



Living the Dream: Letter from the Editor

by Anne Newkirk Niven

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.

— Anne Bradstreet
Meditations Divine and Moral, 1655

*There's nothing wrong with you
The simple life gets complicated
There's nothing you can do, just enjoy
the view, be glad you made it.*

“*The Simple Life*”
— Mary Chapin Carpenter

Whoa. What a winter *that* was. I bet you were wondering if we were gonna make it through to spring. I'll admit that sometimes I had my doubts.

It wasn't any one particular thing, really: just all the unwanted excess, the jetsam and flotsam of eight years of political cacophony and emotional overwhelm washing up on our psychic beaches. Wars. Terrorist alerts. Bank failures. Hyperbolic housing markets. Wall Street meltdowns. It went on and on and on. By the end of 2008, I felt worn down to a stub. It was as if the entire country — heck, the whole darn *planet* — had been gorging at an all-you-can-eat buffet followed by a drunken frat party and we all suddenly woke up lying on cold, greasy floor covered in limp nachos and smelling of stale beer. Oh — and then we got the check. It wasn't pretty, I tell you; it all made me want to just pull the covers up over my head and sleep until the next millennium.

That, of course, was not one of the available options, and neither was going on as things were. Last fall — glorious, warm and magical — faded into the austerity of a grey Oregon winter back in late November. Then the snow hit. Day after day of (so the natives tell us) unprecedented flurries and bone-chilling winds covered us tip-to-tail.

At first, I was giddy with the novelty of waking up surrounded by trees draped in glistening white. (The last time it snowed back in Point Arena I was pregnant, and our youngest son is now fourteen, so you know how long ago *that* was.) But after a few days the difficulty of actually having to move around on that white carpet began to leave its toll. Just going out to pick up the newspaper had to be carefully planned to avoid an ankle-wrenching spill, and it wasn't any picnic to get to town, either. Our family had the only car that could hope to navigate the unplowed slalom course that was our street. It was fun for awhile to run errands for our snowed-in neighbors, but quickly became apparent that neither Alan nor I had a clue how to drive in snow, or, Goddess forfend, ice. (As any winter-savvy driver knows, four-wheel drive is only good for going forward; there's no such thing as four-wheel *brakes*.)

Then, right after Yule, the snow melted into icy little patches of slurry and the long, slow slog through winter began. It wasn't so much the rain — we found the infrequent deluges mostly seemed to

come at night when we were tucked in cozily anyway — as the isolation. Our neighbors, new friends, even shoppers simply seemed to go into hibernation. Oh, and yes, the clouds *were* a bit much; it seemed to us that if it was going to be cloudy all the time, the least it could do was actually *rain*. But it mostly dripped, drizzled, and drooled on us, and we found ourselves missing the drama of the batten-down-the-hatches coastal storms to which we'd grown accustomed to in California.

The news wasn't helping, either: the economy seemed to have gone directly from debauch to debacle in a matter of weeks, and didn't seem likely to come out of hangover-land any time this decade. I was working a day job at the local charter school to make help make ends meet and my idealistic fantasies of enlightening a class of eager young teenagers were being methodically hammered into rubble one bewildering day at a time.

The low point came in late March, when Spring Equinox came and went without any sign of, you know, actual *spring*. I was struggling to publish the spring issue of *PanGaia*, having just heaved an issue of *newWitch* into existence only six weeks earlier. And yes, *SageWoman* was already late as well, which weighed heavily on me. I was simply too tired to pick my head up off the floor, let alone have the creative *mana* necessary to create something magical and extraordinary (which is always what I strive for.)

Then the phone rang: it was my printer, telling me that there was a problem with mailing the issue. That irritant was followed by a humiliating discovery passed along by a strangely ebullient message on my machine. The caller informed me that “I think your printer messed up — you spelled Carl Llewellyn’s name wrong on the front cover!”

Of course, it wasn’t the printer’s fault: it was mine. I was the one that spelled the name wrong — twice, as it turned out. That proverbial, humiliating straw was one too many, and I found myself sobbing at my desk; no matter how hard I tried, I realized that it simply wasn’t going to be enough. I felt battered, bruised, and simply broken. More than that, I felt that I had failed: failed my readers, failed my family (whose food, home, and college tuition depends on our magazines), and most importantly, failed the Goddess Herself.

Sometimes, it takes a flood of tears to wash clean our eyes, and so it was for me that morning. After getting a concerned hug from Alan, I squared my shoulders, looked him straight in the eye and said, “Things have got to change. I can’t keep trying to do this. It’s impossible.”

It was only then, in seeming defeat, that a tiny tendril of hope awakened: maybe there *was* a way to transform this crisis into a crossroad. After a great deal of discussion, we decided to combine our two co-gender titles into one: thus *PanGaia* is merging with *newWitch* to form a new, pan-Pagan magazine titled *newWitch: creating Pagan community*.

But the important point wasn’t a business decision, however vital that may have been. It was a personal transformation — my decision to step out of denial, out of my addiction to superhero status, and to admit that I had limits that couldn’t be pushed indefinitely into the future.

That is what winter is actually *for*, both physically and metaphorically. It’s for setting boundaries, finding limits, learning that all things change, and sometimes they even have to come to an end in order for new life to emerge. It’s very difficult in our current culture to fathom this fact: everything is geared to inexorable, all-consuming growth, the newest strategy to lose weight, find true love, gain a job, or, get rich quickly.

But life — real Life with a capital “L”, the life to which the Goddess calls us — requires a season of fallowness, of darkness, of clouds and rain, even of seeming despair. The seed cannot grow if it is not first planted deep in the womb of the earth. Many seeds — like our very lives — must spend frigid months underground, seemingly dead, even forgotten before they can begin to move towards the light. So it is with me, and, I suspect, with you — the times when we seem most inert and neglected can actually be moments of quiescence, the breathless silence when we may come, eventually, to listen to the still, small voice of our virgin selves.

It is now mid-May, and after that long, dormant winter, the barren hardwoods all around our home are exploding into popcorn balls of blossoming color. Between the brief bursts of cold spring rain I can feel the sunlight stream into the earth, coaxing bulbs alive and flowers into bloom. I, too, am stretching out, soaking up the warmth. Creating this issue of *SageWoman* has once again become a joy and a gift. Thank you for your love and support.



—ANNE NEWKIRK NIVEN *is the Editor-in-Chief of SageWoman, PanGaia, and newWitch. She lives with her family 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 *newWitch* accepts both fiction and non-fiction from all genders. Our new magazine *Crone: Women Coming of Age* accepts material from women 49+ years of age and older. To submit to *Crone*, please use *SageWoman* contact information below; put “for *Crone*” in your subject header or on your manuscript if submitting by mail.

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

#78, “Finding Our Balance” Deadline August 1, 2009

We are all so busy these days (has there ever been a time when women weren’t busy?) that’s it is very easy indeed to lose ourselves in the daily buzz and fly off in a million different directions. How do you stay centered, balanced, and rooted in Goddess? Please share your stories of keeping connected amidst chaos.

#79, “Grandmother Earth” Deadline October 1, 2009

What does it mean to connect with the Earth? From biodegradable diapers to green burials, even mainstream culture is beginning to realize that our health, wealth, and future are dependent on the biosphere. How do you discover, explore, express and celebrate your connection with the Grandmother of All? Earth-based rituals are especially welcome for this issue!

Coming Soon

#80: *Healing Paths*

#81: *Ritual & Ceremony*