

Crane Chatter

Imbolc 2010 Edition



Brighid's Cross

Around the fire



Well, Anna Gail asked for a column from the Senior Druid, and it took me a minute before I said “Oh wait, that’s me!” I’ve spent the last two weeks trying to figure out what to write about. Having come up with nothing, I decided to stare at a blank screen and just start writing. So, here it goes.

As I write this, we’ve had our first thaw of the winter and now the mercury is heading back down. I always think of the first thaw as the ‘real Imbolc,’ not just a somewhat arbitrary date on the calendar, but when the snow and ice recedes to reveal the dirt, grass, and earth beneath. My forget-me-nots are green in the garden out front, so it seems like the first stirrings, even though the air underneath is still cold, no matter what the thermometer says.

When people ask me what my favorite high day is, I usually end up saying whichever one is coming up, and Imbolc is no different. Imbolc was my first ADF rite, in Jenni’s apartment on the east side of Columbus. Jim and I walked in, were warmly greeted (ah, *ghost), saw some new faces and surprisingly some familiar ones also. That first ADF rite changed everything I felt about my spiritual path, and was like “coming home.” Soon afterward, we started getting more involved with the grove until suddenly at Summerlands, Mike was standing there with a membership forum,

winking at me, and saying “C’moooooon.” So we joined, and once again there was a change as to what my conception of a pagan group was, and could do.

Imbolc is a time of initiation, of new life, of rebirth. Joining Three Cranes Grove was a rebirth on my spiritual path, and I imagine it is for many people who join ADF. But more importantly than just our ‘membership cards,’ is our devotion and connection to the Kin-dreds. I had only done sabbats before and the occasional full or new moon. The idea of daily devotions, patron deities, and more inclusion of ancestors and nature spirits was foreign to me, and my connections to all have grown in the last seven (wow!) years.

So, for Imbolc, maybe we should focus on those areas of our lives where we need new growth. What parts of our spiritual gardens have grown barren or stagnant, and need to be revitalized?

Tanrinia
Senior Druid
Three Cranes Grove, ADF



Three Cranes Grove, ADF

Brigando

Also known as Brigid, Brighid, Brigantia, Brigit and Bride. The daughter of the Dagda, Brigid is a tripleformed Celtic Hearth-Culture Goddess. She is mother to Ruadán. The first keening heard in Ireland was when she mourned after he was killed at the Second Battle of Moytura. She can appear in many guises including the Maiden, the Sister, the Mother, the Foster Mother and the Crone/Calliech/Hag. She contains aspects of fire, well and oak tree goddesses. She is patroness of healers, seers, hearth fires, poetry, smithcraft and forge fires among many other things.

Her feast day is February 1st, and she figures prominently in the Three Cranes Grove liturgy for the Holy day of [Imolg](#). It is thought that our current traditions of Groundhogs Day stem from traditions surrounding Brigid's weather seership. Sacred Fires were kept burning perpetually by her priestesses throughout history and this tradition has been "re-ignited" in the present times. Three members of our Grove are Oath sworn Flame Keepers in this tradition. The flame we use and "keep" has been obtained through pilgrimage to Kildare, Ireland. Kildare means literally the "church of the oak." In ancient days it was the location of a fire temple maintained by 19 priestesses. Later it became the site of a convent of nuns of the Celtic Christian church. Sisters of the Brigidine Order maintain the perpetual flame there today.

Brigid unites many traditions, Groves, orders and religions. Her message to us has been one of peace and cooperative work towards justice. Her message is of healing of the planet, inspiring us through Awen and forging a new and better way forward.

-Shawneen



Anthesteria—a Hellenic View of Imbolc

By: Melissa S Burchfield

Hellenic Druids may not seem to be on the same page as our Celtic counterparts—and with good reason! Most Druids view Samhain as the time to honor the Ancestors, and although we do our best to follow along these lines, it is not until the *Anthesteria* that our true calling to the Land of the Dead comes to full bloom. The Rosalia Festival in Roma is comparable.

Athens: Anthesteria occurred over the course of three days and was centered on *Dionysos Limnaios*, Dionysos of the Marshes. This was a festival of celebration, remembrance and unity, for unlike other Hellenic festivals, the slaves were allowed to participate in the Anthesteria as a way of uniting the household. Decorations included vine and ivy leaves, and part of festival clothing included head wreaths and a wand known as a *thysos*: a wand of wood with ivy leaves affixed to the top.

At the heart of Anthesteria was the celebration of the maturing of the wine, the Feast of the Wine, *Pithoigia*, for on the first day the wine stored at the previous vintage was opened. People dressed in more formal clothing or in costumes of the god Dionysus and poured many libations near his temple in his honor. The revelry lasted all the first day and well into the second, the Day of Cups or *Khoes*, and included drinking games—whose prizes were often wine skins full of wine! A common theme of “ecstatic abandon” or “intoxicated ecstasy” consistent with the Mysteries of Dionysos was evident among all walks of life. The wine was left opened to breathe in its natural state during this time. After the end of the festival and throughout the rest of the year, the wine was properly diluted in a 10:1 ratio, water to wine (Winter, 177).

The evening of the second day was when The Holy Marriage of the Spring occurred. The wife of the *Archon Basileus* (magistrate responsible for the civic religious arrangements) went through a marriage

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She was assisted by fourteen Athenian matrons, *geraerae*, whom she chose herself and swore to secrecy.

Most festivals in honor of Dionysos had an element of sexual union, though the “wine and sex” in this festival is more symbolic and formalized than the orgies common during the Dionysia (Burkert, 167).

This is also the time when the dead freely roamed the city. On the third day, *Khutroi*: The Feast of the Dead, libations were poured on the tombs of departed loved ones, offerings were made to Hermes as god of the lower world, and the *Keres*, or Destinies, were honored. Several sources make mention of the Cult of the Dead, and it is assumed they were a mystery cult, since further information regarding them at this time is vague at best. Another name for this day was the Day of Pots, so named for the pots of stewed vegetables and seeds that were prepared and left out for wandering spirits (Winter, 117).

The first day post-festival, the *Keres* were expelled from the city and the wine was covered once more. A popular Greek proverb tells of the attitude many had with these spirits, for people known to pester for continual favors were ran “Out of Doors, *Keres*! It is no longer Anthesteria!” meaning they will no longer be tolerated and have overstayed their welcome.

Anthesteria was a time of revelry and reverence, of wine and of devotion, of harmony and of homage to those above, those below and those all around. Hierarchical lines were blurred and much in the spirit of Dionysian work, the true self was exposed to the world. Modern-day Hellenic Druids have been known to adapt some of the moving and meaningful practices of the Celtic Samhain festivals such as Dumb Suppers and Underworld Meditations which serves to illustrate that “scholarly research...is important, but it should not be a hindrance to those wanting to honor the Gods in the Old Ways” (Alexander, 83). No matter how you celebrate this high day, the time taken to meet the Gods in a meaningful way will always be a common thread among us, linking our hearths in unity of purpose

Wwww.threecranes.org and blurring the lines that divide us.

Service Report – Green Lawn

Over the years Three Cranes have performed many different acts of service and has been honored by receiving not one but two of the ADF Founder's Award for our efforts.

In the past we have adopted parks and trails to clean up and try to give back to the communities we serve. This past year we decided to change directions and adopt a local cemetery. We choose Green Lawn Cemetery not only because it is a Columbus Landmark but because it has a wonderful Druid Monument. Here is a little information about Green Lawn from their website.

A Very Special Park

Our "very special park" was founded in southwest Columbus, Ohio in 1848. With over 360 acres, Green Lawn is home to a wide variety of plants and trees, many native to Ohio, that provide a splendid background to the unique architecture of the monuments, obelisks, and mausoleums. Green Lawn is known to many as a [birding area](#), and to others as a natural setting where [wildlife](#) and [history](#) intertwine.



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Green Lawn is the final resting place for many of Columbus's founding fathers, as well as many noted historical figures. Among them, Gordon Batelle (industrialist), Samuel P. Bush (founder of Buckeye Steel and grandfather & great-grandfather to Presidents George Bush & George W. Bush, respectively), Lincoln Goodale (physician & philanthropist), the Lazarus family (founders of the Lazarus department stores), James Rhodes (three-term governor of Ohio), and Eddie Rickenbacker (World War I flying ace). (www.greenlawncolumbus.org)

I feel an overwhelming warmth when we are walking through the cemetery, fixing headstones and cleaning up mostly fallen tree debris. Like many older cemeteries the ground is settling and the markers aging; fading from the constant contact of wind, rain and sun. I know many of us take time to not only clean and stand the markers back up but to read the names and share a quiet moment with those ancestors that we communing with. Of all the cleanup projects we have done over the years this one is my favorite.

- Seamus





Prayer Beads

By Mary Anne

Shortly after joining ADF and becoming a friend to Three Cranes Grove I started seriously working on my Dedicants Path materials. I had been trying to get through my 9 virtues articles and was finding I was having a lot of trouble motivating myself to do them. I had been browsing the articles on ADF's website and stumbled across one by Susan Reed called "An ADF Nine Virtues Bead Devotional". The idea intrigued me so I read on. After reading the entire article several times I realized that this could be something that might really help me figure out what I want to talk about in my virtues essays so I set about to create my own set of prayer beads. I borrowed heavily in some places from Susan's original devotional but in other places I felt my interpretation was much different and warranted coming up with a brand new words and ideas. It took me a couple of hours to complete the whole devotional and it is still a work in progress but it is something that I am very proud of and think on almost everyday. I have yet to complete all my DP virtue articles but the longer I meditate daily on the virtues the deeper understanding I gain from them and I have confidence that when I finally sit down and write it all out my daily devotional will provide me insights I would not have had otherwise.

First Bead- Ancient Ones, Noble Ones, Shining Ones, I welcome you in heart and hearth. On this day may I live in such a way that I may honor you in word and action. *(The bead I used for this I felt represented all three kindreds, silver for the shining ones, antique looking for the ancestors, and floral designs for the nature spirits.)*

Wisdom- On this day may I have the knowledge and insight to judge appropriately. *(This bead is represented by a pearl for "pearls of wisdom")*

Piety- On this day may I never forget my relationship with you and may I honor you with a joyful heart. *(I associate piety with love and devotion so it made sense that this bead was heart shaped.)*

Vision- On this day may I assume nothing and open my eyes to the wider world around me. *(I chose this bead because of it being clear, you can almost see through it.)*

Loki- Master of Mischief and Bringer of Change... *(Because Loki is one of my patrons I felt it only appropriate that his bead is slightly larger than the rest. I also tried to find the most unique bead in my collection because Loki tends to march to the beat of his own drum.)*

Courage- On this day may I follow the way of truth with strength and determination in spite of my fears. *(I chose red for this bead because it is often associated with bravery.)*

Integrity- On this day may I remain true to my values and approach others' beliefs with tolerance and respect. *(I chose a rainbow for this bead because all of the colors exist together harmoniously.)*

Perseverance- On this day may I wholeheartedly pursue my goals even in times of strife. *(I chose an orange bead because it reminded me of the sun and how it never fails to rise and fall everyday.)*

Danu- Queen of Kindness and Great Earth Mother... *(I chose a large brown bead for it's obvious earth connections.)*

Hospitality- On this day may I give to you and others with humor and grace so that I may receive in turn. *(I chose a golden bead because it reminded me of warmth and compassion.)*

Moderation- On this day may I find balance in all aspects of life. (*I chose this bead because of the light and dark colors together.*)

Fertility- On this day may I remember to appreciate and nurture creativity in all my endeavors. (*I chose green because I have always found green an inspirational color.*)

Last Bead- Blessed Patrons and Kindred, I thank you for your gifts and wisdom and on this day may I continue to receive your challenges and blessings.



Three Cranes Grove ADF & 6th Night Grove ADF
are once again proud to present the Summerlands Festival in
Yellow Springs, Ohio

Coming August 2010

Mother Nerthus

By: Saoirse

I met her at Ventura Beach in 2006. I was romping along the beach when I suddenly pulled my leg and could barely manage a limp. In that moment while I was sitting upon the sand rubbing the cramp out of my muscle that I heard a voice from the sea,

"Throw in your silver ring and I will heal you."

Not certain who it was but willing to try anything, I did. Two days later, it was as if it had never happened. I then went on with my life and forgot about that voice until 2009. I was washing my hands at a friend's sink and I heard something say,

"I want that silver ring you are wearing"

"No," I said.

I was a bit partial to my jewelry and was neither willing nor prepared to part with another item. But, before I could grab the ring, it slid down the sink. I was not very happy at that point. At that moment I remembered the one who healed me after the beach romp. Interested to see who it was and determine if a connection could be made, I asked my friend to reveal itself to me. It felt male at first, but then female as well. I was not given a name and curious, I went about my business figuring that I would be told very soon who my benefactor and the silver hoarder was.

I went to a liturgy meeting later that week with Three Cranes Grove. It was the first liturgy meeting I had attended with them. This redhead looked at me. I had forgotten her name. I would discover later it was Anna Gail, though I often confused her with another member. We were discussing the Samhain ritual and it had been decided to do a Norse flair on a high day that most people honored in a Celtic fashion. Out of nowhere she said:

"You are going to invoke the Dark Mother, Nerthus."

"How do you spell that?' I asked. Not even thinking how odd this would be. I had never actively participated in Crane rite before. I am not Druid, so I never asked.

"N-E-R-T-H-U-S"

After getting a little bit more information from Anna Gail I started researching online. A Norse goddess...could have been a god/goddess combo....maybe Frey/Freyr, maybe a fertility deity...maybe the Earth itself....maybe maybe maybe...Tacitus, henceforth known as Mr. T wrote about her in the first Century...the guy whom lumped all these tribes together into "Germania", a guy who was writing about people who he did not know or understand. He said it was a she and she got slaves drowned to her. I thought that sounded fun. Dark. Right up my alley.

Websites had colors denoted to this and that deity, Nerthus included. There is a stone and a flower and a day and a blah blah blah. Maybe it was a monk's typo or something invented out of the blue and it never was a divinity anybody worshipped in pre-Christian days. The more I looked, the more none of what I found made any sense. None of it meant anything to me. None of it made me feel like I was being introduced to this divinity. Frustrated and skeptical I wasn't certain this was something I could do, but a Crane had said this was what I was supposed to do, and I therefore would do my best to provide. Driving home from work a day or two later, my friend from Ventura beach popped up....

"It's me", she said,"My name is Nerthus. Scrap the books, let's talk."

So we did. She told me Mr. T got some of it right, but not all of it. I decided not to rely on just what the Internet and library books said about her. I started talking to her, giving offerings, and listening in the silence of my heart.

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This went on for a couple of months. Our relationship grew and continues to grow stronger every day. Regardless of what the Internet says, she's a meat and potatoes girl, literally. She likes mutton and the occasional candle burned to her. She is not picky about incense, whatever smells good will do. She likes red poppies....and wants something pink and yellow planted for her in the Spring of Summer. I associate her with our planet. Our beloved Earth Mother. As the rite approached I could feel her with me in my day to day life. And when I touched the concrete floor, and called out to her at the Samhain rite, she reached up from the ground, and took my hand. She has touched me and moved me in ways that constantly amaze me.

What I built was a relationship with this wonderful goddess, not a scholarly intellectual voyage with books that say this or that. I have not memorized the dates Tacitus wrote, the exact spot of the Norse areas where he wrote about her or what the name of the Tribe that supposedly worshipped her was. None of that matters to me. What matters is our relationship today that will last for the rest of my life.

I always wonder if we would have met had I not overdone it on vacation at the beach with friends. Lucky for me, I will never have to worry about that.



Running With Trees Part 6

By Shawneen

Now, we move on to the next two trees in our Ogham forest, the Hazel and the Apple. The Hazel and the Apple are the trees of the fourth and fifth oghams of the second Aicme. (We covered the second and third oghams of this Aicme last winter.)



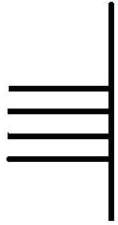
The first of these, the Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) is sometimes known in this country as the Cobnut. A native of Asia, Africa and Europe; the plant was brought to North America in colonial times. It was valued here as it was in the old world for its tasty nut and for the value of its stems. When coppiced, the shrubby hazel branches can be used for

woven fencing and as the “wattle” in wattle and daub construction. Its branches are also renowned for use as divining rods in geomantic work.

The large shrub or small tree often forms bushy thickets usually about 10- 20 feet in height. They tend to prefer moist sites and are often found bordering wells and lakes. Male and female flowers are separate, but found on a single plant. The male flowers are ropelike structures called catkins. These can be found expanding and shedding pollen in the early spring. The female flowers are very small red tassels. The leaves are rounded, toothed, and hairy. One cultivar of the hazel, called Harry Lauder’s Walking Stick, lives with me in my grove. Its branches grow in contorted spirals. It is named after a famous Scottish entertainer, and all of these specimens are clones of a sport (or mutant)

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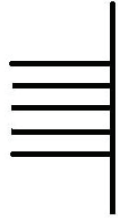
The few “Coll” in the Ogham is pronounced like “coal”. The few of Coll is formed by four marks to the left of the stem line. Its primary image is that of Wisdom. In the lore, the nine hazels that border the Well of Segais feed the Salmon of Wisdom. The five streams that come from the Well of Segais represent the five senses. It is through the five senses that the experiences that transform our knowledge into wisdom are perceived. Secondary meanings for this few are intuition, divination and deep listening. The use of hazel rods to aid in geomancy reflects these meanings. The rods in the hands of a diviner serve to amplify intuition in the diviner. They make the diviner’s subtle perceptions visible and understandable. I use my contorted hazel wand when subtle manipulations of energy and accurate, insightful perceiving of energy fields are desired.



The next few, “Quert,” is represented by the apple tree, or more probably to the ancients, by the crabapple tree. What we know in the modern world as the apple didn’t exist before years of selective breeding increased the size and sweetness of its fruit. What the ancients knew were the smaller, tarter “crab” apple. Crabapple trees tend to be smaller in stature than most of the cultivated

apple trees. Their fruit tends to be substantially smaller. Both are members of the Malus genus. European cultivars of both were brought to this country during colonial times. The stories of Johnny Appleseed and his deliberate naturalization efforts are legendary. In my garden grove, I chose a cultivar called Sargent’s Crabapple due to size constraints. It forms a large multi-stemmed shrub, and has notched leaves and white flowers followed by red fruit. Every year at Winter Solstice time, I am sure to honor and bless my crabapple-kin by wassailing it with an offering of song and spiced cider. The spiced cider I make al-

The few of Quert is formed with five marks to the left of the stem line. Its primary divinatory images are of choice, the otherworld, love, and beauty. Love and beauty can be easily understood by anyone who has been with these beautiful trees during their flowering time and smelled their heady fragrance. My tree friend seems to go in two year cycles of massive versus minimal blooming and fruiting. The tree chooses to alternate between really stepping into its power verses resting/consolidating its gains. To choose love and to live in beauty seems to me to be the wisest of choices. Consider the message of the apple as you move through life! The legends of Glastonbury, the Isle of Apples, which all place its existence lying between the worlds, speak volumes about this few.



The orchards of apples run right to the foot of the Glastonbury Tor itself. Seeing the apple trees in the morning mist below the Tor was indeed an otherworldly experience for me!

I always include apple wood in my bundles of the nine sacred woods for establishing our good fire. I want to be sure to include the traits of this tree in our workings. For me, connecting our world with the otherworld, and choosing love and beauty, all make this a most auspicious of fews.

Bless Everyone/Stick the Landing,
Shawneen

Freyr and the Virtues

Nick Engelhoff

I. Expulsion

There was a time, when Freyr Ingvi was in his youth, that he caused his father, Njorðr, much consternation and many headaches. His wild, raucous behavior and lack of thought for others as he indulged his own whims was turning Noatun upside-down and inside-out. Finally, having reached the limit of his patience, the great, marine Ván called his son before him and told him that until he learned to comport himself with ethics and virtue and some semblance of decency that he would be expelled to the Miðgarð to learn from Men, who at that point held themselves much better than young Freyr did.

Distraught and turned out from his father's home, Freyr Ingvi ventured out into the lands of Men.

II. The Farmer

It was not long before Freyr came upon someone in his travels. As he made his way through the countryside of Miðgarð, he met an old farmer resting upon his tractor. The young god was hungry and asked the farmer if he had food. The farmer gladly shared what food he had with him with the stranger, and as they ate Freyr asked the farmer why he worked so hard at raising his crops and tending to his fields when there were easier ways of getting food.

The farmer thought for a moment, and then replied, "I love this land that I live on and work. I want to see it flower and prosper, bursting forth with life. That's piety, I'd say, friend. Loving something beyond yourself, loving something so much that you're willing to give of yourself in order to see it bettered." Freyr Ingvi asked how the farmer remembered that love, how he kept it going from day to day.

The farmer replied: "Those times when being pious becomes hard, I remind myself through prayer:

May I feel the warm flame of Piety within me.
May I allow it to blossom and grow,
Shining forth into the world with my love for the Kindreds.
For my family and friends.
For the very cosmos itself.

“When I say that prayer, it reminds me what it is to be pious.”

Freyr thanked the farmer for his food and for his insight, and asked for directions to the nearest town. The farmer told him where to go and bid him a safe journey, and as Freyr departed, he whispered a soft blessing and felt the land become effulgent with fertile life.

III. The Fisherman

As Freyr traveled through the fields and countryside, he eventually came to a simple road winding its way through the trees, crops, and high grasses. Following this road, the land slowly dropped away on one side, and a large river came into view. The young god walked along road that mirrored the winding course of the river, and after a while he saw a figure standing on the bank.

It was a man holding a long pole, with which he would periodically cast, wait, reel back-in, and recast a long line into the slow-moving waters. As Freyr approached closer to the fisherman, he could see the line snap and fall into the waters. “Drat!” the fisherman called out, reeling the broken line back in.

The fisherman was sitting on the bank, mending the broken line, as Freyr came within speaking distance. “Why not give up?” the young god asked, his eyes scanning the ground around the fisherman, which was bare aside from his box of tackle.

“A man’s got to eat,” the fisherman replied.

“But how do you keep going on? You’ve caught nothing and your line is broken.”

“Patience, my boy! It’s a virtue,” the fisherman smiled. “That and perseverance. When the way gets rocky and the journey hard, I close my eyes and say to myself:

May I have the strength to Persevere.

May I not let temporary failures become final defeats.

Holy Ones, give me the courage to press on, despite all obstacles.

“That helps calm my mind and heart and remember what needs to be done.”

Freyr nodded thoughtfully, and then helped the fisherman finish mending his line. The man thanked him and gave the young god a few coins for his effort, before Freyr Ingvi continued on his way.

IV. The Priest

The young god kept walking and as he traveled down the road, he began to notice the sun's quickening descent in the west. Impatient to reach town before nightfall, he sped up his pace as much as he could without breaking out into a full run. He continued in this way for a while, his shadow lengthening before him, until he heard a voice call out.

"Ho, boy! What is your rush?"

Freyr Ingvi stopped and looked off to the side of the road, where he saw an older gentleman sitting beside a campfire. "What business is it of yours, old man? But, if you must know, I seek to make it to the next town before night falls."

"Well, you'll tire yourself out long before that happens. The next town over is more than ten miles off and already Lady Sunna prepares to bed down for the night." The old man replied, stoking the burning branches of his small fire with a long stick. "Here, share my fire for the night and continue your travels in the morning. You'll be the better for it."

The young god snorted softly, but after a moment's consideration he approached the old man's fire and sat down. "So, what brings you to the side of this road, sir?" he asked the old man.

"I am a traveling *goði*," the old man said. "And, as I said: Sunna has just about put her horse away for the evening, so I felt it best that I do the same. It wouldn't do to push myself and continue traveling through the night. As I always remind myself:

May I be centered and Moderate in all things.
Let the light of wisdom shine within me
And guide my actions every day.
May I know when to work, may I know when to play.

"And, thus, I knew it was time to stop working and rest for the evening."

Young Freyr smiled, nodding as he did so. "You make a good point, sir. I'd much rather fall asleep with the warmth of a fire at my side and good company, than cold and alone."

"As would I," the *goði* concurred. The two men shared food and conversation together, taking shifts at watch as Mani traveled through the starry heavens. When Freyr woke in the morning, the *goði* was gone, but he had left the young god a small package of food by the cooling embers of the previous night's fire.

V. The Mayor

By late-morning, Freyr saw the rising peaks of the town's houses, shops, and buildings. They grew larger and larger on the horizon as the sun climbed to its zenith and then prepared for her slow descent, as Freyr's shoes put more and more asphalt behind him. It was late-afternoon by the time that the young god entered the town proper, taking in the sights and sounds of the quaint village.

As he wandered through the town's square, idly window-shopping and people-watching as he walked, Freyr was stopped by a middle-aged man sitting at a table outside one of the town's small diners. "Afternoon, stranger," the man said. "I haven't seen you around before, what brings you to our fair town?"

"What, are you the town's sheriff?" Freyr snorted in reply.

The man shook his head. "Nope. I'm her mayor. And I like to greet any new visitors and residents that I happen upon with an open hand and a smiling face."

The young god felt his cheeks redden and apologized. "I'm simply traveling through," he said. "But, I must say, that your town is quite beautiful from what I've seen."

"Well, thank you!" The mayor replied jovially. "I and the other townsfolk have put in more work than can be explained to make this town - our home - as nice as it can be. But it's all been worth it."

"Wow," Freyr said. "How did you find the fortitude to keep going? I'm sure you must've wanted to give up more than once."

"Aye," the mayor said, nodding. "But if you walk through the park across the street, you'll find a commemorative obelisk in the center. And upon that, is carved these words:

Blessed Kindreds,
 May the fertile energies of Creativity flow through me.
 May I create without ravaging and insatiably consuming.
 May I help to reinforce the cosmic order of the Holy Ones,
 Bringing beautiful, new forms into existence
 While helping the old pass away in their time.

"Those words gave us the courage and perspective to remember what we were working for during those times of weariness and despair."

Freyr nodded thoughtfully as the mayor spoke, and thanked him for his words and his welcome before con-

tinuing on through the town.

VI. The Soldier

As Freyr wandered through the town, he eventually came upon a large celebration, the focus of which seemed to be a young man in a military uniform. Freyr drifted among the groups of people, helping himself to some of the food and beverages that were laid out, as he had not eaten since leaving his road-side camp. Eventually, he made his way to the uniformed young man, striking up conversation.

“I am not from here,” the young god said, “and I feel compelled to ask: why the festivities?”

“I’ve been called off to war. This is my going-away party.”

Freyr looked confused. “But, why leave? All your friends and family are here. Besides, you could die, why risk that?”

The young man smiled. “Because I value peace, and sometimes one must fight and sacrifice to make sure that peace survives. And if I’m honest with myself, I could do no less to make sure that my friends and family are safe and sound and able to enjoy that peace. It’s like a prayer that my grandfather taught me:

Blessed Kindreds,
Give me courage to see myself wholly,
With all my virtues and vices laid out before my eyes.
May I have the strength to be honest with myself,
So that I might be honest with others.
May I have the Integrity to always keep my word.

“In those moments that I want to run and hide from what I know is right, I remember that, and I remember the oaths that I’ve sworn and my duty to uphold them.”

Freyr nodded, thoughtful, but did not have time to reply before the young man moved on.

VII. The Mother

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The young god continued to wander around the gathering, taking in the festivi-



ties. As he did, he noticed a young woman with two small children in tow. She was alone, that much was clear, as Freyr could see that she had a singular presence about her. The kind of centered control that a seasoned parent, and a lone one at that, maintained amidst the tiny hurricanes of chaos drifting about them. As Freyr stood watching, one of the two children ran passed the young god, bumping into his leg, as he played tag with his sibling. The young mother chastised the two children for making trouble and apologized to him for their rudeness.

“Don’t worry,” Freyr responded, before asking: “They seem like a handful, how do you do it?”

The woman smiled. “Lots of love. Lots of patience. The occasional shot of whiskey.” They both chuckled at that. “But, no, it’s mostly love.”

“I’m sure that it makes it easier to have another pair of hands to help when things get rough.”

The woman’s face fell slightly. “I wouldn’t know. The kids’ father left a year or so after Dylan - the youngest - was born.” Freyr began to apologize, but the mother cut him off. “No, it’s okay. With the grace of the gods I get through each day, without their strength and guidance I don’t know how I would do it.”

“Guidance?” Freyr asked.

The young mother nodded. “When I feel lost and don’t know how to proceed I pray to the gods, asking:

Blessed Kindreds,
 Open my eyes to See the Path before me.
 Give me guidance to follow, so that I might lead.
 Give me spirit to press on.
 Give me Vision to help the cosmos and its beings proper.

“At the very least, it helps me calm down and not choke the life of my darling babies,” the woman said with an ironic smile. Her eyes went wide before she abruptly darted passed Freyr, yelling out: “Samantha, don’t you *dare* yank on that table-cloth!”

VIII. The General

As Freyr watched the young mother run off after her children, an older man in uniform came up to stand beside him. “Poor girl,” the man said, “it’ll be a fine day when she finds a *good* man to love her and help her.” He nodded to Freyr Ingvi and thrust out his

hand in greeting. “General Benjamin Ayers.”

“Ingvi Njorðrsson,” Freyr returned the handshake.

“I don’t believe I’ve met you before, son,” the General said.

“I’m passing through town. I saw the festivities and came to see what was going on.”

The General smiled. “Ah. Well, I hope you’re having a good time. I pulled out all the stops for this. I wanted to make sure my son had some good memories before going off to war.”

Freyr tilted his head to the side. “But...I’m a complete stranger...?”

The General’s smile broadened. “So? I was raised with a healthy sense of hospitality. Unless someone proves themselves unworthy of that generosity, you do what you can to provide for them. No matter who they are. After all, you never know when one of the gods might be about in the land.”

Freyr said nothing.

The General continued. “As a boy, whenever I was selfish and greedy, my mother would make me repeat this to myself:

Blessed Kindreds,
May I be a generous host and a gracious guest.
Let the spirit of *ghosti*, of Hospitality, well up within me.
May I share my wealth and love with my kith and kin,
Weaving the threads between us that much closer.

“It always reminded me that there was a bigger world beyond myself, and that it was important to be mindful of others.”

Freyr nodded as he took in the General’s words. The older man clapped him on the shoulder, beaming jovially. “Well, enjoy yourself, son. Be sure to try the pulled pork sandwiches, they’re absolutely delicious!” And with that, the General moved off into the crowd of party-goers.

IX. The Chaplain

Freyr wandered through the party, to its edges, finding a seat at an empty table. He thought heavily upon the General’s words, turning them over in his mind. His ruminations were interrupted by the approach of a middle-aged man, wearing a military uniform that was becoming more and more pervasive as Freyr observed the festivities.

“You okay, friend?” the man asked.

Freyr nodded. “Yes, yes. I’m fine.”

“It’s just that you looked troubled about

something,” the man replied.

“No, I’m fine,” Freyr responded. He looked the man over once. “You’re in the military as well? Are you serving with the young man who is being shipped out?”

The man nodded his head. “Aye. I’m the chaplain for his unit.”

Freyr paused. “Doesn’t that mean that you’re not allowed to carry weapons? How can you go into battle so...*naked* like that?”

The man smiled. “Well, I won’t lie, it can be terrifying at times. But one has to acknowledge the fear and push passed it, otherwise it controls them and dictates their actions.”

Freyr seemed impressed. “It must take a lot of mental discipline to be able to do that.”

The man nodded. “It does. Sometimes, the fear takes a hold of you and you can’t shake it. That’s why a lot of people use mnemonics, like prayers, to help steady their hearts and their heads. I always repeat this one to myself when I need to keep my head:

Blessed Kindreds,
Fill my heart with Courage.
May I face my fears.
May I surmount them and keep them from impeding me.

“At the very least it helps clear my head and help me think somewhat more rationally when things are stressful.”

Freyr thanked the chaplain for his insightful words and set off from the party.

X. The Magician

The young god wandered to the outskirts of the town just as the sun was setting, his head and his heart whirling with all of the new information he had taken in over the previous several days. He sat down at the side of the road, watching cars fly by without even a glance in his direction, trying to make sense of things.

As the sun slid lower toward the horizon, a figured appeared from the direction of the countryside, walking along the road. Freyr didn’t move as the man approached closer and closer, until he stood next to him, looking down at the seated god. “Why the long face, *kemo sabe*?”

“What does it matter to you?” Freyr grunted in reply.

The man shrugged. “Well, it’s not

every day that one finds a god with a troubled air about him, sitting by the side of the road.”

Freyr stared up at the man in surprise. “How did you know...?”

The man smiled. “I’m a *vitki*, a magician. It’s my business to know these kinds of things. I *am* one of the ‘wise’, after all.”

Freyr grunted thoughtfully. “Well, if you’re so wise, perhaps you can help me. I was sent here by my father to learn about virtue and ethics and wisdom, and though I’ve certainly been taught a lot by the men and women I’ve met, I don’t know what to make of it all.”

The magician was silent for a moment, thoughtful. Finally, he spoke: “Wisdom and knowledge, the expansion of understanding, are never easy. Sometimes, what it takes is a lot of contemplation and quiet reflection. Perhaps these words will help you:

Blessed Kindreds,
Help me to find Wisdom, Crown of All the Virtues.
May I feel its fullness and humility within me.
May I let its insight guide me.
May I let its hunger drive me toward virtue.
Blessed Kindreds,
Help me to kindle its flame within my breast,
So that I might have a light to guide me through all my days.”

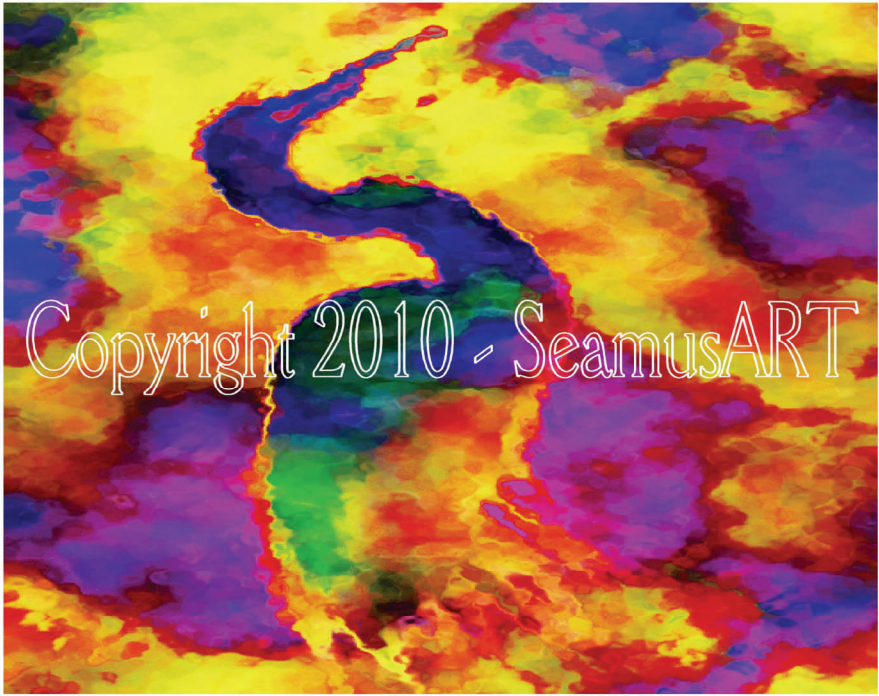
The magician patted Freyr gently on the shoulder. “I’m sure that you will find understanding in time, good Ingvi. Good luck.”

And with that, the magician continued on his way.

XI. Return

Freyr sat by the side of the road for nine days and nine nights. Contemplating the lessons and the insights he had gained during his time of Miðgarð, and reciting the prayer that the magician had taught him, he barely noticed the passing of the days. And as the last night passed into day, the dawning of Sunna on the eastern horizon saw a similar dawning of understanding in the young god’s mind. He realized what it was that his father had wanted him to learn: responsibility, strength, mindfulness of others, humility.

Leaping to his feet, Freyr made his way from the world of Men and back to Noatun, where he was warmly greeted by his father and the other deities.



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I come to you now Garanus, Crane-kin, warder and watcher of my tribe, with an open mind and open heart. I ask that we commune together so that I might learn the lessons of the Crane.

I stand with one foot solid upon the ground. I feel the heartbeat of our mother and it gives me strength. With a firm base I begin my work.

With the wind on my face, I feel the love and fellowship of the Noble Ones and they give me strength. I hear the chorus of voices in the trees and feel the power of the Nature Spirits fill me and empower me.

I stand with one foot in the water. I feel the emotion and love of the Mighty ones and they give me strength. I hear the voices on the waves and feel the power of our Ancestors fill me and empower me.

I stand with my arms stretched out and head up. I feel the blessings on our Mother's first children pouring over me and they give me strength. I see the bright shining stars, moon and sun and I feel the power of the Shining Ones fill and empower me.

Now with the power of the Kindreds and of Land, Sea, and Sky, flowing through me, energizing me, transforming me, I stand as a Crane ready to begin my journey.

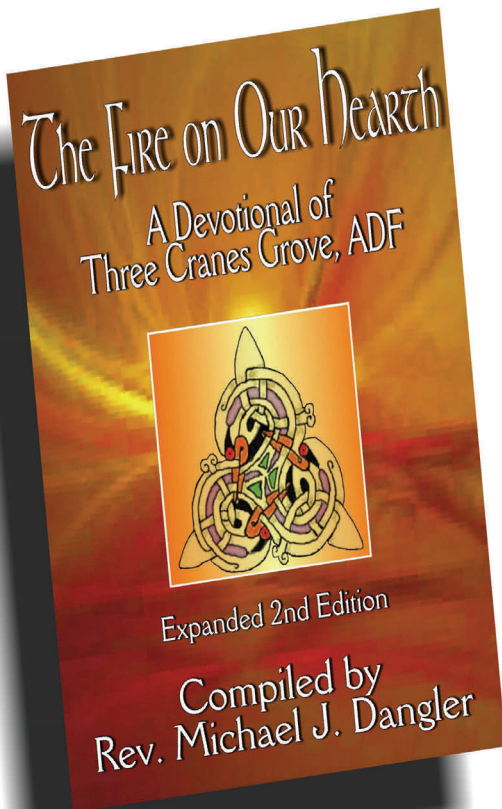
Mighty Crane on your wings I travel distant lands and times, returning always to the sacred center. Lead me where you may. May my Crane-bag never empty of sacrifices to the Kindreds and may I always pray with a good fire.

Three Cranes Grove, ADF

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*Let us pray with a
good fire.*

Next High Day: Ostara (March 21st)

Neo-Pagan name: Ostara
Gaulish name: Sonnocingos

The spring equinox is a time of planting, where the ground is thawed and new things can be initiated. It's a time to think about plans for the future, and to gather together all the things you will need for the work you will do in the year to come.

In ancient days, the folk would bring their tools to the priests who would then "charm" them. This charming or blessing would keep those tools in good working order throughout the year, and would thus sustain the lives of the folk through the always dangerous time from planting to harvest.

The Grove celebrates by bringing forth the tools we use in our work and blessing them in the "working" portion of our rite. Many also celebrate by taking their first spring hikes in the crisp spring mornings.

This Ostara join us to honor the Nature Spirits at the Metroparks of Columbus. Go to our site at www.threecranes.org for location and times..

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