

T the **Stone**

a journey through the mists



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ECHOES FROM THE CAULDRON: A RETELLING OF THE TALE OF CERRIDWEN

Jhenah Telyndru

Cerridwen Speaks:

So, you have come...

Many have walked this road before you — oh yes! The way has become dark and tangled. Fear has a way of turning shadow into monsters — yet I remain. Heh heh, yes... the look of some faces! I know not what they think they see when they peer beneath My hood and into My eyes. For there is only the truth — only the truth.

And here you are — come to look into My Cauldron, yes? Heh, heh. Ahh — but with such knowledge comes a price, My dear. Are you prepared for what lies within?

Let me tell you a story — yes, a tale ages old, almost beyond human memory. It was easier then, to walk

through these woods. Once, a boy came to Me and asked to learn My ways. I chuckled to Myself and I led him to My home.

I set him about, doing this chore and that. But the lad, Gwion, was impatient to learn the mysteries and was at My side always, constantly questioning. He had not yet learned that the nature of revelation was not in the speaking but in the quiet seeking. I aimed to teach him patience and set before him a task — and a test.

Now, I have many children, but one in particular was born with a visage humans found horrifying — a face only the Mother could love, I'd say. Avagddu was his name, and I set out to make for him a brew that would more than make up for his lack of beauty. Yes, quite a brew it was — a distillation of all the Knowledge and Wisdom of the Universe. The recipe? Heh, heh... A brew like this can only come from the Soul transformed, and no two batches taste the same, I can tell you.

Such a working is not undertaken and completed in a day's time. For a year and a day it needed to be stirred constantly. When I was not at the task, it was Gwion whom I set beside the cauldron, long-handled spoon in hand. Thus, I hoped he would learn the value of inner calmness and gain insights by gazing into the mystical vapors of the steaming philter. I made sure, too, that he knew exactly what it was that he was stirring. The soul's mettle needs to be tempered by such lessons. What indeed, was this boy made of?



So it came to pass, that at last the time of the brewing was ending. Only a few precious drops of the liquid remained — and there was Gwion, working diligently as he had for a year. With one day left and needing my rest, I retired for the night, leaving the boy alone by the fire. I knew as I went to my slumber of Gwion's restlessness, but I had hoped that he would overcome his Shadow nature.

Oh, the dance that followed!

Gwion had had quite enough. As soon as my eyes were closed ... as soon as the eye of the Moon turned its sight to Within... the elixir was complete. Looking this way and that, the boy brought the three drops remaining in the cavernous depths of My Cauldron to his lips ... and took what should not have been his. Immediately, My eyes flew open. Immediately Gwion, filled with All Knowledge, knew what he had done — but it was too late.

The boy ran from My home, aware that I was in pursuit. No one may partake of My Cauldron unprepared — true wisdom comes only to those who have earned it. The time had come for him to prove his worth. My though, he led me on a merry chase!

Down a path of rich Earth, he led Me, changing his form to that of a hare. I, as a greyhound, pursued him — challenging him to demonstrate his mastery. He leaped into the Waters as a silver salmon, seeking to escape Me. Yet I was no stranger to this game, and as an otter I almost snared him when he vaulted himself high into the Air. A swift thrush arched across the sky, yet as a sharp-taloned hawk, I was closing the distance between us. Seeking to escape, he fell to the ground — a drop of Fiery sunlight,

lost among the grains on the winnowing floor. I smiled inwardly as I pecked and scratched among the chaff and the wheat. A fat little hen, I knew he wasn't far, and in no time... I devoured him.

Impetuous Gwion was gone. He had entered the greatest of Mysteries — the darkness of the Tomb, the Womb — the Death of Self. It was a difficult lesson he learned indeed — but no more difficult than any that would know My ways, any that wish to know themselves. There is no short path — but the goal is well worth the effort.

Nine moons later, I gave birth to yet another child — a fair babe with a Shining Brow. The waters of My Womb cast him out into the Sea. 'Twas Samhain, and the veils were thin between the worlds — the infant boy returned again to the world of men. Found in a salmon weir, the transformed Gwion had at last attained his desire — having earned it truly. He grew to be the great bard Taliesin, whose Wisdom inspires humankind to this day.

So come, my dears — but come prepared. It is not easy to see that which brews in My Cauldron. It may call for the death of some part of you, and you may fill it thrice over with your tears, but it is I who will hold you in your darkness, and I who will show you the way to your wisdom. In My eyes you will find the mirror of your soul — embrace what you see, and learn to transform yourself. Enter the depths of My Cauldron ...

You will emerge Reborn.

IMBOLC

SidheLady

The festival of Imbolc or Oimeic marks the transition from Winter to Spring. It is said that the name of the feast itself means literally “Ewe’s Milk.” Another idea implies that it also means “in the belly.” Imbolc begins at sunset on February 1st and ends at sunset on February 2nd. It is traditionally when the first signs of Spring begin to appear across the land. For our agricultural ancestors, one sure sign that winter was fading was the beginning of the lambing season. The ewes would be pregnant and ready to give birth to their lambs and also ready to produce milk. Sheep’s milk was highly prized and was used to make delicious white cheese. As the days lengthened and the sun’s warmth increased, the burgeoning of new life across the land was marked and celebrated as Imbolc. Agricultural activity was resumed following the dark winter months and the preparation of the land for new crops was begun. The lambs were born and the ewes began to lactate. The fertility of the land and the miracle of motherhood were celebrated and honored through offerings to the archetypal Goddess of womanhood, Brigid, Breed or Brigantia, all

being the same faces of the Goddess in different areas peopled by the Irish, Scottish and Welsh branches of our Celtic ancestors.

Imbolc is the time to clean our homes, our clothing, and other possessions following the long winter months. It is at Imbolc that the divine feminine, the Goddess, is honored and welcomed into our homes. After all, Bride is a Goddess of independent womanhood, and her celebration signals a time of change whether it be a hurtful relationship or other negative aspects of our lives. She is the Goddess of midwifery, of inspiration, and the eternal flame of illumination in the dark.

Let us each take a moment to welcome Bride into our homes and hearts by honoring her with this simple prayer:

“Every day and every night, that I say the genealogy of Bride, I shall not be killed, I shall not be wounded, No fire, no sun, no moon shall burn me, No lake, no water, nor sea shall drown me”

—Excerpt from “Genealogy of Bride” from the *Carmina Gadelica* by Alexander Carmichael.

Resource

Celtic Wisdom by Vivianne Crowley

THE HERB LADY

Tara Summerland (Tammie Yerries)

Introduction

Well met! I am Tammie but go by my screen name of Tara. My articles will be tips about herbs, and I hope that you can find some information useful. I am by no means a doctor, nor an expert, and I would like to advise you for serious reasons to consult with either of them in the occasion that you have a medical condition that needs attention.

Harvesting Herbs

No matter whether you are harvesting stems, leaves, or flowers, always gather them on a sunny day after the dew has evaporated off the plants but before the full heat of the day has filled the garden. For plants with volatile oil, such as mints and lemon balm, just before noon is a good time to harvest. By then the oils have had a chance to reach the leaves but have not yet been drawn off by the day's heat. Rain washes away some of the aromatic oils from many herbs, so after a rainstorm, wait a day (preferably 2-3) before harvesting in order to let the plants' oils collect again.

Drying Herbs

Properly dried herbs retain a noteworthy amount of their original color, aroma, and healing qualities. If done correctly, this is not a difficult task, as long as careful attention is paid to each plant's attributes.

The first step is to take the plants out of the direct sunlight as soon as you've finished gathering them.

Make sure that leafy herbs are kept clean of soil when you harvest them. A layer of mulch in the garden helps keep plants clean

and free of mud from splashing rain. Wash herbs only if they really need it, because prolonged washing will affect their quality. If you do need to wash them, do it quickly and efficiently under cold running water. Allow herbs to dry well before placing them on a drying rack or hanging them. Gently pat them dry and place them in a cool airy place to rid them of all moisture before the drying process.

When herbs are drying, the flow of air over and around them is as important or more important, than the heat. Greater air circulation makes a lower drying temperature possible. Herbs containing volatile oils should be dried in the shade, not in the sun, where their oils would decompose or vaporize.

Storing Home -Dried Herbs

Heat, light, air, and bacterial action can all dissipate the healing properties of herbs. So can plastics and metal. So you must protect your dried herbs from the factors with proper storage. For short periods of several weeks or so, you can store them in a wax paper bag that is in turn placed in a brown paper bag. For longer storage, a tightly capped glass jar, preferably made of dark glass to protect from the light deteriorating them, is superior. If metal lids are used, place a piece of waxed paper over the jar before screwing down the lid.

Resource: *Growing and Using Healing Herbs* by Gaea and Shandor Weiss

TO PART THE MISTS...

A PRIESTESS OF AVALON

Jhenah Telyndru

She stands in the prow, her form cloaked by dark robes and clinging mists. Her voluminous hood conceals her age – she could be anyone’s daughter, sister, mother. Her foothold is sure, her body steady. Though the mist be thick and the lake proves choppy, she stands firmly in her place, ever certain of the way – for she has conquered these waters and parted these mists to find her way to Avalon. Her service is to guide others through what appears to be the impenetrable, until they too can arrive at the Holy Shore unaided. She is a Priestess of Avalon.

What does it mean to be a Priestess in today’s world? It is a vocation that has changed greatly in the centuries since the last woman of Avalon wove the ritual way to the top of the Tor. We are orphans in a sense, for the place of training and learning the ways of a Priestess of Avalon no longer exists on this plane. How can we, who have heard the Voice of the Lady of the Apple Isle, fulfill this calling?

Among Pagans today there are many differing perspectives on the matter of what makes a priest/ess – it is a topic of heated debate. Some say that all who serve the Divine are priestesses or priests – they need only declare themselves so. Others feel that only by having completed a proscribed training program – human made and belonging to a specific tradition – can a person become a

priest/ess. Still others insist that there is a difference between priest/ess and clergy and that we must enforce uniform standards for our spiritual leaders that include study of disciplines on par with the clergy of the new religions in order to receive acknowledgement by mainstream society. Which is the path to follow? Where is the truth here?

It is a complex subject with no easy answers, but I think the deciding factor lies in the path of service one chooses, for service is indeed the heart of the matter. A woman who seeks the Goddess at an altar of her own creation, who follows no tradition save the one she finds in her heart, is a different sort of priestess than a second degree initiate in a Gardenarian Coven, but is a priestess all the same. A woman who acts as facilitator at rituals and rites of passage manifests her service differently than one who acts as a counselor or one who teaches the Way to others, but all do so in the Goddess’s name.

If we were to look back to the ways of the ancients, sift through what remains of their traditions, we would find shafts of light guiding us to a degree of understanding of how women served the Divine. A priestess serving in the Temple of Innana walked a different path than her counterpart who served as Oracle at Delphi, or she who built the sacred Moon Lodge. For every culture, every tradition, every Goddess, there was a specific path of service, honed and developed through time. Why

then should we not seek to walk the way of service already blazed by the priestesses who have come before us?

We who wish to serve these Goddesses of old should look to the ancient traditions that have arisen around their worship. It is important, therefore, when striving to work within the archetypal realm of one culture or another, to do a great deal of research. With close scrutiny of mythic materials, religious art and societal paradigms, clues will be found which will serve as a doorway into the deeper workings of the archetype. For example, researching accounts of the Little Bears of Artemis will give a woman who aspires to become a priestess of the Huntress a place to begin. Once she has her foot in the door – understanding symbols, totems, sacred objects – the woman will be able to gain an understanding of the work before her, and can begin to retrieve information and apply it in a way which will help her to tie into the established energy patterns of a priestess of Artemis.

In cultures where there is little or no written record, or when the mythos has been written down after the Christianization of the culture, as in the case of the Welsh mythic cycle preserved in the Mabinogion, the process becomes more difficult. We must turn to art and artifacts, and painstakingly work past the biases of another time period and belief system to uncover the original material buried between each word. We must, in these cases, rely more heavily on symbol and intuition to unlock the lost wisdom of our foremothers and, as such, must be even more certain that we are clear in our work and focused in our intention to ensure that the informa-

tion we receive best reflects the essence of what was.

What better way to honor the Aspects of the Goddess to whom we have dedicated ourselves than by remembering what was? It is important that those who seek the Lady in any of Her Endless Names do so having done their “homework.” We are heirs to a rich heritage of wisdom, and although we must labor to remember much of what has been lost, I feel it is one of our greatest responsibilities – not only to honor the Goddess, but to honor those women who have walked as priestesses before us, as well as those to whom we will pass the torch of Her Light. The more we work with specific Aspects of the Goddess, the more we reactivate the archetypal energies of the myriad of Divinities spun by humanity’s collective unconscious of the eons and the closer the realms of this world and the Otherworld will become. The Old Ones have been awakened from their sleep by those who earnestly seek to come to know Them and Their ways. While the creation of new rituals for honoring the Goddess is beautiful, valid and effective, there are well-worn pathways to Her which shine brightly across the void with an energy wrought from time and tradition.

Even still, we are bound to find within each cultural archetype that there were, and are, many facets of service – many paths that lead to understanding of self and connection with the Divine. Not all Celts were Druids – nor were all Druids Bards or Ritualists. We may do well on our quest for

Priestesshood to listen to what makes our hearts sing as we explore all the ways of Women's Wisdom. Healing your sisters in mind and body is a service, a way to Oneness. Creating chant and music to celebrate the Lady is a service, a way to Oneness. Birthing ideas, images or children... expressing thought, feeling, and experience... these are all paths of service and a way to Oneness.

The greatest task of a priestess is to become her genuine self – the best woman she can be. When we touch that part of ourselves that is not limited by fear or bled anemic by soul wounds, we touch the Divine within us. The more we live in that energy, the more we allow the Light of the Goddess to shine through us and out into the world. This, in my opinion, is the greatest of all services. The more whole we are and the more empowered we allow ourselves to be, the more we are examples to our sisters who are walking their own paths to the Goddess. A priestess's goal, above all, is to demonstrate – through her very being – to those who look to her for guidance how to access the priestess – the Wise Woman – within. Although no two women will come into their power in the same way, all women can touch the Goddess.


She who parts the mists for others does so in hope that they will remember. Remember who they are ... where they have come from... where they are going.

Remember, sisters... remember the way back home.

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Excerpted from the forthcoming book *Calling the Barge: Women's Empowerment and Personal Transformation through the Mysteries of Avalon*

The Sisterhood of Avalon
Remembering
Reclaiming
Renewing



**A Celtic Women's Mystery Tradition
made relevant to today's
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For further information visit our website:
www.sisterhoodofavalon.org

WISE WOMEN

Joanne Leilani Carpenter

This is a story of women helping women, women learning from women, cultures crossing, and minds opening. I write this on behalf of the women who will be climbing breathtaking and daunting mountains. Six Women Intolerant of Social Enslavement (WISE) are to embark on a quest — the quest of six American women seeking to climb four mountains in Bolivia in order to raise awareness of the threat of violence against women and girls around the world and to benefit specific organizations helping women in our communities.

The mountains each have their own challenge:

- ★ First, to draw attention to the fact that as women, they make this climb for all young or old and in all social statuses.
- ★ Second, for empowerment through education and support.
- ★ Third, for intolerance of violence and social enslavement.
- ★ Finally, the fourth and most important, to express love and peace that ALL women may have right and means to pursue a life for themselves and their children in peace and equality.

How can six young women climbing mountains in a far-off country make a difference? Their plan is not just to climb mountains. This will be a test for mind and body, but more significant is what it means to all women.

They hope to:

- ★ Overcome fear and persevere when faced with the unknown
- ★ Practice teamwork
- ★ Transform anger and frustration to posi-

tive accomplishment

- ★ Promote learning new skills
- ★ Listen

★ Connect with women different than they are and with the Earth Herself

In thinking about reaching their own goals, they realized how fortunate they are and how many other women have different struggles, different mountains to climb every day. At the heart of it, we are all women, all residents of this small planet. They don't want to just climb a mountain but to learn to help, to connect in the name of peace, on a mission to learn what our sisters here and our sisters there can teach us. At the same time, they want to teach the lessons they learn and to share these insights with others so that they too may better understand the path to a less violent world.

Violence against women and girls in all societies throughout the world is pervasive. While the events of 9-11 still resonate in our hearts and minds, and with the bombings in Afghanistan, the unrest in Israel, and countless other wars around the globe occupying the evening news, it is easy to forget there are personal wars waged every day in the most intimate of places - our homes! We talk about wanting a peaceful society, yet the most insidious violence happens every day, in every part of the world, to every kind of woman, rich and poor, young and old, and of every ethnic and racial group imaginable. Violence against women manifests itself in many forms and contexts.

“Violence has been defined to include physical, emotional, sexual, psychologi-

cal, and/or financial abuse or control.”¹ Violence can be perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member, a stranger or acquaintance, or by an authority figure.

The types of interventions needed to illuminate the plight of victims of abuse will vary by the type of abuse and the type of perpetrator. Counseling, legal help, and support from family and friends are all important in helping the victims of abuse deal with the immediate situation. Many services exist for

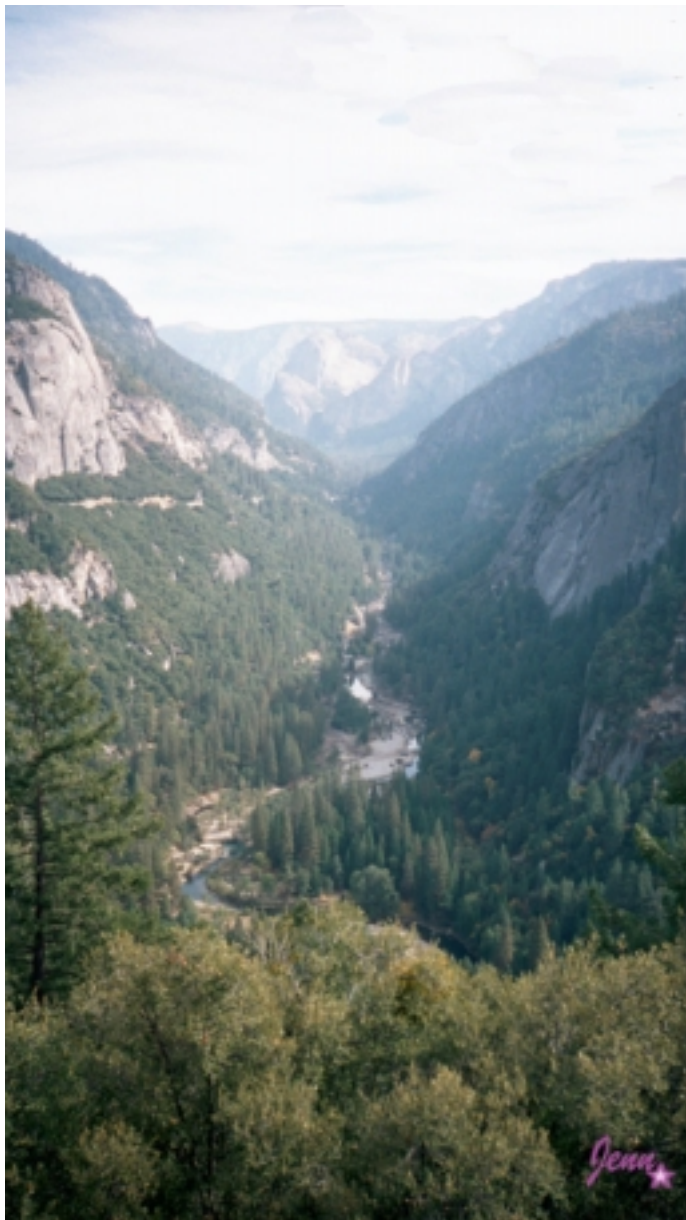
women to aid them in their crises.²

But what of prevention? In San Francisco as well as internationally, the three most important ways to prevent violence against women are through increased community awareness, self-defense classes for women and girls, and life-skills classes such as parenting, job training, and self-empowerment training.

This is where the WISE expedition will focus its efforts. They will seek to advance the cause of preventing violence before it starts, through raising awareness about the issue and raising money to fund education/skills training for women and girls. Women and girls, both here and around the world, need to have the strength, skills and courage to live their lives without violence.

By sharing the story of the climb and its obstacles and the lessons learned from that experience, they will remember and use what they learn from survivors of violence here in San Francisco and in Bolivia to push each step onward. Their obstacles and achievements will enliven physical ability when bodies want to fail. They hope to increase awareness about the prevalence of abuse, the types of abuse, and the services available to help those affected both in the United States and in Bolivia.

They know they cannot change the world in a single day, but with each step they take, the goal is closer to being realized. They can learn and then teach what they’ve learned to enlighten those they touch with their stories about the strength that women hold to overcome their fears, rise to their challenges, and conquer their own mountains, one step at a time. So, they WEEP (Women for Education and Empowerment of the Planet) but are WISE



(Women Intolerant of Social Enslavement) as they approach the mountains that will remind all women that they are indeed the Divine. The Goddess is every woman's own right and the freedom and the physical hardships they endure are truly a testimony that women are capable, strong and viable as members of Mother Earth.

Here is the reality of what they are trying to accomplish; the mind and body begin to deteriorate at about 12,000 feet. Imagine you are on this mountain. You fight to concentrate on staying awake and alert and to remember that you have limbs beneath you and that you must move forward. The cold gripes you to the bone, yet you have another 1,000 feet to go before a warm beverage and food are waiting to replenish your body. The mental strength will rely not on stronger muscles or better training but sheer spirit and the will to continue when everything inside you is screaming to give up. The focus must be on the women and children they have met and have yet to meet. Their tears and anguish will give the warmth and strength that are needed to take one more step.

They need you; they need your faces, your voices, and your prayers to get them to the mountain and then to the TOP!

They need your help to accomplish this incredible expedition. They would ask for your positive healing energies and offerings, monetary or otherwise. They ask for your prayers so they may have the privilege of contributing this daunting but inspiring task. As they climb so shall every one of you! The view from the top shall be glorious for us all! Let freedom ring for all women of the world.

I am the mother of one of these brave

women. I think of my beautiful daughter putting herself in harm's way and the painful effects this will put on her body, and I cringe. I pause and want to say "Hell no, you can't go." The Great Mother of us all has said to us "Rise dear ones to My call, and the summit of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness will be yours." The call is strong and steadfast as it nags and frustrates, yet it must prevail, and we shall answer as mother/daughter and as daughter/mother. "The growth of a forest begins with one acorn." The first mountain begins with the steps below. Those of you who would like to help us overcome the first mountain may respond to jojoc@Ev1.net or Sierra_10@yahoo.com, strap on your gear, and take a step!

Steps:

- 1) Identify partner organizations
- 2) Develop plan for:
 - a) Raising awareness
 - b) Raising funds for prevention programs
- 3) Identify sponsors and supporters
- 4) Personal fundraising for trip (separate funds)
- 5) Volunteer and learn in San Francisco
- 6) Visit Bolivian organization
- 7) CLIMB A MOUNTAIN!
- 8) Spread the lessons learned

¹Price, J; Lee, S; Quiroga, S. (2000) "Violence against women and girls in San Francisco: Meeting the needs of Survivors" San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women. December. (pi.)

²Ibid.

HOW TO BE AN URBAN GODDESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

FEATURED TOPIC: APARTMENT ALTARS

*Estrella April**

Living in an urban environment, I found that there is less and less affordable living space today than there was 10 years ago. More and more people are calling Home Sweet Home by another name. Apartments, flats, lofts and studios are the affordable housing of choice for many a city-dweller. The less space that is offered the less we pay, so we find ourselves sometimes cramped into a small living space surrounded on all sides by others who are themselves cramped into a small living space.

Trying to remain spiritual in such an environment has led many a seeker to throw up his/her arms in despair and say, "I'll work on this when I have some more room!" You know who you are! You want a place to put your religious icons, items and tools but, short of throwing them into a box to go under your bed between other boxes filled with odds and ends, you just have no room. Sometimes it's hard enough having space for that couch and end table, much less a shrine, altar, or religious workstation. I myself have been at such a stage in my life, and I say to you: Do not despair, there is hope for you! You too can be an Urban Goddess with her very own altar!

First of all, you have to use what you have; when life gives you a 30% off sale, you go out and buy an exquisite gift... for yourself! Sometimes the only space one has in an apartment is the unreach-

able top shelf of the kitchen pantry. You may call that dust bunny heaven, but I call it sacred space! Here are some ideas on how to utilize any space for sacred space.

1) **Your Refrigerator.** Ok, so it's not the most posh spot in your place, but sometimes it's the only one you'll have. If you're vertically challenged like me, use a step stool. Be a real life Kitchen Witch and buy a frilly dishcloth to put atop your fridge as an altar cloth. Next add a saucer to use as your offering tray, a bowl for your condenser/cleansing water/elixir/etc., an incense holder, a mini Goddess figurine, and other objects you hold sacred that may fit there. You can even use a trivet for an altar tile if need be. If there is no space atop the refrigerator, then use the door! A friend of mine made Witch and Goddess magnets and placed them all over her fridge door and made chants/spells/praises with Magnet Poetry around her Goddesses magnets. After a few months, her refrigerator door became a practical work of art!

2) **A Windowsill.** Again, not the most glamorous spot, but it is in view of nature (sometimes) and a wonderful spot for the sacred and divine. Take two potted plants and place them on either side of the sill. Suspend a crystal/pendant/prism/stone from the top of the window so that it will catch the sunlight coming through. If you have curtains, use silk pins to pin Goddess drawings/pictures/cut-outs/poetry/feathers/etc. If you don't have curtains you can hang some twine across the window and

use fancy paper clips or clothespins to hang objects from it. On the windowsill itself, place your sacred objects or tools such as a deck of tarot cards, runes, or pendulum. If you don't have space for all your objects, place your remaining tools in a small "ritual tool box" that you painted and decorated personally and place it on the sill or just below it.

3) The Toilet Top. We are not talking about the toilet seat here, we're talking about the back part with the removable top for repairs and such. Far be it from me to let such an empty spot go to waste, or so to speak. When you're not using the toilet for it's more obvious uses, it just sits there like a porcelain eyesore. The bathroom always needs to have flare! Why not make it fun? Buy one of those fuzzy or frilly Potty tops (just like the one your grandma used to have on her potty) to use as an altar cloth. Place a clamshell filled with stones/petals/herbs in the middle. Place figurines of Goddesses or fairies on the back corners. Place your chalice, SCENTED candles, and other sacred objects in the empty spots. If you don't have any room on the top of your toilet, install a shelf somewhere in your bathroom for use as sacred space.

4) The Top of your Television. Even the Goddess enjoys a good TV show every now and then. Most of us have a TV set, whether we use it or not. The top of your TV may already have photos or figurines on it, but clear them off to make way for your sacred space! Place a lovely sash or scarf across the top so that the ends dangle around the TV. Then place a Goddess candle (in a non-flammable container) in the middle. On both sides of the candle place a box (that you painted and decorated yourself) that will hold your incense, herbs, salts, oils, and other miscellaneous ritual tools or treats. This sacred space is both decorative and entertaining!

Remember that any space is sacred space whether it's an old tree stump in the middle of a moonlit grove or a bubbly bathtub surrounded by scented votive candles, shiny stones, and magickal herbs. A place is only as sacred as you make it, so make the most of it. Be creative, whimsical, and flamboyant. An Urban Goddess turns her nose up at convention and says, "From this day forward, this linen closet shall be sacred space! So mote it be!"



LIA'S JOURNEY

Karen Robinson

And I know that what I really want out of life can never be, for I was born in the wrong place and time. I want to be a bard; I want to see a unicorn; I want to ride a dragon; I want to dance with the fairies. I want to be a priestess of Avalon. But even if I were born into the right time, are those things even true?

Lia sat at her desk with her pen in her hand, staring out the window to the street below. Every now and then a car or a kid on a bicycle would rush by. Everyone moving so quickly, even the children playing, as if they didn't have time to stop and enjoy the delicious fresh air that surrounded them, full of the scent of flowers and trees. Why didn't they take the time to let the sun warm their faces? Couldn't they see the delicate pink flowers poking up lonely through the grass? Was she the only one who ever noticed these things?

She sighed as she finally bent her head back down to the page. Continuing her thoughts she wrote: My mom is right. I do live in a fantasy world. My dreams can never come true.

Again, she looked out the window, but this time she looked beyond the street to the world of her dreams. She saw herself in a tiny cottage on the edge of a small hamlet in southern England. She was down on her knees in the dirt, digging holes to plant sweet woodruff. As she stood on her feet, she wiped her forehead with her arm, trying not to get any of the dirt from her hands on

her face. And as usual, she didn't succeed.

"Lia! Lia, get down here! I've been calling you for five minutes!"

Lia felt herself fly back into a body that was sitting at a desk with a pen in its hand. She shook her head, knowing that it was time to step back into reality.

Trudging down the stairs she saw her family sitting at the dining room table getting ready to eat. Actually, not just getting ready. It looked like they had already started, once again without her.

"Don't you even believe in waiting for everyone to get to the table?"

Her brother shot her a look. "Not if we have to wait until the food is cold to eat."

Lia decided she didn't feel like arguing, so she just let her usual unsaid reply hang in the air. Besides, they were actually eating something that she really liked, chicken pot pie, and she was hungry.

After dinner Lia retreated to her room. Walking into it, she glanced at the posters lining her walls: fantasy art pieces, prints from Waterhouse and the like, as well as stills from her favorite movies. She walked over to her stereo and hit play for the Celtic music she knew was already in the CD player. Lying on her bed, she closed her eyes and tried to bring the image from earlier back to her mind. She couldn't see it. It just wasn't there this time.

So disappointed that tears started to gather in her eyes, she decided to continue writing in her journal. But she didn't feel like standing up and walking to her desk. For some reason, she felt drained of energy. Drifting off to sleep, she once again tried to capture her dream, and this time it was waiting for her.

The next morning she woke to the

warmth of the sun caressing her face. She felt perfectly rested and at peace. She smiled with her eyes still closed, afraid if she opened them the feeling of peace would disappear. As her mind began to clear she started to feel that something was different. *Maybe it's just because I feel so rested and relaxed for once.* Though the more she thought about it the more uneasy she became.

Slowly, she pried her eyes open to look around her room. Only she wasn't in her room anymore. A little nervous and quite curious as to where she might be, she sat up to get a better view of her surroundings.

She was in her bed in the middle of a large meadow full of flowers of every color and design imaginable. The sight was breathtaking, and she felt herself give an involuntary gasp. Reaching a hand to her arm she pinched herself, winced, and knew that this wasn't a dream. As she was gazing at the beauty, a strange door materialized in front of her, appearing as if the particles were pulling themselves together to form the object.

Climbing out of bed, she walked to the door and pulled it open with the simple handle on it. She discovered that it was a wardrobe door and inside she found a long flowing dress of pastel colors so airy that it seemed almost to be insubstantial. Knowing that it would fit her perfectly she slipped out of her pajamas and into the dress. She placed her own clothing into the wardrobe and shut the door, which disappeared just as it had arrived.

The meadow seemed to be talking to her, but she couldn't quite make out what it was saying. She wandered out into the

flowers knowing that if she kept walking she would eventually find something or someone to answer her questions.

Sounds came to her ears. Sounds of music and laughter. She quickened her pace only to stop suddenly as she came to the top of a hill. At the bottom of the hill a circle of women clasping hands danced to the beat of an unseen drum.

As Lia watched, two women unclasped their hands and began a weaving pattern in the dance. Soon her feet began to itch to join the line. Before she knew what was happening she realized that her hand was reaching out for the hand of the woman at the end of the weaving line. When had she moved down the hill?

The other woman's hand stretched out across the gap to catch Lia's hand and pull her along into the dance. At first Lia felt herself move stiffly, as she didn't know the steps, but as she moved more into the pattern she found that her feet were dancing of their own accord.

As she realized this, she lifted her face to the sky and laughed, letting herself feel the breeze against her face and through her dress. She felt another hand grasp her loose hand and the line became a circle again.

Round and round she flew until she felt the circle slow down slightly. Suddenly she found herself lying sprawled upon the grass. Looking around she noticed that she was alone; no trace of the women remained.

As she stood brushing the grass off she thought she heard a short peal of laughter. It seemed to her that the laugh was almost mocking. A flash of white

passed by her right eye. Turning, she ran to follow the sight, hoping to find the source of the laughter.

Instead, the sight that met her eyes forced her to a halt, awed, mouth gaping. A pure white beast was drinking from a river that wound through the valley. As the creature raised its head from the water, Lia saw the sunlight gleam from the pointed horn protruding from its forehead.

Can it be? Her feet were rooted to the spot as she gazed upon the sight before her eyes, which widened as the unicorn slowly picked its way closer to her, stopping just slightly out of reach. She longed to move that short distance between them that she might touch the silky mane that stirred slightly in the breeze. She saw her fingers nearly touching the flowing mane. Quickly, she drew her arm back, knowing that it was forbidden to touch a unicorn. Instead, she found herself staring into the creature's eyes – the rainbow shimmers in which Lia soon lost herself.

When Lia regained consciousness she found herself back in her bed in her room. Looking at the clock she noticed that very little time had passed.

I suppose it was all a dream. Getting out of her bed she went into the bathroom and shut the door. Staring into the mirror she thought that there might be something different in her face. *This is crazy. There's nothing there.*

After splashing some water on her face she realized how extremely tired she was so she went back to her bedroom and collapsed onto her bed.

As soon as she did, the feeling of ex-

haustion which had overwhelmed her disappeared. A little timid about opening her eyes she finally peeked out from under her eyelids. The now almost familiar meadowland met her eyes.

Since she was lying on her stomach in the grass she pushed herself up to her feet. Hearing a noise behind her she turned around to meet a very startling sight. As if the unicorn weren't enough, now before her stood a dragon.

His deep golden scales glistened in the morning sunlight. As Lia's gaze traveled from head to tail to head again her eyes were once more held by rainbow shimmers. Remembering what had happened the last time when she had lost herself in those pools, she forced herself to look away so she could enjoy the experience a little longer.

The dragon seemed to nod and settled himself in such a way that Lia saw he wanted her to climb on his back. She scampered up and found the seat on the back to be a perfect fit for her body.

Before this surprise had a chance to realize itself another came. The dragon lifted himself from the meadow and slowly began to gain height. Lia gave a little squeal as she looked down and saw the meadowland disappearing. Then she forced herself to push any fears aside so she could fully enjoy this exhilarating experience. The air rushed by her face blowing her hair behind her as she gave another squeal, this one of happiness. Soon she was laughing into the wind, filled with joy.

Then the complete joy turned slightly into fear. The dragon was plummeting down and now the meadowland was reappearing at a quick rate. Lia closed her eyes

and blacked out.

When her eyes reopened she was once again back in her bed. Her body shuddered all over, and she forced herself to crawl out of bed. There was no need to go to the bathroom this time; that had already been taken care of.

A flash of light on her mirror attracted her eyes. Walking to the mirror her reflection began to shimmer until she was no longer looking at herself but at an old woman in a blue robe with familiar eyes. She took the last few steps to the mirror and reached out her hand to touch the image. She was startled when her hand didn't stop at the image but went through, and even more startled when she felt, and saw, the woman pushing her hand back.

"Is this really what you wish, my child?"

Lia stopped herself and thought. What was she doing? What did she wish? Falling back a step she shook her head in sad confusion.

"I see that you do not understand. Through this mirror is the entrance many have been searching for. For this is the land of Avalon, where the old ways are still acknowledged. Once one arrives in Avalon one can never return. Do you wish to join us?"

Avalon! Yes, of course she wished to go there! Once again she stepped toward the mirror and again felt herself being pushed back. "Why won't you let me through?" Lia could feel her voice raise an octave as her frustration surfaced.

"You are too hasty. You cannot return if you enter here."

"But I don't want to come back!"

"You must give yourself more time to think and grow."

With a cry, Lia threw herself at the mirror . . . and bounced off of it onto the floor. Looking up through her tears she saw her own face once again reflected.

#

Years later when her grandchildren came to visit they begged her to tell them about the dream journey.

Little Sara cried, "Grammy, tell us about the unicorn!"

"No, I want to hear about the dragon," her brother Tommy shouted as he pushed her aside.

So once again Lia told the familiar story, a story now so familiar that it had lost its touch on reality and had become only a dream to Lia. But it had affected her and she knew her life had been more full because of it, even if it had been just a dream.

Afterwards Lia excused herself to go rest in her room. As she was about to lie down in bed she noticed a flash of light off the mirror. This time as her reflection glimmered she didn't stop but continued walking into the mirror. A feeling like walking through water gave way as she stepped onto the land of Avalon.

Turning back to see if the mirror was still visible, she saw it fading away, and the reflection showed her own face, young and once again lit with happiness.

POETRY

Cerridwen's Cloak

Mara Taylor

As I pull the black shroud o'er me
I can feel your transformation
That I might peer in the Cauldron
To see all that I can be
To look out from under the hood
Of a dark empowered woman
And see the world more clearly
As I've wished for it to be
As I stitch and sew formation
I'm confronted by my fears
And I fear that it's not good enough
Although it's only me
It's not working...transformation
Turn it round so I can breathe
Peering deep into the Cauldron
Inspiration may I see
Though my cloak's a work in progress
Process through the lesson now
Feel it, breathe it, turn around
Let the Lady set me free!

Prayer

Lezah Marrs (Witchhazel)

Cosmic Mother, Birther of Life!
I stand before you in my human
form, dedicated to you
in my spiritual self.
I open my soul to you.
Imprint upon me your unconditional love.
Open my eyes that I may see your
beauty, my ears that
I may hear your songs.
Come into my heart and live here!
I call the vibration of the Goddess

Islands of Apples

Dianayhi

Brides' islands of apples
Through glass they shine in firelight
As sparks rise from iron hammered for
the Mare.

In purple, blue and gold
The shadowed hill
Sends trembling shivers through the land.

And mist closes in
And buds stir in sleep
As She moves in murmurs of dawn.

Untitled

Meiri-bear

This is just to say

I am who I am

The same person
who I was when we met
some 14 years ago

The only thing
that has changed
are seven letters

One word that goes
along with a type
of religion

Forgive me
for trusting you
with more of myself
than you could handle

The Simple Things
Corrywynn

Sometimes I like
the simple things,
when they come up
in contrast
to complicated society's ways.

Chopping wood chips,
the hearthfire burning,
cooking water for tea
and oatmeal, Avalon-style
with dried slices
of last autumn's apples.

The clear fresh scent
of rosemary and lavender twigs
between plain sheets
of undyed linen;
the soft singing sound milk makes
simmering in the blue pot
on the hearth.

Inner rest, seeping in quietly
while I sit on the doorstep
with a cup of herb tea,
as I watch the slow,
yet strong process
of rotting leaves decaying.

A very late bee comes buzzing
and reminds me
of last summer's honey,
of the sweet, nurturing taste
of simple things.

Untitled
Dragonfly Lotus

May you have the Blessings of the Universe

May you taste them through the light in
the stars
The warmth of the sun
The gentleness of the breeze
The coolness of the waters
The strength of the ancient tree.

May the radiance of Love shine upon you
Guiding your steps on the path
Journey on, knowing you are blessed
The single beat of a heart full of Love
It is enough to carry you across the
stormy seas.

The Gift of remembering
A child of the stars
Can taste these things
The spirit is free again and all is well
It is not in finding yourself...it is re-
membering
Whom you already are.

Remember Now...

Real Witches

A documentary by April Melody

Purchase your copy at www.goddesspictures.com



Butterfly
Bobbi Hollars

I am not sure how
and I know not when
my heart told me
There is no "sin."

Been made to feel dirty,
made to feel wrong
So many women...
Far too long

Told "There is no place~
Not by a man's side.
You should feel no honor,
feel no pride."

Only behind him
were you allowed to be.
A suffocated Butterfly
never allowed to soar free,

But She has always been there
a guiding light in the storm
To offer a Mother's comfort
in Her warm and loving arms.

She tells us to be free now
Our time has finally come
The jar is opened
 Our wings unfold
 We take a life-filled breath
And begin the journey home.

She says it is ok to weep
for all that time has lost.
Do not become angry though
lest we ourselves have lost.

It is time to remember

what we have known from lives before,
time to find the meaning
in all the myth and lore.

She knows we will do well now
to reclaim our heritage past
to place the power back in Her hands
and ensure it to be passed

From one to another
as it was lifetimes ago
we share Her knowledge given us
just as Her cauldron flows.

We shall renew Her light
one woman at a time
as She guides us to Her,
Wondrous Goddess, Divine.

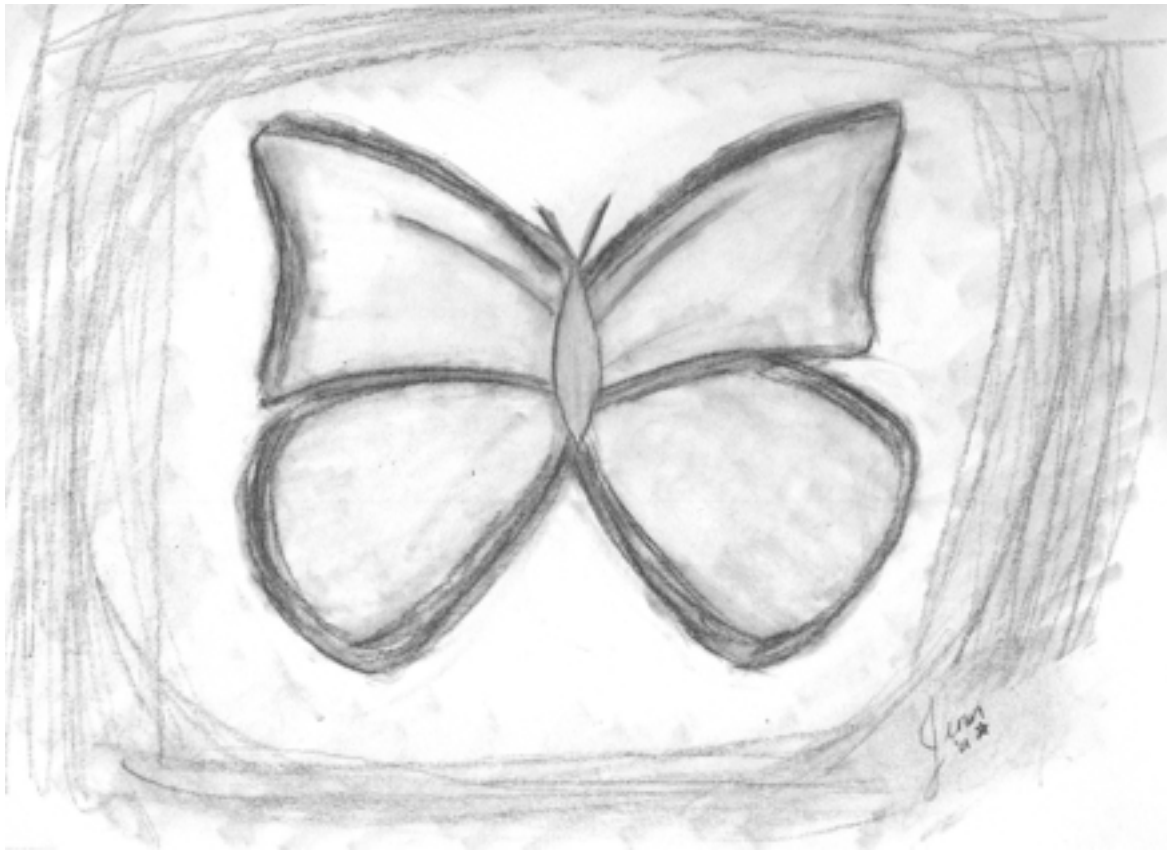
She is our Warriress and Matriarch
Maiden, Mother, Crone
Once we have found Her
we shall never walk alone

~~~~~  
As I stand to call the Barge  
to take me to Her shore  
I anticipate the thinning mists  
to behold Avalon~once more.

I have been here before...I know  
though in this life I can not say  
this body had not tread on Her ground  
yet somehow...I knew the way.

She calls me to the Sacred Grove  
on this silvery night  
to share with me Her message  
in perfect trust, love and light.

As I begin the journey  
upon Her spiral course



I feel no fear, just love and light  
I am safe...my heart soars.

I reach the top and enter  
the Circle made of Stones  
every woman singing  
with Her voice they intone.

I take my place among them  
Sisters we are all  
one by one ~ each of us  
have heard Her awesome call.

She says I am her daughter  
that I am strong, beautiful and wise  
all of Her children are these things  
it should come as no surprise

You are all made of Me  
this you must hold true  
Whenever you have need of me

just look inside of You.

You may come to Me in Ritual  
with all gathered near  
Or come to Me one by one  
Fear not, I will still hear.

Go My daughters, all of you  
your work has just begun  
I lead my children on My path  
As always, one by one.

I need you here to show them  
to guide them on their way  
for each path is different  
just as yours was this day.

Remember you are not made of sin  
not dirty and not wrong  
You are My beautiful butterflies  
Floating on My song.

Wintertime Song on the Loom  
*Corrywynn*

I weave a web of darkness,  
a wintertime song on the loom,  
shadowy colors of night,  
spotted with sparkling snow crystals  
and a full opalesque moon.

I weave a web of time  
throbbing slowly through my fingers  
as they follow the woolen tracks,  
leaving golden traces of flickering  
candlelight.

I weave a web of relations  
with the ancestors gathering near me,  
my shuttle made of a mare's bone  
sings a song of ancient bloodlines.

I weave a web of connections  
hemming the fringes with heron  
feathers,  
amber beads from the seashore  
and the backbones of salmon return-  
ing home.

I weave a web of love  
being interwoven in my community,  
my clan is strong again  
like the hugging threads forming the  
patterns.

I weave a web of songlines  
in dark moor brown and light green colors,  
listening deeply to the call of  
Earth Mother,  
finding my own song as the fabric grows.

I weave a web of women and land,  
adding braids of beloved sisters  
to rattle grass, heather and moss,  
to rosemary, sage and the tie of my  
grandma's apron.

I weave a web of life  
working in tune with the rhythm of my  
heartbeat,  
the sound of my staghide rattle  
and the murmur of the nearby river.

I weave a web of memories  
with colorful threads of childhood beach days  
and the volcanic emotions  
of last night's wonderful lovemaking.

I weave a web of dreams  
of misty fancies and clear plans,  
of visions that tell me what I will be  
when I grow up some day.

I weave a web of journeys  
to hidden places and stone circles,  
mingling the bone white threads of the  
tholos in Delphi  
with the royal blue strands of the  
Cornish Sea.

I weave a web of light  
bridging the deep of night  
to the sunrise of a new day.  
I'm weaving a wintertime song on the loom.

Untitled  
*Melanie Rose*

In the Year of the Snake  
My earth shakes down  
to the very root of foundation  
and I'm awake!

And seeing eye to eye with the Twin  
I look within  
to get clear on the things of which I intend.

Within the midst of Babylon  
the Mists of Avalon  
are parting again  
and at their beckoning I travel on  
to help weave the web  
make it more tight  
like all those who have come before  
and helped me see the light.

And blessing me with their kiss,  
now I cannot resist  
this adventure in which we are divinely  
assisted.

For it's an honor to be in this world,  
as we're dancing through and between all  
the worlds.  
And it's exciting, the sweet divine timing  
of standing in a time of no time,  
where the lines are twisting, insisting  
that we heal our bodies, our souls and our  
minds.

And to retrieve our LOVE for EVE  
evolving and letting our Third Eyes perceive  
the reception and sweet resurrection  
of love free of jealousy and without deception.

Sarnau Elen  
*Corrywynn*

Elen of the Ways,  
Matrona, with the dog in your lap,  
antlered Goddess  
with reindeer horns,  
I hear your footfall  
in my dreams,  
waking, trembling  
with your name  
on my lips.  
I follow your call  
like the cranes, flying  
in a new moon night,  
stepping out into the dark,  
my eyes don't see,  
but my heart resounds  
with AWEN  
as I realize  
I am, already,  
on your path,  
they call it the "Sarnau Elen."  
I still don't know  
where it will lead me,  
but my feet walk on,  
partly in this world, partly in faerie,  
knowing that I don't have  
to find you  
because you were always with me.

Frankie and Me  
*Joanne Leilani Carpenter*

There once was a little girl you see  
And she was as sad as sad could be.  
Her mama and daddy were sad as well  
They fussed and fought in the day and night.

The little girl could not understand or see the controversy  
The little girl had one true friend that she could always see.  
He would bring her love and security.  
His name was Frankie, and he was a tree.

Frankie would be there in sunshine and rain  
And eased her of her pain.  
Frankie's bark was warm and smooth on her face  
And the sunshine he let through surrounded her with warmth and grace.  
When her mommy and daddy were unhappy and didn't see her  
Frankie was always present, strong and firm with branches to greet her.  
In the cold, he would share the warmth within.

This little girl has grown up, you see, and she is me.  
And Frankie continues to be  
A friend, a parent in her days and in her nights.  
Every time she sees a large tree, Frankie is there in her memory.  
How wonderful nature can be to me.  
When she sees a little tree, she can see a young Frankie waiting to be.

My daughter, when sad, one day came to me and said "Have you met Frankie?"  
Then told me where he was and how he came to be.

My children found Frankie with no cue from me.  
I finally had a name for my tree, for when I was little it was just a tree.

My children and grandchildren have seen  
That nature can be there for them. My girls have grown well and strong.  
One still champions nature and the tree as she cries "Recycle, Recycle," in an

attempt to save our lives and devotes her life to nature's end.  
For the daughter of nature was led to Frankie without an introduction from me.  
She remains a shining star that brings smiles to the angels of light.  
The light of the angels follows her walk for  
She will always defend the tree.

The youngest of the three, my youngest, now a mother to be.  
The Goddess relives her abundance through her you see.  
She has given birth to two angels at present  
And one more in the making will then make three.  
Her children she fosters as her arms enfold like that of a tree.  
As they return the hug the circle of love and Frankie is plain to see.  
Frankie would be proud to see the seeds she has planted for earth to see.

The oldest of the three is the artist and captures the magnificence of the tree.  
She manifests the spirit of love and artistry.  
The Goddess again unfolds in her synchronicity.  
Beautiful lines and colors abound in her creation of solid ground.  
The roots of Frankie stretch farther than we can see.

I will always remember Frankie and me no matter how old I get to be.  
Frankie will always be in my memory.  
A tree is not just a tree but a friend waiting to be  
You must just know that they are there for you and all the children to be.

So listen to the wind and the blowing leaves for they are saying something to you and me.  
Come little one come to me for I am a tree here for you to see.  
I will shelter you in the summer and warm you in the winter when you think of me.

Love me little one as I love you and my family.  
I will need you someday to protect me.  
When the little girl prayed at night to her angels of light.  
She asked that Frankie be protected for others who have not come to see.  
The love and encouragement of all the trees and how they give it free to you and me.

I say this to all parents and people with eyes to see.  
Never underestimate the power of the tree.

## Sample Issue

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