

SageWoman

Celebrating the Goddess in Every Woman



HEALING OURSELVES

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Living the Dream: Letter from the Editor

by Anne Newkirk Niven

*Motherland cradle me
Close my eyes
Lullaby me to sleep
Keep me safe
Lie with me
Stay beside me
Don't go, don't you go.*

— “Motherland”
Natalie Merchant

The morning started out cold, wet, and dark. After a few days of bright clear weather — mornings when sunrise actually revealed the sun and not just a slow fade from black into grey — the rain has closed back in again. Yesterday’s promised snowstorm dropped only a tantalizing quarter-inch before switching briefly to icicle-birthing freezing rain, and then straight into the warm, wet stuff. The rain washed all the ice and snow right into the storm drains, and from there into the swollen Tualatin River, then from the Willamette to the Columbia and eventually into the dark grey sea.

I could be bummed about the rain, but as I stepped outside for my thrice-weekly walk with my neighbor Gloria, we greeted each other jauntily. For the first time in two weeks, our breath didn’t billow out in dragonish clouds of steam as we walked briskly up the hill; we even left our gloves inside our coat pockets as we chugged along. The new storm raised the temperature a full fifteen degrees from what it was two days ago, and it feels like spring — a damp, sploshy spring, mind you — but spring nevertheless, or at least its harbinger.

That feeling — not optimism, exactly, more like a slight-but-perceptible sigh of relief — sums up my mood right now. The economy still sucks, climate change is still on track to do Goddess-knows-what to the environment, and our increasingly fractionated culture still shrilly stirs up boiling pots of outrage, anxiety, and ego at every opportunity, but today I am looking on the sunny side — okay, make that the *soggy* side — of life.

It’s a deliberate choice, this upside perspective; prone to both adrenalin-spiking anxiety and soul-draining depression, I know that keeping my mind clean, focused, and active is as important to my longevity as regular exercise and a balanced diet. So this morning it’s all blues, rockabilly and Texas swing on the stereo even though normally I’m a NPR junkie; sometimes I just have to take a break from the news cyclone or I find myself getting emotionally wrung out.

It’s pretty hectic here anyway: as my sons have concentrated more on their studies I’ve picked up many of the tasks they used to handle. Answering the phone, entering subscriptions, and filling orders are fun, but adding these responsibilities on top of my job as editor and designer sometimes leaves me feeling like I’m sprinting through a marathon. A *Witches & Pagans* gets out and then *SageWoman* clamors for my attention, followed shortly by the next *Crone*; meanwhile, the next *W&P* is gestating away in the background. It’s a wee bit like being pregnant all the time!

But there’s an upside to all this, and it’s far from trivial: I have the rare luxury of being gainfully employed doing work that I find meaningful. So many of my friends — talented, generous and hard-working people — are un- or under-employed and I am acutely aware of how lucky we are to have our work supported by our loyal readers. (Thank you so very, very much!)

In addition, the constant whirl of activity keeps me on my toes. I’ve heard it said that learning something new every day will keep one young-at-heart, and if that’s the case I must be rocketing backwards towards adolescence at a dizzying pace. Our three sons (now all young adults) are eager purveyors of the newest trends: not a day goes by when Alan and I are not excitedly proffered (in person or through social media) tidbits of the future: a new culture craze, a technological breakthrough, or simply a silly posting, video, or “must-see” website. Such “postcards from the future” are thrilling (if occasionally mystifying) and in a world where so many people are estranged (or at least distant) from their children, I am delighted to have mine close at hand to teach, surprise, and nurture me.

And then there’s our newest family member: an raven-black silky-haired rescue named Zillah. We’ve never had a cat in our family before; our previous home in Point Arena was located on a major highway and was a modest dwelling with barely enough room to swing a — well, you know the saying.

Also keeping our family feline-free was my family history. As a child, my allergy doctor forbade us from having any pets — especially cats. But one day when I was about ten, my father brought home two kittens that had been left in a box outside the Safeway where he worked. My mother forbid their adoption, of course, but my tearful pleas (and that of my three siblings) prevailed. The kittens — two young toms, one white-with-black (a polydactyl we named “Mittens”) and a black-on-white we called “Boots” — stayed on the condition that they were never allowed to enter the house; they were exiled to the garage. We installed window seats so they could look outside, visited them several times a day, and took them on regular leashed walks, but to this day I can hear the mournful cries they made when we closed the garage door and left them all alone.

Since I left my childhood home, I’d never lived with a cat and had convinced myself that I didn’t even *like* cats. But early last spring, I began receiving visitations from Freya, who manifested as an overwhelming sense of languid, sensual pleasure as if there was an enormous cat luxuriating — and purring loudly — in my lap. I found these ministrations — and the feeling of ease that accompanied them — quite pleasureable. But what could the Norse goddess of love possibly want from me? I asked Heathen friends for advice, but they concluded that my personality was a better fit for Frigga than Freya, so I settled for enjoying the Goddess’ visits without knowing the purpose behind them.

Another conundrum was competing for my attention last spring: our home was suffering from a plague of mice. Our escalating attempts at repelling them had proven futile and, from the gnawing sounds we heard emanating from underneath the dishwasher, a rat had decided to join their campaign.

Among Freya’s attributes is Her preferred mode of travel: She drives a chariot pulled by two golden cats, but the “Freya-cat-mice” connection didn’t enter my mind until one night when She sent a mouse right into my bed. The first time I felt the patter of tiny feet I thought I was dreaming, rolled over, and laid back down. So the mouse came back and skittered no less than three times in rapid succession across my chest. I sat up, threw off the covers, and screamed. The sole thought in my mind was *this has to stop*, followed shortly by a surprising one: *we have to get a cat*.

Within a week, Zillah joined our family. Initially so timid that we named her after a Hebrew word meaning “shadow,” she proved to be a voracious hunter, beating back the rodent revolution with a ferocity that belied her otherwise mild nature. Slowly she warmed up to us and now often invites us to stroke her luxurious velvet fur. Meanwhile, Freya hasn’t visited me since the Night of the Mouse, but I now frequently drift off with Her avatar nestled on my pillow, gently purring me to sleep.

A year ago, I would never have dreamed that overcoming my deeply-embedded, shame-induced aversion to cats was possible or even desirable. It took the direct intervention of a goddess — who apparently knew better than I that this wound was ready for healing — to bring me full circle back to my little girl-self, now ready to open my house (and my heart) to a new feline companion. I regard this development as nothing less than a ten-pound ebony miracle.

May the unexpected beauty of the Lady’s grace also fill your life this spring and always. Peace,



— ANNE NEWKIRK NIVEN *is the Editor of SageWoman and Witches & Pagans and the publisher of Crone. She and her family live in Forest Grove, Oregon.*

Editorial Notes

We encourage all Goddess-loving women to write for *SageWoman*. Most of our articles come from our readers! *SageWoman* accepts non-fiction submissions from women only, while *Witches & Pagans* accepts both fiction and non-fiction from all genders. *Crone: Women Coming of Age* accepts material from women 49+ years of age and older. *SageWoman* articles are primarily first-person spiritual narratives from a woman’s perspective; please query editor if you wish to submit outside that genre.

Please submit *SageWoman* articles directly to Anne Newkirk Niven; via email (preferred) to: anne1@bbimedia.com. By postal mail, send submissions BBI Media, P. O. Box 687, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

#82, “Wise Woman, Grandmother, Crone” Deadline May 1, 2011

Eldering wisdom, experience, stories, rituals, reflections, musings, magick and poetry wanted! If you are 50+, please write about your own personal experience; if you are 49 or younger, about women of age you connect with, or about the archetype of the Crone/WiseWoman/Grandmother (the third aspect of the Triple Goddess) in your life.

#83, “Protection.” Deadline August 1, 2011

What makes you feel safe? How have you sheltered others, and what (or Who) has sheltered and protected you? We are especially looking for your stories of self-empowerment and for practical methods (mundane or magical) of keeping ourselves and our loved ones safe in an often chaotic, even violent world.

Coming Soon:

#84: *Women & Men*

#85: *Endings & Beginnings*



Magazines that feed your soul and liven your spirits.



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