



The journal of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids
November 2022

Issue 303



She Rises by Maryanne Mattson

CONTEMPLATION 1

In my silence
I would reach beyond
the ticking of my little heart
to hear the pulse of distant galaxies.
I would be porous
as a leaf to sunlight.
I would meet my maker
sweet Earth
skin to skin.
In my silence
there would be nothing
which is everything.
I would dissolve my unique essence
In the ocean of equilibrium.

Linda Davis

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Greetings again as we pass the liminal time of Samhain; crisp leaves crackle as we scurry to the comfort of home and a new Touchstone to feed our senses... bon appetit!

We have praise for local trees, p4, a year-long project centred in a cemetery, p5 and, to aid our understanding, *an AsperDruid's world*, p7. Please link to a clip which explains the realities of this condition better than thousands of words. Then 'Roundhouse', p10, an idiosyncratic guide to building one! And here's a **possible T'stone quiz**: go to the roundhouse virtual tour on Simon's website & identify every decoration that you can. I won't tell you how many I got until I get a few answers in... And if you are 'bone weary' and stressed, make the appointment with wonder: allow time for 'autumn's honey-yellow warmth to wrap around you', p13. As our AsperDruid says, 'I have never been overloaded in nature'. It's the green therapy that feeds the Druid's soul.

This autumn has inspired our bards, so apologies if your poem isn't within; all are valued and held safely. Learn a brilliant mytho/historic fact about the pomegranate on p15 and lastly, our cover image "was created to honor my dear friend Michele as her beautiful spirit rose to the heavens." A Druidic blessing to all who lost loved ones, and to all who have made that last mysterious journey this year,

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CERIDWEN BEFORE TALIESIN

Here is a lake:
A home-thing for her,
Open-mouthed and deep-bellied.
What she must do
Can best be done at home –
That is the nature of the magic.

She searches into its darkness –
The deeply dark –
Which cannot be a home for lighter folk,
And in aeons of that darkness
She finds the needful light.

She cannot sit, though, by the lake
And find the work all done.
She wanders now with her feet bared –
Moon-white –
The land around her home lake's rim.

Under those feet are grass, and softer moss,
Flowers, leaves, sharp twigs, and bones,
And damp, dense soil miles deep.

According to the stars they are gathered,
According to the stars they take their place,
And in their ferment build the boy
Who is already born.

Jeff Daum

THE SONG OF THE JUNIPER TREE

I took the juniper branches
And burned them in the fire
The berries, they were cleansing
The bark, a funeral pyre

I cast away my worries
My anger and my fear
The Cailleach, she was kind to
me
And whispered in my ear:



I thanked the Cailleach graciously
And offered her some tea
We sat and sipped and laughed and sang
The song of the juniper tree.

Karin Fendl

PAMBER FOREST IN EARLY OCTOBER

The bracken is an orange ocean
Underneath the cosy embrace of the trees
Standing tall in the forest.
Their boughs stretch over head
As shelter, as cover, as friends.
Acorns roll playfully underfoot,
While blackberries join in the fun
With their thorns that pluck and snag.
Birch bark bursts
Like an overstuffed duvet;
It longs for sleep.
Rowan berries are bright and bold on their
branches,
And chestnuts lounge in their spiky jackets
Wherever they please.
Mud squelches.
The grey-mirrored surface of a pond
Protects its treasures, safe in the world below.
It is peaceful and still.
Yet silence is interrupted by song,
As birds of fine voice celebrate the season.
Beetles scurry across the paths
Their iridescent backs sparkling.
Autumn is settling,
Leaves flash yellow and orange as proof.
The sky shining white with cloud
And the faint smell of decay is on the air.
The forest is getting ready for bed.

Suzie Johnston



I find my inspiration in the whole of nature, and the wisdom of others, passed on by word of mouth, or through the creative arts in whatever form their talent takes.

After reading the first chapters of a beautifully presented, magical book called *Nine Ways to Charm a Dryad* by Druid author Penny Billington, I closed my eyes and entered spontaneous contemplation, that turned out to be anything but silent. Either an apple tree dryad had entered my inner world, or it had been rooted in my Soul's landscape, for quite some time, just waiting for the right moment to grab my attention. Now here it was, right in my face, swaying branches laden with rosy fruit, demanding attention.



Throughout my life, I had eaten a daily apple with my lunch at work, but when I retired this ritual had fallen by the wayside with the change of routine. Apple is a mystical tree of regeneration embodying health, vitality, and wholeness connecting us to stories of the otherworldly Avalon, or the golden apples of the sun in Celtic mythology, sweet magical fruit of well-being and longevity. Since I am now sure that the apple tree helps to nourish and heal the Soul, I have decided to re-instate regular apples into my diet as a direct result of this magical experience sparked by reading a very creative book.

Later that day on a local walk, I meandered down narrow lanes hidden between two wide roads in Penarth, discovering apple branches in secret gardens, either pushing

Dryad dreaming IONA JENKINS



towards the cloudless blue sky, or hanging, laden with fruit over stone walls and fences. My inner world was vividly reflected in the outer world of form, with an abundant harvest this year.

In a local park, I opened my eyes to a group of birches I had passed on many occasions with scarcely a glance, but

now, my awakened senses picked up a presence, inviting me into a birch grove. The trees numbered nine. Nine tall slender maidens dressed in robes as silver as moonlight, evoking images of the nine Priestesses said to inhabit the Isle of Avalon or Isle of Apples, where King Arthur was taken to heal his wounds. The association moved on to tales of Merlin's last resting place on Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli in Welsh), off the north-west coast of Wales, where he is said to lie sleeping in a tower or castle of glass, attended by nine Bards. The birches and the apples were connecting through their Celtic roots to fire my imagination.

A breeze flowed through the silver birches in my Penarth park, cascading Awen through leaf, branch, trunk, and root into earth, where I in my stillness had become an integral part of this rich green seasonal magic, a note in its Song, and the wholeness of its life.



It doesn't seem like seven years ago, but that's when I met William and started visiting him weekly and writing down what he taught me.

Cemetery GLENN REDUS

I should point out here that William and I were never formally introduced, and that he'd been dead for 24 years before I was born! How then could I "meet" him and how could a dead man have lessons to teach? Those are very sensible questions, but the answers are wrapped up in a writing project dealing heavily with death and grief, but also with birth, life, and the circular nature of time. It's called "*A Year in the Death of One Man*," and I'm belatedly making it available to members of OBOD.

While communing with the spirit world might be the province of the Ovates; writing/photography are considered bardic; and using the project as a teaching tool might be something druids would do, I initially intended my work for a more general audience. In fact, I went to great pains to avoid language that would mark it as overtly pagan.

Consider what I wrote around this time in 2014, when I used the word "Halloween" instead of "Samhain," not wanting to freak out any of my less pagan-leaning friends and relatives: "*I want to say this straight out: There's nothing creepy or scary about visiting a cemetery on Halloween. In fact, it's so trite that I almost didn't do it. I don't like to be pigeonholed, but I also like to satisfy those readers who have a certain expectation. So, I rationalized. I'd visit William today, but only to draw attention to the fact that today is just one day, not vastly different from the one before it.*



"Or is it?

"I think we're conditioned to think in absolutes: Yes, or no?

Black, or white? Right, or

wrong? Trick, or treat? We're always seeking some border, some line of demarcation, and Halloween — Samhain to some — has become just that.

"I used to think there was something magical about the day itself, but now, not so much. I now see Samhain and the 'thinning of the veil' within a larger scope. One thing about visiting William every week, I've seen with my own eyes that this 'veil' has been growing gradually thinner day by day. There was nothing sudden, nothing that might be indicative of a special, magical day. The circle of time itself is what is magical, not the starting and ending places we assign, which may only allow us to better comprehend its endless nature."

When I first started visiting William, I had no notion that many of the essays would end up being so "spiritual," but my hope now is that if a Bard, Ovate or Druid were to examine my work, they might recognize it – at the very least - as coming from an OBOD member and kindred spirit:

"Now is a time of transition, though you might be hard-pressed to detect it here in William's abode. The grass and the trees are still vibrantly green, but if you're attuned to such things, you know that change is in the wind. Hot becomes cool, young becomes old, light becomes dark, and it's all happening right in front of us,

though it doesn't happen overnight. Already I've seen leaves that are turning, and I'm not just talking about the obvious ones, like the early-turning sumacs, but also some of the oaks and maples that have a slightly altered shade of green. Most of us never look, not really. We

have computers, cell phones, and even low-tech paper calendars that tell us what time of year it is, and what we should be doing. William, however, is forced by his condition to observe changes the old-fashioned way."

I attempt to teach the need to slow down and view life with eyes that are rooted to one spot, in this case, a tombstone. Such a restriction is all but impossible for the living. It's challenging work detecting weekly differences in a tableau of sameness, but when the living train their eyes to look closer to heart, interesting things might appear:

"What is different here?" It's been a week, something must be different, but with the eyes of a living man, I don't detect small changes. After kneeling, my jeans are wet from the soaking grass. My knees, which anchored me for all of 45 seconds to William's eternal resting place, feel chilled as the gentle breeze — moving like spirit through the tombstones — reaches out and touches them. I bend to brush away wet grass, and then I see it, right about where William's chest should be. I'd mistaken it for a leaf, but now see that it's a curling strip of thin bark, a gift from a pair of evergreens just a few feet away. I didn't see it here last time. It's not much, but maybe it's enough. The bark is beautifully fragile, and I think to take it with me as a souvenir, but quickly realize that the trees left it here for someone else, someone unburdened by time, and who has become as one with this landscape."

And what of life? It might seem counterintuitive to seek life in a cemetery, but not when you learn to think of death as just one part of the process:

"I visited William today and found the same wintry scene that has been prevalent for many weeks. But now the birds are singing, and spring is on the wind. In fact, I can see the tip of William's headstone just peeking out of the snow,

and against my better judgment, I leave the safety of the road and walk out to it. It's hard going. The misty rain of the past two days has formed a crust on top of the snow. I struggle onward — crunch, sink, crunch, sink, crunch, sink, fall — through the knee-deep drifts. After a second fall, I sit there gasping, a lone living fool with a cut hand, surrounded by dead people. Turn back to the car or go on? I'm just over halfway, no sense in quitting now. I struggle to my feet and keep going."

"Finally, I arrive and look down on William's headstone. I see more closely how the stone's black surface apparently reflects a tiny bit more heat, causing the snow to actually pull away. It's just a lifeless stone, but it still reminds me of a green shoot pushing through the dirt, struggling to be born. Ice and snow give way, becoming the waters of rebirth. It sounds so easy, even poetic, but any mother could tell you there's nothing easy about it, like my staggering, slipping, sliding, falling, bleeding walk to William's side."

"Here in the cemetery, it's the contrast that gets me. Cold and warm. Death and life. And somewhere at the bottom of one thrashing hole, a tiny drop of blood upon the snow."

Dealing with sadness and grief at this time of year can be a struggle but keep looking forward. Through this project, I extend to you my hand so that we might travel a shadowy path together. There's so much more to read, and my hope is that you will find something that helps on your own path.

Blessed Samhain! Our ancestors are waiting:



<https://ayearinthedeath.wordpress.com>

With high interest I read 'Can Autistics be Druids?' by Samantha Bodwell (June 2022 edition).

An AsperDruid's World **JENNIFER FRIEDMANN**

Over time I learned that if you know an autistic person, then you don't know autistic persons in general, but only one person with Autism, because Autism is so diverse that it can turn out in every person differently. Maybe that's why I don't feel comfortable with the term, 'we Autistics'. That's why I would like to give you a glimpse into my world, that's totally my unique perspective.

On one hand there's my perception with heightened intensity that makes it challenging for me to navigate daily life in our modern society. On the other hand exactly this perception with heightened intensity contributes a lot to my Druidry.

But let's go into details. The most familiar label for my condition would be Asperger's Autism, a high functioning kind of Autism. High functioning means that these autistic individuals can 'function' in a lot of daily situations so they pass as neurotypical (what most people would call 'normal'). But just because it looks from the outside as if everything is okay, that doesn't mean it is.

Someone found that neurotypical and neurodivergent people (those with a different kind of brain) have kind of the same hardware in their brains, but that Autistics have a very different wiring. The Autism of high functioning individuals is often hidden to the outside world for a good amount of time – till the 'fake to be normal' mask falls off and everything crumbles. The reason for that is what stands behind the different wiring.

Imagine for a moment that you have a colan-

der on your head, like a hat. The holes in the colander are about the amount of

information that reaches an average brain, which has filters to prevent too much information crowding the motorways of the brain. But the colander of an autistic brain has many more holes, some even so many that it looks like a sieve. So a lot of information is coming in at the same time, but the autistic brain doesn't have more capacity to proceed the information, so somewhen the motorways in the brain are blocked and nothing works anymore. That can affect the physical senses, be it hearing, seeing, touching... or all of them, and in some individuals even extrasensory perception. For me the extremest kind of blocked motorways is not a meltdown, but a shutdown - my brain shuts down like a computer: every physical sense gets narrower, I cease to understand words or express myself, my sight shuts down, even my navigation in space and time. In the most extreme version I am for days in a dark nothingness since my system reloads.

I've never had a shutdown from being in nature. But being for the rest of my life alone in a hut in the woods, far from civilization, wouldn't be me, so I have to find my way through it. What helps me to prevent or at last reduce shutdowns is to have a good deal of familiarity, predictability and routines in my day and enough breaks that allow my overloaded brain to come back to a more relaxed state.

Another detail of the different wiring is that the incoming perceptions come in with the same heightened intensity, so all people in the room are talking with the same volume, the grinding of the coffee machine is as loud as

the soft tipping of a foot on the floor and it needs extreme concentration to focus on a single voice. 'Carly's Café' is a good example for that – please turn the volume up to the maximum to get the full effect. Google. By now you might have come to the conclusion that the pure navigation of daily life like that is a real challenge, beware of extra tasks like social communication or work. And yes, it is.

But now it's time to shed some light and a rainbow of flowers onto the path. In the video clip the last words to be heard are as Carly's father asks: *How can I help?* That mirrors my own experience. As soon as people became aware about a problem, they were willing to help. I needed to tell them, to make them aware about what was difficult for me, because people are not so good in reading minds. What I learned through that process was asking for help, or support, and then I often got more than I expected or hoped for. 10 days before my first Druid camp I got a night long panic attack. I knew nobody there, I had a message to deliver and hadn't spoken a single English word for more than 20 years, but I had the strong impression that I should go there. That was the first time I asked for help. I emailed the organization team, told them my difficulties and that more detailed information about what awaited me there would be very helpful. So the person that answered offered to have a phone call and even if I normally detest phone calls I enjoyed our one hour call. Besides that she offered to organise a mentor for me whose appreciated support was there for me throughout the whole camp.

Also at this camp I met the first members of my wonderful seedgroup. I went to this camp with no idea how to interact with people, and returned with a group of very special people to stay in my life. It's a very valu-

able gift for me that there are people who can sit with me around a fire without the need to talk, who can give me the personal space that I need and who can communicate with me in a way that goes far beyond words.

I love books, and since I could read I binge-read whole libraries. But nonverbality is a common trait in Autism, and when the motorways in my brain get crowded I also become nonverbal and wouldn't even be able to understand the simplest question, be it in presence or online. And, yes, also not the texts of OBOD rituals or courses or Touchstone articles. That's maybe one reason for my Druidry being mainly nonverbal, another one that the nonverbal access for me is the most natural one.

I didn't discover Druidry some-when in my life; Druidry was always there for me. As soon as I could walk my grandfather took me with him into the woods, and there I became friends with the most magnificent of trees and birds. And since my first encounter with a deer in the snowy forest at the age of four I knew from the depth of my heart that I would never be alone when I'm among trees. Druidry is for me the connection to the deepest heart of nature, and I'm not in need of words to experience or express it.

I am a visual thinker, so when my grandmother started to tell me tales about fairies, elementals and traditions those stories began to play like movies in my brain, and when I later told stories myself I was practically replaying the movies I stored in my brain. Also a big part of my reality is my extrasensory perception. For example I experience energy patterns and emotions that might even be from people, beings and places from the other side of the planet. Since my teenage years I had single experiences of visions,

deceased ones or divine beings showing up with messages, and with time these perceptions increased. During the Ovate course I found a way to navigate these inner worlds, and for me they are not separate from the mundane world, but exist parallel, and in the blink of an eye I can dive deeper in. My inner worlds are very vibrant, some in natural, some in psychedelic colours, some pitch dark and only to be navigated with a sense for vibrations. There are the most diverse landscapes, from forest to mountain, from the ocean to the atmosphere, from the microworld to the outer universe. Those realms are populated with the most different species, some familiar from natural beings or myths, some unique in their kind. Whoever meets me there at a certain point in space and time gifts me with a special experience.

When I grew up, and later got into learning consciously about Druidry, it took me some time to relearn some of the customs that I had earlier in life to bring my initial access to Druidry into my adult life: touching trees and plants to get in contact; allowing the energy of a certain place to flow through my being; creating patterns with the arrangements on my balcony or in my living space; making the outside part of it a home for my winged friends; using the pictures on photos or oracle cards on my altar; making a tabletop garden as a representation of my local surrounding; drumming and singing without words, and finding a special tune for every one of my favourite trees; doing prayers and rituals with simple actions and gestures; painting stones as representations in my circle for the seasonal celebrations and the directions; watching the rain and the magical flight of the willow seeds.



CONTEMPLATION 2

In my stillness
I would be attentive
as a Heron by the stream.
I would persevere
through the irritating buzz of thoughts
and the clamour of small pains.
Breathe
breathe into
and gentle
body and mind.
In the centre
is no striving .
Just the abandonment
of a cat
stretched out in the warm sun.

Linda Davis

A day spent without the sight or sound of beauty, the contemplation of mystery, or the search of truth or perfection is a poverty-stricken day; and a succession of such days is fatal to human life.

Lewis Mumford 1895 - 1990

CONTEMPLATION 3

In my solitude
I would extend my branches.
Standing firm in my rootedness
I would send out questing tendrils
of connection.
Secure in my own sovereignty
I would acknowledge the dignity
of all beings.
In my solitude
I would wait,
not asking,
not expecting.
Held between earth and sky
in awareness.

Linda Davis

Five years ago, I took early retirement from teaching, due to a spinal injury. It wasn't the way I wanted to leave, but the cycle of a new part of my life began.

A step by step guide to building your own Roundhouse SIMON CARROLL

With the help of my pension lump sum, from 18 years teaching, re-mortgaging and a bit of savings, we decided to build an extra bedroom and lounge area on top of our existing garage. Being an old converted barn, we wanted to keep the stone walls, but after several attempts by our architect, it proved too difficult, mainly due to the 200 year old foundations being rather shallower than modern building regulations would have liked! So, down came the garage and up went the new 2 storey extension, on the same footprint. This left us with about 12 tons of Devonian stone, a lot of timber rafters and debris – all of which was saved for an idea I had, when I first left teaching. The Roundhouse. By recycling materials, there was little environmental impact - and also very cheap!

The plan was for our newly built annexe to be open for visitors to stay in and the Roundhouse would provide Forest Schools type of activities for guests and living History and education days for schools. My philosophy was, if I can't get into schools, then schools can come to me! In rural N Devon, visitors could be immersed in nature. This is a step-by-step guide to how I built the Roundhouse.

Step 1 – Plan what you are

doing (even if it means not keeping to it)

You know when you sit in a GCSE Maths class and wonder 'when will I ever use this?' – well, when you build a Roundhouse!!!

Angles calculated, measurements taken, plans drawn out. Plans drawn out again. And again. Until you say sod it and stick to what you first thought of.

Step 2 – Assemble your materials

If you have a very kind builder who stacks things neatly in graded piles in your paddock – ideal. If your kind builder stacks them in a different place, because of access issues and needing to turn his tipper around – not so ideal. 12 tons of stone – check. Timber of assorted lengths- check. Now you need to locally source tree trunks for the uprights and acquire timber boards for the roof. (Have you seen the prices for thatch - and then the insurance on top for having children inside an enclosed structure, with a fire?!.)

Step 3 – Replace the old gravel driveway

Rather than dumping the old gravel/mud combination, elsewhere, why not use it to build up a set of banks around the Roundhouse footprint? It can also be used on the roof to cultivate a green roof. Give the digger operator precise diagrams of where it

needs to go and ply him with lots of cups of tea and biscuits. Stare in amazement at his precision at forming the banks and how he manages to drive along the top of them, to compact it all.

Step 4 – Gather volunteers
Cups of tea and biscuits on hand during assembly



and bottles of wine/beer/chocolates as a thank you. Give a brief overview as to what you want to do and where things are to go. The prepared stone footings may be a big clue, but don't take it for granted!

Erect the middle 4 posts and attach cross-beams, which have been measured according to the plans. Then onto the outer ring. Realise that tree trunks don't grow perfectly straight and that the measurements are not going to work. Tear up your finely thought through plans and make it up as you go. Thank your friends, family and neighbours for their help as they limp off for lunch.

Step 5 – Build the drystone wall around the inside of the banks. On the online images, you'll notice that the stone which had been sorted is no longer sorted, as the digger needed to get to the correct spot for the banks. It's now a pile of mixed stones which needs to be sorted again. Then you begin building up the walls, using YouTube videos to help. This may take around 5 months to do, but you'll be surprised and rather proud that it's still standing, as you thought that it would fall down after the first week.

Step 6 – Get the roof on, before the rain comes, in Autumn

Your original plans, which had every angle calculated, no longer apply, so each board needs to be cut differently to the others – all 160 of them – and both ends of the plank.

Using offcuts of your old pond liner, attempt to cover the roof, by folding it in some sort of origami fashion. Get bogged off, when the wind decides to blow at just the wrong moment and watch helplessly, as the liner floats off.

Find some neighbours to help hold it down. Even better if they are agile enough to balance and crawl around on the roof like a

monkey. Cut old carpets to shape and lay them on top, then add the remaining gravel and mud from the driveway debris and cross fingers for it to sprout greenery. Apologise to the sparrowhawk who used to use the beams as a perch to shred its prey and to the foxes who finished off the remains. Secretly breathe a sigh of relief that you don't have to keep cleaning carcasses and fox poo from the floor, anymore.

Step 7 – Get the sides on, before the rain come, in Autumn

Hammer boards onto the sides. Then build up the perimeter gravel banks, preferably before they get too wet. Having failed that, slip and slid around with friends, as they try to get the gravelly sludge to stay on the banks.

Step 8 – The interior

Using the remaining offcuts of beams, construct benches for the inside. Hope that the schools which visit, only bring children of a certain height and leg length.

Step 9 – Defences

Using the hazel and ash trees in the wildlife field, build palisade fences around the top of the banks, in the hope that it'll deter people from climbing on the banks. As an extra defence, plant hawthorn and blackthorn (which you've dug up from the field) around the perimeter.

Step 10 – Bless it

Accompanied by your Grove, have a drumming session and tell ghost stories around the central fire.

After a 9 month long slog, the Roundhouse is almost completed, ready for visiting schools, groups and holidaying guests, in Summer. It's amazing what can be achieved when a community comes together. It's also amaz-

ing that as one path grows over, another opens up, leading you into a new phase of your life. Do you stop, fearful of where this new path takes you, or follow this new route, excited at where you may be led? Change is all around us. I've found that acceptance of this can lead us to greater and more fulfilling things. Running my ideal job. Being my own boss. And doing all this in a wildlife field, surrounded by nature and fantastic views across rural Devon. Perfect!

Photos of the construction and further information can be found at www.devonshippon.com

Seasons they blow
A voyeur of the brittle tides and decay
To rest in the centre of manifest
Slumbering inward and onward
Sheathing divine, and making way for the reveal
They dance on the pluming pillows
Waltzing after the rain, and for the masses
Flora entranced by the gleaming crescent
and the illuminated circle
They, too jive to the rippling staff and the
highest mountains. *Joše Stow*

UNIVERSE

Dark the sleep, light the dream
The truth revealed in soul's wide space
Explore its depths, reach out to find
The universe inside each soul
Here's freedom where we can create,
Discover who we really are
Then open out and reach the stars
From deep within our own true selves
From here we can embrace the world
And feel the force of love and life.
To go inside is to reach out
And break the shell that separates.
All universes then unite
The cosmos grows as souls expand.

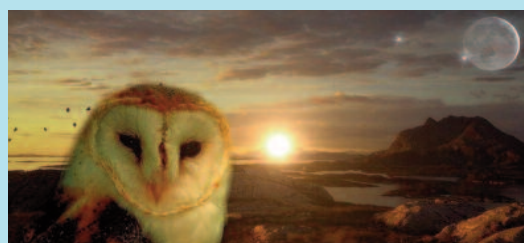
Jackie Innes

THE VEIL: MEDITATION NEAR SAMHAIN

You who have gone before
Who have taken
that great journey—
(or is it a single step, sideways—)
Can you see us?
Can you hear us?
Have you settled the questions
that plagued you
or niggled at you
when you were yet here?
Are you at peace?
I like to think so,
with your questions
answered and your
demons at rest.

Art you well?
I want to believe so,
You who suffered so much,
You who asked the hard questions:
Why me / Why now?
What comes after?
What does it mean?
You are not alone—
You were never alone,
Not really—
But meaning is hard to come by
On this side of the veil,
And questions are many...

And we can only love,
and trust
And greet you,
Meeting your eyes
Through the veil
and smile
through our tears. *Cathy Johnson*



The sun streamed in soft golden stripes through the canopy of sycamores that lined the lane. A gentle mist cast the day in vintage hues and the fresh

fragrance of rain hung heavy in the air. There was a coolness bearing news of the change of season. The heady heat of the summer was waning as the solar masculine retreated, in the face of the dark feminine's return. Beneath a laced shawl of dew-bejewelled webs, midnight black berries hung ripe and ready. The faint tint of browns and oranges visible now in the blanket of hedgerow green. Yes, change was coming; Marcia could feel it in her being.

Marcia knew about autumn. She sensed its pending arrival in her own being. She was dry and burnt out from her time of summer. She needed the autumn rains to wash herself clean again. To water her soul...wash away the dust. Yes, she was ready for change.

Marcia was bone tired from her busy professional life in the city. The relentless turning of the wheel of commerce always driving her on. Always wanting more. Its thirst never quenched. Save for yesterday when Marcia had driven herself to this tiny, time stood still, village in deepest Northamptonshire. She had driven herself here to rest from the incessant thirst. She had rented a tiny, thatched cottage surrounded by trees: switched off her phone, unplugging herself from the turning wheel.

She had crawled under the thick duvet in the tiny room in the eaves late last night and slept. A deep unbroken sleep that had been eluding her in the noise and bustle of the city. It was early morning when she awoke to the chatter and squabbles of the sparrows in the

Autumn's Coming A short story SARA COLLINS

hedge outside her window. After a simple breakfast she had headed out to explore. She found herself now, ambling slowly along a quiet lane that ran

up beside the village pub. For the first time in a long time Marcia felt she could breathe again. Breathe in the change around and within her. Summer could not last forever, autumn was peeping around the edges.

As she meandered along her eyes wandered to the horizon. In the crook of the lane just ahead of her, before it swung off to the right, stood a magnificent horse looking directly at her. Its body the colour of sun ripened barley and its mane and flowing tail as white as mountain snow. Its eyes a soft forest brown held her gently in its gaze. Marcia stopped transfixed and a little startled by the surprising appearance of the majestic beast before her. She glanced about wondering if it had maybe escaped from a nearby field. Before any further thoughts or questions could enter her head, a circle of blinding white light obscured the horse from view. The light shimmered and faded and from the centre stepped a tall, beautiful and elegant woman. Clad in a long gown of corn yellow velvet, with snow white hair down to her waist and large eyes of soft forest brown.

Marcia rubbed her eyes in disbelief. Yet the woman remained before her, watching. Marcia's breath caught in her throat and her heart galloped in her chest pounding out the tribal beat of fear. The woman raised her hand to Marcia, and with a long slender finger beckoned Marica forward. Despite fear pulling her in the other direction Marcia felt herself taking steps towards this mysterious figure, as if being pulled by an invisible thread. It was as though a part of her soul

had been awaiting this moment, for a very, very long time.

When Marcia was within touching distance, the woman reached forward and took Marcia by the hand. The instant their hands touched; Marcia was overcome by a dizzying tornado of warm wind that wrapped itself around them both. A movie of images of her life, flashed before her eyes and swirled around her in a kaleidoscope of colours. The wind abated and Marcia felt herself falling inward, downward through the images and colours to a black stillness. The wind had morphed into the gentle sway of womb like waters which were holding her buoyant. Rocking her gently from side to side like a babe in its mother's arms. A felt sense of the waters washing over round and through her again and again. As Marcia relaxed into the hypnotic tidal rhythm, she became overwhelmed by a sense of falling again. Falling into the light.

A warm yellow light that touched and burst upon her skin like a thousand sun blushed kisses. The warmth and light weaving around and through her. Breathing fire into her belly and igniting the spark in her heart, turning her cheeks a soft dawn pink. As she basked in the light Marcia felt herself falling once more. Tumbling forwards toward the ground. Caught suddenly, mid fall on the strong muscular back of a barley yellow horse, with a mane and tail of snow mountain white.

With a toss of its magnificent head the horse set off across the fields at a thunderous gallop. Marcia wrapped her hands through its mane and

lent forward low over its long neck. The wind sailed through her hair, as her heartbeat in unison to the pounding hooves. Marcia felt a stirring of wildness deep within her being. In answer to the wild calling Marcia lifted her head and let out a banshee warrior scream that pulsed through every fibre of her being. She felt alive...at last she felt alive. Riding like the wind out from the very depths of her soul.

In a heartbeat, Marcia found herself back in the sun-streaked sycamore lined lane that ran alongside the pub. In the distance in the crook of the lane, just before it swung off to the right, stood a tall, beautiful woman clad in a corn yellow velvet gown. With hair of mountain snow down to her waist and soft forest brown eyes that were watching Marcia, the faint trace of a smile lay upon her lips. A circle of blinding white light appeared engulfed the woman from view. As Marcia watched the light shimmered and faded, and from the centre strode a magnificent horse. A body of sun ripened barley yellow, a flowing mane and tail of snow mountain white with eyes of soft forest brown. With a toss of its magnificent head, the horse set off at a gallop towards the horizon. Marcia watched as it disappeared from view.

Autumn had visited and wrapped its honey yellow warmth around Marica's very being. She could feel summer's green fading from her as the russet hues of autumn adorned her

soul. A wild desire to dance and twirl like autumn leaves coursed through her body. It was time for Marcia to reap her harvest and dance in the autumn light, for change had come and alighted within her.



GROVE & SEED GROUP NOTICEBOARD

Yew Henge Seed Group

To local members... you would be welcome to attend if you're near enough to join us when we gather for the eight festivals at Waterperry nr. Oxford. We have a simple ceremony lasting about 45 mins then usually gather around a fire for chat and refreshments. Contact davidhockley500@gmail.com.

Blessings, David, Waterperry

Liminal time — a morning trip
Spot black berries — receive a prick
A tiny harvest — gift of the wood
Autumn comes — don your hood

Moss Gnome

REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS:

ANDERIDA MOOT: 2ND MON The Ship, Southwick, nr Brighton. 8pm FFI: info@anderidagorsedd.org
ARTIO SEEDGROUP, Switzerland (Zurich) Meet/rituals/walks. Lily or Britta at Info@druidry.ch (+41 76 326 6963)c wc
ARTURIAN GROVE Seasonal rituals near Otley /York. Optimistichannah@outlook.com
ASH GROVE, GLASTONBURY Seasonal rituals OBOD visitors welcome. FFI jacki.woolmington@btinternet.com
BRIGANTES SEED GROUP. YORK, England. Gatherings on the full moon. brigantes.group@gmail.com
BIG SKY GROVE, NORFOLK - our name reflects the vista and big skies of our Norfolk landscape. Open to OBOD & BDO members. Meetings (zoom) for 8 festivals & meetings, walks, discussion. FFI: rebnikc@btinternet.com
CORNOVII GROVE. Seasonal rituals in Worcs. www.cornovii.org or email via keith.southall@creativelandscapes.co.uk
DÓITEAN AGUS UISCE (Flame & Well Druid Grove). Seasonal rituals, moots and other gatherings. Colorado Front Range, USA. FFI: flameandwellgrove@gmail.com, https://flameandwellgrove.org
DRACAENA GROVE: Saltburn/Cleveland area of North Yorkshire. Seasonal celebrations & informal meetings. dracaenagrove@hotmail.com
DRUID PILGRIM GROVE: Pilgrimages, gatherings and rituals. Encouragement for pilgrims. Australia and NZ. Contact: danuta@adruid.com; FB: Druid Pilgrim group.
FAVERSHAM PAGAN MOOT 2nd Mon The Sun, West St Faversham Kent & events FFI www.favershampagans.org.uk
GOLDEN WATTLE SEED GROUP, ADELAIDE S. AUS. Regular meetings, rituals FFI: golden.wattle.seed.group@gmail.com
THE LAKE AGASSIZ SEED GROUP, meet 3rd Thurs of month near Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Public rituals in local parks, member's homes or sacred grove. www.facebook.com/groups/lakeagassizdruids. Email: agassizseedgroup@gmail.com
LIGHT OF AWEN SEED GROUP in Bristol. Celebrating the wheel of the year, and healing. Email. Lightofawen8@gmail.com
MACADAMIA GROVE Seasonal/events, Brisbane Aus macademiagroove@hotmail.com FB "OBOD Macadamia Grove
THE MELBOURNE GROVE Seasonal celebrations, Melbourne, Aus: Trudy Richards moondancer@outlook.com.au
PENDLE GROVE. Clitheroe/around Lancs. Sionnach on 0161 3432705 or email drvernon@hotmail.co.uk
SHINING MOUNTAINS GROVE western Montana, USA, Eight festivals +seasonal hikes, on-line in winter. contact Heather: roanrobbins@aol.com
SETANTII SEASONAL RITUALS IN MANCHESTER /S. LANCS. Always outdoors. GROVEOFSETANTII@YAHOO.COM.
SEATTLE SEEDGROUP CIRCLE OF COLL - public rituals, workshops, tree walks &... every month. circleofcoll@circleofcoll.org
SLIABH ANAM GROVE Rituals and monthly moots Durango, Colorado, USA. FFI: contact sliabhanam@gmail.com.
SONG OF THE EASTERN SEA SEEDGROUP Central Coast of NSW Aus, FFI: contact Chris at chris@druidryaustralia.org
TAMESIS (London Seedgroup) seasonal festivals/moots/workshops Contact Ricky: gelli3@me.com

AUTUMN HAIKU

When all the trees weep
red-crowned pomegranates gleam
from their gold-leaved nests.

Jessica McGee, San Diego, California



Pomegranate note from Jessica: 'I love that their tops were supposedly the inspiration for King Solomon's crown and used by all royalty since.' Isn't that wonderful??

Photo: A witness to the scorching summer weather... pomegranates grown 6 miles from Glastonbury! PB

EVENTS

OBOD members and friends are welcome to submit events they have organised for inclusion here. This section may also be posted on our website at www.druidry.org Please tell us if you don't want your event posted on the www.

OBOD WHEEL OF THE YEAR ONLINE RITUALS

Hosted by CC Eimear Burke Check druidry.org/facebook Alban Arthan Dec 17th

REGULAR MONTHLY OBOD MEETINGS

OBOD PEACE MEDITATION: *with your Grove or by yourself every full moon: 7pm local time*

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN DIFFICULT TIMES An OBOD Listening Circle. FREE monthly online ZOOM gathering, 1st Wednesday of the month 7pm UTC. Contact harrietlock@gmail.com for link.

EVENTS 2022

12-13 November Join Wild Women Retreats and OBOD Celebrant River Jones for a sacred weekend of co-created ceremony and ritual. Glastonbury Assembly Rooms £100

Bookings: info@wildwomenretreats.co.uk

2-4 December The magical world of Alan Garner: Into the Living Landscape of Myth (Glos) with John & Caitlín Matthews, & Ian Rees. Like a modern Merlin, the Cheshire writer, Alan Garner OBE, has woven together the abiding myths of British folk-culture in a magical way. We will explore the stories, themes and magical pathways that serve to conduits into the living realms of story. Contact: Hawkwood College, Painswick Old Rd., Stroud, Glos GL6 7QW (01453 759034)

17 December OBOD online ritual & day of activities, FI via the OBOD website & FB page

2023

3-5 March 2023 Druid Grade Gorsedd in the New Forest National Park, Hampshire, England.

Email druidry.sylvangrove@gmail.com for further details

1&2 April Inner Journeying and OBOD ritual Level 2. For all previous level 1 participants. Early booking recommended. Email FFI: mattmccabe.1@outlook.com

28th, 29th, 30th July Bardic Gorsedd. For those currently studying in the bardic grade, a weekend of exploring *The fiery spark of Awen*, with special guests Kristoffer Hughes and Eimear Burke. Held at Noddfa, Penmaenmawr, Wales, LL34 6YF. £185 (£85 deposit is required). lorrainem@druidry.org and tomMmentor@druidry.org (please copy both recipients into emails).

For your Solstice stocking... check out the obod online store, and these members' books...

Connemara Greening Keith MacNider My first collection of poems has been published and is available on Amazon and/or the Publisher: an exploration of the land but also the nature of love - of people, of place, the Druidic reach into being. <https://www.ginninderrapress.com.au/> Keith MacNider

To Sing with Bards and Angels, Iona Jenkins Pub. O-Books 9.12.22..PB & Kindle. An invitation to travel through landscapes evoked by beautiful language into the heart of nature and imagination. Step into the magic of a creative spiritual journey through the descriptive voice of a contemporary Bard, as she shares her quest to work in harmony with the Creative Spirit, writing her way into being, turning her life into poetry and story. *'weaves together the fertile worlds of our spiritual and creative lives with the natural world and the realm of Spirit, illustrating with personal stories, poems and suggestions for practice, how relationships between these worlds are intimate, inseparable and life-enriching. Iona Jenkins' gentle wisdom illuminates the landscape of the heart and the song of the soul in each of us.'* Eimear Burke. Chosen Chief, OBOD