

Sheffield Goddess Temple

NEWS LETTER



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to Temple



Issue 15 – Lammas 2019

Our Lammas Goddess and Temple Events

Gwenith

Golden Grain Goddess

The ancient cross quarter festival occurring on the first of August has an important place in the history and culture of Britain and Ireland. It is also - importantly to us Sheffields - YORKSHIRE DAY!

It is a festival which celebrated the first fruits of both the wild and the cultivated harvest, a time when people gathered to meet for fairs, athletic games and hand fasting, whilst the fields are rich, golden and full of ripe standing grain. Our

northern Goddess for Lammas is therefore called Gwenith, which literally translates as wheat, but also means golden, bright and fair, as are our fields at this time of year.

However, held deep within the joy of summer celebration and Lammas, Lughnasadh (or in modern Irish Lúnasa), Welsh Calan Awst, there lies an element of poignancy due to the sacrifices of nature as she gives over her bounty to sustain us through the season to come and through harsh winter ✨



Image: Harvest Goddess by Aradia Vive
<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/281193570457674922>

Temple Celebrations

Lammas Celebration

Sunday 21st July – 1:00pm. Free to attend – help our priestesses acclaim the first riches of this year’s harvests. Please ring the Airy Fairy shop (number below) to book on to this free event, as well as book refreshments if required, including the **BBQ at 3:00 pm.**

Autumn Equinox Celebration

Weekend 21st /22nd September - join us to celebrate completion of the harvests. Please ring the Airy Fairy shop (number below) to book on to this free event, to book refreshments if required, and for details of times and updates - or see the temple web page (sheffieldgoddess temple.org).

Temple Diary Dates

Free Monthly Guided Meditation

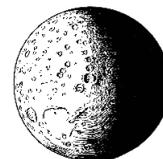
Friday 9th August, 12:00 - 12:30 pm. No booking required.

Moon Meets

Celebrate the ever changing energies of the moon with Carmen Edwards.

26th July 7:00 – 8:30 pm

8th August 7:00 – 8:30 pm



To book events please ring Airy Fairy on **0114 2492090**



Spiritual Crisis Network – 17th August, 1:30-3:30 pm

Pagan Pathways – Talks, Discussion, Tuesdays, 8:00 pm

- 6th August: *Divining the Landscape* – Paul Pearson and Tallis Harril
- 20th August: *The Artwork of Pamela Colman Smith and the Ryder Waite Tarot* – Val Copley
- 23rd July: *Zoroastrianism* – Daryoush

Tuesday 30th July – Sunday 4th August

With Fringe pilgrimages, events and workshops from 27th July 2019



the Goddess CONFERENCE Sun Lover

<https://goddessconference.com>

Glastonbury, England

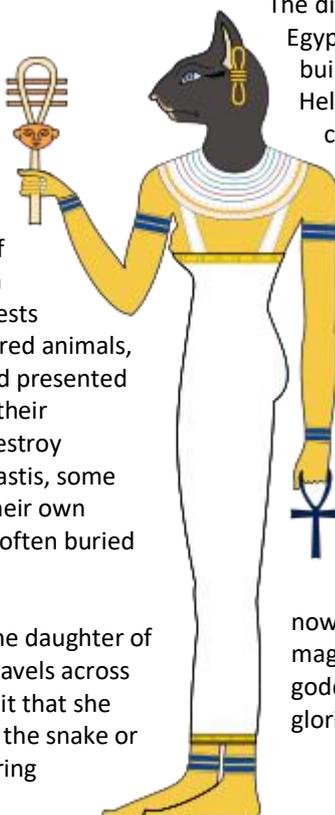
Cat Goddess *Bastet*

Terry Pratchett, the famous author of the Discworld comic fantasy novels, such as *Small Gods*, *Wyrd Sisters* and *Equal Rites*, understood how important cats are. He said, "In ancient times, cats were worshipped as gods; they have not forgotten this."¹ Anyone who has ever been owned by a cat will have already experienced this for themselves.

The best known cat goddess is probably Bastet,² also known as Bast. Bastet is the Egyptian goddess of cats... and: the home, fire, sunrise, music, dance, pleasure, sexuality, fertility, family, pregnant women, and children; so definitely quite important! She is believed to be the personification of the soul of Isis. She is represented either as a woman with the head of a domesticated cat, a lioness (as goddess of sunlight) or as a desert sand-cat. She holds with her a sacred rattle, a small bag over her left shoulder, a sistrum³ in her right hand, and has figurines of kittens surrounding her feet. She possesses the *Utchat* or *Uraeus* – the revered, all seeing eye of the sun god Ra, used as instrument for his vengeance.⁴

Bastet was seen as *The Sacred Cat* and Egyptians had a high regard for cats because of her. Any crimes against cats were considered a severe transgression and very unlucky. Her priests considered cats living in her temples to be sacred animals, and when they died, they were mummified and presented to the goddess. Cats were revered because of their protective nature - they killed the pests that destroy essential food crops. In the ancient city of Bubastis, some 300,000 cats were mummified and buried in their own cemetery. When cats' owners died, they were often buried beside their pre-deceased, mummified cats.

The cat goddess was often understood to be the daughter of the sun god Ra. She assisted Ra in his nightly travels across the sky in his boat of a million years. Myth has it that she protects him against her fierce nemesis, Apep, the snake or serpent demon. This role resulted in her acquiring another title: "the Lady of the Flame". She is believed to be the wife of Ptah, the chief God of Memphis, and to be the mother of the lion god Mihos. She is also thought to be the mother of Nefertum, the god of perfumes.



Cat Goddess Bastet with Ankh and Sistrum³

"In ancient times, cats were worshipped as gods; they have not forgotten this."

Like most Egyptian goddesses, Bastet has at least two aspects to her: she is both nurturing and aggressive. On her gentler side, she appears as a protector of homes and pregnant women. Her more bellicose nature shows during incredible battles when she is protecting the pharaoh, and here she takes the form of her twin sister (sometimes considered to be simply another aspect of herself), Sekhmet.

The divine Bastet was one of the best-loved goddesses of ancient Egypt; especially Lower Egypt. Many temples and statues were built in her honour by her followers in cities such as Memphis, Heliopolis, and Herakliopolis. However, of all the cities, none could surpass the reverence she received in the city of

Busbastis near the Nile Delta, which was actually named after her. The historian Herodotus recorded that every year, in the months of April and May, her yearly festivals attracted some 700,000 people, travelling in huge ships, singing songs and dancing as they headed to the city. Prodigious amounts of wine were drunk in these festivals. Upon reaching Bubastis, great sacrifices were made. This annual festival went by different names including "Festival of Bast", "Procession of Bast", "Bast Goes Forth from Bubastis" and "Bast Guards the Two Lands".⁴

The festivals continued until the destruction of the city in 350 BCE by invading Persians. Unfortunately only ruins now remain to remind us of the one-time splendour of magnificent Bubastis and its festivals, the sacred city of the cat goddess - a feline creation even greater than any Discworld glories imagined by Terry Pratchett. ☆



Write for the Newsletter 😊

Do you follow a particular pagan path? Do you have an interest in an individual goddess, or a whole set of deities? Are specific aspects of daily life, such as the environment or social relationship issues, of concern to you? Do you have a favourite seasonal recipe? Please consider writing for this newsletter (articles can be as short as you like or up to about 1,500 words).

Contact Jamie at: temple@lovecat.com

¹ <https://www.greatest-quotations.com/>

² Bastet image: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bastet>

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sistrum>: "A sistrum is a musical instrument of the percussion family, chiefly associated with ancient Egypt. It consists of a handle and a U-shaped metal frame, made of brass or bronze. When shaken the small rings of thin metal on its movable crossbars produce a sound from a soft clank to a loud jangling. Its name in the ancient Egyptian language was 'sekhem'. The sistrum has remained a liturgical instrument in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church throughout the centuries and is played on important church festivals. It is also occasionally found in Neopagan worship & ritual."

⁴ <http://egyptian-gods.org/egyptian-gods-bastet/>

Lammas - Festival of the Great Mother

The Great Mother in England¹

Throughout England and throughout the world the Great Mother Goddess is honoured through myriad forms and names. In Sheffield Lammas, 1st August, is marked both as Yorkshire Day, and as the day of Gwenith, our bright and fair northern goddess of golden grain (see page 2 of this newsletter).

The name Lammas comes from the Saxon *Hlaf-mass*, the feast of bread, and is a celebration of the produce of grain. This festival of fruitfulness became identified with the Celtic midsummer festival of Lughnasadh, which celebrated the cutting of the corn, and the death and resurrection of the god Lugh of Llud or Nudd as Grain God or Corn King. Reminders of this festival of mourning for the death of the Corn King continue to the present day in Wakes Weeks, when annual summer holidays are traditionally taken by many Northern and Midlands factories. Wakes Weeks are holy-days in which family ancestors are remembered and their graves or homes visited on holiday.²

The Saxon *Hlaf-mass*, the feast of bread and the corn harvest, is personified in the English folk song *John Barleycorn Must Die*, which celebrates the important cereal crop barley, and the alcoholic beverages made from it, beer and whisky. In the song, John Barleycorn is represented as suffering indignities, attacks and death that correspond to the various stages of barley cultivation, such as reaping and malting. Kathleen Herbert draws a link between the mythical *Beowa* (a figure stemming from Anglo-Saxon paganism who appears in early Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies and whose name means "barley") and the figure of John Barleycorn. Herbert says that *Beowa* and Barleycorn are one and the same, noting that the folk song details the suffering, death, and resurrection of Barleycorn, yet also celebrates the



"reviving effects of drinking his blood."³

As an ancient folk song *John Barleycorn Must Die* has too many verses (and alternative versions) to publish here, but they include:

There were three men came out of the west, their fortunes for to try,

And these three men made a solemn vow:

John Barleycorn must die.

They've ploughed, they've sown, they've harrowed him in,

Threw clods upon his head, And these three men made a solemn vow:

John Barleycorn was dead...

They've hired men with their crabtree sticks

to cut him skin from bone, And the miller he has served him worse than that,

For he's ground him between two stones.

And little Sir John and the nut brown bowl and his brandy in the glass,

And little Sir John and the nut brown bowl proved the strongest man at last.

The huntsman he can't hunt the fox, nor so loudly to blow his horn,

And the tinker he can't mend kettle nor pots, without a little barleycorn.⁴

In Glastonbury the Mother Goddess's abundant nature is celebrated at Lammas each year through the international Goddess Conference. Here the Great Mother is recognised as Novala the Mother Goddess of the Isle of Avalon: "While our human mothers may fail to live up to our exacting ideals, the Great Mother Goddess is ever-loving and always present with her endless compassion."⁵

"This is not to say that men are lesser beings than women because they are not able to give birth"



Women have the amazing ability to conceive new life, to be the physical, emotional, mental and

¹ Image: www.kisspng.com/png-mother-goddess-mother-nature-gaia-7130488/

² Kathy Jones, *The Ancient British Goddess*, Glastonbury 2017, p.126

³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Barleycorn

⁴ www.songfacts.com/lyrics/traffic/john-barleycorn

⁵ Kathy Jones, *Priestess of Avalon*, Glastonbury 2006, p.226

spiritual vehicle through which intangible, insubstantial spirit incarnates into physical reality. This is not to say that those women who decide not to have children, or who are unable to bear children for whatever physical reason, are somehow lesser women. Their karmic choices bring other initiations to the fore. It is also not to say that men are lesser beings than women because they are not able to give birth; again they have different initiations to face. But motherhood is the great female experience and achievement, which is not only physical, but also emotional, psychological, and spiritual.⁶

The Great Mother in India⁷

For Hindus in India and throughout the world the Great Mother Goddess is often worshipped as **Durga** – **as illustrated on this newsletter's front cover**. Durga is the fierce form of the protective mother goddess, willing to unleash her anger against wrong, to use violence for liberation, and destruction to empower creation. She is depicted in the Hindu pantheon as a Goddess riding a lion or tiger, with many arms each carrying a weapon, often shown (with the active assistance of the lion or tiger) defeating a demon named Mahishasura.

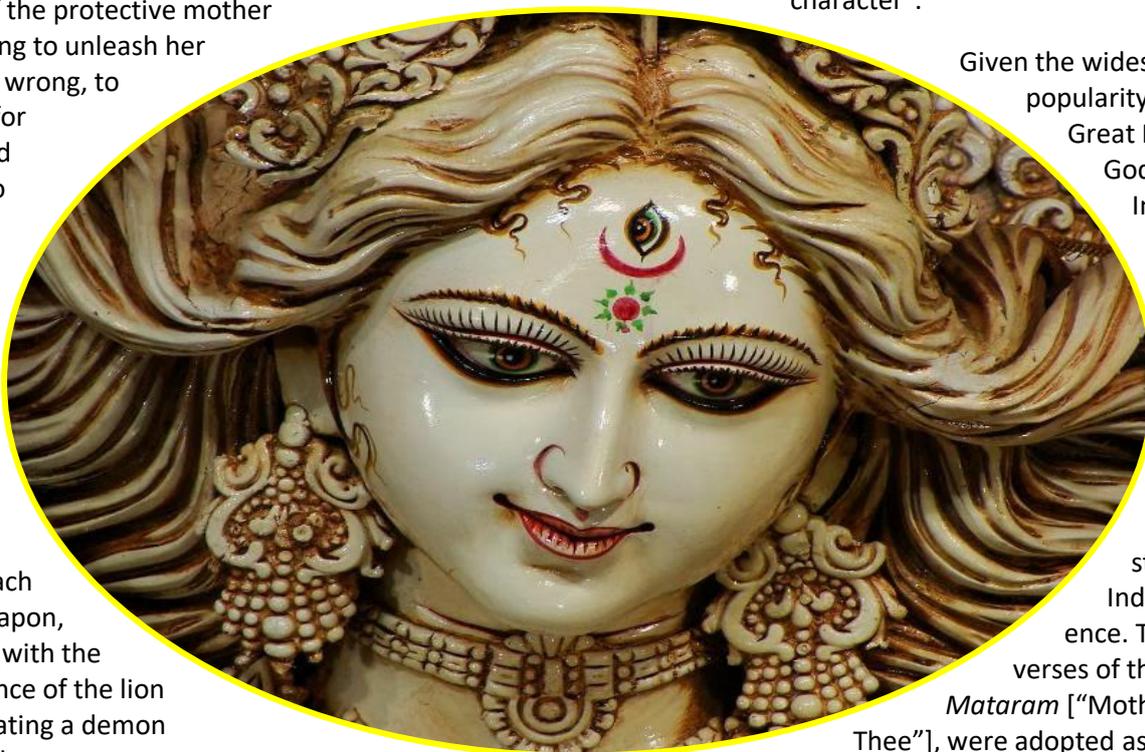
Durga herself is viewed as the "Self" within and the divine mother of all creation. She has been revered by Hindu warriors, and asked to bless their new weapons. Durga iconography has been flexible in the Hindu traditions, with for example some intellectuals placing pens or other writing implements in her hands, rather than spears or other weapons, since they consider the stylus as their armament.

It is notable that Durga's presence is not limited to Hindu India. Some tantric traditions of Buddhism included Durga and developed their own traditions about her, and in Japanese Buddhism she appears as the goddess Butsu-mo (sometimes called Koti-sri). In Tibet, the goddess Palden

Lhamo is similar to the protective and fierce Durga.

In Jainism the *Sacciya mata* (Mother Goddess) found in major medieval-era Jain temples mirrors Durga, and she has been identified by Jainism scholars as the same goddess, or at least as sharing a more ancient common lineage. In the Ellora Caves in Maharashtra, India, the Jain temples feature Durga with her lion mount. However here she is not shown as killing a demon, but is presented as a peaceful deity.

Sikhism too has a sacred text in which Durga is exalted, in this case in *Dasam Granth*, a text traditionally attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. However this view has been challenged by modern day Sikhs who consider Sikhism to be monotheistic, and who hold that feminine forms of divinity and reverence for Goddesses are "unmistakably of Hindu character".⁸



Given the widespread popularity of Durga as a Great Mother Goddess on the Indian sub-continent, it is no surprise to learn that she was looked to for inspiration during the struggle for Indian independence. The first two verses of the song *Vande Mataram* ["Mother, I Bow to Thee"], were adopted as the National

Song of India in October 1937 by the Congress Working Committee, prior to the end of colonial rule in August 1947. In 1950, after independence, the first two verses of the song were declared the "national song" of the Republic of India (distinct from the national anthem of India). The first two verses are an abstract reference to mother and motherland, and do not mention any deity by name, but later verses do mention goddesses such as Durga.⁹

This is in line with the ancient ideology of Durga as Mother and protector of Indians. The Indian Army still promotes slogans such as "*Durga Mata ki Jai!*" ["Victory to Mother Durga!"]. In India today any woman who takes up a cause to fight for right and justice is said to have the spirit of Durga, the Great Mother Goddess, in her. ☸



⁶ Jones, Ibid. p.239

⁷ Image: http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-pmO2XwrMn78/UIPfXSGFBxI/AAAAAAAAAFg/EEzVx7g1cxo/s1600/maa_durga.jpg

⁸ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durga

⁹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vande_Mataram

The Breeze Necklace

A Northern Story – Retold¹

The flaming dominion of magic can be fanned into life by the flowing energies stored in gold. Catherine knew that; she felt it in her bones. The sun goddess herself breathed rays of heat and light into gold. The breath of the goddess was the transforming breeze of magic, the gentle zephyr of empowerment. The runes could teach her. Ansuz, ᚲ, the runic out-breath of a god, could give her empowered speech – spell casting.

Catherine was still young, but eager to learn. Her body had become that of a woman, but in her village she still lived with her family. Her people had a small farm, but since she had been a little girl, Catherine had wanted more. In her dreams at night she sensed an emotional and spiritual breeze blowing. It came from the world of the Light Elves, from Freya and Frey, goddess and god of fertility and growth. This night breeze, the breath and secret whispered wisdom of the gods, told her to study and to learn, to become whole and sovereign through discovery, healing, empathy, compassion, and ability to protect. “*Look for the Breeze Necklace*”, something in her dreams told her, “*and learn the magical out-breaths inherent in the spoken powers of the runes*”. Were these the words of the god Frey she wondered? Could they be trusted? Or was this the trickster god Loki impersonating wisdom in her mind?

One dark winter night, leaving the family cats sleeping soundly on her bed, Catherine ventured out, away from her village, wandering away through snow covered fields, walking in to the mountains. After some time, before the dawn, she took shelter in a cave entrance, finding herself in a large dank cavern. Feeling her way, she descended down a steep and stony path, drawn onwards by a faint red light and hint of warmth.



¹ Based on *The Necklace of the Brisings in Norse Myths*, Kevin Crossley Holland, Penguin 1982, pp. 65-69



Catherine paused and stood listening.² She heard water dripping into rock pools. And then a distant tapping noise. Her heart beats aligned themselves to the rhythm of the tapping, measuring her longing. Somehow she felt that here she could find her magical Breeze Necklace of gold. She continued onwards, down into the strengthening underground light, now flickering and turning fiery.

Eventually she stepped into a large cavern – which, it quickly became obvious, was a smithy of the Dark Elves, those also known as dwarves, small in stature and saturnine in temperament, but famed for their skill in working gold. An intense heat emanated from a glowing furnace in the centre of the cavern, around which stood four dwarves.

When she realized what the dwarves were working on, Catherine gasped in delight. She saw an almost completed, wondrous necklace of gold, incised with magical patterning – runes potentially both warding and active. She stared at the workings of the dwarves, wondering from where their knowledge of the runes had come. Hearing Catherine’s astonished exhalation, the four dwarves turned and stared. Just as Catherine was mesmerised by the magical splendour of the gold, so they became enraptured by Catherine’s feminine beauty. “*Dvalin, at your service!*” announced the first Dark Elf. The others too gave their names: Alfrigg, Berling and Grerr.

At first she did not understand that to the Dark Elves the runes were patterns and letters, but little more. They had sought to imbue the necklace with their own dark, male magic, but they didn’t see the vast and complex potential of the gold so worked. Catherine knew instinctively that she could take that basic male magic, and transform it into something else. From base metal that is gold, she could create things much more valuable than material wealth. In her hands the golden runes might bring light of knowledge, spells of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, and ultimately new life itself.

Dimly she perceived that the dwarves would never do these things, never bring the rune-incised gold to its full potential, because they remained blinded by its material value as a worked object, a great creation of dwarven art, beautiful and valuable in monetary terms but, once forged, static and apparently dead. She ached to bring the runes to life, to interact with them, to be able to use them not only as adornment, but as living magical gifts to those in need: women and men who could be made more fertile, healed of physical, emotional and psychic pain, or be given opportunities to learn and create in many varied ways.

[continues on page 8]

² Image: www.shopbop.com/goddess-brisingamen-necklace-gemma-redux/vp/v=1/845524441879174.htm

Lammas Recipe

by Patti Wigington
www.learnreligions.com

Barley Mushroom Soup



Grains such as wheat and barley are the ultimate symbol of the Lammas season. After all, once the grain is harvested, it is milled and baked into staple foods such as bread, which is then consumed. It is the cycle of the harvest come full circle. The spirit of the grain god/dess lives on through us in the eating of the grain. In many traditions, a loaf of special bread is baked in the shape of a man or woman, to symbolize the god/dess of the harvest.

Barley is one of the grains honoured in harvest folklore throughout history, especially around the Lammas sabbat. You can either make this soup right before meal time, or get it started early in the day, and allow it to simmer for a few hours.

Ingredients

- 5 cups vegetable broth
- 1 cup barley, uncooked
- 1/2 lb. mushrooms
- 1/2 cup onion, diced
- 1/2 cup fresh carrots, chopped
- 1/2 cup celery, chopped
- 2 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Bring the vegetable broth to a low rolling boil on the stove and then reduce heat. Add the mushrooms, onions, carrots and celery, and allow to simmer for ten minutes. Add the barley and garlic, cover and simmer for another hour.

Add salt and pepper, seasoning to taste. Top with fresh croutons and chives, if you've got them handy. Serve as a side dish at your Lammas celebration, accompanied by a nice soft chunk of buttered bread!



Goddess Temple Melissas



Join our Sheffield Goddess Temple Melissas between 12:30 and 1:30 pm, Monday to Saturday, to experience the seasonal energies in quiet contemplation.

Temple Melissas are the people who hold space in the Temple between 12.30 and 1.30 pm every day, Monday to Saturday. It is a delightful job to do. If you would like to be part of the Melissa team please leave a message at Airy Fairy for Ann Staniland or Brian Harrison.

The Temple on the Web

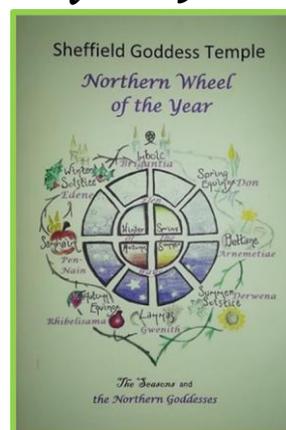


Welcome Events Gallery Our Publications Links Facebook Twitter Contact Us

For all the most up to date information on what is going on at the temple, don't forget to check out our website which has all the latest news of events, and links to our Facebook and Twitter pages:

<https://sheffieldgoddess temple.org/>

Discover Our *Northern Wheel of the Year*



Booklet available in the temple (£4).

The temple is open each day, Monday to Saturday 12:30 to 1:30pm, or ask in the Airy Fairy shop.

Agree or Disagree?

"The concept of perfection has no place in an organic, evolving religion."

Freya Aswynn
[Leaves of Yggdrasil, Llewellyn USA, 1994, p.196]



[continued from page 6]

In desperation Catherine offered to buy the necklace... but the dwarves pointed out that they had spent their lives acquiring wealth – they had no need of yet more coins. But, they told her, there was a way the necklace could be hers. “Stay, and have a drink with us,” they said, “and we’ll discuss it. Don’t worry, we’ll look after you.” Later in the evening, when she was already drunk and confused, they named their price. Or at least, the first instalment. Dvalin led her to his bed, coverting her charm. He took possession of her body, placating his physical desires.

The next day Catherine was ill and hung over, but now it was Alfrigg’s turn. With a knowing wink from Dvalin, he insisted that she stagger to her feet, and eat and drink with him, “to make her feel better”. By evening she hardly knew where she was any more. This time it was Alfrigg who took the beautiful young woman to his bed, and had his way with her. And the next day and night it was Berling’s turn, and then finally, amidst much laughter from his three companions, the fourth day and night belonged to Grrerr. By which time, Catherine no longer knew where she was, with whom, or what was happening to her.

On the fifth day, used and abused, she

was evicted from the forge by the dwarves. Laughing loudly amongst themselves they dragged her, almost senseless, to the surface, and dropped her on the path outside the cave entrance to their underground labyrinth. They called her “whore”, but - loudly proclaiming that they were men of their word - also threw their golden necklace on to her prostrate body. “Don’t say we didn’t pay you... whore!” Dvalin shouted, cursing her for her expensive, seductive, attractiveness. “And don’t come back, we’ve had our fill of you!” Alfrigg moaned as the dwarves departed, leaving her wounded and alone.

Someone was watching. As the barely conscious young woman tried to struggle to her feet, she sensed a presence. At first it was all round her: in the sky above, and the ground below; in the trees, in the wind. In the breeze. Then She came, walking down the path towards her: warmth, a mature woman. There was an intensity about this approaching figure, a healing, healthy protectiveness. Catherine attempted to stand, but was too weak. Instead the woman bent down, embraced her, and gently lifted her to a sitting position, where she could at least breathe more easily.

After some time had passed, Catherine began to feel well again. At first she was bemused by the taught power of the arm muscles holding her. Then she noted a sword hanging in a sheath from a leather belt around the woman’s skirt. At last, with sudden vision, she knew her protector: Freya, Sun Lover and Warrior Goddess. Catherine’s spirit re-awoke. Her soul danced and basked in the forbidden fruit of knowing that she, yes she, and all women, are made in the image of Goddess... with all her imperfection, her pain and abuse, she was loved.¹

Escorting Catherine back to her village Freya explained: “I was travelling the nine worlds and I saw you. I saw that you know true beauty, the energy that is in golden sunlight, in the warmth of the sun’s rays. You know that solar energy, through the magic of the runes, can give knowledge, wisdom, understanding; that it can heal the body, the emotions, and

the spirit. And I can tell you: that’s not all the golden etchings in your Breeze Necklace can do. Learn to use those runes aright, and they can, at your spoken words, transmute active evil into impotent immobility.”

Later, as time passed, Catherine learned much about the runes and their solar energies. Until one day - one pre-dawn - she returned to the mountain cave entrance to the dwarves’ underground labyrinth. Wearing her golden Breeze Necklace, and speaking runic enchantments on every out-breath, she drew Dvalin, Alfrigg, Berling and Grrerr to the surface - attracting them with spells of lust for both gold and sexual pleasure.

On to the path they came, greedy for yet more wealth and beauty to be despoiled. But as they emerged, so too did the sun from beyond the horizon. Freya’s light rays, her solar energies, quickly turned the stunned dwarves to petrified stone, absorbing their body heat, and changing their fiery hot blood to frozen ice. The runic etchings on Catherine’s golden Breeze Necklace glowed for a few moments, then faded to become once again just etched metal... awaiting any future need for spells to be spoken. ✱

JI



Discover
The Tarot

Booklet available in the temple (£4).

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¹ Sentence. adapted from Tyna Redpath in “The Ancient British Goddess”, Kathy Jones, Glastonbury 2017, p.229

