician's Dictionary by E. E. Rehmus. According to Rehmus, the Four Watchers originate from old Persian astronomy. The four were guardians of the Solstice or Equinox of their assigned Quarter. They were characterized by the four stars, Regulus. Aldebaran. Fomulhaut and Antares. The colour of the Watchers' third eye correlates with the stars' visual color.



# The Wheel of die Year

## Wiccan Religious Holidays

The holidays determined by the solar calendar are our Sabbats. The reading in this chapter will take you into some very profound experiences, through some beautiful stories and into some delightfully humourous approaches to viewing these religious observances.

A Festival Wheel	Heronfriend	165
This Mysterious Wheel	Ishan	180
In Darkling Slumbers Keep	Brin	188
A Personal Adventure in Learning	aslan	217

## The Wheel of the Year

*What is the 'Wheel of the Year?' This 'Wheel' is a metaphor for the turning of the seasons, marked by the Earth's passage around the Sun. We who are Wiccan see not just four seasonal changes, but eight. We live more closely with the Earth, with the seasons of planting and growing, with the changes in light as the Sun shifts his position within the sky. The four common changes of the year are the seasons which we all recognize. They are the longest and shortest days of the year (summer, at which we celebrate Midsummer and winter, or Yule, respectively) and the two days of the year at which the balance between day and night is equal (the equinoxes at spring [Eostara] and autumn, which some call Mabon).*

*No matter what my local climate, which I have experienced from the northern snows of Minnesota to the desert heat of Southern California, there are equally significant changes within the climate and growing seasons midway between the four already listed. In studying folk customs and religious customs which have survived centuries of religious upheaval and political revolution, we still find strong remnants of these seasonal changes. Halloween falls opposite May Day and both are still widely observed. Lammas is a little more obscure and much of the emphasis on Candlemas has been lost to Groundhog's Day.*

*There are a variety of names for the eight Sabbats of Wicca, derived from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is not the name of the Sabbat which is important, but the myths which are taught, the practices which connect us to the natural changes within the Earth's tidal energies. Lothlorien's Pathworking within The Mystery School includes studying our own Tradition's approach to the eight Sabbats but also requires research of other customs - both social and religious - in other Wiccan Traditions, other religions (including J'udeo-Christian) and diverse cultures. What the student discovers is that the Wheel of the Year is Universal and working ritual at those times of the year is not only a deeply profound celebration of being Wiccan but transcends one's personal Path and connects us with all peoples of all times who share recognition of the changing forces within the cycles of life.*

*What follow are some very different approaches to the Sabbats. When a Novice has completed her research, she then creates an individual approach to the Sabbats, mingling knowledge gained with the creative forces of evolving spirituality. Heronfriend offers us the conversations between father and child, between elder and youth the teaching of heritage, the sharing of history and education with one who is young. Ishan offers our readers text for contemplation and meditation, both of which are very powerful tools, capable of unfolding the deeper Mysteries of the Sabbats for you.*

*Brin takes you on a delightful romp through literature and history. Sometimes irreverent, sometimes humorous and touching, this series will*

*greatly expand your concepts of the Sabbats. Finally, aslan brings us a wonderful series of Sabbat stories in which a magickal tree offers the Mysteries of the Wheel.*

• *Rev. Paul*

## A Festival Wheel

Heronfriend

"Dad, what are you making?"

"This will be a Wheel when it's finished."

"Like on my bicycle?"

"No, it's a special Wheel. It's more like the one you helped me build before."

"You mean the one with all the different kinds of wood?"

"Yes, a lot like that one. That was a calendar Wheel. We used a different kind of wood for each lunar month."

"Will we need that many sticks again?"

"Not quite. This one will be a Festival Wheel. It will have eight spokes."

"Can I help you cut the tree down?"

"You know we don't have to do that. There were plenty of branches blown down in the big wind storm."

"I remember! You put the big branch from the Rowan Tree in the shed."

"And we put some compost around the tree too. Do you think it liked that?"

"I guess. It sure makes the rhubarb grow! Can I plant my own Rowan Tree?"

"Sure. You can have some compost for it too. While we're working on the Wheel, you can help me think of some stories we can tell to the Rowan Trees at each Festival."

"Do plants really grow better when you talk to them?"

"I'm not sure but I'm happier if I have some company while I work."

"Me, too!"

## Yule



"I've never seen a Wheel with a clay hub before. Why did you make it like that?"

"Well, we've never made a Festival Wheel before. The clay reminds me of the Earth from which all the trees grow."

"Are you going to put those neat marks on the rim like you did on the Calendar Wheel?"

"You mean the signs of the Zodiac. O.K. You can learn them as we go along. Let's put the first spoke in now."

"It hardly holds the rim up! Can I put in the other spokes?"

"Not yet. This is just a beginning. The other spokes are for the other Festivals. Why do you think the Wheel is so fragile at Yule?"

"Because the Sun is just beginning to grow and isn't very strong yet?"

"Yes, the Sun is just beginning to grow again. In fact He is so weak that we'll have all Winter before the weather is warm again. What would you like to say to your Rowan Tree?"

"You're very small too, Rowan Tree. You look even more like a stick than you did this Fall when we planted you! Here, I'll put a garland of leaves around you just like the leaves you'll grow in the Spring. These are bunches of popcorn. They look just like the flowers you'll grow when you're bigger. Let me tie some red ribbons on your branches like the berries you'll have. See, you'll grow so big and look just fine!

"Oh, oh! I put all the popcorn on the Tree. Do you think it will mind if I take some off to have a little bit?"

"I think that would be just fine. We all like the gifts we can share the best. Have some now and the birds will share the rest later. Here, let me have a taste too."

### *Candlemas*

Younger: This is the second spoke for the Festival Wheel. I guess the year is on two legs now!"

Elder: "Yes, the Sun is shining longer each day. Soon the snow will begin to melt and in time the Earth will warm again."

Younger: "It seems so different this time of year. At Yule there were all sorts of songs and celebrations of the birth of the Sun. Now it's so cold it seems as though no one is singing."

Elder: There is one song I think suits this time quite well. How about, 'Good King Wenceslas?'"

Younger: "I didn't think you'd sing that one. Isn't it from the Church?"

Elder: The people preserved a lot of their ideas within the Church. Parts of the song were changed and others added but you would be surprised how much remains. Let's take a look at the words and the story.

"King Wenceslas looks out of his castle and sees a poor 'man' gathering wood for fuel. It is a cold Winter day. The king asks where the poor person lives and is told that 'he' lives by the fence at the edge of the wood by St. Agnes' Well. The king has his servant gather food and they set out toward the house. It becomes very cold and the servant only keeps warm through walking in the steps of his king which are miraculously warm and have melted the snow. The end is a pious comment on the lesson of the blessing of sharing food in times of need.

This story happened a long time ago when people thought their rulers were a lot like gods. King Wenceslas sets out on the feast of Stephen, the 26th on December. The word "Stephen comes from a rootword meaning 'crown.' Saint Stephen himself was the first martyr of the Christians. He was killed for witnessing or insisting that Jesus was God. In fact in the King's journey we are witnessing the path of the crowning rays of the newly born Sun across the snow.

"The King is travelling to St. Agnes' Well. This is by the forest rather than the Castle. The Christians usually celebrated their festivals inside rather than outdoors in Nature. The area is fenced. Perhaps it is a sanctuary. The person collecting fuel may have been using it for heat, or it may have been for a sacred fire which was often kept by holy wells. Perhaps <sup>4</sup>he' was a woman, a priestess of the Well and the Flame.

"St. Agnes<sup>1</sup> was a Roman maiden who was martyred because she refused to agree to a forced marriage. The Well belongs to the bride of no earthly man, but to the Goddess. 'Agnes' means lamb.

"King Wenceslas then is travelling as the Sun across the snowy fields, warming and melting the snow to meet the Goddess with sustenance at the holy

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1 Rev. Clifford Stevens, *The One Year Book of Saints*, "Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, IA 1989

well, at the time of the lamb, at Imbolg. That is why we bless our candles at this time of year.

"And, that is the story of this time of the year. This is the story of the Sun's journey to meet the Goddess as she rests and restores Herself at the Well in preparation for the first signs of Spring."

Younger: "I hadn't heard the other verses before. Let's sing it all the way through!"

### Good King Wenceslas<sup>2</sup>

*Good King Wenceslaus looked out on the feast of Stephen  
When the snow lay round about deep and crisp and even.  
Brightly shone the moon that night though the frost was cruel*

*When a poor man came in sight gathering winter fuel.*

*Hither page and stand by me, If thou knows't it telling:  
Yonder peasant who is he? Where and what his dwelling?  
Sire, he lives a good league hence, Underneath the mountain,  
Right against the forest fence by St. Agnes' Fountain.*

*Bring me flesh and bring me wine. Bring me pine logs hither.  
Thou and I shall see him dine when we bear them thither.  
Page and Monarch forth they went. Forth they went together,  
Through the rude wind's wild lament and the bitter weather.*

*Sire the night is darker now, and the wind grows stronger.  
Fails my heart, I know not how. I can go no longer.  
"Mark my footsteps my good page. Tread thou in them boldly;  
Thou shalt find the Winter's rage freeze thy blood less coldly."*

*In his master's steps he trod, where the snow lay dinted.  
Heat was in the very sod where the Saint had printed.  
Therefore, Christian men be sure, wealth or land possessing,  
Ye who now will bless the poor shall yourselves find blessing.*

### Ostara

Younger: "Why does the Easter Bunny bring Eggs at Easter?"

Elder: "We're very lucky that we have chicken eggs to eat all year. This is the time of year when the wild birds begin to lay eggs. Without chickens kept inside, it would have been along, long time since the people had eaten eggs. This would be a big event. The people gathered eggs. There were as many as they could eat. There

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2A version of John Neale (1818-1866) of Pia Cantiones, 1584, in "A Treasury of Christmas Carols" ed. Henry Simon, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1955



were so many birds that there still were enough eggs to hatch. The people even preserved eggs for later."

Younger: "Yes, they taste good, but why do we paint them too?"

Elder: The eggs are a symbol of fertility and the return of Springtime growing things. We paint them to show how glad we are that Spring is coming."

Younger: "But rabbits don't lay eggs!"

Elder: "You've seen the commercial too! The rabbit or hare is another symbol of fertility. They have very big families. In the Springtime, they love to run and jump and chase one another. Often they are so busy they don't seem to pay much attention to the people around."

Younger: "So it's a little like saying the same thing twice - eggs and rabbits!"

Elder: "O.K. - birds and animals. There aren't many plants growing yet. Maybe these two are telling them it'll soon be time for growing too. Seeds are like the eggs of plants. We bless our seeds for the garden at Ostara. We start some of them indoors to get a head start on the growing season. You saw the sketches of where we'll plant in the garden. There's a very old song which sounds like nonsense at first. If you think about it as planning for the planting and growing and harvesting, then it makes a lot of sense. Have you heard this one?"

### My Father had an Acre of Land<sup>3</sup>

- 1      *My father had an acre of land*  
         *chorus: Heigh-ho, sing ivy My*  
         *father had an acre of land*  
         *chorus: With a bunch of green holly and ivy.*
- 2      *He ploughed it with a team of rats*
- 3      *He sowed it with a pepper box*
- 4      *He harrowed it with a small tooth comb*
- 5      *He rolled it with a rolling pin*
- 6      *He reaped it with the blade of his knife*
- 7      *He wheeled it home in a wheel-barrow*
- 8      *He thrashed it with a hazel twig*
- 9      *He wimm'd it on the tail of his shirt*

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<sup>3</sup>Halliwel. 1842 in "Folksongs of Britain and Ireland," ed. Peter Kennedy, Oak Publications, London, 1984

1 0    *He measured it up with a walnut shell*  
 1 1    *He sent it to market on a hedgehog's back*  
 1 2    *He sold it for eighteen-pence*  
       *chorus: Heigh-ho, sing ivy*  
       *He sold the lot for one and six*  
       *chorus: With a bunch of green holly and ivy*  
 1 3    *And now the poor old man is dead*  
 1 4    *We buried him with his team of rats*  
       *chorus: Heigh-ho, sing ivy*  
       *And all his tools laid by his side*  
       *chorus: With a bunch of green holly and ivy*

### ***Beltane***

Elder: "How did you do with winding your ribbon around the Maypole?"

Younger: "O.K. We got tangled at first. Then the girls went one way and the boys went the other and it all worked out pretty well."

Elder: That can take a lot of cooperation. The pattern of ribbons winds differently every year."

Younger: The older ones are talking about who's going to the Beltane fires together. Can I stay up to see them light the fires?"

Elder: "For a while, I guess. What are you thinking?"

Younger: "Well, you know. Do you think I'll find someone to go there with when I'm older?"

Elder: "I'm sure of it."

Younger: "But how will I tell who to catch? What if I can't catch anybody?"

Elder: "Wait a minute. Nobody really catches anyone. Partners agree to be together. If you are true and kind you'll have lots of people interested in you."

Younger: "But how will I know?"

Elder: "Listen. There is a very old song about this time of year." *The*

### ***Spotted Cow\****

1        *One morning in the month of May*  
           *As from my cot I strayed*

*Just at the dawning of the morn I  
met a charming maid*

- 2     *My pretty maid, now whither you stray So early, tell me  
now?*

A . 'Folksongs of Britain and Ireland," ed. Peter Kennedy, Oak Publications, London, 1984

*The maid replied: Kind sir, she cried, I  
have lost my spotted cow.*

- 3     *So, no longer weep, no longer mourn,  
Your cow is not lost, my dear.  
I saw her down in yonder grove. Come,  
love, and I'll show you where.*
- 4     *Oh, I must confess you very kind,  
very kind, said she.  
It's there you're sure the cow to find.  
Come, sweetheart, walk with me.*
- 5     *Then in the grove we spent the day And  
thought it passed too soon.  
At night we homeward made our way,  
When brightly shone the moon.*
- 6     *Next day, we went to view the plough  
Across the flowery vale.  
We clasped and kissed each other there, And love was  
all the tale.*
- 7     *So, if I should cross the flowery glen Or  
go and view the plough,  
She'd come and call me: Gentle swain I  
have lost my spotted cow.*

### **Summer Solstice**

Younger: "Is the Sun all grown up now?"

Elder: "You could say that. This is half way around the Festival Wheel. See how the Sun is so high in the Sky. Your little Rowan Tree hardly casts any shadow at all."

Younger: "The Sun sure is strong. The days are so bright that it stays light after I go to bed and gets light again before I get up. He makes the days so hot that it hardly cools off at night. Can we go swimming?"

Elder: "Soon. Remember too that the Sun's light shines and warms the Earth so that the plants can grow."

Younger: "Yea, He's strong alright. Sometimes I wonder if it'll ever cool off. Sometimes He's too strong!"

Elder: "There are different kinds of strength, aren't there? We've seen the growing Sun, some call Him the Oak King. He's strong and fast. Some say that the Holly King takes over now. He's older, not quite as fast, but He carries the Green through the Fall and Winter until the Oak King is ready to return."

Younger: "Two Kings? And one Earth Queen? Do They fight over Her?"

Elder: "I've wondered about that too. No, there's a lot of confusion, but I don't think they fight. I think they're really the same King all the time. We need to do different things at different times. There are times to be strong and fast. There are times when it is better to be a long distance runner than a sprinter. A lot of projects take a long time to stay with them to be worth while. The hard part is trying to decide just what is the best thing to do at any one time."

Younger: "Is this another Wheel, too? You mean, we do different things when we are older than when we are younger?"

Elder: "That's true. The things we do change. Our relationships change. We're all still really important though."

Younger: "Good. I want a hug."

Elder: "Sure."

Younger: "Let's go swimming!"

## Lammas

Elder: "It's time to put the Lammas spoke into the Festival Wheel. What are you doing with it?"

Younger: "See, it's just like the Bread Man that came out of the oven!"

Elder: "Yes, I guess so. Lammas is a fertility celebration too. This time we celebrate the start of the Harvest."

Younger: "But why does He have to be eaten?"

Elder: "The year so far has been mostly about beginnings. Nothing increases all the time. You have seen how the days are becoming a little shorter already. The

grains we harvest have nearly finished growing. They are making seeds for next year now."

Younger: "And there are some extra so we can eat some too!"

Elder: That is true. We save seed for planting next year and leave some on the field for the birds and animals. The grain gives us enough more for our food. It's nearly a sort of sacrifice. Some of the grain is eaten and some grows next year."

Younger: "What about us? The Bread is in the shape of a Man."

Elder: "No, we're not cannibals, but people do give of themselves. We share our time and what we know. We look after our children and one another. No one life goes on forever. We help when we can. We are helped when we need it. We come back to find our places again. That's an even bigger Wheel than this one."

Younger: "Wow! You'd have to use whole tree trunks for that one!"

Elder: "Maybe so. Let's take this Wheel out to the Circle. They'll be waiting for us."

### *Autumn Equinox*

Younger: "I have this Festival all figured out! Let me tell you this time!"

Elder: "You certainly are growing up. Tell me your story."

Younger: "Well, this is the time of the Year that belongs to the school bus. The wheel we are making is just like the school bus driver's steering wheel. The school buses take the children to school and while we're in class, all the school buses bring the frost! Then the leaves all turn yellow just like the school buses!"

Elder: "I hadn't thought of it that way before. The Wheel does seem to turn quickly this time of year. The geese head south, the frost comes, we finish the harvest and ready the garden for Winter. And you children all disappear into school! It's almost as though you're on your own inward journey just like the Sun this time of year."

Younger: "I wish we could come out of school in the Spring just like the Sun does. We have to wait until Summer!"

Elder: "So it is. You know, if you need a reminder of the natural world at lunch time, I have a suggestion. Try cutting your lunch apple through the equator rather than from stem to blossom."

Younger: "What difference would that make?"

Elder: "Try It one day and tell me what you see. Let's make some fruit loaves with this Harvest so they can mellow for Yule time. Help me put the ingredients in and stir the batter."

### *Hallowmas*

Younger: "Hi. Why are the lights out? Why are you burning that black candle?"

Elder: "Hello, there! Come here and sit down for a minute. How was your party?"

Younger: "O.K., I guess. What is that smell? It smells like tobacco. You don't smoke!"

Elder: "You know this as Hallowe'en. It is also called Hallowmas."

Younger: "I really liked the costumes we wore tonight!"

Elder: "Yes, that is part of the celebration. Here, put the final spoke into the Wheel of the Year."

Younger: "O.K., but what were you doing?"

Elder: "Another part of what we do at this time of year is to think about those who have left us and gone on to the Summerland. I was thinking about my Grandfather, your Great Grandfather. He used to like to smoke this kind of tobacco in his pipe. Here, smell this glass."

Younger: "Oh, Yech! Did he like smelly things?"

Elder: "I guess he did. My Grandfather used to smoke his pipe and sip on his scotch whiskey while he told me stories. They were usually short, but I liked the time he spent with me and my brother."

Younger: "What kind of stories did he tell you?"

Elder: "They were usually very short. I remember one he often told us. It went like this. He'd say, "This is a story about Pat and Mike. And now my story's begun. That was a story about Pat and Mike. And now my story's done.""

Younger: "Hey, where was the story? That wasn't fair!"

Elder: "Yes, we said the same thing, too. Later on, I wondered if he meant to tell us that no one has all the answers. Maybe he was just learning to tell stories. I know that later he spent a lot of time with my youngest cousin. They told one another a lot of stories. I think he had learned to tell stories by then. That's why I

taught you to keep your journal. Your stories are important to you. As you learn to write your stories, you will learn how to tell them to others too, when you want to.

"Here, let's take the spokes from the Wheel of the Year and talk about the Festivals this year as we put them on the fire."

Younger: That was fun. We should do that again next year. Where should we put the clay center and the metal rim of the Wheel?"

Elder: "Let's just put them on the table here to remind us how the Mother Earth rests quietly now. She's encircled in the arms of the Sky God as they rest and wait for the birth of the Young Sun at Yule."

Younger & Elder: "Blessed Be!"



## **This Mysterious Wheel**

The Wheel of the Year by Ishan

The Celestial Wheel, always spinning, Endless  
rotations, in love, birth, growth, facing, death;  
viii spokes, viii Sabbats; For inner change, For  
outer change, Turning, Turning, viii spokes, viii  
Sabbats, Guide you to the Wheel's hub, the  
Center, To the glory of the Mother, the Maker,  
To the First, the Last...

The turning of the Wheel of the Year presents us with the eight Sabbats that most Pagan groups celebrate; that is Yule or conception, Candlemas or birth, Eostara or puberty, Beltaine or youth, Midsummer or adulthood and parenting, Lammas or maturity, Autumn or old age, and Hallowmas or death. These celebrations mark specific times in the Earth's yearly cycle as well as providing the basic plan that all things in existence must somehow follow, including we humans. Through the celebration of each of these Sabbats we gain some insight into the cycles that the Earth must follow as well as ourselves. And each year as we come to the same point in the Wheel we may add to our understanding with the experience of the last year behind us. And as each of us move on through our course in the Wheel, we may come to understand the joys and celebrate the moving course of our lives as we eventually reach the Wheel's center.

Yet looking a little deeper beneath the surface of the Wheel, we may also see that each and every moment of our existence we travel on all aspects of this mysterious Wheel. For every moment we give birth to new plans or ideas, we are in the middle of maturing projects, and truly every moment cells in our bodies die only to be replaced by new ones.

Through the celebration of these Sabbats we may take time to celebrate things that are always in existence yet find them clearly in the changes of the Earth Mother.

Look in the eight Sabbats and look in your families. All is there, always, for a wheel is an eternal shape neither beginning nor ending, always existing complete within itself.

### ***Hallowmas***

#### **Oracle**

I greet you, Seeker, on this most frightful of all nights of Hallowmas and trust that you have placed your Jack-O-Lantern in the window to frighten away any evil spirits that may be a-foot this eve. As you know, we have been busy preparing for the coming of winter with the harvest and killing of most of the herds. I trust that you will not want for anything in the cold months which are surely ahead. This night stands between time, for you see the old have not yet died and the young have not yet been born. This, then, is truly a most sacred time. This night we shall see our most Gracious Goddess descend into the Underworld and the Earth shall grow barren indeed. The Goddess leaves us now for rest and regeneration; for during the summer months She has been birthing and sustaining the beautiful creatures that were so bountiful. This night is so full of Magick that the veil between the worlds shall be torn open, to let the souls who have died in the harvest pass on and also to let those who have gone before return to the earth for reunion with loved ones and to share in the celebration of this eve. Seeker, this night I urge you to seek council from those who have gone before us into the Summer-lands for much wisdom may be gained, and in return, invite them into your harvest feasts. As for now I must go, for I must make ready my temple for I expect a few visitors this night.

#### **Meditation**

Consider the Feast of the Dead ... Consider the laying down of life that life may continue ... Consider the fruitful harvest ... port, nuts, apples, cider ... Consider the dead walking the earth again ... Consider the youth of children enacting the drama of the Dead ... Consider divination by the fires of purification ... consider life-defying death in the union of polarities ...

### ***Yule***

#### **Oracle**

e

I greet you, Seeker, on this night of the winter solstice with the kiss and wish you the peace, promise and merriment of Yuletide cheer. Seeker, on this most wondrous night, a magnificent thing will happen. As you probably know, this is truly the longest night of our year and on this night in the depth of darkness, the Dark Lord will miraculously be transformed into the child of light. For you see, this night our most Gracious Goddess will give birth to the child of light and in His coming is



the promise of a good harvest and of warmth. I bid you be of good cheer this night and I will think of you; and now as the darkness gives way to light I, too, must prepare my temple.

### **Meditation**

Consider the Yule tree shining in the first light of the young Sun God as He breaks over the horizon ... Consider the wreathes of Holly, the symbol of life that persists throughout the death and despair of winter ... Consider the Cauldron fire - spark of life that may grow in the waxing year ahead ... Consider the gifts you give - symbolic of the good fortune you wish for the growing year ... Consider your growing desires and dreams for the year ahead ...

### ***Candlemas***

#### **Oracle**

Seeker, I greet you on this most transforming of eves. Tonight will see such marvels that astound me every year. As you know, He who was born at the last Solstice is now beginning to show His presence in our world as the days grow visibly longer, and as such this is truly a Feast of Waxing Light. But yet another wondrous thing will occur tonight. As the Sun dawns over the horizon our most Gracious Goddess will drink from the springs of regeneration and after the pains of giving birth to the Sun Child will again be renewed and we shall behold the Virgin, the Maiden. So you see this is also a feast of Regeneration. This night is very special for us who are ancient, for you see after the harsh cold of winter we seek personal renewal to again feel young at heart. Also, let me share a rumour with you. It is said that on this eve, if you listen very closely to the Earth, you may be able to hear the young seeds awaken and sing their first hymns in honour of the Youthful Maiden. Ah, the wonders of it all. We have been busy preparing for this feast by throwing out the psychic garbage which seems to have collected through the winter months (and believe me there were a lot of cobwebs and dust so that we needed an army). As for now I must take my leave for I think I hear the Gatekeeper summoning us to the temple to light our Candles for this celebration (all of maybe a thousand), and I still have not yet taken my purification bath!! May the growing light transform your most sacred heart and may you be renewed in the Goddess<sup>1</sup> beauty.

### **Meditation**

Consider the young Earth full of life, gestating ... Consider the promise of growing light ... for the Earth ... for you ... Consider the Cauldron of Rebirth ... Consider the preparation for rebirth ... Consider purification ... Consider the single flame in the darkness ...

### ***Eostara***

#### **Oracle**

Seeker, I greet you with the kiss of spring and of new life. This day we shall see that the day and night are of equal length. We shall see that this is a time of

balance. This feast celebrates the seed time, when new life shall burst forth from the Earth in honour of a long awaited reunion.

It shall bring tears to these old eyes to hear the Sun God, now in His youth, call forth the Maiden. This long awaited reunion will see flowers growing in the young lover's steps. This is the time of the Sun overcoming darkness. This is the time of SPRING and of LIFE, and this eve we honour these two forces. As for now I must make haste for I am in charge of picking flowers for the temple tonight and I have not even painted my Eostara Eggs yet. I wish for you the youth and balance of this night.

#### **Meditation**

Consider the spring ... Consider young life and vitality ... Consider children ... Consider the promise of an egg... Consider the fertility of a rabbit ... Consider light and dark in balance ... Consider the eternal lovers ... rejoined ... in youth ...

#### ***Beltaine***

#### **Oracle**

Seeker, I greet you with the kiss of love and lust on this May Eve. We here have been quite busy, we have put our animals back out to pasture and have already begun to sow some of our seeds. This Eve is one of the busiest of all the Sabbats for us. There are always so many different things going on ... Beltaine is truly my favorite of all the Sabbats. For on this night the Lord of the Sun shall meet His love, the Maiden of the Spring, in the Greenwood and They shall love and be as One. This Feast is always very special to us old oracles, for you see I love the life and vigor that is born of the coming together of the Goddess and the God. And everywhere one can feel the desire and the delight in the air as all creation sings hymns of praise in honour of the life-giving Union. This is a Feast of Fertility and as such, the folk up here plan many different things. Some will be dancing around the Maypole and as the shaft of life is wound with the spiral web, we shall see the renewal of all nature. Some will be dancing in the fields to show the seeds how high to grow, but in my opinion I always think the seeds grow from their laughter at this. And yet some others will be lighting the Sacred Bel-fires

to celebrate the Waxing light and the growing strength of the Sun King. I hope that this eve I will be taking part in all of these celebrations for I will be up all night "a-conjuring summer in." As for now I bid you merriment and the delight of the beginning of Summer, and so for now I must go to prepare the scarves for the love chase. Oh, and by the way, perhaps I will see you in the early morning light for I shall surely be collecting morning dew, said to make you look fresh and young.

#### **Meditation**

Consider the lust of spring ... Consider the loving at the beginning of new life ... Consider the love chase ... the Great Rite ... Consider the coming together of Lord and Lady ... Consider desire ...

#### ***Midsummer***

## Oracle

Seeker, I greet you with the kiss and fullness of the Summer. I trust that you have been enjoying the wonderful and relaxing days and lustful nights. The Earth now is shining forth in all the beauty and radiance of our Divine Mother. In this time I always feel a little bit nostalgic, for one as old as I truly loves to see the life and beauty of the opening blossom and strength in the young creatures - now becoming adults. This night marks the fullness of the Summer Queen and the Might of the Lord of the Sun; and we shall again celebrate Their great love as the stars sing of Their coming together. Yet the stars also sing of the decline of the Sun, for on this night our most excellent Lord of the Sun shall slowly begin to weaken and give way, again, to the dark. This marks the maturity and aging of the year. On this night we shall see the Wheel turn again into the darkness and feel His growing presence until Yule. As for now I must take my leave, for I would like to Sun-bathe a while before preparing the Rosemary incense before tonight's festivities.



## Meditation

Consider aging ... Consider the decline after maturity ... Consider the turning of the wheel ... Consider flaming wheels rolling downward ... Consider the blossom, beautiful yet withering ...

## *Lammas*

## Oracle

Seeker, I greet you on this most special of nights. With the Sun now obviously in His decline we must start preparations for the coming of the winter months. This feast of Lammas marks the point in the Wheel where the first harvest shall begin. Tonight while the grain stands high and glorious in the fields we shall bless the harvest, for in the morning She, known as the Reaper, must surely come to collect the harvest. Yet we shall dance, sing, and feast for we will celebrate the ripeness of the harvest with its first fruits; some will have Lammas bread and ale; some will take part in a vegetarian delight and others will collect their herbs for storage this night. We are truly blest this night for we shall see the sacrifice that the Gods are willing to make that Their people may be prosperous, for this night the Grain God shall willingly sacrifice His life, in Its prime, that His people may be prosperous throughout the winter months. As for now, seeker, I must take my leave for on this night there is much baking of breads in our kitchens and I am the official taster, a job I do best. I wish you a most fruitful and bountiful Harvest!!

## Meditation

Consider the harvest ... Consider being cut down in the prime of one's life ... Consider the word sacrifice ... Consider reaping what you have sown in the course of this year ... Consider spiritual harvests ... Consider the sacrifice of the Grain Lord ... Consider the celebration of the fruition of hard labours ...

## *Autumn*

### Oracle

Seeker, I greet you on this Mabon eve with the kiss of perfect balance. This night will mark the day and the night in perfect balance, and we shall see that from this night forth the darkness shall overcome and rule until Yule. This night the God of the Sun shall become the Dark Lord and in His growing will surely come the cold and death. We celebrate this night in a very positive way, with the best of our harvest and give thanks to the Old Ones for the bounty given us that may we endure the Winter months. This night we shall weave a dance of life that will preserve us through the coming hardships of winter. As for me I must take my leave for this night is one of those rare occasions when we will be having a hay ride and I hope to get a good seat (away from the horse's behind). And I must rest after this celebration for there shall be a lot of work to do before Samhain. I bid you the joy of persevering life and the fullness of life.

### Meditation

Consider the coming of barrenness and death ... Consider the celebration of life in the face of death ... Consider the libation of sustaining foods to the Gods ... Consider Autumn's grain being Spring's seed... All life comes from the Goddess and to Her shall all life return....



## In Darkling Slumbers Keep

### The Wheel of the Year & the Eight Sabbats

by Brin

"Healer, tell me a story."

I looked up from the books I was working on and into the face of Dylan's little girl, Shauna. She had found my abused stuffed rabbit, Buzz, and was hauling him around by the ear. (Don't worry, Buzz likes it). Shauna had grown up in the Craft and was used to us and we were getting very used to her.

Now you have to understand something, I don't adore children as a rule. This is perhaps more the fault of their parents for raising spoiled and rude creatures. Now wait, before you start stoning me, let me explain something. I love Shauna. In fact, she is one of the most exceptional small people I've ever met. I'm a sucker for doing just about anything she wants and I smelled a scam in the air.

"What kind of story do you want to hear, krtling?" "A good one."

Great. Right now I didn't know any stories and really didn't feel like trying to make one up, but she was just sitting there looking at me. Big green eyes, the size of saucers. I couldn't take it anymore. I put down my books and tried to think.

"Tell me a story about Samhain. Why do we have more holidays than Joey? Do the Gods know why? Why is Buzz's hair cut into a mohawk and dyed purple?"

"Time out." I interrupted. "One story at a time and Buzz will have to wait. I have an idea. It's a great idea, you'll love it. I'll tell you the story of all the Sabbats using some stories you might have heard before. This way you can see that Joey and you aren't that different. O.K.?"

"O.K. Can Buzz listen?" she said, putting the battered grey bunny on her lap.

"Yes, Buzz can listen."

"Remember to start the story with the beginning part."

"I'll remember."

You see, when I first started telling stories, I used this preamble to get audiences in the mood. It was written by a good friend of mine and I think it's inspired. I took a deep breath, smacked Buzz on the head to make sure he was paying attention and began.

*One night as I lay dreaming in darkling slumbers keep,  
I journeyed to the other world, drawn on by ghostly feet.  
And there I met an elven lad, who smiled with twinkling eye,  
Who shook his head and laughed at me as I ran fearful by.  
Then bumped into a beggar man, as blind as he could be  
Who peeped from under darkened shades and grinned and winked at me.  
Then found myself by silver stream that wandered through the wood,  
And came upon a pegasus which resting, trembling stood.  
She fixed me with a cobalt gaze, her ageless wisdom's eye,  
Shook herself one ivory wing and leaped up for the sky.  
Then slipping through the scented air there did a feather fall.  
A long white plume with pointed quill which hummed a siren's call.  
I plucked it from the grassy earth and pricking it drew blood,  
And wrote my name in mortal ink, a whirling air scrolled flood.*

*It captured me in ribboned flow and tightened till it broke.  
And then I was again in bed, thus dreaming I awoke.  
But in my ear was elven laugh and in my hand the pen.  
So winked I at the beggar man and smiling I began ....*

## **HALLOWS Where There is**

### **Darkness/Secrets**

Jason left his car by the side of the road and walked quietly to the crossroads. He had to drive for over an hour before he found a place that was secluded enough and still had roads that crossed each other. Hecate, Mistress of Magic, had always been one of his favorite Goddesses and he wanted to leave her an offering on this special night.

He laid the food in the middle of the crossroads and turned to head back when he saw something glimmer out of the corner of his eye. He knew he shouldn't turn around or go back. He should just keep walking but curiosity got the better of him and he looked.

Beside the food he left, half buried in the dirt was a glint of metal. Jason ran over, dropped to his knees and started to brush the dirt away from the object. Before he could get a good idea of what was buried there, the wind suddenly sprang up, moaning like a dying thing. He crouched down, trying to shield his eyes from the blowing dirt and leaves. Suddenly the wind disappeared as quickly as it had come and an eerie stillness pervaded the air.

Jason ventured a look in front of his hands and was greeted by a luminous white foot attached to the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Her hair was blue-black and her skin so pale, it shined with an inner glow. Hecate looked down at him, surrounded by a spectral pack of crimson-eyed hell hounds who bayed and snarled in irritation.

"What do you wish human?" She said slowly, her voice crisp like falling snow at midnight. "Why do you disturb my hunt and my hounds?"

"I meant no harm," Jason swallowed. "I only wished to pay my respects."

Hecate smiled coldly, her eyes glittered like many stars. "No harm? Isn't that what all humans say? 'We meant no harm.' You lie, you do plenty of harm. You harm yourselves, you harm your brothers, and most of all, you harm your Mother. You are children who should never have been allowed to play with fire. You never learn."

Jason sat very still. He was not sure if it was wise to argue points with a God but decided that he didn't have much to lose.

"That is right. Some humans cause great harm but there are others who don't. At least we try not to. We make mistakes but we try. Please give me a chance to prove it to you."

Hecate considered this unusual proposition. "Here is what I'll do, little human. I'll give you a chance to prove you can learn. I propose something challenging. A test of my own devising, a riddle as it were, Do you accept, human?"

Jason nodded.

"Then hear me." The Goddess replied. "This night you will travel through time and space for one turn of the seasons. If you solve this riddle and understand each line, I'll let you have your prize." She glanced at the metal winking from the ground. "If not..." The Goddess looked meaningfully at her hounds, their eyes glowing a dull red. They seemed to grin with anticipation. "It has eight parts to it, mark it well.

Where there is darkness, secrets  
Where there is conflict, rebirth Where

there is emptiness, light Where there  
is enmity, renewal Where there is  
love, despair Where there is sadness,  
gladness Where there is labor, fire,  
Where there is death, wisdom.."

Before Jason could say another word, there was a brilliant flash of light,

a sickening drop and he was alone on the dirt road. The night lay as dark as ever but something was very wrong. The trees. There were more of them. In fact he stood on the edge of a forest that had not been there a moment before. Shakily, he dragged himself to his feet and headed to his car only to find it gone and a river in its place.

Dazed and frightened, he tried to commit the riddle to memory, knowing that solving it was the only way out of this strange dream. If it was a dream. He followed the river upstream for a while until he came to an old covered bridge. He had seen pictures of bridges like this back East in places like Pennsylvania. Where was he?

Quickly he crossed the bridge and started up the road when he heard a noise. Horses hooves were following him behind the foliage. When he'd stop, they'd stop. When he sped up, they'd speed up. Nearly overcome with fright in this strange place, he started to run when he saw a light shining through the trees. His heart was pounding as loud as the sound of the unseen horse. He imagined he could feel fetid breath on the back of his neck. With his flagging strength, he fell on the door, pounding on it in desperation. Quite unexpectedly, the door opened and he fell into the strange house.

An old man stood on the threshold of the wooden house, pulled him inside and shut the door behind him, fastening it with a wooden brace.

"He almost caught you that time." the old man said matter-of-factly. "Welcome traveler. What brings you out on this night of all nights?"

"I lost my way in the forest." Jason stammered as he took in his new found surroundings. The room was small but comfortable with a cheery fire. The old man was the sole occupant but there were two places set at the table. "Where am I and what's special about tonight?"

"You are in Sleepy Hollow, stranger, and tonight is All Hallows Eve. The angels themselves must have been guiding your steps this night, son. Don't you know that the Headless Horseman rides tonight?"

"Headless Horseman?"

"Aye lad. Come and sit by the fire. I will tell you the story and the hearth will take the chill from your bones." The old man pulled a chair to the fire next to Jason and began.

"It was many years ago when Ichabod Crane, the new schoolmaster, came to Sleepy Hollow. He was a cowardly, scrawny beanpole of a man who was afraid of his own shadow. Pity for him that he fell in love with the beautiful Katrina Von Tassel. You see, Katrina's father was very wealthy and he was very poor. That would have been bad enough but Katrina's suitor was the overbearing, brawny braggart Brom Bones. Against many warnings by Brom and the locals, Ichabod took Katrina to the Hallows dance. Brom was furious and swore revenge on the schoolmaster. But Brom's jealousy was in vain. After the dance, Ichabod vanished

on h'vs way home through those very woods, never to be seen again." "What happened \o rum?"

The old man shook his head. "No one knows, but they say the Headless Horseman caught up with him in the woods that night. In the morning, all they found by the covered bridge was Ichabod's horse, stone dead, and a shattered Jack O'Lantern. Some folks say that it was Brom Bones dressed up like the horseman who scared Ichabod away but I'm not so sure. Strange things have happened in those woods on All Hallows before Brom Bones came here and things have happened after he left.

"I cant speak for other folks but know what I saw. One night, when I was younger, I saw the Headless Horseman beyond the ridge. His cloak streaming behind him, his black horse from Hell breathing steam and snorting fire and a glowing Jack O'Lantern tucked under his arm like a head. I just know what I saw and pray I never see its likes again."

"I noticed you have an empty place at the table," Jason said. "Were you expecting someone?"

"I set a place for poor Ichabod or any lost soul who wishes to return this night and share some food, ale and a place at my fire. I have a few poor stories I could tell to help them pass the time between sunset and sunrise."

"Like you've been doing tonight?"

"Aye lad. You wouldn't be a ghost came back to haunt me, would you?" "No sir."

"You see lad, the old ways haven't left, just changed with the times." "And so you could say that the darkness holds secrets." "More secrets then I have stories. At least for tonight. Get some sleep boy. It will be daylight soon and then it will be safe to leave."

Jason leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. Thinking about the next line of Hecate's riddle, he fell asleep and awoke in a place hundreds of years before the man he met was even born.

## **YULE**

### **Where There is Conflict/Rebirth**

Jason slowly opened his eyes and promptly closed them again. The old man's house was gone. In its place a snow-covered forest primeval stood. He shook his head a few times to clear it, taking in his new-found surroundings. Snow had been falling since before nightfall, blanketing the hills in shimmering moonlight. Through the trees a dark castle stood stark against the winter-white landscape. Jason pulled his jacket close and, having few options, trudged toward the towering structure.

The crust of the snow broke gently under his feet as the castle drew near. Looking back to see his tracks in the snow, Jason felt awkward and alien in this glittering fairy realm. His footsteps seemed to glare at him in reproach for spoiling the otherwise pristine landscape.

Suddenly he stopped in his tracks and paused, his ears catching pieces of a broken melody. From far away came the strains of music, small childish voices faint and thin in the air:

*The Wren! The Wren! The King of the  
Birds, On St. Stephen's Day was caught in  
a furze. Up with the kettle and down with  
the pan And give us a penny to bury the  
wren.*

"Children?" he thought. "It couldn't be." There was no one around for miles. The land was deserted and the castle stood as dark, empty and silent as a tomb. As if in answer to his thoughts, howls echoed from the surrounding forest. The song of winter wolves wove through the trees, filling the darkness with an eerie melody. The children of the night lifted their voices in harmony, wild and unfettered. Jason paused, then did the first thing that came to mind. He ran.

Perhaps it was the all too recent memory of Hecate's spectral hounds salivating, but it was just too much for one evening. He ran heedlessly through the drifts of snow. Puffing and wheezing, he reached the open gates of the castle and stumbled into the courtyard.

He darted into a doorway and tried to catch his breath. Now that he was here, he had no clue what he was supposed to do. The windows surrounding the courtyard glared down at him like empty eyes, holes in a skull, mocking him.



He walked through rooms on the ground floor and found them equally deserted. A small, adjoining room near the courtyard, strewn with leaves, offered him a view of the countryside. Jason stood at the window and stared into the night, wondering what he was supposed to do or what the riddle had to do with an abandoned, windy old relic that was slowly falling to rubble.

Just as he was beginning to despair, another song drifted across the snow, only this time it was stronger and deeper:

*Good King Wenceslaus looked out on the Feast of Stephen. Where  
the snow laid round about deep and crisp and even. Brightly shown  
the moon that night, though the frost was cruel. When a poor man  
came in sight, gathering winter fuel.*

Jason stood on a bench and peered over the stone sill. A man was coming over the snow, singing. He was tall, lean and muscular, with waves of blond hair flowing over his shoulders. He carried no weapons and strode toward the castle with a purpose. Jason jumped off the bench and ran into the yard to greet him. The desolation was beginning to become oppressive and another face was a welcome addition.

The man strode through the castle gates humming to himself when Jason nearly ran him over. The man smiled and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Good day, or should I say good eve'n, for it is so. I was fully expecting to be alone this year. Friendly faces are always a pleasure."

Jason was a bit perplexed by the man's sudden appearance and good cheer. "You mean you aren't lost?" Jason asked.

"No, are you?"

Jason paused. "I'm not sure. I just happened to be here." The man smiled. "And so am I, so it is good fortune, indeed. What is your name?"

"Jason."

"I am called Sir Gawaine. You may call me Gawaine since the Sir is a bit formal for this night." He seemed to glow as he walked. In this place of darkness, he seemed to bring Summer with him. Jason followed him with awe.

They walked together into a large hall. The ceiling was so high, it was lost in darkness along with the far walls of the room, itself. Gawaine turned away, looking into the gloom for a while before he finally spoke.

"Jason, this is a very special night. This is the one night of the year that the darkness lays longest on this sky, for tonight I must kill a man."

"Kill a man?" Jason yelled. This was not what he expected at all. Sure, he'd seen movies and stuff. Hell, he'd seen Terminator 5 times but maniacal cyborgs from the future or Rambo weren't real. He began to seriously doubt his sanity. Was any of this real?

"I don't understand why you're so upset, Jason." Gawaine put a hand on his shoulder and turned him to face him. "We do this every year. Didn't you know?"

"I don't know what I know anymore. Who do you have to kill, anyway?"

"My brother," Gawaine explained, "You see, tonight we battle for the crown of sovereignty. I will win and cut off his head, then I will be King."

He took a long-handled, executioner-style axe from the wall and hefted it casually, taking a few practise swings. The axe, though long of handle was impossibly heavy. Gawaine handled it with ease, swinging it in a circle as if it weighed nothing at all.

Jason looked aghast. "Oh, great, just great. It's not like some evil cyborg but your own brother!"

"Oh, it's not that bad. We are very civilized about it. You see, I behead hrrr and get the crown tonight, but he gets to behead me and take the crown back a: Midsummer. We take turns. That way there's no hard feelings and we both win. By the way, what's a cyborg?"

"How can you win if you're both dead?"

"Well, we're not dead, either. That's another good point."

Jason looked very confused. "I'm sorry, but I really don't understand."

"Why dont you just watch. It's much easier than my trying to explain. Trust me."

"Who is your brother?" Jason asked.

"The Holly King. However, most people just call him the Green Knight."

As if by design, a green star traced itself on the far wall of the room. It blazed with the light of day and a man on a heavy war horse rode through the portal. His armor glowed with a green light and was decorated with metallic holly leaves. The man tossed down his helmet and Jason could see a circlet of holly leaves twined in his dark, tangled hair. Where Gawaine was all light, this Knight was all shadows. His face was brooding, but striking. A Dark God made manifest.

"Greetings, my brother," the horseman boomed. "Is it so soon?"

"I'm afraid so. The year goes by so fast."

The Green Knight dismounted and took a two-handed broadsword off his horse's saddle. He faced Gawaine and grinned wickedly. "Come my brother, I dont feel like making it easy for you this time."

Jason grew pale. This was no dream and that sword looked very sharp.

"Gawaine, are you sure you want to do this? That guy might be your brother but he doesn't look like he's in a good mood."

Gawaine raised his hand, cutting Jason off. He smiled lovingly at him, running his finger along his cheek, tracing fire with it as he went.

"What's the matter, Jason? Do you want to live forever?" Gawaine winked at him, quickly turned, yelled a cry of challenge and charged the Green Knight.

Jason backed into a corner as the two brothers clashed in a flurry of frying steel. They moved so fast that Jason could barely distinguish one brother from another. Suddenly, the Green Knight cut off Gawaine's retreat and forced him over a table, it was not looking good as Gawaine strained, trying to throw off the blocked blade with the handle of his ax.

Something was terribly wrong, Jason thought. Gawaine was supposed to win.

Gawaine cried out, drew upon some deep reservoir of strength, and threw his brother back. He leaped up, ran at the knight and, with a mighty swing of the axe, the Green Knight's head fell from his body and came to rest by Jason. The holly circlet disengaged itself, rolled from the head to rest at Gawaine's feet.

Gawaine picked up the holly circlet in his hands. It shimmered and began to transform. The holly leaves withered and curled in upon themselves. From the nubs of the dying leaves, green sprigs of oak grew in their place. White berries sparkled like drops of moonlight within the foliage of the new-grown crown. Gawaine smiled and placed it upon his brow. The leaves entwined into his hair of their own accord until the crown of oak was a permanent fixture on his head. Permanent, at least, until Midsummer, Jason thought.

"Uneasy is the head that wears the crown." Gawaine laughed.

Jason smiled thinly at the joke when he heard raucous laughter. He looked at Gawaine, but Gawaine was silent. The laughter was coming from the fallen head. Jason stared at it with a mixture of disgust and fascination.

"Son, would you do me a favor?" the head boomed.

Jason jumped.

"You talked?" he asked incredulously, edging closer. "Of course I talked. Could you please take me to my body? I'm starting to feel a draft."

"Why aren't you dead?"

The Green Knight's eyes rolled skyward, then looked at Gawaine. "Didn't you tell him?"

"I tried to, but it's so hard to explain if you've never seen it before."

"I think I understand," Jason said as he bent down and picked up the Green Knight's head in his hands. There was no blood dripping from the neck. It was almost like some strange, Stephen King movie. He placed the severed head on the body and stepped back. The neck affixed itself and held. The Green Knight blinked his eyes a few times, gave his neck some practice twists, and stood up.

"Good job. I dislike squeamish people." He retrieved his broadsword and hugged Gawaine. "Good to see you, Brother."

"Good to see you, too."

"Until Midsummer."

"Wouldn't miss it."

The Green Knight retrieved his helmet and mounted his horse. "Good fortune to you, my Brother, and to you, Jason."

"Until later, Jason, and good fortune," Gawaine echoed.

Somewhere in the distance a baby cried. Jason turned but saw nothing. When he turned back to ask Gawaine if he had heard, they were both gone, as if they had never been. Jason stood alone in the empty hall. Stepping into the courtyard, bathed in the light of a single star, he felt a pull from the sky and the rest was silence.

### *Candlemas* Where There is

#### Emptiness/Light

It had been snowing hard all night. The feeble glow from the oil street lamps did little to cheer the grey streets. Lost in the darkness and the cold, a little girl sought shelter from the swirling snow. Her head was uncovered and her feet were bare. The shoes she had worn were too large for her tiny feet and had fallen off. Two mean boys had picked up one of the discarded shoes and teased her with it. He said it was so large he could use it for a baby crib when he had children. The little girl didn't pay them any mind.

She stood huddled in the alleyway, clutching the fist of matches to her thin chest. Her dull, brown hair hung back about her face and shoulders as she watched the Victorian ladies and gentlemen hurry by. In a tattered old apron she had a pocketful of matches and she carried a bunch in her hand. No one had bought any from her the whole day. Not one person had given her a single shilling.

The matches were all she had to sell and she knew if she didn't sell them all, her father would beat her. Did she dare light just one? She could strike it against the wall and warm her fingers by the flame. Surely he wouldn't miss just one match. Scratch! The match flared and glowed like a tiny candle. She cupped her hand around it to shelter it from the breeze. The light flickered strange, brighter than it was before. It seemed to the little girl that she was sitting in front of a huge, shiny, black pot-bellied stove. A cheery fire shone from the grate and sparkled on the brass knobs. It was wonderfully cozy and the little girl stretched her fingers out to warm them when the flame went out. The little stove disappeared and all she was left with was the burnt end of a match.

A shadow fell over her and she looked up. A tall man was standing there, looking down at her. Afraid that her father had caught her wasting the match, she tried to run past him but he caught her by the collar of her dress.

"Hey, take it easy," Jason said, kneeling down to her level. "I'm not going to hurt you. Where are your parents?"

"My mother's dead and my father doesn't like me. I thought you were him and that you were going to beat me."

"Why would your father want to beat you?"

"Because I haven't sold any of my matches." The little girl began to cry. Her tears cut lines through the grime on her face. "And I was cold and I lit one and it was so pretty and there was a stove and..."

Jason wiped the tears from her face. "Look, don't cry anymore. It will be alright."

"Look, look," the little girl said excitedly. "If you promise not to tell, I'll light another one. Maybe the stove will come back and you can get warm, too."

Jason smiled. "Sure, why not?"

Taking another match from her pocket, the girl struck it against the side of the building. Where the light from the match fell on a bare wall, it became like transparent gauze. Through the glow Jason could see a dining room that was set for dinner. There was a white linen tablecloth, fine china and sparkling crystal glasses. Bowls of steaming vegetables and broths were set in painted tureens and in the middle of the table was a fine, stuffed goose. The little girl clapped her hands and laughed as the goose hopped off the platter and started a dance with the serving fork. Then the match went out and only the bare, cold wall remained.

"That sure was something. How did you do that?" Jason asked.

"I don't know. It just happened."

She lit a new match and was sitting in front of the largest Christmas tree Jason had ever seen. It was over twenty feet tall and sparkled like a star. The boughs were covered with little candles held on the branches with brass clips. Small, wooden toy soldiers and drums hung from the tree and bright red cranberries wound their way through the branches. The little girl stretched out her hands and the match went out; the glow of the numerous Christmas candles shot higher and higher until they were bright stars looking down on the Earth. One of them fell and cut a fiery streak through the air.

"Look!" said the little girl as she pointed at the sky. "Someone has died. My Grandmother Bridgit told me that when a star falls, a soul goes up to God."

"That sounds nice. It might be fun to ride on a star. Your Grandmother sounds like a special lady. Does she live with you?"

"Oh, no," the little girl replied. "She went to heaven to live with the angels. I'll see her again some day. I love her very much."

"I'm sure you do. Listen, you look a little hungry. Why don't you stay right here and I'll go find something for you to eat. Alright?"

"I'll be here," she smiled.

Jason ducked around the corner and disappeared into the snow.

Carefully, the little girl withdrew another match from her pocket and struck it against the stone. It shone around her and within the glow stood her Grandmother, smiling at her.

"Grandma Bridgit! Take me with you! I know you'll be gone when the match goes out, gone just like the warm stove, the dancing goose and the beautiful Christmas tree!"

And hastily she struck all the matches in the bunch. She wanted to keep her Grandmother with her. The matches shone with such a radiance that it was brighter than the light of day. Never before had her Grandmother been so beautiful.

The old woman gazed lovingly at the little girl, gathered her into her arms, and laughing together they flew high into the early morning sky. There was no hunger, no fear, and no cold. There was only the stars and her Grandmother's love.

The sun was starting to creep over the horizon when Jason returned with some fruit he had found. The snow stopped falling and the air was starting to warm. In the pale pink of the dawn, a flash from the sky caught his eye, a shooting star. Rounding the corner to the alley, he stopped, seeing a crowd of people where he had left the little girl. Suddenly filled with foreboding, he started to run.

Jason pushed through the crowd and looked into the alley. In the early morning cold, sat the little match girl with rosy cheeks and a smile on her face -dead, frozen to death. Clutched in her hand was the bunch of matches, burned. She had wanted to warm herself, the passers-by murmured. No one knew the lovely sights she had seen nor the happiness she felt when she had gone with her old Grandmother into the bosom of the new day.

## *Eostara* Where There Is

### Enmity/Renewal

The sun had crested the rolling hills of Jerusalem when Mary left her small house that spring morning. She carried a basket of bread and cheese along with some stray flowers she had found by the roadside. She walked quietly, wrapped in deep thought. So much had happened in the last few days.

She hummed quietly to herself as she crested the hill that overlooked the tomb. Suddenly she stopped abruptly, dropping her basket. The flowers spilled, forgotten, onto the road. The heavy stone that had sealed the tomb only yesterday had been rolled away. Mary ran into the tomb and looked around: it was empty.

This couldn't be happening. She tried to keep from screaming. Who would take his body? After all that's happened, couldn't they have just left him alone? Perhaps one of the twelve came in the night and took him so the Romans wouldn't defile the body. That was it. She would just ask one of the twelve. Better said than done, she realized. They had scattered into the wind as chafe from wheat.

She ran from the empty tomb and her confused thoughts. She tried to think clearly; there had to be an explanation. Slowly she made her way back to the tomb and peeked inside. The tomb was no longer empty. On the slab where the body had lain, two men sat, silent as sphinxes.

"Excuse me," Mary asked. "Do you know what happened to the body that was here?"

The two men said nothing. This was getting creepy. Mary backed out of the tomb and right into a figure. Startled, she turned and looked up into the glare of

the morning sun. It was a man. The sun shone behind him like a halo. The gardener, she thought.

"Excuse me, Sir, could you please tell me what happened to the body that was lain here?"

The man was silent for a moment, then spoke. "Don't you know me, Mary?"

Mary shielded her eyes against the glare and looked at the face of the man she thought was the gardener but found the face of a man she thought was dead. Her face turned as pale as the sands.

"Go tell them, Mary. Tell them there is no death."

Mary turned and ran from the tomb and the silence and the dead. She ran back toward the town when she bumped into another man.

Jason had appeared on a dusty road in the early morning, the gloom of Victorian London far behind. From the dust, sand and palm trees, it looked like either the Middle East or Egypt, but exactly where he could not say. Before he could take in much more of the countryside, he had his arms full as a woman ran into him.

"Who are you?" the startled woman asked. "My name is Jason. I might ask you the same question." "My name is Mary, Mary Magdalene. I'm sorry I bumped into you like that," she apologized. "It's just that I've had a terrible fright." "What happened?"

"Do you know of Jesus, the Rabbi of Nazareth?"

"I've heard of him." Jason smiled, knowing where this was going.

"They crucified him two days ago." Mary explained the happenings of the morning, starting with the empty tomb and ending with seeing Christ. "I saw him. I know you'll think I'm crazy, but I saw him as plain as I'm seeing you now. I'm supposed to tell the others but I don't know where all of them are. I heard that James and his brother John went back to fishing. I'm not sure about the others. They never liked me being around, anyway."

"Why not?" Jason asked.

"Because I'm not a properly pious woman. You see, I sell my body for bread."

Jason looked away, uncomfortable.

"Don't let it bother you. It doesn't bother me. What I did to eat didn't matter to Him. He loved me for myself."

"Mary, why don't you start with the fishermen. At least you know where they are."

"I won't have to, after all."

"Why?" Jason asked.

"Because here comes John now."

A man was walking down the dusty road. Mary ran toward him and began to talk excitedly. John listened with rapt attention, nodding his head now and then. Mary tugged on the sleeve of his robe, leading him to where Jason stood.

"Jason, this is John."

Jason clasped the man's hand.

John looked across the land and spied three figures reclining against a tree. He could make out Matthew the tax collector, Luke the gentile and Mark the Roman.

"If you'll excuse me," John said, "I believe I see a few of my compatriots who would be very interested in what you saw, Mary. Excuse me."

Without another word, he hurried down the hill to talk with the group of men. Jason and Mary moved closer, watching with interest.

"Where is Paul?" John said to Matthew, who was reclining under a fig tree with the others. "I thought he'd be with you."

"You know Paul," Matthew said, standing up and stretching. "He's in one of his 'I'm so depressed and deserve to die' moods. I really wish he'd get over it. What's going on? We haven't seen anyone since the funeral."

"James and I went back to fishing for a while. Trying to put the whole thing behind us. But this morning, the most amazing thing happened. You are never going to believe it! I was on my way into Jerusalem when I came across Mary."

"Which Mary?"

"The fun one. Anyway, she told me that Christ has risen!" "What?!" This caught the interest of Luke and Mark, who rushed to join the conversation.

"She was going to the tomb this morning and saw the stone rolled away." John continued. "When she went inside, it was empty. She thought maybe one of the twelve had taken the body. I told her we wouldn't do such a thing. Besides, the stone is way too heavy and you know that I strained my back last week. Anyway, when she went back to the tomb there were two men there, angels of the Lord. They didn't say a word, just sat where Christ's body used to be. Mary ran out of the tomb and that's when she saw Jesus. She talked to him and he talked back, just as I'm doing now."

"Wait, wait, wait." Matthew interrupted. "Are you telling me that the prostitute saw our Lord and not you?"

"Would you lower your voice. She might hear you." "She knows what she does for a living."

John glared at Matthew in frustration. "Do you want to hear this story or not?"

"Please, go right ahead."

"Anyway, she didn't know it was Jesus at first. She thought he was the gardener."

"The gardener!?" Matthew exclaimed. "Who's going to believe that she mistook Jesus for the gardener?"

"Well, I did. The sun was in her eyes and she was emotionally distraught. You know how women get. It was an easy mistake."

"Camel-dung," Matthew spat. "No one is going to believe that little Mary, the 'you-know-what,' saw Jesus and thought he was the gardener! There are no credible witnesses."

"There were the two angels."

"Who didn't say a word. John, you've lost it. Why would Christ appear to that woman?"

A man in Roman garb stepped between the bickering men.

"Please, gentlemen," Mark said. "There must be a solution to this dilemma. What we need is an angle. If credibility is the issue, I propose that in addition to Mary, we include Salome, Jesus' aunt and Mary, mother of James, because he's a great

guy and I owe him money. We can have them met at the tomb by a man dressed in white. This way we're not saying he's an angel. People can draw their own conclusions and that lets us off the hook in case they want to stone us again for being heretics."

"Good idea," Luke said, stepping into the fray. "Speaking for the gentiles, I agree that stoning is not a good thing, but how about beefing this up a bit. We can have two men in white instead of one. There is strength in numbers and where one messenger from God might be explained away, surely two is more believable."

"I also agree with having Mary, mother of James in the group, but how about instead of Salome, we throw in Joanna. She's a pious woman and gives me free beer. I also think we should consider throwing in a group of nondescript women for atmosphere. We all know women travel in packs. This will lend our story credence since no one is going to believe Christ appeared only to Mary."

Matthew started pacing slowly, collecting his thoughts the way he collected taxes. Methodically.

"No, no, no, it doesn't have enough kick, enough drive. O.K., picture this. Mary arrives with another woman. We'll just call her Mary, too, make it easy on the readers."

"Wont that confuse people," John interrupted, "having two women named Mary?"

"I don't have a problem with it," Luke said. "Of course not. You have the cast of thousands in your story." Matthew rapped on John's head for quiet. "Gentlemen, please, may I finish my opening narrative. Now, we'll have the two Marys coming to the tomb. There they will see an angel of the Lord. Now, you might ask, how do they know he's an angel? Well, I'll tell you. He will create a mighty earthquake. The trees will topple, rocks will roll down the hillside and the women will tremble most terrible. Then he will put the burly Roman guard to sleep." "What Roman guard?" John said.

"I'll put him in for allegorical effect. The angel will proclaim that our Lord has risen. So, what do you think?"

Silence filled the grove. Then mayhem erupted. Mark, Luke and John began pelting Matthew with anything within reach. Sticks, figs, small rocks. It was a free-for-all.

Jason watched the ensuing fracas with interest from a vantage point with Mary. She was quiet.

"I didn't think they knew each other."

"Does it matter? No one will take what any one of them says seriously, anyway. Look at them."

Jason looked at the four future writers of the gospels, heaped in a dogpile - rolling down the hill, arms and legs flailing. It looked like something out of a Hal Roach movie. He turned back to Mary.

"Doesn't it bother you, the way they talk about you?"

"I don't care what they say or what they think about me. He loved me, you know. And as long as I keep that alive, he'll never be truly dead. He lives in me and all who loved him. So, you see, he did rise from the dead and was born again into our hearts. Even the flowers die and are reborn from the seeds they drop. As long as we remember, love never dies."

Mary smiled an enigmatic smile, put her scarf over her head and she picked up her basket.

"Walk in love, Jason," Mary said and headed down the dusty road.

### ***Beltaine* Where There is**

#### **Love/Despair**

The early morning air of Palestine drifted away to become the heat of noon. Easterly winds blew swift across the prairie and the grasses rippled and flowed like a great sea of water around Jason's legs. Rolling hills and valleys stretched for as far as

the eye could see. The silence was tangible, only broken by the occasional cry of a bird and the whisper of the wind.

Jason followed the bend of the grass toward the west, walking stoically with the wind at his back and a song on his lips. After what seemed like hours of walking, Jason stopped and sat down to rest. Suddenly, he heard a sound. Turning quickly, he saw an old woman who seemed to have appeared from the Earth herself.

She was seated in front of a large frame loom. Her face was brown and wrinkled, lined with the cares and joys of a long walk upon the Earth. She slowly looked up from her work and gazed at Jason. The web of her weaving spread before her face, concealing her within its strands.

"I have been waiting for you. Sit beside me, Jason, and let me tell you a story. This story has been with my people since before the Great Spirit put his mark on the land."

She paused in her speech, but not in her weaving. Slowly she collected the threads of her thoughts and began again.

"There is a legend of a flower. A flower with no name. A flower that burns in secret places as bright as emerald fire and as soft as a lover's kiss. To see it once is to lose yourself forever; nothing can compare with its remembered beauty. It is a flower of disillusionment.

"In my village there lived a woman named Jewel. She was very much like the other women of the village. She did as she was told, respected the elders and made the prayers to the Gods. She was pledged to a young man but was in no hurry to marry for she knew that life would be the same as she knew it to be.

Then one day a stranger appeared out of the prairie. He came from the winds, riding a pony as wild as his hair and his spirit. All the women loved him. They talked in whispered voices as he walked by. The old women would put their hands to their hearts when they spoke of him and had the gleam in their eyes of far-off remembrances. But of all the women in the village, he chose Jewel and she was lost.

The stranger taught her the dance of the stars and the stories they told. He spoke to her of far away places and the people who lived there. At night they would lay together by the river and she would breathe the scent of him, leather and sweat and strange places. He would tell her stories of the Great Spirits, of Raven and Coyote the Trickster.

"Her other life was forgotten as she walked in the sun of the stranger and wished on every star that she could be his forever.

Then one day she awoke from the stranger's bed to find it cold and the wind blew over the prairie uncaring.

"She waited for many days for his return, staring out across the vastness of the land. Her young man waited beside her but she did not see him. He was nothing to her for he was not the one she sought.

"Her mother told her that she was being foolish. She should marry the young man as before and forget the stranger with his stories and persuasive words. So Jewel was taken from the prairie to be the young man's wife but she found no joy in it. The magic had gone out of the stars that were Jewel's eyes.

"One day the young man awoke to an empty bed. She was gone as if she had never been and the wind blew over the prairie uncaring.

"There is a legend of a flower. A flower with no name. A flower that burns in secret places as bright as emerald fire and as soft as a lover's kiss and somewhere Jewel still searches for it in the stars."

"Did she ever find the stranger?" Jason asked.

"I thought you were listening. That is not the point of the story." The old woman paused in her weaving and looked at Jason. "What is true love?"

Jason was taken aback. "I'm not sure I understand the question."

"Do you not know any stories about love?" the old woman asked.

Jason thought hard for a few minutes. The old woman resumed her weaving. "There was a story I read in English class named *Wuthering Heights*. There were these two tragic lovers in it named Heathcliff and Cathy. They loved each other."

"I've heard this story. Cathy was a fool."

"But wasn't Jewel the same as Cathy. She loved an unconventional man."



"This is true. But Jewel left her young man and her family in search of herself. Cathy betrayed herself by marrying a man she didn't love, behaving in a selfish way and treating the only man she did love with contempt. What happened to your Heathcliff and Cathy?"

"Cathy died in Heathcliff's arms and her ghost haunted the moors looking for her lost love. Heathcliff went mad, ran out onto the moors in the snow and froze to death."

"Cathy deserved what she got. She killed herself because she was selfish. She didn't listen to her heart and stay with Heathcliff as she wanted. Cathy married a man she didn't love so she could have material possessions she thought would make her happy. She only realized her mistake when it was too late. Her spirit roamed the Earth looking for the love she denied herself in life.

"Jewel went on a quest for understanding. She asked questions of herself and found her previous life wanting. When you search your self for love, you find the ability to love another. If you are empty inside, you have nothing to give another person.

"You must understand this, Jason, in love there is pain but love is not tragic and selfish. Love is selfless. Your culture holds up to you a very distorted picture of love. You look at yourselves as through a pool of rippling water. You need to gaze into the clear, still waters of your soul to see yourself clearly reflected.

Jason lay back in the grass and watched the clouds drift overhead.

"I understand what you're saying about loving yourself but then, why do people do all the stupid things they do?" There was no reply.

Jason turned but the old woman was gone. Nothing remained but a small spider who climbed into the old woman's weaving and disappeared from sight.

## *Midsummer*

### Where There is Sadness/Gladness

The afternoon sun stretched over the green hills and lit upon a small caravan of wooden wagons winding their way toward a grassy bowl. Jason headed toward the small band of traveling players, looking for a friendly face. He found one in a slight man with a ruddy face who came forward to greet him.

"Good day to you, lad, pleased to make your acquaintance. I am Richard Burbage. The lead actor of our company. It has been a long, dusty journey and new faces are always a comfort and a pleasure. You are...?"

"Jason. I was lost and thought you might be traveling to a town."

"That we are, lad. Vagabonds and thieves we arent, though actors we be. Our patronage is to Lord Strange, we are of his men, out of London since the plague season started."

"That's odd. I seem to remember that Shakespeare used to be in Lord Strange's players."

"Used to be? Still is, boy. He has written us a new comedy, though it is nothing but a gaud, a trinket, a fancy toy. Now give to me a tragedy and I can make the stones weep."

"What is the name of this play?" asked Jason.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream. By God's teeth, boy, have you never seen us in London? Our fine playwright is o'er thar. He did say that we approach our playing space, though neither town nor inn I see."

Jason looked to the hilltops where Burbage gestured and saw the figures of two persons against the Midsummer sun.

A man stood at the top of the hill, wrapped in darkness. Shakespeare approached him cautiously. Morpheus, the Lord of Dreams, looked up and gazed into the slight human's eyes. His piercing glance froze Shakespeare's blood. There were no eyes gazing back at him. Only what seemed like an endless pit of stars. The dark man's voice cut the air, breaking the deadly silence. "You are ready?"

"We have arrived as you instructed, Lord, on Midsummer's Eve, by the Long Man of Wilmington. An odd choice of a place for us to perform."

"Wendel's Mound was a theatre before your race came to this island." Shakespeare looked puzzled. "Before the Normans?" "Before the humans," the Shadow Lord replied. "Go and make ready to perform your play. Your audience shall soon arrive." Shakespeare stumbled down the hill, leaving the darkness to the wind.

Jason had spent the time meeting the other players and waiting Shakespeare's return with a mysterious patron. Burbage said that Will would not talk about the man, only that this debut performance was important. Shakespeare returned to the caravan and instructed the actors to set their scenery and props within the grassy bowl. The audience would be coming to them, he explained, and left it at that. He bent down by a small child, talked briefly with the boy and disappeared into the crowd.

The actors started to dress and erect the scenery. In England at the time, there were no women players so the younger men put on wigs, dresses and make-up to imitate the women in the show. They were really very convincing. Jason seemed to remember that the only country at the time that had women actors was Italy and they seemed to be more trouble than they were worth.

Suddenly the ground started to tremble slightly and, from the far side of the bowl, a sliver of light appeared. From the rift drifted all manner of creatures, lead by two stunning immortals. The man was tall and dark with a brooding countenance. The woman was pale and slight. The breezes seemed to follow her as she walked. At the man's heels capered a half-naked man creature, a hobgoblin with a terrible, alien beauty that was frightening to look upon. Leading the group of faeries, nixies, trolls and various assorted critters was another man. He was cloaked in black and stepped apart from the throng to stand next to the playwright. He was Morpheus, Lord of Dreams and the mysterious patron of this unusual recital.

As the immortals, Lady Titania and her consort Lord Oberon arranged themselves among their varied horde. Morpheus instructed the players to begin. Jason remembered this play from school. It involved four lovers, a host of fairies, a love potion/flower and lots of mayhem. It was the perfect play for the afternoon.

The actor playing Puck gamboled and cavorted with a svelte fairy, throwing himself into his part with child-like exuberance. "Thou speak'st aright: I am that merry wanderer of the night."

Oberon bent over Puck, who was lying at his feet. "It's you, hobgoblin, that actor personates you." Puck just grinned, with a smile that seemed to hold too many impossibly sharp teeth.

"I am that merry wanderer of the night?" An incredulous sprite whispered into Oberon's ear. "I am that giggling-dangerous-totally-bloody-psychotic-menace-to-life-and-limb, more like it."

Oberon just smiled and turned back to the play.

Titania motioned Morpheus over to her and whispered in his ear. "That child, over behind the wagons. Who is he?"

"He is the son of Will Shakespeare, the author of the play."

The fairy queen smiled an enigmatic smile. "A beautiful child. Will I meet him?"

"I have told Shakespeare to call an interval midway. You may meet him then."

"It is not common of you, Dream Lord, to traffic with mortal kind. Why have you done this?"

Morpheus looked toward the wagons. "We have an arrangement, the playwright and me. I give him what he thinks he desires most and in return he shall write two plays for me. This is the first."

After an hour, the players called an intermission. Jason wandered behind the wagons and found a small boy sitting on some clothes, looking lost. "Hey kid, why aren't you watching the play?" "Dont feel like it," he replied sullenly. "What's your name?" Jason asked. "Hamnet Shakespeare. My father writes the plays." "You must be very proud of your father, Hamnet."

"I suppose," he said, kicking his heels against the side of the wagon. "He's never around. He's always in London or with his friends. It's like he's somewhere else even when he's with you and anything that happens, he just makes stories out of it. Mother told me that he's changed but I don't remember him any other way. My twin sister Judith joked that if I died, he'd just write a play about it. Hamnet."

"All that matters are the stories."

Jason turned away from the small child as he saw Shakespeare approaching with the Shadowy Dream Lord at his side.

"They are satisfied, Will," Morpheus whispered. "It will last." "Are you satisfied?" Shakespeare asked, his eyes darting nervously. "I am."

"Then our bargain is half concluded. One other play then, celebrating dreams at the end of my career. Already, Shadow Lord, I come to regret our bargain."

Jason turned from the exchange between the Dream Lord and the playwright to see the Faerie Queen talking to Shakespeare's young son Hamnet.

She had entwined him in her pale arms, painting pictures of her homeland for the boy with her words.

"... and bonny dragons that will come when you do call them and fly you through the amber skies. There is no night in my land, boy, and it is forever summer's twilight. Would you like to come live with me, my sweet child? I would take care of you and you would have many friends to play with." The boy nodded and hugged her tight.

"My lady," Morpheus said as he appeared suddenly at her side, "the play begins."

Titania reluctantly let go of the boy and let him slip back into the press of performers.

"This must be our last visit to this Earth, Dream Lord," she said as she took her seat beside her consort. Things have changed. Gaia no longer welcomes us as once she did. The humans have sealed us behind our veil of faerie and we no longer have the strength nor will to leave."

Morpheus turned his head, brooding over the words.

"I wonder, Titania, if I have done right. Will is a willing vehicle for these great stories. Through him they will live for an age of man and his words will echo down through the corridors of time. It is what he wanted. But he did not understand the price. Had he understood, it would have made no difference. Sometimes the cruelest jest of all is getting everything you thought you ever wanted. Have I done right, Titania?"

"You have done what you felt you must do. why did you bring us here, Shaper? It has been amusing but I have wondered none the less."

"During your stay on the Earth, the faerie has offered me much entertainment and diversion. I would pay back that kindness, now that you have retreated to your own realms. They shall not forget you. That was important to me, that King Oberon and Queen Titania will be remembered by mortals until this age is gone."

"We thank you, but the story, though amusing, is not true," Oberon interjected.

Morpheus laughed. "What is truth? Does a thing have to have happened to be true? Tales and dreams are but the shadow truths that will endure when facts are dust and forgot."

Titania smiled, "If you say so, we are honored," and turned back with her mate to the show in progress.

Puck cavorted among the feet of actors and faeries alike, reciting the lines that Shakespeare had written. "And we fairies, that do run by the triple Hecate's team, from the presence of the sun, following darkness like a dream, now are frolic. Not a mouse shall disturb this hallowed house. I am sent with broom before, to sweep the dust behind the door."

Oberon stood, his long, black hair whipping in an unseen wind. "Come, my Puck, the time of our return to faerie draws near."

"Leave! Now?! When there are mortals to vexate? Nay, good Lord, I will remain. The last hobgoblin among men in a dreary world." Puck grinned darkly, showing pointed teeth. "I think, my Lord, that the playwright said it best, 'If we shadows have offended, think but this and all is mended. That you have but slumbered here while these visions did appear, and this weak and idle theme no more yielding than a dream. Gentles, do not reprehend. If you pardon, we will mend. And as I am an honest Puck, if we have unearned luck to scape the serpent's tongue, we shall make amends ere long. Else the Puck a liar call, so good night unto you all. Give us your hands if we be friends and Robin shall restore amends."

No sooner had Puck finished when a clap of thunder echoed through the bowl and the light was drained from the sky. Jason heard the panicked human voices of the actors, the high-pitched faerie voices, the sound of wings, feet, a demonic chuckle, someone yelling 'what is happening?' and then blackness.

Three years later, Shakespeare's son Hamnet died at age eleven. The classic tragedy *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* was written not long after. Shakespeare went on to write many plays for two monarchs, including the Dream Lord's final inspiration, *The Tempest*. This was the final play of Shakespeare's career. Shakespeare died at the age of 52 from pneumonia complications derived from a drinking bout in the rain with Ben Jonson and Richard Burbage. The whereabouts of Robin Goodfellow [Puck] are unknown.

## *Lammas* Where There is

### Labor/Fire

The disorientation of the faerie whirlwind faded and was replaced by the strains of raucous song. Jason looked around and found himself in a small English village. The time seemed to be the same as the last. The music was coming from a sturdy tavern on the corner of a dirt street.

Venturing a look inside, Jason saw men & women laughing. They had spread a large feast on one of the long wooden tables and every person had a tankard full of drink. The festive atmosphere was contagious. Everyone, between rounds of song, hung the rafters with braided wheat and corn husks.

From the depths of the room came a booming voice. "Come lad, sit and celebrate the harvest with us this fine day." A large, bearded man grabbed Jason about the shoulders and steered him to a crowded table. "Do you know of any rousing songs praising ale that we do not already know?"

Jason shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't think of any at the moment."

The man laughed. "No matter, here's one for thee." He pressed a cup of dark beer into Jason's hand and began:

"I'll drink one if you drink two  
And here's a lad that'll drink with you  
And if you do as I have done  
You'll be a good companion...  
*Companion, companion,*  
*You'll be a good companion."*

More faces started to gather around the table, lifting their mugs to Jason as they started the second verse of the song.

"I'll drink two, if you'll drink three And  
here's a lad that'll drink with thee And if  
you do as I have done You'll be a good  
companion... *Companion,  
companion, You'll be a good  
companion.*"

As the verses went on and on, Jason wondered if there was indeed an end to this song. The burly man sat down beside him while the rabble rousers continued the song.

"Do they just make up verses for this song as they go along?" Jason asked.

"The man laughed, "Indeed they do. I myself only know of words through the number ten but I have heard the boys sing up through thirty. It helps sharpen the wit while you drink with your fellows."

"Are you having a party tonight?"

"You are new to this shire, are you not? Tonight the harvest begins and we tell the tale of John Barleycorn and his sacrifice for our village and for England." "Who's John Barleycorn?" Jason asked.

The man's eyes went wide. "You have not heard of poor John? I had thought that every lad from Windsor to London and beyond has heard of John. Since before my time, John's blood has guarded the health of Englishmen everywhere. Well, lad, let me sing you a song that tells his story.

"John Barleycorn's a hero bold as any in the land  
For ages good his fame has stood and shall for ages stand  
The whole wide world respect in him, no matter friend or foe  
And where they be that makes so free, he's sure to lay them low.  
*Hey, John Barleycorn  
Ho, John Barleycorn  
Old and young they praise has sung  
John Barleycorn*

"To see him in his pride of growth, his robes are rich and green His head is  
speared with prickly beard, fit nigh to serve the Queen And when the reaping  
time comes round and Johnny's stricken down He'll use his blood for  
England's good and Englishmen's renown. *Hey, John Barleycorn Ho, John  
Barleycorn Old and young they praise has sung John Barleycorn*

The lord in courtly castle and the squire in stately hall  
The great of name, of birth and fame, on John for succor call  
He bids the troubled heart rejoice, gives warmth to nature's cold  
Makes weak men strong and old ones young and all men brave and bold  
*Hey, John Barleycorn  
Ho, John Barleycorn  
Old and young they praise has sung  
John Barleycorn*

Then shout for great John Barleycorn, more heed his luscious vine I have no  
mind much charm to find in potent draught of wine Give me my native  
nut-brown ale, all other drinks I scorn For true old cheer is English beer, our  
own John Barleycorn. *Hey, John Barleycorn Ho, John Barleycorn Old and  
young they praise has sung John Barleycorn*

As the man finished the song, Jason noticed that he had gathered quite an audience. People cheered, stomped their feet and upended tankards on each other. A portly man stood on a box, tankard raised high and proclaimed in a booming voice:

"For many years the people of our village have told the tale of John Barleycorn. The Morris Men dance in his honor with bells round their legs and sticks in their hands so he will grow tall and strong. We toil long hours in the sun but when the reaping time comes, John gives his body to us to grind and press that we can make many more jugs of good English ale to keep our village healthy and strong. The last of the harvest stalk is tied into the good luck 'neck,' a wheat weaving that will ensure a good harvest for the next year.

"So every one raise your bowls high and thank good John for the harvest."

The tavern erupted in a cheering mass. Jason was swept along outside within the press of bodies. They danced and laughed out to the fields behind a small row of buildings. One by one they walked out to the now barren fields and poured their ale into the freshly turned earth and started to sing:

"Ye travellers all as you pass by, Come in  
and drink if you are dry. Come spend, my  
lads, your money brisk, And pop your nose in  
a jug of this.

Oh, when I was young I was brisk and gay  
And every maiden who came my way Would  
scruple not to caress and kiss, When once  
she'd tasted a job of this.

Oh, but now I'm old and can scarcely crawl  
I've a long grey beard and a head that's bald  
Crown my desire and fulfill my bliss; A pretty  
girl and a jug of this.

And when I'm in my grave and dead.  
And all me sorrows are past and fled,  
Transform me then into a fish, And let  
me swim in a jug of this."

## ***Mabon***

### **Where There is Death/Wisdom**

The sky was quickly heading toward night. Crickets chirped, carnival noises drifted on the air and, from far away, a train whistle echoed. Jason found himself in a small New England town which, to his delight, appeared quite modern; cars, dogs, kids, the usual small town fare. Everyone seemed to be having a good time but something strange hung over the air. It was like a photograph that was slightly out of focus.

Jason walked along the streets and by the park, watching groups of women sew, gossip, drink lemonade and sell wares from brightly decorated booths. Glances darted in his direction and small things started to bother him. It was the men. They looked nervous and furtive. There were no loud, raucous football games in progress or beer-chugging contests.

As the afternoon waned, more of the men kept close to homes and stores. Some shut doors and windows when he came near. As he wandered down one deserted street, a man reached out and pulled him inside a house.

"You shouldn't be outside for too much longer, son. It will be dark soon. You know the rules about Harvest Home."

"I'm new here. What's going on?"

The old man looked around and pulled Jason further into the house.

"If I were you, I would leave now. I don't know when it started, longer than I can remember. There is a tradition in town called Harvest Home. Once a year a corn maiden and corn king are chosen from the town. The man who is chosen lives like a king. He gets the best house to stay in, great food, nice car. Everything is free but then, something happens during Harvest Home. After the sun goes down, all the men have to stay inside. The women go to the corn fields and no one sees the corn king again. Some people say he leaves town, but I'm not so sure. Any man caught outside the house after sundown is punished, sometimes killed. I had a friend that snuck over to the cornfield. They caught him and cut out his tongue to keep him from talking. I guess he's lucky to be living."

"Where is this cornfield?"

"Look, don't go over there. Haven't you been listening to anything I've been saying?"

"I've been listening," Jason said, "But it's something I need to do." "Alright, but don't say I didn't warn you. Just go to the end of this street, turn left and head out of town. You'll find it if they don't find you first."

Night had fallen and Jason crouched among the stalks, watching as the women filed into the corn field. They were dressed in black and carried covered lanterns. The corn maiden was dressed in little more than sandals and a wreath of corn husks and flowers. The women started chanting and from the back of the line they pulled the young man that had been chosen as the corn king.

The corn maiden approached the young man and pulled him to her. She pulled him down into the corn while the chanting raised in volume and intensity. When she was done, she backed up and took something from one of the women behind her. Jason froze as the moonlight flashed on a sickle as it descended toward the prone man.

A voice cried out. They had seen him. He had to get away. He had seen something forbidden and they would kill him for it. He started to run, tripped and the darkness enveloped him.

Everything was cloaked in darkness. Jason felt small, suffocated, unable to move or breathe. Softly the beat of a drum throbbed within his head. He wondered if this was what death was like. Pain lanced through his protected world. Just when he thought there was nothing, there was light. It was sharp but fuzzy. Something scared him. He didn't like the light. It was harsh and blinding. Then he saw a faint blurry something, a smile, the outline of a face. It was his mother. He was a baby. He was being born.

Everything started turning in a sickening blur. Jason reeled from the sensations. Slowly things began to focus. He was back on the country road, surrounded by Hecate and her hungry-looking dogs. This had not been a dream.

"So, human, what have you learned?"

Jason thought about the different lessons he had learned. Trying to put them into words and fit the poem was going to be a stretch. He decided that he didn't have much choice but to give it a shot.

"There are many things that we do not understand. The darkness of our subconscious can hold secrets to our heritage. We can use conflict as a tool toward rebirth and understanding. In any given situation, there are ways to use conflict as a tool for growth. Even the darkest night has a daybreak. People need to understand that they are not very different from each other and that, from the seeds of our difference, can spring new offshoots of humanity. All cycles have a completion whether it's seeing the fruits of your labor through the sweat of your brow or realizing that even strong emotions are not as they appear. In the end, there is no death. Everything is a cycle. Things only die to be reborn and in that knowledge comes wisdom."

Hecate looked down at Jason and smiled slightly. "You have done well and your wager won. There is no black or white, only shades of grey." The hounds howled in unison and the party disappeared into the early morning air.

Jason turned back to the crossroads and started digging in the dirt. The wink of metal gave way to a knife blade. Jason pulled the athame out of the soil and held it in the new light. The sound of baying hounds echoed faintly in the air. On the blade

was etched a twisted circle, a mobius strip, with no end and no beginning. Slowly he walked back to the car.

*/ would like to acknowledge the following authors and the various stories which formed the foundation of my works of comparative fiction. For more information on these stories and legends, please check with me or your local library.*

Sam ha in      The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving

Yule              *Sir Gawaine & The Green Knight* an Arthurian legend

Candlemas      *The Little Match Girl* by Hans Christian Anderson

Eostara              *"The Resurrection of Jesus Christ"* The Bible - King James I version, the Gospels according to John, Mark, Luke & Peter

Beltaine              *Emerald Fire* a Sioux legend & Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte

Midsummer A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare in which parts are based on The Fairy Queen by Spenser & Metamorphosis by Ovid. The surreal parts of this story are based on the *Midsummer Night's Dream* #79 comic book "*The Sandman*"

Lughnasadh "*The Legend of John Barleycorn*" a British brewing legend  
"*John Barleycorn's A Hero Bold*" "*Travellers Air*" and "*To Be A Good Companion*"  
from English folksongs and other sources, music available.

Mabon              The Dark Secret of Harvest Home by Thomas Tynan

## A Personal Adventure in Learning The

### Wheel of the Year

by aslan

Candlem

as

What made me go to that field that snowy February morning? It was cold, yet the Sun was shining brightly and invitingly, i decided to take a walk to the field about a mile down the road. It has always been an interesting place for me. i am a gardener and have beds for vegetables, herbe beds, fruit trees, berry bushes and vines of many types. This open field, however has always attracted me for the way it shows the changing seasons so clearly. Driving by on the way to work each morning, i always can tell when the first frost has visited, when the spring flowers and trees are in blossom, when the dry heat of late Summer is setting in. This field is like a living calendar to me. It is fairly flat, one end sloping up with a large hawthorne tree, the other end giving into a nearby wooded area. Several large stones are in the field, which is probably why it is not farmed like the owner does his other fields. One stone, close to the center of the field is bigger than most of the others and has a flattened top. In the past few years, since i became aware of Mother Earth, the Goddess and the God, and the Spirits of everything that exists, i have grown to appreciate the way this field lives, grows, rests each year.

So, with my boots and heavy coat, scarf and gloves, i decided that morning to take a walk to visit the field, i needed to get out of the closeness of the house and get some fresh, clean air into my lungs ... and spirit. There were footprints in the snow at the center of the field already, i decided to go where no one had been



before, i stomped/crunched/trudged up the slope and looked across the field, standing beside the hawthorne. So peaceful, and the sun warming me. Looking at the tree, its bark was so beautiful, i wished that i could let it know how much i appreciated it as part of the complete living being of the field, i took off my glove and rested my hand against the rough bark ....

### **Candlemas - The Earth is Reborn**

M-m-m. That hand feels warm. OH! I'm sorry if I startled you. It's just that your touch was so gentle and loving... What's that? Yes, of course, I felt it. It was so different than the Sun's light, so much more intense that... What? Who am I? Well, you are the one that put a hand on my trunk. Can't you tell? Oh, now I understand. You have never had a tree communicate with you before. Well, maybe you just didn't pay close enough attention. Yes, we all communicate. We communicate to each other breeze to leaf, breeze to branch and spirit to spirit; that last is also how we communicate with the moving creatures.

I communicate with many small creatures that climb or fly or crawl on or in me, some wanting shelter, some wanting food, some just wanting a place to rest. Not many big creatures bother me because of my thorns. You are one of the few of your kind even to seem interested in me, even though I am the only big tree in this entire field. You may name me Hawthorne, since that is what others of your kind usually have named me. What do I name myself? That would be communicating much and taking much of time. Maybe that can be shared after we know each other in more detail.

Why am I communicating with you? Well, you put your hand on me, and I could sense that your spirit is one of the Old Spirits. How could I tell? That is a difficult knowing. I don't sense the "using" or "wanting" or "taking" in you that many of your kind have. You aren't thinking, "What could I get from this tree?" or "How could I use this tree or this field?" You are just like me, enjoying the Sun's light on this shining. Also, you seem happy in your spirit, enjoying those little purple and white and yellow crocuses and snowdrops. They are a treat, all right. They always seem so eager to greet the longer light-times. I have actually sensed them pushing right through a layer of frozen water-crystals.

You give me the same feeling as some others that were in this field a few darks ago. They have been visiting regularly several turnings now. What's a "turning"? That is when the lights grow longer, the plants grow greener, and then everything dies and the cold and the darkness return. Each time that happens, we name that a turning. I do not know why; it's just what all the trees have always named it.

Anyway, these others were here a few darks ago. They usually come to the field during a dark. They brought moving fire with them. Moving fire? Like one little flame on a stick. The sticks? Many different colors, not of wood, always at least one white and then other colors depending on the time of the turning. What are they named? Candles? Well, if you believe so.

For this visit, each one brought a "candle." Usually, only one or two bring the flames for all. They had a big movable hole to put water in... A "pot?" What a strange naming. After each of them put some water in the... pot, they also each put in a special crystal. I know that's the correct name, I heard them using their body to body communication.

They called upon Air, Fire, Water and Earth and the Lady and the Lord to be with them. Of COURSE, I know the Lady and the Lord. Am I a tree? Every existing thing knows the Lady and the Lord, although some of your type seem to believe they don't have to pay attention to Them and Their laws.

Next, the visitors played together; each one washed their face in the water in the... pot. Did I understand that correctly? Good. The leader communicated that this was to represent what happened to the Lady a long age ago; actually, She has to do Her special bathing each turning. Where? Oh, I could not share that with you, I am sure.

Why? Well, all I understand about it is that each turning about this time, my roots

and branches start to tingle more than they have been, and I can tell that I am ready to do more growing.

After the visitors did the washing, they sat around to communicate body-to-body. Some of them did some body-to-spirit and spirit-to-body communicating, but the one being sent to didn't always receive. Then, the Four Elements were thanked and sent away, the Lady and Lord were thanked and the visitors left.

What do you believe of all this? Really? I hope you will communicate it to me. Oh, it's their way of joining to honor Her. That would make sense. I certainly am pleased that you happened here during this light. Come back and see me later in the turning; I appear more healthy and pleasing when my branches have leaves and berries. Also, come back and communicate again; I am actually feeling a glow to understand one of your kind. You, also? Good.

I notice the Sun is leaving. You may want to go. I have sensed that your kind are not too tolerant of the cold during this part of the turning. You keep in touch; your touch feels good. I would enjoy finding out what is different about you. Farewell for now, new friend. Move in warmth.

#### Eostara

As the days were growing in length, i suddenly realized that the Vernal Equinox had passed. Yes, i had noticed some changes in the yard. In fact, i had already started taking off some of the mulch and preparing the beds for the new seeds. The bed for the snap peas was already planted and little sprouts were starting to appear. The grape vines were showing the brown-red swelling at each bud. The plum trees had already started to blossom; i was just hoping that the last frost was past.

i still remembered my "conversation" with the hawthorne in the field down the road. It had taken me several days to deal with this communication. Had i imagined it all? It had seemed so clear in my mind at the time. It explained the footprints in the snow, i just didn't know if my imagination, always fertile, had grown a new type of weed, i decided to visit the field again and see if anything happened, i was feeling much better, with the longer days and better weather to be outdoors, even if it is rainy a lot of the time in the Northwest. The coat i wore this time was not as heavy; i didn't need gloves or a scarf like in February, i still wore boots; one never knows where mud will be. i was careful as i walked up the slope at the end of the field; the grass was damp and slick. As i reached the hawthorne, i put out my hand to touch it, and

#### Eostara - The Sun's Puberty

Greetings, my friend. It is good to communicate with you again. Your lightness and enjoyment of existence make me feel like a sapling again. I hope you do not mind my greeting you as "friend." It just seems appropriate, since we have communicated so well.

How goes your existence? You, like I, seem more energetic than when we last touched. Yes, this sunshine does me very well. I have already, you may have noticed, started to put out a few leaves. And my roots, though you may not be able to tell, are sending more and more nutrients up. Yes, every once in a while it still gets nippy, but my life force is protected, deep in Mother Earth, in my roots and deep in my trunk.

I can tell it will be a good turning, already. How can I tell? I have seen many turnings in this existence. I communicate with many other beings of the Earth. All are filled with joy and light as I have not seen in many turnings. Friend Clover has already put out many leaves; that three-petaled leaf is one of the signs used for the Lord and the Lady. Most of my animal friends are astir, many with new young ones which they are already teaching. And, even without hatchlings, you cannot have

missed the cacophony of bird-song; they have been saving it all through the cold and Great Darkness. It is almost like a water-fall in the air, is it not?

By the way, do you recall my communicating about those others of your kind when last we met? They were back again, just a few darks ago. They brought some blossoms from my distant cousins, Tulip, Hyacinth and Daffodil. They also brought some fire sticks - oh yes, that's the word - candles. They had eggs, seeds and other young plants with them. They even had another tree with them. What kind? An oak, just a few turnings out of the acorn. I was glad to see it was alive and not just cut off as I have sensed happen to some.

They did their calling on the Four, and the Lady and the Lord. Then, they lit fire in a - you told me the name last time - ummm, a pot! That was it, a pot. They took the eggs, which, I could sense, had no creature within, and decorated them. They put them through the flame of the pot. I am not sure why they did this, but I could sense that the Lady and Lord were pleased by this. They sprinkled water on the eggs, the seeds and the young oak which they had brought. I could sense that the Lady and Lord like that, too. Afterward, they said good-bye to the Four, thanked the Lady and Lord, and left.

I am not sure about everything that happened, but I do know that, the next light, they were back with their little ones (Saplings doesn't seem correct. What? Children? Oh.) to play a game in the field. Some of the colored eggs from the previous Dark and many more were hidden all around the field, and the little ones seemed to take great pleasure in looking for and finding them. One egg had been hidden near me, right about where you are standing. That was enjoyable. They dug a few holes in the ground and buried a few of the eggs; that seemed to be important and very serious.

Later, I could sense that the oak had been planted in a special grove, not too far from here. It seems to be doing well. I haven't had a chance to send it proper greetings yet, but soon. Also, I felt the energy of some of the seeds which were already put to Earth. They are very excited.

That is about all of my communication for this time. It is enjoyable to have you here again. Be blessed in this time of balance in the turning; I can sense that you understand. Fare you well and the balance of the Lady and Lord be with you.

### Beltane

The yard has been blazing with bright colors. The tulips set fire to their beds. The hyacinths make a flag of their's with the pinks, blues and whites; their scent is so sweet and powerful. The yellows, reds, oranges, purples, pinks of the various azaleas are like holiday decorations. And the sight and sound of the birds has been outrageous.

i had used some of my flowers to make May baskets to take to work. Not many people do that stuff anymore, which i think is too bad. The flowers like to be appreciated.

On the drive home from work Friday, i passed by that field where i had "met" the hawthorne spirit, i noticed that the branches of the Hawthorne were covered with their own particular brand of Spring "snow." i decided it was time to pay my new friend a visit. A comfortable wind-breaker, a pair of outdoor shoes, some gardening jeans and i was ready to go. The insects were having their own version of a Maypole dance around the blossoming tree as i approached....

### Beltane - The Earth Flowers

Greetings, Friend. For once, I am awake as you approach. Who would not be widely awake and alert with all of the energy in the Air and in the Earth, with the Sun's light pouring down even through clouds and rainy days? The rain of the past few lights has done some marvelous work. Take a look where you are standing. Do you notice? Yes, those are my seedlings. So many, I agree. But I do that for two reasons: One, while still berries on my branches, the birds do love to come and eat,

and I could not refuse them. Two, once sprouted, the little creatures of the Earth enjoy tasting them, too. So far, I have not had any of them last more than a turning or two. Maybe, eventually...

Oh, no. I am not feeling sadness about it. I know that I am lucky to be where and what I am, a part of the Lady and Lord's marvelous plan. And, thinking of Them ...

Yes, yes, those others were back. Quite recently, too, I think. Just a few darks ago. So full of life and energy and joy they were. Before they did their calling, believe it or not, they came to visit with me. They invited me to help them in their honoring of the Lady and Lord. Well, how could I refuse? They then, when they felt I understood and they were aware of my consent, carefully, gently took some of the flowering branches from me. It really was not painful as they did it with patience and, obviously, did not take very much. In truth, I would believe that you, my Friend, could not even tell where they cut. No? I was correct. This is the only time during a turning that they even think about cutting any of me.

After they had finished cutting, they took the flowers back to use on their meeting stone. I was happy to be able to participate. They had other flowers which were being worn in their hair and carried in small pots tied with ribbon.

And, thinking of ribbon, they had a very tall tree-trunk with no bark or branches; this they planted in the Earth. I almost laughed, even without wind; I thought they might expect this trunk to grow. However, I noticed that there were ribbons attached to the top of the trunk. I will communicate what they did with the ribbons soon.

First, they called on the Four, and the Lady and Lord; then, they lit a large fire in a pot. (I recalled this time, did I not? You see, I am learning from you.) Each of them ran and jumped over the fire in the pot; it did not seem to frighten them. Indeed, they were making sounds of enjoyment and I could sense their pleasure. After the jumping, they moved to the pole and, each taking a ribbon, danced around it in such a way that the ribbons were woven tightly to the trunk.

When they finished, there was frolicking and game playing, much like what the birds and rabbits have been doing. I even noticed some going away from the light. When these returned, I could sense the release of great amounts of sacred energy. As all were back together, they bid farewell and thanks to the Four and the Lady and Lord. They took up the ribbon-covered trunk and left for their rest.

At the beginning of the next light, many of them were back. They had their feet uncovered and seemed to enjoy putting their hands into the grass and then rubbing their faces with the dew. They did this several times as the Sun was returning to the sky. Then, one of them put a small pot of flowers tied with ribbons at my side. Later that light, another I had never sensed before came by, noticed the pot and took it away with happiness in its heart. I could sense that one's pleasure.

It is a good time of the turning. Lately, I have sensed so many Devas coming back to enjoy the light growing. Some are garden-friends like the Carrot and Lettuce Devas: others, like the vine Devas of Berry and Grape have simply reawakened from their Great Dark sleep. So much life as the light becomes stronger. The little ones, the ones that drink of my blossoms and the blossoms of other plants, have a hard time keeping up with It all, choosing which blossom to enjoy. Well, I sense I have held your attention long enough. You go enjoy the light, too. I enjoy your coming to visit and communicate. Be well and strong, and grow with the Earth.

## Midsummer

Now, all of the vegetables are up. In fact, some of the snap peas are about through with their first crop, i must keep the water on them as well as on the other plants, flower, herbe and vegetable. The little green apples have set on the trees and it looks to be a good crop, i have finished with the first raspberry harvest and, next week, about the third or fourth of July, the gooseberries should be ready, i certainly enjoy the longer days and warmer weather, when i am able to get into my yard, feel the soil, enjoy the energy of the Earth.

Last week was the Solstice. Although i do enjoy it, it always is tinged with sadness because it means the days will start getting shorter again as the year heads into Autumn. Getting back to Solstice, i decided that this last weekend would be a good time to revisit my friend, Hawthorne, in the field down the road. Yes, now i am capitalizing its name because it seems so truly personal and alive, i slipped into some shorts, a pair of sandals and a t-shirt and started down the road toward the field. A lot of distractions slowed me down, all of the wild flowers and

herbs along the road; some people would call them weeds, but they really are pretty and some could even be used for medicinal or ritual purposes. There i go again, getting distracted, i finally got to the field and decided to walk around a while before going up to Hawthorne, i should have known that my enjoyment would get to Hawthorne before i actually did .....

### Midsummer - The Sun's Maturity

My Friend, welcome again. I noticed your spirit approaching some time ago. You, like I, must be enjoying the sunlight and communicating with all of the creatures around. Have you visited with one of my brothers or sisters, the Apple or Rose? Both of them are growing by leaf, blossom and fruit right now. And so have I! Even though they dont look much like what I sense you consider to be fruit, if you look closely at my branches, you'll notice that I am fairly covered with berries. They are still green right now, not like cousins Strawberry or Raspberry, already ripe and some taken for food by many creatures. But, mine will ripen later like cousins Blackberry and Gooseberry. (I feel fairly close to Blacky and Goosey, since we all have barbs on our branches.)

Did you enjoy it? The longest light was just a short time ago. So much activity going on. All of the Devas were so excited, and the animals and earth are all still pulsing with energy. There have been many folk in the field here in the past few lights and darks: faeries, elves, a pixie or two, even a Unicorn! The glowing insects have been making their lights flicker each evening. So much life.

What others? Oh, the others of your kind. Certainly they were here. That was the dark just before the longest light. They brought some of sister Rose's blossoms, a ring of Oak leaves and a ring of Holly leaves. No, I haven't heard any of the trees complaining, so they must have been very polite when gathering the branches, as they were with me back at the time of blossoming in the turning.

I could barely believe that they would or could do it, but they stayed here through the entire dark. Of course, it is the shortest dark of the turning, but they really acted as if it were still light. Yes, all right, I will start at the beginning.

As usual, they called upon the Four and the Lady and Lord. They had their candles, many of different shadings of green; that was probably in honor of the growing that has been going on. After all of the light was faded from the sky, except for star-shine and a glimmer from the Moon-Lady, two of them were chosen by the leader to put on a play. And what an impressive play it was. One acted as the Oak King and wore the circle of Oak leaves upon its brow, the other was the Holly King and wore those leaves. Did you just communicate something? I sensed that you are becoming more aware. Do you know the special meanings of these actions?

Ah-h-h. You are wise. Yes, the Oak King represents the light as it has grown stronger and the Holly King represents the dark. All of the plants and animals know that at this time, the Lady has decreed that the Holly King must slay the Oak King, though they be brothers, and though it means that She too will need to go to rest. Quite a serious time of year; a time of great change and movement.

However, the play which was presented was so much fun; the two actors used false weapons, like axes but with much shorter handles and much longer blades. "Swords?" I suppose that could be what you name them. No matter, the Holly King chased the Oak around the field, including up here around me a few times, until Oak became tired and knelt, at which point Holly knocked the Oak leaves from its head and Oak King "died" or at least seemed to. In truth, I later noticed that the one playing the part of Oak was up enjoying the rest of the fun. Of course, the play represented the truth that the dark will now begin to grow and the light will be waning. A sad thing for plants and animals eventually, but, for now, not too much changes.

After the play, there was food and drink, and splashing in some special water that had been brought. (I've noticed that every time they come here and bring special water, the grasses and plants where it spills seem extra perky afterward, even though they have also been trod upon. Curious.) Then, singing and dancing

through the rest of the dark until just before light, when they sat down to make gentle music and welcome Father-Sun.

I'm pleased to sense that you understand all of this; that helps me to understand some of it better, also. It is great pleasure to share and to be learning your communications. Feel free to visit whenever you wish. I can offer you shade and calm thoughts through this warming time. May cool breezes be with you until we meet again.

## Lammas

Thank goodness for air-conditioning, even in the "rainy" Northwest. This is the time when my grass turns brown, not from neglect but because of water rationing. Yes, it really does dry out up here. In the vegetable garden, the lettuce has gone to seed, as has the chard. The onions just got their tops bent over so they will form large bulbs, i keep pinching on the herbs to keep them from blossoming, but i think i am going to let them go from now on and blossom and go to seed. It's too warm to do much cooking, so, many days, a salad is the most interesting thing to eat with a little cold juice. A sandwich isn't too bad either.

Enough about my diet, i can tell that the days are getting shorter, even if they are warmer and drier, i happened to hear someone mention that this was a day when people used to celebrate some special festival or other having to do with the beginning of the harvest, i know that my apples (well, they arent really my apples, they are the tree's apples) have started to ripen. Also, i have seen some fields with hay bales, and i have been reading about the grain harvests on the Eastern side of the mountains. After hearing this tidbit of conversation about harvest (i can't remember now who was talking), i decided i needed to pay a visit to me friend Hawthorne, to see if it could give me some information. If it can see me, it must be amused at the way i keep changing my covering, while it keeps wearing the same bark. This time, with the warm temperatures, i was wearing a tank top, shorts and thongs. Grasshoppers jumped out of the way, and an occasional butterfly flew past. Other than that, everyone and everything seemed to be taking a siesta, i was pretty warm by the time i got to the field and climbed up next to my friend....

## Lammas - The Earth's Fruition

Welcome back, my Friend. Have a seat here beside me and rest. That's right, just put your back against me. I can sense that you will enjoy my shade and I will enjoy your communication. I am sorry that I cannot offer more shade, but already some of my leaves are dropping off. The increase in heat and decrease of water has forced me to do some choosing. Right now, my berries are more important to me than leaves. See how some of them are ripening already?

I can sense why you have returned. Your interest in this field has increased since we first communicated. You feel pleasure when you hear what is happening in this field each part of the turning. This which I am about to communicate to you will not be disappointing. I was quite surprised and impressed myself.

This concerns those others of your kind that have been visiting the field. Instead of coming to the field all together, I sensed the gathering of the others at the side of the field: their spirit communications with each other are getting quite strong, so strong that I can almost sense all of them. They were very joyful in a serious way. As they had gathered, they moved themselves into an ordered line, as the birds move in the sky, and moved in a calm stately fashion to their meeting area around the great stone in the center of the field. A few had come in the brighter light and set up some of their things: candles of red and amber, apples, grain sheaves. Those then left the field to wait for the others, and joined them in their moving lines. As they approached the waiting items in the field, I was surprised to sense them bringing even more candles and grain. They were also carrying some bread and many pots of water. I was pleased with that, for the ground has become quite dry and they will usually pour some of their water upon the ground, as I communicated when you were here another time.

As usual, the Four, the Lady and the Lord were invoked. It was with some interest that I sensed several birds, a few squirrels and other creatures drawing near - cautiously, but close. The grains were blessed; then there was a play about harvesting the grain and making it into flour to make bread.

I was quite amazed when they suddenly started their procession again. This time they moved in a large Sun-ward spiral around the field; they actually spiralled large enough to encompass me. What surprised me were the strong feelings and touches they were giving to bless and thank each plant and animal they encountered. They were carrying their bread, water, grains, candles and other objects with them as they moved. I noticed one bread shaped like one of them, one like a sheaf of grain and another like a golden crown.

Well, after they had spiralled out past me, they spiralled back to their center, ate some of the bread and had some drink of some type. What happened next was very exciting and a little frightening. They poured several of their pots of water on the grass. (I could sense the grass was pleased with that pan.) Then they placed several dry branches in the wet area and set them to flame. It really was good that the grass was wet first or this whole field, myself included, would have become intimately acquainted with fire. As it was, they used a few of the pots of water to quench flames started by sparks that flew skyward and landed in dry places. None came close to me, thank the Lady.

Finally, when flame had given way to coals, they used the last pots of water to cool the coals and subdue them. I have never experienced anything like that fear mixed with excitement, as the fire burned and they danced around it, singing. No, they were not afraid, the rest of us were. But when we sensed their control and joy, it helped all creatures and plants to enjoy their dancing around their little "Sun."

After they had gone that dark, many creatures visited the field, for the others were generous and left whatever bread they had not eaten as a peace token to us all. Very gracious!

Yes, Friend, I did feel the Presence of She who dances to His Pipes; They both were at this place. I can still feel Them. In fact, I sense Them in you! You certainly are an unusual creature. Come later, when my berries are ripe. The birds sing to me that they are very tasty and I would be glad to share with you. Come again, Special Friend, and, for now, know that you are a welcome addition to my senses. Blessings and Beauty of the Earth be with you.

## Autumn

The weather is getting cooler. In fact, a few nights ago, we had our first frost. The wind has blown for several days, we have rain off and on again. Definitely the season of the colored leaves. They are so beautiful. There is one tree called the sweet-gum, i think. Its leaves turn several colors, including purple, red, orange, yellow and brown - on the same tree at the same time! The branches are starting to get bare, the grapes and apples have ripened. In the stores, it is difficult to find some of the beautiful vegetables of the summer now. Luckily, i knew to replant some of my veggies in late August, i should be able to get some more fresh lettuce, carrots, even snap peas before to heavy frosts set in.

The weather is so on-and-off, warm-and-cool. The other night, i went out to look at the stars in the clear sky. They were so beautiful. Everything seemed to be bright in the starlight, i remembered that this was the time of the Autumnal Equinox, balance between day and night, i wondered if my friend Hawthorne was thinking about that, i almost went to visit it that night, but decided that i would wait for the next day. In a way, i missed something important. When i dressed and got to the field the next day, Hawthorne was waiting to tell me.....

## Autumn - The Sun Reaches Old Age

My Good Friend, well met again! I sense that, even in this time of light fading and dark growing, of wind and cloud and rain, of the balance and weighing of options as plants decide to rest or continue through the Great Darkness of the turning, you have much energy within you. Indeed, you seem to be enjoying the time

of leaves changing color and dropping from the branches. You are enjoying the air moving around you. Truly, your feelings are quite tree-like; that is commendable.

My memory of the last few darknesses? I wondered if that would be a seeking from you. Yes, the others of your kind came back and, yes, they were here for a reason which I could sense. In truth, they had the same joy and energy that you have. They brought apples from a brother of mine, clusters of grapes from a cousin and berries from my friend of the field, Blackberry. They were also bringing other types of tokens which I could sense they had made for this time, some forms of communicating on tree fibers, some decorations for their limbs, things of that type. The field was fairly clean of leaves, the wind having picked much up and moved it away before they came. They were covered above with some pretty colored leaves, a fitting and festive adornment.

After calling upon the Four, the Lady and the Lord, they put their tokens on a flat, shiny piece of metal - (Of course, I know metals. They communicate with me. Why should they not? They are of Earth!) As I was communicating before, on a piece of metal which had magickal markings upon its surface. How could I tell? All plants are familiar with much magick, more than your type usually is aware of existing. After all of the tokens were reverently placed upon the metal, they began to move in a line, joined together by their hands, sunward around and around their tokens, faster and faster, much like when the wind picks up leaves and whirls them around. The energy of their spirits moving combined with that of the field, the wind, their water pots, and their candles. I could sense a huge shape of power being formed. And the Lady and Lord added some energy also. In truth, They added quite a bit!

When the others stopped moving, everything was very still. The Energy was almost shining. I could sense the directing of the Energy gently into the tokens they had brought. When the Energy had been either absorbed or released, the tokens were gratefully yet reverently reclaimed. The Lady was looking on in happiness as was the Lad, while some of the tokens as well as some of the fruit of the harvest were placed on the special stone with new candles set to flame.

Then happened the usual food and frolic. They do enjoy dancing and singing; He was quite amused. The candles, pots and other non-food tools and tokens were taken when they left the field. They did leave the food on the stone, and many creatures were very pleased to have it. As you may notice, there are only stems and seeds left now on the stone.

Oh, I just recalled. If you are interested, I would be quite willing to allow you to take some of my berries. Do not hesitate. They could make excellent beverage for the Great Darkness ahead, and they are quite all right. The birds and squirrels enjoy them. Since we have experienced one of Her silvered nights, I can tell a change in them. Also, they will soon want to drop to Earth and rest. Oh, yes. they do have their own thoughts now. They are seeds, my off-spring. They are very independent.

Come back soon if you desire to have them. You are welcome to communicate anytime. I still find it unusual to have your hand touch me and communicate so much. Be well and blessed in Her love and His joy, cleansed and refreshed by the winds of balance.

## Hallows

The other night was Hallowe'en, i have always enjoyed the children dressing in their costumes and trick-or-treating. i always enjoy the clean fresh air of the nights, i have enjoyed decorating, going to parties, having left-over candy. HA! Somehow, though, i have never really believed in the witches-on-broomsticks idea, nor have i believed that evil ghosts and other bad things are about, i dont know why. It has just always seemed so festive.

This year i did something different. Since parties were on the weekend before, and this was a school night, so the trick-or-treaters were finished by early evening (Of course, the earlier sunset helped with that, too.), i decided to take a walk, i really didn't have a conscious goal in mind; somehow, though, something



must have been moving my feet subconsciously, i ended up walking to my favorite field where i have become acquainted with Hawthorne. When i arrived at the edge of the field, i could see a bonfire and other people already there, so i decided to come back on the weekend and ask Hawthorne about what had happened. So, on Saturday, i headed back, and, just as i expected, Hawthorne had plenty to tell....

### Hallows - The Earth Dies

My Friend, I am glad you have returned. It is interesting to me that I am becoming used to your visits. You are giving me sensations of feeling the cold air, which I am already living with, so perhaps I won't be sensing you for a while. I will not be very awake as I move through the Great Darkness; I will, however, try to sense your presence if you choose to return. I am aware that I do not appear as welcoming right now as at other times, with so many of my leaves gone. It is good that some of these berries are still here to adorn me and make me appear less hostile and dead.

How have I been dealing with the wind and cloud-water and growing dark? I have been sensing myself alone. So many of my friends and relatives from the light part of the turning - the flower faeries and devas, the garden vegetable devas - they have either gone to sleep for the length of the darkening or been sent away as the harvest was gathered. Even the tree and vine spirits are quite tired and sleepy. Apple has just about yielded all of his fruit, Grape has given the fruit of this turning, Blackberry is very tired. Most friends have dropped their leaves to keep their feet warm during the coming cold time.

What I remember as a younger sapling is that I feared that I was one of the plants that would last only a single turning. It took me a few turnings to learn that the sleep is not the death, but rest instead. And next turning, when new leaves appear, I will be larger than last turning because each turning I am growing.

Something that has caught my attention the past few turnings is that the group of others like you, that visits this field so often, comes out also in the cold of one of these darknesses and moves together. They bring some of the fruit of cousin Pumpkin (although I could barely recognize him when they brought him the first time, having a face carved on him, his innards replaced by a candle, looking very unnatural), candles (thank you for teaching me that name), a big pot and their other objects. They tie ribbons of bright color on my branches, being so gentle and never breaking even a twig. They have gathered stalks of corn, twigs that have been blown off by the wind, and larger branches from other places fallen from the storms, and make a large fire. They call on the Four, the Lady and the Lord, as usual.

But, they do something different at this time of the turning. They get very still and quiet, so quiet I can even hear the wind's thoughts. They gather around the big pot and set flame within it. They put some of their food into it, too. It seems not normal to do, but I know something happens. The past few turnings, I noticed that I could feel some other trees very near me during this quiet time, even though I am obviously the only tree in this field. It is as if trees that once lived here, many turnings before my current existence, are returned to visit. Some appear much taller than I, others as mere bushes, many of types I have not sensed in this existence. Interesting? When it occurred the first time, I nearly dropped all of the berries I still had hanging, I was so surprised. Now, I look forward to it. It makes this time of the turning less alone.

One other thing I've noticed is that during that darkness, after those others have been here and gone away, I seem to sense a black horse-shape tromping through the gardens and fields. And I've noticed that, even if it hasn't been one of Mother's silver darknesses, the others of your type do not take any more leaves or fruit or garden-stuff after this particular darkness. Maybe they're just tired like (YAWN!) I am.

Rest well and be blessed with peace in the growing dark. Come back again and visit with me, if it is not too cold for your type. By the Lord and Lady, you make me feel important with all of your askings. Go in warmth.

### Yule

Holiday season. Sometimes i wish i could pull the covers over my head and hide from the end of October until the start of February. Yes, i enjoy the social parts, and the decorations are pretty. Sometimes, however, i would like to throw the radio and TV away; i get so tired of the commercials and 'cutesy' gimmicks to try and get people to go shopping. The weather tends to keep me inside, being windy, rainy, cold, altogether unfit for normal human habitation, i often wonder if this part of the year isn't what inspired people to start building houses!

The trees are bare and resting. The garden is covered with shredded newsprint; no, not newspaper because the inks could cause damage to the soil. Some of the herbes have been brought in to sit on the window sills in South-facing windows, so they can see what they are missing. The days are so short It seems like i get up in the dark, go to work in the dark, come home in the dark. This could be pretty depressing, except for one thing, i know that we are at the shortest point in the year and the days will (!!!) get longer. In fact, the Winter Solstice being just past, i wanted to see what Hawthorne, my tree-friend in the field down the road, was doing during this season. Probably not much, but my curiosity was getting the better of me. Putting on some over-shoes and a warm coat, i walked down the road, into the field and up the slope. This time, i received no greeting from a distance, so i gently touched the bark.....

### Yule - The Sun Dies and is Reborn

(Yawn!) What's happening? Oh, it is you. My, my. It certainly is cold for you to be here standing next to me communicating. What was that? Well, of course, I am still a little sleepy. I dont think I remember any creature actually coming to communicate with me during this time of cold and the Great Darkness. I have been having a very restful time, storing my energy and getting ready for the next turning. There is so little light time and much of it is sky-watered. But, I am aware that a change has taken place.

How do I sense it? Well, a few darks ago, those others about whom I have communicated to you were back. Yes, even in the snow they came together with candles of green, white and red. Also, they brought some logs of oak (yes, I could recognize it and sense it from here), some holly branches woven together, some mistletoe, some sparkling pieces of metal and glass, and some colored ribbons, as well as the usual pots and other items they carry.

After their usual gathering around that large stone (notice how snow-covered it is), they called the Four and the Lady and Lord. They then played out the story taught to all seedlings and ingrained in plant memory. They chose one to play the Oak King and another to play the Holly King. On that night, the Oak King was to begin His rulership again, and so he had to slay His brother, the Holly King. As soon as they finished the play in which they did not really injure each other, all of the holly decorations were set to the fire as fuel to start the oak logs. Then, they came up this hill to be with me here where we are right now (Can you still notice all the footprints in the snow?), and they attached their ribbons and metal-glass pieces to my branches.

Somehow, they were able to sustain the flame burning all through the dark, feasting and dancing, giving to each other. As the light grew when the Sun was to come up, the light was reflected from all of the Metal and glass they had attached to me. I almost felt as if I were ablaze with Sun-light. Finally, they came and unfastened most of the metal-glass pieces they had attached to me; a few were left, as well as the colored ribbons. I hope the color stays for a few lights. They put out the fire and left the field. They also took the ashes from the fire.

Now, the strangest part. Even though the light times are still short, I can already feel a change down deep in the Earth, a tingle of feeling like my roots trying to wake up and spread out. Of course, they are not growing yet; it is far too cold to do that safely. Still, I am amazed at the energy I am feeling. I am confident next turning will be a good one. I'm even awake enough to communicate with you, am I not? Well, you come back another light and we'll communicate more. Maybe when my energy (yawn) is even better stirred. For now, I will just (hum -horn) go back to my Great Darkness nap. Be well, blessed and warm, Friend.

### Epilogue

i've learned a lot from Hawthorne during this year, or "turning" as it would say. i did get some berries from Hawthorne; most i used to make a beverage, but i did save a few to plant and maybe grow one of Hawthorne's offspring, i also want, during the next year, to try contacting the group of people who are meeting in the field, i think i am now ready to join with others who respect and worship the beauty of nature and the Earth, i will have to watch the calendar carefully and see when they might be there again. It seems to me that they should be there near the beginning of February. If i am able to join them, i think that will satisfy this deep longing to understand even more of the "whys" of the year, i shall make an attempt.

And, even if that doesn't work out, i will definitely continue to be in contact with Hawthorne. What a great, gentle creature it is. So patient, i will learn much more from it, i am sure.

