

Welcome to *Between the Worlds*
Myth, Magic and Community
April 2006

Psyche and Eros: Faith Grows Up *by Cynthia Jones*

We must believe, and we must question. Doubt ... there are all kinds of doubt. There is well-dressed, acceptable doubt, and there is unacceptable doubt. It is acceptable for me to doubt your truths. It is not acceptable for doubt to ask me to question my truths, the ones that keep my world in place. It is not okay when doubt taps on the foundation of my reality.

Unacceptable doubt is an exiled initiator. Doubt can be a dark force with intense eyes. He stands in the corner of the room and silently watches. Have you done this? Have you seen doubt walk in and, even though you know him well, have you turned back to your conversation and pretended that you didn't know him? Have you pretended that you didn't hear the question that he asked?

Doubt doesn't seem to care. He has faith in himself. He has faith in you. He will touch your shoulder as he passes by; just a touch. It could have been the accidental brush of a stranger moving through a crowd, but it isn't. Just a touch, and then he waits. He waits for you. He knows that you will come to him in the middle of the night. Clandestine lover, the guy with the goods; you'll come. Doubt has plenty of time. He'll wait.

Self-doubt, lack of trust; banish it, cure it, send it away, and yet, who would we be without it? Who would you be if you had never questioned...your perceptions, your perception of yourself? Who would you be if doubt hadn't met you in the night some years ago and sent your "reality" on a vision quest?

You know, when Psyche lit the light, she discovered that Eros really was a God. Everything he had said was true. But if she had never lit the light, she never would have known, not really. Self-doubt, other-doubt; if you light the light, you might discover that you really are...good at what you do, right for the job, on the right path, with the right community, giving your life to the right cause. And you might discover that things are not as you thought they were. Nonetheless, doubt is not the bane. Doubt never wanted to be a stopping point. Doubt is not the nemesis. Doubt doesn't say *You can't*, it says, *Can you?*

Doubt enters Paradise. Psyche lights the light. Paradise disappears, and Psyche begins the work that will deliver her to her place in time. Challenge after challenge after challenge; doubt is the first initiator; experience, the teacher. Psyche grows up. Faith grows up. And what of Eros?

He remains invisible for the rest of the story. But, if we were to see him, what might we see? He loses the one he loves. We follow her story, but what about him? Invisible, he was.

Invisible, he remains. Out of sight, his life goes on. Although his story is untold, in this story, a god grows up.

Joseph Campbell said, “The gods we have are the gods that we are capable of having.” Is doubt the initiator that allows faith to mature? Does doubt impel the gods and goddess, Divinity itself, to grow and ripen? Eros—passion—finds strength within himself. It isn’t that Eros has to prove himself to Psyche. A display of miracles would, I presume, have been easy for an Olympian. Instead, he discovers that Paradise—could we call it heaven?—is pointless without her. He watches her struggle. He prays for her. He discovers that he can’t take the course of her life away from her. He learns empathy. God learns empathy. “The God we have is the God we are capable of having.”

In the story of the soul, as the mortal grows, so does the god. Perhaps we must grow, for if we will, God, too, can grow.

Cynthia Jones will be weaving the Psyche story into philosophy, philosophy into discussion, discussion into challenge and challenge back into the story throughout this 2006 Mystery year. Cynthia founded Diana's Grove with Patricia Storm in 1994.

Seeing the House I Live In: Faith Grows Up *by Matt Guynn*

In many ways, I am a true believer. I love to believe. I love to *trust*, to put my faith in something without really thinking about it. It feels good. I want to believe whole-heartedly, with the full flow of my soul.

Sometimes I am enchanted with a spiritual tradition, a new way of understanding the Divine, an insight, or a religious institution. Sometimes it’s a group I’m just getting to know; sometimes it’s a political effort. I put stock completely in whatever it is, often unconsciously, hanging my hopes for redemption and wholeness on the source of my enchantment. Have you ever lent unquestioning belief to something?

This process of investing myself so completely might be compared to living in a house that is tight and windproof. In this house, I have no doubts and a lot of comfort. I can feel a familiar flow of energy in a known context, a feng shui that I’m used to. I know where the drafty spots are, and I know my favorite places for resting. And this process is also like this: I forget that I’m living in a house. I forget that someone built it. I forget that I signed the mortgage papers.

For my faith to grow up, I must wake up to the spirit-house in which I reside. This means recognizing the spiritual covenants I’ve made and looking around at the structure I am in. Is it dim? Is it well-lit? Is there anything to eat? If there is food, does it still need to be prepared?

I have to step outside the door, to stand in the yard, to look around and notice the state of the place. I need to check the foundation, to see whether it's still strong, or cracked or crumbling, or slipping off-plumb. How would you describe the spirit-house you are living in?

Faith growing up entails a move from innocence to decision, from implicit assumptions to conscious choice, from feeling imposed-upon to choosing co-creation. I must make a choice about going back into the house, or drawing up some renovation plans, or finding a new plot of land. Conscious choice helps us become aware of self-as-architect, self-as-co-creator, and self-as-covenant-maker and covenant-breaker.

In this month's story, Psyche lives in a paradise of a spirit-house, but it has one darkened room. In the place where she is most in touch with divinity, she cannot see or be seen. When she decides that this is no longer good enough, she decides to light the lamp, despite the covenant she had made. She recognizes that her previous covenant no longer serves the person she is becoming.

This lamp: is it the lamp of her personal power as she shines forth for the first time? Is it a first step in the process of direct exploration of deity and divinity, a refusal to make love in the dark anymore? It is clearly a breaking of a covenant, a demand to see the real house that she lives in, an examination of that one room of the house that cannot yet stand the shining of the light. Is there a darkened room in your house?

Sometimes at the moment of awakening, there's a "poof!" as the house around us simply disappears. This is what happens for Psyche. Paradise is gone, and she's left on a craggy, rainy, windy outcropping.

Lighting the lamp or leaving the house can be costly. We can lose illusions of a tradition's perfection or the comfort of community or friends or family. What sweet things have you lost in the process of stepping out of the house of spirit into which you were born? What did you consciously leave behind?

The gains are also rich. Psyche loses Paradise, but she knows more about who she is and what she can live with. She affirms her right to exist, to make requests, and to see her Beloved. She gains a realistic understanding of where she is. She newly claims a sense of autonomy and authorship, as well as the ability to make and break covenants consciously.

Psyche's story doesn't end here on the craggy, cold outcropping of seeing things for what they are. Moving from an innocent or unknowing faith or covenant to the critical moment—the deconstruction of belief—is only the first step.

It's hard to live on that rocky promontory. Many try to. Suspicious of all houses, of all divinity, of all covenants, unwilling or genuinely unable to consciously re-engage, some folks set up camp there on the outcropping. Yet living in the "critical moment" is not mature faith. Psyche accepts the quests that divinity puts in front of her, and so must we, in our search for a mature spirituality. There are new houses to build and renovations to do. We have a genuine relationship with divinity to uncover, in which humanity and divinity are both seen and experienced, and in which costly covenants are forged. This new path leads toward a mature spirituality.

A mature spirituality or spiritual practice provides a plumb line, a cornerstone for the house of an integrated life. I have no blueprint—you will design that—but I can suggest some criteria for building, or ways to recognize this house:

- Mature spirituality moves us down the path toward ever more vibrant individual and community thriving.
- Mature spirituality increases compassion and connection, helping us to stand in our own power and encourage the power in others.
- Mature spirituality reminds us of our limits and helps point us toward our growing edges.
- Mature spirituality heals wounds, or transforms them into something new.
- Mature spirituality gives shape and structure to the ongoing exploration of divinity.
- Mature spirituality helps us see things from a new perspective so that we can constantly re-examine our lives; it affirms our very being while challenging us to go farther.

In the course of life, we will each light Psyche's lamp again and again. Blessings on the quest that follows! Blessings on the blueprints for our new homes!

Matt Guynn is a writer and a social change organizer who is experimenting with the possibility of coming fully alive, and is in his sixth year of Mystery School. He lives in Richmond, Indiana. The idea of reaching the “critical moment” and moving beyond it comes from the work of Gordon Kaufman.

Ritual Artistry: No Doubt About It: Ensuring Success *by River*

Does this sound familiar? You are facilitating a trance for a public ritual. You've come to the point in the trance where the participants are to get a gift from the Goddess. You know that they need to get this gift in order for the next part of the ritual to make any sense. You give the trance suggestion, give it the right amount of space and time for integration, and then get ready to make the transition. As you and your trance partner are preparing to make the shift and hand things over to the next facilitating priestess, you notice a few people frowning and fidgeting in their seats. Suddenly, doubt seeps into your mind. What if they didn't get a gift? What if they didn't even trance? What if they are bored out of their minds? What if they're upset? How can we pull off the next part of the ritual if they aren't on the same page as the rest of us? What if...?

That may sound like a lot of “what ifs,” but anyone who has facilitated a large group ritual is likely familiar with those internal voices of doubt that tend to sneak up on us. And what's worse, unless you ask them directly, you probably won't get to know exactly what's going on with those restless participants. Perhaps your fears are warranted, and they aren't ready to follow a ritual transition. Or perhaps they are having a powerful internal experience as they

have a conversation with the divine. It could just be something as mundane as the fact that they're sitting in uncomfortable seats or that they have to go to the bathroom. The point is, you can't know for sure, and there's probably not going to be an appropriate moment to stop the trance, walk over to them, and ask them if there's something wrong.

Never fear! There are specific tools that you can use to ensure that the participants are successful, no matter what their internal (or external) experience may be. And as an added bonus, the same tools can help prevent you from spiraling into a mythic tailspin of doubt and worry over whether or not your ritual plan is meeting your intention. A few weeks ago at the Grove's Drum, Trance, and Ritual Arts Intensive, the participants did a brainstorming session on how to ensure success in ritual. I'd like to offer a few of those ideas here.

We all experience the world in different ways. In fact, as Sallie Nichols said in her book *Jung and the Tarot*, we all have a way in which we "apprehend reality." While most people tend to be visually oriented, connecting to their surroundings through what they see, you're almost guaranteed to be in sacred space with folks who operate differently. I'm one of those people. My primary mode is auditory, with kinesthetic running a close second. This doesn't mean that I'm not impacted by what I see; I'm just more likely to connect to things I can hear or touch, so I tend to respond most to pieces that involve interaction. Still other people experience the world primarily through emotions. They're more likely to respond to a ritual piece that plucks at their heartstrings. If you can design your ritual to speak to all of these systems—visual, auditory, kinesthetic and emotional—then the participants are more likely to give themselves over to the experience. Speak to them in their own language and they'll be drawn into the magic.

You can use those same ways of "apprehending reality" to test for areas in your ritual plan that may need adjustment. For instance, what are the kinesthetic needs? If the ritual involves a physical action, such as walking across the room to take a token to represent a choice or a commitment, how do you involve those who choose to remain seated? How do you let them know that remaining seated is a valid choice in the first place? What are the emotional needs? Are you providing enough time to integrate an emotionally charged piece? Have you laid enough of a foundation for participants to feel safe? What are the visual needs? If you are using a prop, can everyone see it? Can the drummers see the chant anchors across the fire in an outdoor ritual? What are the auditory needs? Do you have enough cover overhead to contain sound, such as tree branches or a ceiling? Can you project effectively enough so that the entire circle can hear you? Run your next ritual facilitation piece through these "reality checks," and you may discover that you can find a way to deepen the experience for the participants on several different levels.

Let's go back to our original example, where you hope that the participants will receive a gift from the Goddess. One useful tool is to give them an entirely different option that still meets the intention. During the January Mystery School weekend, we did a ritual in which the participants were invited to make a commitment to a specific "path to initiation" for the year. They could choose from the five options we gave—Integrity, Compassion, Generosity, Grace, or Fellowship—or they could choose our failsafe option, which was the path of Mystery. I don't mean to diminish the power of the "Mystery" path by calling it a "failsafe"; however, that's exactly why we created it. On the basis of the feedback we received, those that ended up choosing this path found it to be an appropriate choice that had a great deal of impact on their personal work. I think the reason that it was so powerful for them was the mere fact that they were given a choice to step out of the proposed framework if it didn't work for them. If you make it okay to resist the structure and can still find a way to uphold the

integrity of the intention, then you've ensured the success of the participants, as well as the facilitators. The only choice that you remove from that situation is the option to fail. I call that artistry.

When all is said and done, if you've paid attention to your participants and responded to what you think they may need to step fully into the experience, then you've gone a long way towards ensuring the success of the ritual. If I'm a participant looking to lay a new pattern in my soul and to do some deep personal work, then I don't want to have to worry about whether or not I can see the facilitator. I don't want to feel miserable because I wasn't able to trance to get a gift from the Goddess and therefore can't connect with the rest of the ritual. I want to be immersed in the magic, not the logistics, and if a facilitator can help me achieve that, then that's what I call a ritual success.

River is a Grove staff member who would like nothing more than to talk about ecstatic Ritual Arts for hours on end. She lives in Chicago, IL with her cat, roommate, and half a dining room full of drums. For information on her teaching and travel schedule visit www.rivermagic.org.

Will you Dance? Choosing to Light the Light

by sisalfish

It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth—and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up—that we will then begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it were the only one we had.
—Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

In this month's story, Psyche lights the light. She is in Paradise, and has everything she could possibly want. Her beloved, Eros, has asked one small thing of her: that she never look at his face. It interests me that Psyche's joy is dependent on her ignorance. When she lights the light, that ignorance is dispelled—but so is Paradise.

And I'm interested in what she saw when she did light the light. When she climbed to the mountaintop, she expected to meet Death. Instead, she met Eros there. In lighting the light to look at his face, I think one thing she may have been looking at was, indeed, Death.

What does it mean to us, to light that light? What does it mean to choose to look at the death that awaits us, or to choose not to? Many spiritual paths, particularly Buddhism, urge us to come to terms with death during our lifetime, in order to be free of the hold it has on us. To face the knowledge that we will cross that threshold some day, and so free ourselves of the threat of it.

In my own experience, I'm finding that working to have a daily relationship with my own death is, indeed, useful. Many Mysteries—Fire Dancer, Scarabella and Sherrid, among others—have said that they are also called to regularly consider the concept of death. I'm wondering

if other Mysteries have chosen to become more familiar with death, and whether their path reflects mine.

Choices

At eighteen I was in a car wreck, and I had a brief, two-minute span in which I thought I was dying. I broke several ribs and punctured a lung, and I couldn't breathe. I struggled to breathe for what seemed like a long time. I remember a panicked feeling that air was absolutely essential—now, now, RIGHT NOW—and in that panic I was still, for what seemed like a long time, unable to take in any oxygen at all.

But then I made it past some threshold. I became very calm and thought, *This is it. I'm about to find out what happens when you die.* I remember a feeling of intense excitement—but a few seconds later I started breathing again. My experience with death didn't last long; “no blinding light, or tunnels to gates of white,” as the band Death Cab for Cutie says. But the experience was enough to make me aware that I had an option. I could choose to remain ignorant and keep death at a distance, unseen; or I could light the light and make the realization that I would one day die a part of my everyday life.

I didn't really light that light for thirty more years, when two influences helped me move closer to doing so. One was the television show *Six Feet Under*. In our culture, it seems to me that most people don't ever consider death if they can help it. Watching *Six Feet Under* let me make the choice to consider death for one hour each week. It was a good first step.

The other influence was working with the Death card during the Grove's Tarot year in 2004. Our local Mystery group held a death ritual, in which each member was shrouded and laid down to melt into the earth and join Her again. We released everything. Everything. I think that ritual was a turning point for many of us. We didn't want to come back. The utter peace of it was amazing.

And—that experience was chosen. That choice to die was retractable. Unlike those who are actively dying, I could have opted out at any moment, gotten up, unshrouded myself and continued on as before, without having to make death a part of my life at all. But that ritual did lay a new pattern on my soul, as Cynthia Jones says, and I did choose to keep considering death. That's where I find myself now.

One way that I consider death daily is by studying Thanatology, the study of death and bereavement. Through that study, I continually come up against death's inevitability and the understanding that I will one day give up everything I've worked for, everything I have, everyone I know. All that will end, and very likely at a time not of my choosing. In learning about the struggles and challenges of those who are dying, I've come to think that the opposite of death is not *life*, but *choice*. Often it is their lack of choice that haunts the dying. They begin to lose their choices when they begin actively dying, and they have fewer and fewer choices as death approaches.

So I do choose, now, to live with the thought of death, each and every day. I choose it, knowing that death will one day choose me. Every day, I'm blessed to interact with others who have made this same choice, many of them nurses, therapists, doctors, clergypeople, and social workers involved in hospice. They've taught me that each death is unique. That those called to death work are, above all, witnesses, who are blessed to witness these transitions. They've taught me that we must not bring our sorrow to this work, because there's enough sorrow in it already.

Death without sorrow, day by day. I've chosen that. In return, it seems to me that my own death has moved closer. I'm getting to know it, and in choosing to do so, I'm finding freedom, strength, and, to my surprise, no lessening of joy.

What of your own choice? Will you choose to light the light and make your peace with death's inevitability, or not? Either way, I think you are reaching for a kind of freedom. Which freedom most calls to you: freedom from the thought of death, or freedom from the fear of it?

sisalfish is a writer and editor living in San Antonio. This is her sixth year as a Mystery in the Diana's Grove Mystery School, where she is currently a member of the 2006 Rites Team. She is currently working toward certification in Thanatology, the study of death, grief and bereavement. You can contact her at sisalfish@satx.rr.com.

Astrology for the Journey: Lost and Found by Teri Parsley Starnes

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

In last month's article, I wrote about a Chiron transit and my loss of faith. I saw myself as the traveler on the Eight of Cups card in the Rider-Waite-Smith tarot deck. Last month, I felt lost, and when the subject of faith came up as the theme, all I could think about was my lack of it. During this short time, from last month to this month, I have traveled to the other extreme. This month I find myself writing from a state of amazing grace. In just a month's time, it seems that I have found that next cup, and it was full of inspiration and redemption. Lost and found again. This portion of my journey is delivered courtesy of Neptune, the planet of illusion and salvation.

In January, I recklessly wrote, "This year, I'd like to invite the stars—the planets and constellations of the zodiac—to be initiators on my journey to soul." After last month's experience, I have to say I think that they accepted the invitation. Who knew that this initiation would be such a roller-coaster ride? Perhaps the Oracle did.

If Chiron's initiation has been about my wounds, then Neptune's initiation has been about my redemption through surrender. These planets have held the two ends of a cord pulled tight within my heart, stretching between the extremes of despair and hope. I've been pulled in both directions. I still haven't found the balance point between them. My initiation is not yet finished. Cynthia Jones wrote in the January chapter of the Psyche and Eros story, "I like the definition of initiation as moving beyond the edges of yourself to merge with a larger force." Neptune's initiation fits this description to a tee. Neptune is inviting me to shift my boundaries. I feel that I am growing beyond my former self through losing and finding myself again.

Neptune: The Sacrifice for Self Redemption

I've learned much about Neptune through Liz Greene's epic book, *The Astrological Neptune*

and the Quest for Redemption. She has helped me see that the urges of Neptune—dissolution of self and the boundaries between self and others, the ecstatic state, the tendency toward illusion and addiction—are all connected with the need to be redeemed. Greene speaks of this need as our desire to return to the feeling of wholeness that we experienced in the womb. This bliss is that amazing grace of being found when we once were lost.

For the last twelve months, Neptune has been transiting my natal Moon, which is located at 16 degrees of Aquarius. Neptune, that blue giant on the edge of our solar system, on which scientists say it may rain diamonds, has been slowly moving through the sign of Aquarius since 1998. It spent the last year traveling between 13 and 17 degrees of Aquarius. If you have a planet located between these degrees in any of the fixed signs, then you too are experiencing a significant Neptune initiation. The fixed signs are Aquarius, Taurus, Leo, and Scorpio.

Slowly, persistently, Neptune has been speaking to some of my most personal, interior places, those parts of myself that are represented by the Moon. The Moon represents my need to feel. During this year, I have felt, and needed to feel, connected to community (an Aquarius ideal). I have struggled with a deep feeling that I thought was compassion, only to find that it was caretaking. I have struggled against a need to protect too much. All of this is connected to the Moon, and all of it is connected to the impulse of Neptune to sacrifice the self for redemption.

In terms of Tarot, the cup is a good symbol for both the Moon and Neptune. All this caring, needing, feeling, and sacrificing fit very well with the cups that I felt I was leaving behind from my work in the previous month (as I saw myself in the 8 of Cups card) and the cup that I was losing faith in ever finding again. Sometimes symbols can be quite literal. Tarot and astrology remind me of this all the time. During the last month, I literally found a cup, and it was filled with redemption.

An Experience of Redemption

In February, I was on the teaching team for Winter Camp, a Reclaiming Tradition intensive. I began the five-day camp without much hope that I would be able to shake off my doubts and my wounds. I was saying farewell. I was surrendering. The source of my doubts had nothing to do with the team of teachers or the community; I was questioning my place and my value. My self-questioning involved whether I had anything left to give. My cup felt bone dry. And then there was this ritual. The intention was to welcome the ecstatic and very much alive goddess Freya to our hall to help us celebrate water, to pray with water, and to learn more from water. My job was to embody Freya. As the ritual began, in the center, people were dancing a Sufi dance of Universal Peace, pouring water from the Sun into the Moon, and in other places, people were visiting with water in bowls and scrying into a giant icicle. I found myself carrying a cup filled with Freya's tears, giving and giving and giving. This cup had no bottom; the joy flowing from it was boundless. I later described this moment with the words, "The heavens just opened up and refilled my empty cup." I had to love the irony of that moment even as I was drinking up the redemption.

Transits to Come

Neither Neptune nor Chiron is finished with me. Because of retrograde motion, where it looks like a planet is moving backward against the background of the stars, Chiron will return two more times this year to the exact degree where Chiron is in my natal chart. Furthermore, Neptune now moves into squaring (being 90 degrees away from) my natal Saturn. The

planets move in a circle. As they approach a fixed point, the aspect formed is called a waning aspect; as they move away from that point, the aspect becomes a waxing aspect. Neptune is moving away from where Saturn is located in my chart, creating a waxing aspect. This waxing square has been described as a “crisis in action.” I wonder what the Oracle would say about this?

Saturn describes my reality, my foundations, and my limitations. How will I need to act in accordance with these things? How will my initiator, Neptune, ask me to surrender these things? Will I lose the ground under my feet in order to find it again? Being lost and then finding yourself again: this is the Neptune initiation. How has such an initiation moved you beyond your boundaries?

What I have learned about Neptune is that both its gifts and its challenges never hang around long enough to become dependable. Grace may come from a cup, but if I hold that cup too tightly, it loses its luster. In this moment, I can say that faith returns. Neptune reminds me that this present moment is all there is.

Teri Parsley Starnes is a consulting astrologer living in Minneapolis. She is thrilled to be starting her 7th year as a Mystery. She is available for readings about your soul's journey and loves to answer your astrology questions. Contact Teri at tpstar@mninter.net. To find out more about her practice go to her website at www.starsdanceastrology.com.

Stewarding the Land: Sustainability and Renewable Energy

by Patricia Storm

During the summer of 2005, I realized that I was getting older. I had actually noticed this for several years, but I also began to notice that I could no longer do everything that I wanted to do or once thought I could do. Knowing one's limitations isn't really a bad thing, but it does require some rearrangement of one's thinking and doing.

“What are the long-term plans for Diana's Grove?” It's a question that comes up now and then. I've had several answers, none of which have been quite right. One that occurred to me last summer was that to continue to exist and thrive, Diana's Grove needs some things that we don't currently have. We need to become more sustainable, and we need to find ways to use renewable energy sources. We will also need a few younger people.

I had this realization in the middle of Lunacy, a fabulous week of women's magic. I shared my enlightenment (not the part about growing old) with some other women there. Some of them were equally excited. We talked about biodiesel, solar energy, water power, and cob and straw bale building. We decided to meet again and plan more.

I talked to others about these ideas, and the project grew. When I talked to Charles, he was very interested. We talked about treehouses and ponds and gardens and compost. When Cynthia and the rest of the staff joined our planning, we suddenly had a “path”: a time slot during intensives in which we could work on one or more of the projects or ideas that were

evolving. Charles looked at the schedule and created a path of stewardship work that worked with the themes of the intensives. He also started discussions with Starhawk about doing some permaculture work here again.

One of the people who started me on this path and who strongly influenced the creation of Diana's Grove was Starhawk. I have worked with her since 1988. She has been a teacher and a mentor and continues to be my friend. She came here several years ago and did a permaculture path at one of the camps. She now does permaculture work as part of her Earth Activist Training. I'm delighted that she will be here at the end of this summer to offer this work with Charles. Here's a bit about the two-week workshop from the EAT Web site:

August 26–September 9

EAT – Earth Activist Training

Taught by Starhawk and Charles Williams

Start with permaculture as the foundation. "Permaculture" is regenerative design: a set of ethics, principles, and practices that create beneficial relationships and whole systems. Permaculture meets human needs sustainably and heals damaged natural systems. Permaculture works with nature, or rather, teaches us to "work as nature working."

Extend the principles and insights of permaculture into progressive political organizing, and explore strategies for change. Weave in threads of Earth-based spirituality, inclusive and non-dogmatic, to connect heart and soul to the work. Add nature awareness as the touchstone. This is Earth Activist Training, a rich array of solutions, tools, and strategies to redesign our world.

Immerse yourself in this richness through classroom theory, hands-on practice, inner experience, and community. Don't forget that it's damn fun, too. Many find it life-changing.

EAT includes a rigorous 72-hour permaculture design course—participants receive a certificate on completion.

Topics include:

- Permaculture principles and ethics
- Making a spiritual connection with the elements: real air, fire, water, and earth—the equivalent of a "Magic 101" class with Starhawk
- Nature awareness techniques (such as owl-vision, fox-walking, plant allies, and the language of birds)
- Humans' role as Nature-in-Action
- Pattern thinking in design, strategy, and movement-building
- Diversity in ecosystems and in political movements
- Planning for big changes: global warming and peak oil
- Indefinitely renewable agriculture, urban food growing, garden design, planting for wildlife, and food forests
- Urban permaculture and strategies for cities
- How to think like a watershed: collect, conserve, clean, and reuse water
- Bioremediation: healing soil and water with beneficial bacteria, compost teas, fungi, and plants

- Soil and forest ecology; ecology as economics, economics as ecology
- Erosion control and soil conservation
- "Impermaculture": temporary systems for encampments, gatherings, and emergency response
- Renewable energy and efficient design
- Media strategies
- Natural building introduction and cob practice
- Creative access to land and financing
- Consensus process, facilitation, and conflict resolution
- Movement building: basics of political organizing, strategy, and direct action
- Weaving magic and ritual into action
- How to stay grounded and centered in tough situations
- Breaking the spell of fear, rage, grief, and frustration
- How to renew personal energy, avoid burnout, and find hope for our world

The curriculum is not only immediately useful for students' own lives, but holds real hope for our collective future.

For more information or to register, contact EAT at <http://www.earthactivisttraining.org>

Patricia Storm, one of the founders of Diana's Grove, is instrumental in the developing Stewardship Path Program. For more information see the Diana's Grove web site or contact her at patricia@dianasgrove.com.

The Shadow of Transformation: Beyond a Shadow of a Doubt

by sisalfish

There is a standard folktale motif called the "One Forbidden Thing." Remember Bluebeard, who says to his wife, "Don't open that closet?" And then one always disobeys Life really begins with that act of disobedience.

—Joseph Campbell

Doubt is one of the initiators in this story.

—Cynthia Jones

In this month's story, Psyche finds herself in Paradise, a fate quite different from the one she expected when she climbed the mountain. I look back on the beginning of the story, with Psyche so lonely that she is willing to take Death as her bridegroom. I imagine her, virginal, willingly climbing the mountain to meet her death, and left alone there to wait for the monster who will come. I imagine her bewilderment and joy when Eros becomes the wind and lifts her and carries her to Paradise. There, her every desire is gratified by day, and desires she never even knew she had are gratified each night.

So why, by any stretch of the imagination, would Psyche risk such happiness, such perfection, to answer her one doubt and light the light? Why would she break the one covenant she had made with her beloved? I can say it was because she was human and she had to know. But I get more insight from seeing her story in relation to shadow; in saying that her doubt was a shadow that seemed to cast her out of Paradise, but that, in truth, delivered her to it.

Doubt, the Initiator

It seems to me that, in this story, Psyche's doubt functions as her initiator by saying "No." No, it is not enough to be a beautiful princess if you are shadowed by loneliness. No, you cannot deny fate, even if your fate is to die at the hands of a monster. And no, it is not enough to know Paradise and perfection, not if you are human and a creature of curiosity and doubt. No.

Why that "no," when Psyche had been given so much? I think the shadow of doubt derailed Psyche *because our shadows make choices that are based on what we can become, instead of what we are*. They make choices that are based on possibility. Like the subconscious, our shadows can be tricky; they promise one thing but deliver another, in service to a greater good. They say "no" to what I am so that they can begin to say "yes" to something more. In my own life, I, like Psyche, sometimes act on the basis of the urgings of my shadow, and then I experience tremendous regret. I act out of anger, thinking that I'll gain control, only to reach an understanding that the lack of self-control I gave in to is far worse, far harder to live with, than my inability to control those around me.

But from that place of regret, possibilities open up. Things change. My own pattern is usually that I beat my head against the same issue, again and again, asking: Why can't things be different? And then finally, one day, I just take a step to the left and say: I wonder if there's some way I can *make* things different?

At that point, my shadow has begun to take me from a very narrow place to a broader place with far more possibilities. I begin to ask: What if anger isn't the only way to respond? What if my anger is serving as a road sign, a key to how I feel, or what I think—and what might happen if that information joins other information and I begin to see choices? What if I can find a way to honor my anger and also honor the compassion that I've dedicated to this year?

Can you look back on shadows that have challenged you in your life, and see them now, from this vantage point, as challenges to embrace change and step into another possibility? Can you appreciate what you have become as a result of those challenges?

And if you *can* see value in those challenges, what of the challenges that you and I and Psyche are facing in the *now*? What of my doubt about my own innate goodness or my doubt that I can find enough love in my heart to be the compassionate person I hope to be this year? What if those doubts are ways for my shadow to open me to possibility?

That would mean that Paradise—my belief that I can become perfect, if I walk far enough and work hard enough—is not the ultimate goal after all. In saying that, I'm astonished to finally understand what people mean when they say that this work isn't about reaching a destination. It's about the journey itself, the choices I make and the steps I take. Then doubt and struggling with shadow become integral parts of the journey toward—what? A never-ending possibility?

I can't really know, because I'm still on the path. I'm still in the doubting phase. And in the short term, I can't quite make my peace with those doubts. But I can appreciate that, as I change through working with these shadows, the gifts they offer that I can't see yet may become clear to me, just as they have in the past.

Mysteries, have you made your peace with doubt? Do you struggle with it in the moment, yet simultaneously keep your faith that the shadow of doubt will deliver you to all that you can possibly be, again, and again, and again?

Find out more about **sisalfish** at the end of her other regular column for this magazine, *Will You Dance?* on page 6.

Interview with a Mystery: Selin Strait *by River*

This month, meet Selin Strait, a magic-weaver, art-maker, and world-changer who is in the process of moving cross-country from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to Portland, Oregon. I have been blessed to know Selin for a few years now, and I am thrilled that she consented to let all of us get to know her a little better! Read on to learn more about this incredible person, who isn't afraid to take the Fool's Leap, and who is someone for whom I hold a great deal of admiration.

I was pleasantly surprised to see you on the list of Mystery School participants this year! What drew you to the Mystery School program?

I attended the Midwest Reclaiming Witchcamp last June and was so impressed by the intentional practices that I witnessed in use at Diana's Grove. I could see that personal empowerment and responsibility were valued, along with commitment to community and leadership. It was clear in the way the staff conducted themselves and in the infrastructure. I've also admired the work of folks I've met that have trained at the Grove. This year I wanted to pursue a long-term course of study to deepen my personal practice and improve my community work, one that wouldn't conflict with me moving to the west coast; Mystery School felt like an ideal choice. The theme of initiation through the story of Eros and Psyche is also a great framework for my personal work this year. In a lot of ways, my move is an initiatory journey.

One version of the initiatory journey concerns how love sends us out to become who we are destined to be. What do you love? And how is this love a part of your own initiatory journey?

This is the question I have been struggling with the most over the last few years. For me it is full of paradoxes, stories of choices, sacrifices, and compromises I have made about those things I love. Whether I face it directly or attempt to ignore it, like Psyche, it is the work of my soul. There are so many things I love: dancing and singing, gardening, the theatre, learning, change, working together in community, challenges, the wild earth, my family and friends, chocolate, good food, good sex. The more challenging question for me is, What love calls me out into the world, onto my path? I identify as an activist, and the world of the things I love is under an assault of greed and destruction. Sometimes love feels like a liability, putting me at

odds with the realities of everyday life. So this question is also a challenge: What is my responsibility to the things I love?

This past year has been a struggle for me. I have been working with my shadow, looking at my patterns and choices. Sometimes it has worked me. I have felt hopeless at times, angry about things I can't control, blaming myself for things I have or have not done, paralyzed and terribly grouchy. Like Psyche on the banks of the river, I have been in despair. Aphrodite's call reminds me that the words "I love" can be in themselves powerful magic. To say them out loud is an act of resistance. For me, loving, in itself, is the first step on the journey. Possibility is what sends me out. Right now, my work is to make more space for the things that I love, breathe life back into them, listen for their whispers, to take ownership and responsibility for them again. More specifically, I'm working to figure out what I want to do next in my life. I'm working to decide what job I can do that will embody both something that I love to do and the change I want to see in the world.

Speaking of embodiment, is there a character in the story of Psyche and Eros who resonates with you?

I first read this story when I was 12. I was plowing through all the Greek and Roman myths I could track down. This was not one of my favorites. I thought that Psyche, although beautiful and full of grace, must have been a real bimbo to go quietly to meet her own death, without even a word of protest. In this particular telling, however, the character of Psyche speaks to me the most deeply. She bravely faces her destiny, and she is willing to sacrifice parts of herself in order to *become*. Her story is an intentional quest for love, self, and life, and she is very brave. I aspire to such resolve and courage in my life and choices.

I understand that you're making a major move cross-country very soon. What's behind this big change?

In my story, this move is a culmination of much of the personal work I have been doing over the past couple of years. I closed a business 3 years ago and wanted to make changes in my life. I wanted to bring my life more into alignment with my values, to make more of my everyday acts intentional, to act with more integrity, honoring what is sacred. I wanted a new job. I wanted to move, but to where, and doing what? I've gone to Witchcamps and workshops, traveling, asking questions, searching. Originally I had given myself a year. Hah! Three years later, I am still working with it all. Along the journey I have experienced ecstasy, deep connection, divinity, and personal awakenings. I have found communities I love and cherish, and I have questioned everything—my beliefs, my identity, my dreams, my understanding of the world, my desires, my fears. One thing I've decided is to move to Portland, Oregon. It's a beautiful and progressive city with its own protected wild areas and great public transportation. I've visited and done research, but it still feels like a Fool's Journey. I am packing up my car and heading off across the country. There are so many possibilities, but I am uncertain what the move will bring.

Who do you see yourself becoming in the next 5 years?

Someone who has taken her life into her own hands, stepped into her power, and is doing something that she loves and believes in. What that looks like, exactly, only time will tell!

Find out more about **River**, the interviewer for this piece, at the end of her other regular column for this magazine, *Ritual Artistry* on page 4.

Journey in Words

by Shaun Perkins

Whispers of words and thoughts, ideas and goals and dreams, stories that spiral into dreams and plots and awakenings. We are stirring the cauldron, mixing and adding in the words that have lived with us or are being discovered and are now ready for sharing. This month, you can read about the stories that are forming in the minds of three Mysteries.

In response to an exercise on heroic qualities, Bob shared the theme his writing about his own life will explore. “I follow the echo. The echo is a note in the synchrony symphony. It works in the same way as when a middle C tuning fork is struck and begins to vibrate. It causes the piano string for middle C to vibrate as it is brought proximate to the string, but without touching the string. In my journey as I move proximate to the mystery, if I am tuned and listen, I hear the echo and can choose to respond. Pre-incarnate I accepted a mission to deliver a message without knowing the message. I still do not know but now the echo leads me to speak. I cannot return home without doing so or my life will be a failure no matter how many physical accouterments I may have accumulated.”

The archetypal hero is often a bit of a rebel. Bob describes his rebellion in terms of his career: “After graduation from pharmacy school in 1970, I took refuge at Eden Seminary to escape the draft. I am living proof that ‘Jesus Saves!’ This was the first spiritual baptism and it planted the seed that would come to fruition in the second cycle of my spiritual sojourn. My Myers-Briggs type is Introverted, Intuitive, Feeler, Perceiver, yet I was a Director of Pharmacy and built it into an award winning hospital pharmacy. In management I was a real anomaly. I have never fit in, yet I have always been accepted.”

As for the hero’s altruism, Bob explains that his motto is “I would rather fail at something great, than succeed at something trivial. Seeing the big picture and sharing that vision with others allows others to see themselves as bigger than what they might have previously believed. I see good in people that others do not and proclaim that, even if no one wants to hear it.”

Laura Lee, like Bob, is writing about life experiences though she intends to fictionalize some of the story. In an exercise about framing a story by using the hero pattern, Laura Lee wrote the following piece about her character Lorelei’s story.

“Lorelei leaves home to join the circus for a year and voluntarily proceeds to the threshold of adventure to live on a train with 300 performers and workers. In her job on the circus she encounters a beastly boss who gives her several impossible tasks and substantial abuse as well as general distrust and heavy criticism that tests Lorelei’s sense of her trustworthiness and essential value. Lorelei stands up to the unpleasantness (most of the time) with patience and fortitude and shows her boss compassion and respect in the face of threats and ugliness, gaining the admiration of the performers and co-workers and other fellow travelers, hearing many marvelous stories and enjoying lots of fun adventures and thrilling moments in her travels.”

“After a particularly ugly verbal attack she arrives at the nadir of the mythological round. She searches the ‘dark night of her soul’ and accepts she can’t be responsible for her boss’s

hatred of her and decides to stick out the full year's contract with the aid of her many warm friendships. In this illumination, she finds the freedom to hold her own boundary in the face of an impossible situation, as she gains the reward of carrying through and not quitting in defeat."

"At the return threshold she must say goodbye to her staunch supporters and integrate back into her life. The boon she brings restores the world because she has new skills gained in going the distance and because her courage has strengthened her faith in herself. The final work is acceptance of the power Lorelei's boss holds to kick her off the show and graceful negotiation for a working structure which allows Lorelei to do her work without drawing further fire."

Another Mystery, Sherrid, said her writing journey for the class will be writing "whatever the cards reveal over the next year. However, I decided that I would be doing this from the standpoint of an Oracle. She may never be mentioned again this whole year, but the stories and poems and whatever else is expressed will be from her and her Oracles, and perhaps they will speak to those who read and listen here."

The Oracle is "a messenger of faith and divine intervention in all its voices who lives in a land consumed in betraying logic. . . . Her name is DeLa Noche. She is a librarian and writer by trade and an Oracle by right. DeLa has the courage to listen to the world around her and all its wisdoms and to listen to all the voices that speak to her and through her. Oracles surround her in stories, poems, songs, wind, water, fire, earth, seasons, animals and people. All humanity has the capability to listen, but she is one of the few who does so with an open heart and mind."

What follows is one of the DeLa Noche's poems:

Dark Moon Blessing

Dark Moon lost from sight
 Hiding your light in this dark night.
Darkness flows all around
 As deep and warm as burial grounds.
Lunacy turns, goes inward bound
 My soul's Shadows. Released. Abound.
Fears, tears and laughter too
 Insanity flows through and through.

Dark Moon shadow bright
 Keep me company this holy night.
Look around as darkness flows
 At the flowers the moonlight shows.
Fairy Lily, Mirabilis, Moon Vine and Night Shade
 All bloom here in my moon's glade.
Pale beauties fragrant with bloom
 Quietly grow and scent the soul's gloom.

Dark Moon light my dark night
 Grow my soul strong and bright.
Blooms tender and fragrant that can only grow in the shadows of the soul

Will shrivel and die in the Sun's harsh light.
Tend them tenderly and tend them well
In the shadows that in your soul dwells.
Remember this on your darkest nights
What looks like twigs and weeds in the soul's known light,
May turn out to be the
beauties that bloom in your soul at night.

Words are whispered, spoken, typed, shouted, and shared in a myriad of ways. We tell our stories and the stories of our imagination. We're writing ourselves into the journey of our lives. We invite you to come along.

Shaun Perkins is a fifth year Mystery who lives in Locust Grove, Oklahoma, amidst rye grass, cats, dried-up ponds, family, and teenage boy. She can be reached at okieload@sstelco.com.

Appalachian Trail Tales: Doubting

by Lorely Lather

A couple of days after the unintentional 15-mile day I wrote about last month, I hiked into a small lovely valley along the Nanatahala River. Its lush beauty was timeless, although in the twentieth century, a modest business, Rainbow Campground, filled the entire valley with 10-12 rustic cabins and a quaint lunchroom/campstore. A couple of days later, I left Rainbow Campground with a hiking companion. We faltered together and came back. After four more days, I hiked on alone. So it is that I feel that Rainbow Campground was a stammer in my hike, a place of facing my doubts and modifying my covenant with my beloved earth.

It is interesting how writing about doubts that plagued me when I paused along the Appalachian Trail in 1993 stirs up doubts about my path in 2006. I have current doubts about whether my AT-Tales are sufficiently written; I have doubts about whether I am growing toward my Greater Self. Perhaps doubt creates doubt. Perhaps doubt surfaces when my journey comes close to another's journey and clarity is lost. But right now I intend to tell my story of Rainbow Campground and my hiking friend, Thankful. I will talk about my doubts in 1993 and 2006 as I go along.

I initially stayed an extra day at Rainbow Campground because it was so lovely—such a paradise. Several other hikers were also staying for a day. I felt a quick kinship with a woman my age, Thankful. We rented a cabin together to avoid the crowded mixed-gender bunkhouse. For the first time, we backpackers sat quietly outdoors. We ate ice cream and laughed and talked along a bubbling river surrounded by flowering fruit trees. We rested on lush grass and enjoyed talking for an entire afternoon.

But then, I began to compare myself to others and doubt crept in. Why had I come to the Appalachian Trail? Almost everyone gathered at the Nanatahala River had backpacked before; my backpacking experience had begun only 14 days before. Most hikers knew people who had hiked the entire 2000-mile distance of the AT; I had managed to read what I

could about the AT before I arrived in Georgia. I had a sore toe and very tender feet; others seemed to be faring better with their boots and their feet.

Thankful had planned to hike the AT for many years. She had tested her boots and her endurance on short trips. She'd read many AT books and had purchased supplies on the basis of advice from backpacking experts. She had a schedule planned for the next six months to allow her to hike sections of the Trail with friends and still arrive in Maine in perfect time. I had no clear plan of how far I would manage to hike or even whether I'd ever make it to Maine. Pausing to rest and evaluate my situation brought doubt about my abilities and my dream. My motivations seemed so impulsive and unknowing. I felt foolish next to more knowledgeable hikers like Thankful.

Thankful allowed herself an extra day at Rainbow Campground because her knee was swollen, but she was sure it was healing and as we talked, she and I decided to hike north together as walking partners. The next day we set out.

However, we soon realized that Thankful's knee was not healed; by mid-afternoon, she could hike no further. We were near a highway; I flagged down a car. A couple gave us a ride to a nearby town where we stayed in a motel for the night and saw a doctor in the morning. The doctor sent us back to Rainbow Campground and told Thankful to rest for at least four more days.

In the whirlwind of these changes, my doubts returned. Why had I come to the Appalachian Trail? I thought I knew why I was hiking the AT—to be healed by the earth after the death of my partner of 19 years. I had envisioned steady hiking and alone, with very few days off. But now, I wanted to help this other woman. Doubt crept in. I wasn't hurt, and I wasn't obligated to stay. Maybe I should keep on hiking. Why was I here? What should I do? Thankful was troubled with doubt, too. In four days we had a lot of time to discuss our doubts. Doubts rose so high inside me, I began to speak deep doubts out loud. At that point in 1993, I thought I should quit hiking: perhaps I was not actually capable of hiking long-distance. At this point in 2006, I sometimes think I should quit writing: perhaps I am not capable of effective communication. Both times, stopping my journey made it intimidating to begin again.

Simultaneously to dwelling on our doubts, Thankful and I had time to enjoy the valley. Healing of body and soul happens when one is forced to stop fully and sit quietly in a mountain valley paradise called Rainbow Campground. Resting is as important to the journey as walking. We rested for four days and healing happened at many levels.

But after four days, Thankful's knee was still swollen and her doubts persisted. She decided to hire someone to drive her to a youth hostel at Wesser. Wesser was a two-day hike on the AT, but only a couple hours' drive by car. Her decision forced my decision: I would hike two days alone. This AT section was known to be especially beautiful; I would not take a car ride and miss it. The way to end my doubts was to pick up my backpack and move on, with a deeper commitment to the complexity of my journey.

The reward for my decision to continue my hike was immediate and great. I hiked 10 miles that day and spent my first night entirely alone. It is a powerful sensation to be aware that you are a lone human, surrounded by miles of wilderness. After a slow sunset, the night sounds were embracing, uncontaminated by human influence. There was no reason to speak and soon my own bumping around in the three-sided shelter became too noisy. I

simply sat silently looking at the night woods and listening to the immenseness of the earth. Later I drifted to a peaceful sleep.

The next day was equally rewarding. I hiked all afternoon on a narrow rocky ridge called JumpUp. The ridge extended for miles and was sometimes only a few yards wide. It was like walking along a bluff edge, with an edge on both sides. I hiked on no other place comparable to JumpUp in all of my journey. The earth fell away on both sides, so that it seemed like I was walking on a stone path leading me into the sky. Clouds drifted both above and below me. My breathing was deep and my eyes were wide open. My pack seemed lighter and my feet did not hurt. I remember smiling as I walked. While I had been filled with doubts only a day ago, this day I was filled with life and knew why I had come to the Appalachian Trail. New patterns were laid in my soul as I walked in this place of intense and sacred beauty.

At a pinnacle of her life, **Lorely Lather** stood at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, having hiked 1000 miles in 100 days--all the way from northern Georgia. In the years since 1993, Lorely found Diana's Grove. This will be her fifth year as a Mystery.

Hounds of the Hill: Buddy

Diana's Grove is devoted to dogs as well as people. Each month, a Grove dog weighs in on the monthly theme in his or her own special way. This month's article features Buddy. A neighbor called about a dog under a porch who growled when the homeowners went in and out. We found a full-grown young Labrador Retriever-Border Collie mix in enormous pain and fear. His neck was growing around his too-tight collar, put on him when he was much younger. The collar had to be cut off and starving, terrified Buddy had to be gently lured out from under that porch, then lured across a threshold into our house. It took weeks for him to feel even a little safe. Cynthia says of him, "Buddy needs your help. Only people can undo what people have done. Will you be the person who changes Buddy's life? He is a wonderful dog who has not had a wonderful life, and still - he is a gentle creature searching for a home and a family who will be kind to him. It is easy to be kind to Buddy. He is an appreciative hero, a survivor."

There's a puppy in me being pulled by Spring. No one sees it. None of you would ever know, would you? You look at me and say, "What soulful eyes" and "What a calm dog." You have no clue how my dog wants to give way to puppy. Right here. Right now.

And yet, what if the puppy came out? What then? I think of a life ringed by pain. I want to believe in your response to me. And I'm not going to. I sometimes wonder if you know what you sound like when you say, "Oh, sweet Buddy." Your pity disgusts me.

And yet. Once in a while I have my doubts. Maybe it's not just pity. Maybe there's more to you than that person smell and person voice. I don't think I'll ever get used to either. And yet. Once in a while I sense something else.

And it calls to the puppy in me. Spring and an occasional touch or voice hits that puppy core in me. I will give it up one of these days. It will go away. Like everything goes away. The dark. The fear. The joy. The pain. The dark. The fear. The ring of distrust.

“Buddy will get a good home.” Your faith astounds me. I wonder how you believe. Or is there a puppy in you, a baby in you that lives through all this? Maybe you do have a clue. Or are you seeing some end I don’t see? I see the dirt as hard and compacted as a highway that doesn’t end. And it only opens for a stake.

Yesterday I dreamed an undog dream. I dreamed of sleeping under a sycamore tree. The branches of the tree bent in like they were rubber. The grass around me grew up and in like a bowl. I dreamed I was sleeping and dreaming of my belly opening. And I gave birth to children.

Such nonsense. My neck hurts just thinking about it. There’s a puppy in me, not a baby. What do you have inside you? Is it dark fear joy pain, too? Do you question everything you feel and see? Or just some of it? How do you make the world disappear and what do you do when it happens?

I don’t know why it is I trust the sun. Yes, it comes around every day, but does that mean it always will? And why should I trust any of you? Your life is not dependent upon my trust. My doubts aren’t yours. And don’t pretend that they are.

The children inside me came out shaped like question marks. They were fat and healthy and ready for the world. Sometimes I see them out of the corner of my eye. They are right there alongside the marks we can’t see.

Sometimes I wonder if what I am and what I feel will ever meet. If I had the answer to that I wouldn’t be dreaming. Last night, I chased a question into the woods. And I lost its trail and came back out a different way. It seemed a natural thing to do.

Going Deeper

by Synnove

“Let the garments that cover you fall away. Stand naked on the mountaintop and accept the challenge to find your place in the world. Yes, you will be devoured. Soul dwells in the heart. Only when your heart is open will your soul be free.”

—Cynthia Jones, *Psyche and Eros*, Chapter 3: “The First Death”

Last month, Psyche climbed to the top of the mountain to embrace her fate. Some say she climbed to the top of the mountain to embrace death, but as fate would have it, this was not her time to die. Instead, Eros fell in love with her, and he asked the wind to sweep her up and carry her away to Paradise.

During the day, she was surrounded by beauty; all of her needs and desires were met. At night, she was loved by a god in the darkness of her windowless bedroom. And yet her stay in Paradise was conditional. It required that she never look upon the face of her lover, that she never really know him and never truly be his partner. For how can there be a partnership between two lovers when one is asked to remain in the dark? Eros was not bound by that condition; he saw her, and he knew her.

“Paradise, beauty, and grace—all that I needed or wanted was mine. Eros came to me each night, and I loved him completely. But I was empty. I was lonely. I wanted to be with my sisters. I wanted to be with someone who knew me, someone who could love me, see me, and let me see them. I hungered for this connection. I asked myself, ‘Who am I to question a deception that serves me?’”
—Cynthia Jones, *Psyche and Eros*, Chapter 3: “The First Death”

Psyche broke the agreement. She took a lamp into her room when Eros had fallen asleep, and she lit the lamp and saw him. She lit the lamp, and Paradise vanished.

Something about this story bothers me. Why do we need to be ignorant in order to stay in Paradise? Knowledge is powerful. Children brag in a sing-song voice “I know a secret” to let us know that they have power that we lack. Have you ever encountered the arrogance of a “know-it-all” who presents themselves as though they held a superior position to the rest of the world? Does either of these actions seem like the behavior that you would expect from a god or goddess? Are the gods and goddesses insecure?

I could not imagine being content in Paradise if the price were ignorance. Self-knowledge, knowing my values, strengths, weaknesses, and my vision for myself, is necessary for my personal growth. For how can I grow if I never know about my areas of weakness or if I never know my strengths? I want to know more, to increase my level of consciousness so that I can make better choices. I have the ability to choose to behave in ways that are positive, desirable. I can choose to end behaviors that cause injury or pain. But first I have to know the difference. I have to be able to measure the impact of my choices.

Can you imagine Psyche’s moment of choice? Can you imagine her taking that risk so that she could see Eros? Is banishment the price of knowledge? Or is knowledge a step on the path to union with the divine?

Are you willing to follow in Psyche’s footsteps? Psyche risked her place in Paradise. What will you risk in order to know more about yourself, your blind spots, and your growing edges? What are you willing to risk in order to walk this path of initiation in the light of knowledge?

Care to explore the inner realm? Take a brief journey inside? Inner journeys can be as simple as exercising your imagination.

Perhaps you can imagine being on a journey into the depths of yourself. How does it feel to travel a path to self-discovery? What do you experience as you travel this path? Does the air bring any scent your way? Can you see what the path looks like, the colors and shapes that surround you? Are you traveling alone? Do you hear anything? What do you notice about how the path feels beneath your feet? Is it smooth or rough, narrow or wide, straight, curved, or crooked?

Are there places along this path that seem shadowed? Hidden from your sight, unknowable? Can you stretch your imagination into those areas and experience them? Do they have a message for you? Do you feel called to action?

When you are ready, allow yourself to travel back into your everyday consciousness, knowing that answers to these questions will come in their own time.

“Risk. Do or refrain from doing, and know that both are risks. If you are going to risk, risk for the right reasons. Risk for love, for hope, for healing; risk for the well-being of the ones you love. It is better to be wrong for the right reasons than it is to be right for the wrong reasons. Do I believe that? Yes, I do. And when I light the light, I will tell you whether it is true.”

—Cynthia Jones, *Between the Worlds*, March 2006: “Blind Faith”

Is continuing on your path worth risking the life that you currently know? What is worth the risk of losing everything? Psyche, would you light the lamp?

Synнове is passionate about empowering others. She has over twenty years of Management Consulting and Executive Management experience with an emphasis on building effective teams. She also mentors middle-school aged girls for Passages Northwest "Girls Rock!" — a program dedicated to inspiring courage in women and girls.

Mystery's Light: Elemental Dedications

by Canyon

Psyche lived in a time when the elements of life could not be ignored. Direct, continuous communion with air, fire, water, and earth was not just her daily reality but also her religion. Air was the warm, moist breath of Zeus that greened the land; fire, the light of Apollo that brought the grain to ripeness; water, Poseidon's soul-filled embrace of her peninsular home; earth, her very being, the daily choices through which she lived her dedication to Aphrodite, her love of her family, and her surrender to fate.

Each year, Mysteries are invited to dedicate to one elemental force of life. This year, we may also choose a *practice* for communion with the elements as they are represented in this year's story: Breath, Light, Soul, or Being. Many of us have chosen one of these practices: to breathe consciously for 15 minutes each day, to spend one hour each day outdoors in the light of the sun or the moon, to give one hour of each day to soulful interaction with another living being, or to consciously take one action each week that has been long awaiting our attention.

All text within quotations is taken (with minor edits) from emails to the Mystery List, the voice of the 2006 Mystery School community.

These dedicated practices seem deceptively simple. *Why not?* I say to myself. *I can do any of these, maybe all!* With confidence I made my choice, made my dedication. Although I was choosing, as we all were choosing, to change, I knew that I could make that change; more, I knew that I *would*. “My actions don't always match who I wish to be; who I know myself to be.” So, why not change them? I dedicated and then, suddenly, “I didn't think I could do it. And I don't want to commit to something I don't think I can do.”

Not surprising, then, that “I am already finding it a struggle.” (And I “suspect [that this] means I have made the right choice.”) So, why did I first think that a daily practice would be an easy path? Why did I believe that change would be a simple and graceful slide, rather than a mountain climb? And why did I then believe it was, after all, impossible?

Perhaps each of us, regardless of our chosen element, is “stepping toward something [we] need, rather than into someplace [we’re] comfortable.” I know that “I will never be able to move forward in my healing” without this dedication, this daily practice. I must “make my peace” with this elemental force in my life.

I know that I need this change. Yet it conflicts in some essential ways with who I am now. “I love being outside and I’m inside way too much. I love being at my computer writing and working AND I need and want the balance of movement and stretching.” Daedalus’ words from the story echo over and over in my waking mind and dreamtime: “Sacrifice is not what I will be giving up, but what I will be giving,” and I feel a swell of noble pride—ah! a motivating force.

Still, I struggle; I continue to “wrestle with that call” to practice. Like many, I am “wonderful at justification [of] my slacking.” Perhaps better than some, “I know well the path of procrastination” and, so far, have been somewhat “negligent in my dedication.” Daedalus’ question, *Have you ever decided to give the gods a little bit less than what you have to give?*, requires me to answer, “Yes, sometimes I hold back the ‘best’ for myself.” How can I move beyond this pattern?

And then, “I wondered if I was being a bit too harsh, literal, exacting. Was this a vow, or a dedication to a practice? Was it OK if I didn’t always meet it?” Was it okay not to be perfect? “It almost seems like my nemesis is getting in the way, or really standing up for me to take notice. *I couldn’t do things THAT perfectly.*” A new way of being isn’t easy, and I wonder, “How do [I] stay committed when it gets hard?”

One strategy that might help me is to “convince myself that the practice ... is crucial to my well-being, whether that be physical, emotional, or otherwise.” Or perhaps I can choose to “see this dedication in a larger context, that of supporting my goal to live an intentional life.” I might find a way to see my daily practice from the perspective of how it “aligns with my values and supports my spiritual growth.” Perhaps I could take this step into “intentional life, shedding fear and just being more fully myself.”

Shedding fear ... what is this fear invoked by just the prospect of sacrificing a long-held pattern? And why such fear? What does my pattern protect? “I am trying to trust the unknown, to trust that magic happens” when I “leave my known way of being.” I am trying hard to join my community in “stepping past the edge” of my comfort, my protected life. Perhaps I need to cultivate pronoia, “the opposite of paranoia: taking notice of all of the things that conspire to go right on just an ordinary day.”

And when I become more aware of this mystery, life’s massive conspiracy on my behalf, my dedication begins “spilling over into the other elements.” Even as I struggle in my dedication to one element, “I find myself connecting more fully with all of the elements.” In this way, my life, which seems so lopsidedly focused on this one challenge, seeks its own balance. “Deeper commitment is deeper commitment. The elements are all there, and to take one deeper and remain in balance, they [must] all go deeper.”

“I was not, and still am not, sure what will happen as I spend a year and a day [in this commitment]. But I am encouraged to believe that if I trust my intuition, I will know what I need to do as time passes.” When I look into my heart for the truth about change, “I see renewal and revival, the shedding of the old skin and the recognition of the tender new one

that is emerging.” Of course this process will involve struggle! Will you join me in “laughing a little at [ourselves], for thinking it could be any other way?”

In the end, “perhaps joy is the key,” not pursuing my practice “in an exacting kind of way.” I see my solution as “not looking too far ahead, but focusing on the now: each step, each day.” This is, perhaps, the role of *Being* in all of our dedications. Regardless of the practice chosen, we each “meet the obligation by walking: there is no obligation to like it or to feel good when [we’re] doing it. [We are] free to feel whatever [we] feel when [we] do it. But do it.”

Canyon is a staff member at Diana’s Grove and has been reading and writing for the Mystery List since 1999. She is currently writing a book on how adults can face unresolved developmental challenges from childhood and work them through to a different conclusion. She offers programs and publications that support you in your striving to become who you truly are, who you were intended to be.

Psyche and Eros: Stepping Into the Story

The Sisters of the Soul

by Cynthia Jones

Time passes, even in Paradise. Even though Psyche’s castle was cared for by a staff who loved and fussed over her, even though she had good friends and wise advisors, Psyche was lonely for her family. She asked Eros if her sisters could come and visit.

Caution colored his voice. “This is not the best thing to do,” he warned. Wise advice, yes. But don’t we seek advisors who give us the advice we want to hear? It wasn’t that Psyche wouldn’t listen; she couldn’t listen. She hungered for her sisters. Her longing became grief. Grief made the dark room in which they met even darker. It took away the light, and Eros couldn’t bear the dark. And so Psyche’s sisters were invited to visit her in Paradise.

Now some say that her sisters were jealous. I don’t know. If you had a sister who was so beautiful that she was mistaken for a Goddess, who married the God of Love and lived in a castle in Paradise where her every wish and whim was instantly fulfilled, would you be jealous?

The sisters came to visit. They admired the beauty of the land and the loveliness of the castle. They strolled in the gardens and came to rest in a pavilion overlooking a flock of swans gliding on a small lake. They sat and talked of home and family, of the households of each sister, of love and hope and plans for the future. Psyche told them of her desire to have a baby.

To this, one sister said, “Psyche, are you sure that is the best thing for you to do?” And the other said, “This husband of yours, this god of love. If you haven’t seen him ... what do you think your child might look like?”

The first sister asked, “Wasn’t the prophecy that you were to marry a monster? How do you know you didn’t?” Questions came flooding forth. “What does he look like?” “Why can’t you

see him?” “If he really were beautiful, wouldn’t he want you to see him?” “If he is a monster, that would be a reason for darkness.” “What have you gotten yourself into?” “Do you really believe in all of this?” “Can you trust your own instincts, Psyche?” “What proof do you have?”

Winds. Cold winds. A chill came into Paradise. It blew down the long halls of the castle. It ruffled the placid water on the lake. The swans remembered almost-forgotten patterns of migration. They spread their wings and rose above the lake, circled once, and left. When Eros came home that night, he knew. He knew what he did not what to know, and so he told himself that everything was fine. Everything is the same, he said to himself with a shiver.

When doubt comes to Paradise, it likes it there. It won’t leave. A covenant cracks before it breaks. The light waited to be lit. Paradise prepared to disappear.

Find out more about **Cynthia Jones** at the end of one of her regular columns for this magazine, the cover article on page 1.

The Eclectic Bibliophile

by *Sherrid*

Pete Hauptman’s *Godless*

Psyche invited her sisters to visit her in paradise and they initiated her with doubt. “How do you know he is the god of love?” “He could be a monster.” “How do you know?” Her sisters’ questions were ones that Psyche had asked herself, there in that unquiet corner of her soul where doubts wait until we are ready to hear them.

Doubt is one of man’s greatest initiators. It is pivotal to our history and to our development. Could any force of creation create humanity and not expect it to have its doubts?

Psyche’s doubts led her to light the candle, thus beginning her journey to becoming a goddess. Have you ever had a doubt that led you into becoming something no one expected, not even yourself?

In the novel *Godless*, Pete Hauptman’s main character, Jason, was raised Catholic and goes through his own doubts as a teenager. He begins to question the existence of everything his family holds in reverence. Jason expresses his doubts openly, but is ignored by his family and elders because he is considered too young and foolish to be able to think for himself.

Have you ever had doubts that led you to your convictions? And were these doubts ignored when you expressed them, as if by ignoring them, they would go away? I have, and like Jason, I must admit that there were times when I stated my doubts deliberately to rebel against perceived authority. I was known in my church as a “problem” and was told that I questioned things too much. When I was accepted into a private Christian college, my minister stated that he hoped that they could get me to conform to their ideas of womanhood. They didn’t. In fact, it was at that college that I found another road that eventually led me to Diana’s Grove.

Jason doubted the existence of god; like many people, he wanted proof. Wouldn't proof be great? But if we had proof, where would faith be in the equation? Faith is given to the unknown. If faith were given to the known, wouldn't that revelation change the concept of faith? Jason seriously considers this when his friend Shin questions him on faith...

"I don't have to be a believer to be serious about my religion."

Shin asks Jason, "How do you know it's not true if you don't believe in it?"

"I... Huh?"

"How can you understand something you don't believe in?"

Jason replies, "Shin, that doesn't make any sense. That's like saying you can't understand leprechauns unless you believe in them."

"Do you understand leprechauns?"

"I don't believe in them."

"There you go."

In *Godless*, Jason decided that god was made up, along with some impressive propaganda. So he decides to make up his own religion. He does it as a joke, but as with most gods and most jokes, it takes on a life of its own.

Jason decides that since god was made up, then anything could be a god. During an altercation with a school bully, he has an epiphany about water being the source of all life. Therefore, the Ocean is the giver of life, and that the town's water tower is a demigod, which he calls The Ten-Legged One. He jokingly expresses his ideas to his friend Shin one day when they are pod hunting (snail hunting).

"You're saying the water tower is God?"

"Think about it," I say.

Shin does...

"I can't prove you wrong. I mean you can't prove a negative can you? Like you can't prove that God doesn't exist, and you can't prove that the water Tower isn't a god. Besides when you get right down to it, it's a matter of relativity."

"It is?" I don't always follow Shin's logic.

"Sure. God is relative. As far as the pods are concerned, I'm God."

Jason continues to present his new religion to his friends, to whom he assigns offices and titles. Soon he has several followers. Yet Jason does not recognize that he is his friends' initiator. He considers his religion a joke, but to his friends it is much more. It is their path to finding themselves.

The path of an initiator is a lonely one. Few recognize their role and fewer still accept that responsibility. Have you ever been an initiator and "suffered" the consequences? Have you initiated people into finding themselves, only to be left behind as they took their own journey? The path of an initiator can be lonely, but it leads you to your own path as well.

My father sighed and sat back, "You think you're an atheist, then?"

"I'm not sure what I am."

He looked at me for a long time then. I think it was the longest he has ever looked at me without saying anything. Finally, he spoke.

"I'm sorry to hear that Jason."

“Why?”

“Because it means you’ve got a long, lonely road ahead of you.”

“It’s my road.”

“Your right about that.”

The Hanged One of the tarot was considered a heretic because he saw things from a different perspective. Jason is considered a heretic by his small community, but after initiating a religion that gets out of control he is finally recognized for being an individual.

It is so much easier to be a part of the masses and fade into the background. I took this path for many years, but I could never give up my doubts. They followed me into every aspect of my life. They worked on my unquiet soul until the waters churned and from this I was initiated onto another path, a little water-logged, but anxious to get aground!

I met a Native American storyteller years ago who kept me riveted with his stories. He said that in Native American culture, all stories had a mora, and that the same story had to be diverse enough to have a different moral for people at different stages of spiritual development.

Godless, by Pete Hauptman, is one of those stories. It is listed as a young person’s book and has won many awards, but it conveys a variety of moral lessons and questions to those who read it. It is well written, and I would recommend it to anyone who has ever questioned their faith and had that questioning lead them to their own paths.

For those who have taken that long, lonely road, whether or not you have found your leprechauns, I believe that you will enjoy this book. It brought me some poignant memories of my first attempt to find my road, and it allowed me a moment to bask in that nostalgia of innocence that precedes the first doubts. With innocence come doubts, and wisdom comes with following these doubts wherever they may lead. So, all of you jaded innocents, take a moment to remember that first blush, that first trail, that has led you to who you are. Take a moment to visit that youth in you who still exists no matter how many roads you have traveled. Take a couple of hours and read *Godless*.

Sherrid is an eccentric Mystery who has been part of the Grove, "since the beginning of time" - okay, seven+ years - and was on the 2005 Rites team. She lives in the small Missouri hamlet of Ellsinore and is a nurse, enthusiastic tarotist, multimedia crafter and rabid reader. Her eccentric humor and perspective are liberally sprinkled throughout all her encounters, writings and projects. She can be reached at Sherrid@Dianasgrove.com.

Dreaming with Morpheus: Consciousness and Dream

by *Shauna Aura*

Psyche had to light the light. Although she had made a covenant to never look upon the face of her beloved, Psyche had to shine the light of consciousness, of choice, on what she had taken on blind faith. The dreamscape is often ruled by such things as faith. As initiates into

dreamwork, we can choose to explore our dreams, take them out of the darkness of unconsciousness, and work to understand them. Dreams need not merely happen to us.

We can also light the light and ask for dreams.

Looking closely at our dreams removes some of our naïve acceptance of them. Although we may dismiss our dreams as nighttime flights of fancy, through considering them we gain insight into ourselves, taking steps on the path to initiation.

“If you have a question you truly need answered, or a problem you truly need to solve, you can take it to your dream source...you will get the guidance you need from the dreams that will come to you.”

—Robert Moss, *Conscious Dreaming*

I'll sleep on it

The practice of asking for a dream is often called “dream incubation,” or “sacred sleep.” This practice can be as simple as asking a question of your dreams before going to sleep. It is also the practice of seeking divine assistance with dreams.

I've asked questions of my dreams to help me decide on job offers, work out creative problems when writing or designing, or to help me handle issues of more emotional gravity, such as ending my marriage or seeking answers to guide me on my spiritual path.

Is it a truth I am willing to hear?

When choosing to light the light with dream incubation, I must be willing to face the truth. Dreams and the unconscious can be ruthless; issues that I let slip under the emotional carpet will often stare me boldly in the face in the dreamscape.

Dream incubation ritual

I've adapted my own process for dream incubation largely from Scott Cunningham's book *Sacred Sleep: Dreams and the Divine* and from Robert Moss's *Conscious Dreaming*. My process has five steps:

1. Formulate an intention.
2. Devise a dream ritual.
3. Perform the ritual.
4. Sleep and dream.
5. Interpret the dream.

What's my intention?

Setting a clear intention helps you to focus on the issue and to decide on what ritual techniques will work best for you. Am I asking for advice on a problem, trying to heal my body, or seeking a prophetic dream about my future? Will I be asking a deity or archetype for help in the dreamscape? Much like the preparation for a ritual, it's the intention that matters.

Devise a ritual

The gravity of my question, and the amount of time I have to do the dreamwork, will determine the structure of my ritual. A “quickie” for something I need an answer to the next day might simply involve asking my question before bedtime.

There are a number of ritual techniques that are recommended by Cunningham, Moss, and others. I offer primarily techniques I have used, as well as any understanding I have of why

they work. Please feel free to use these as you like, depending upon your own intention. When I've had a "big" question and a month for preparation, I've used a ritual format similar to what I describe in the following, and it has brought very intense dreams to me that have helped me answer my questions.

Deciding on timing

The date for my sacred sleep could be based on several factors, including those based in astrology. I often do major dreamwork on a full moon. Mundane factors include ensuring that I will have time and space when I wake up to write down my dreams. And since, unlike the ancient Greeks, I don't have a dream temple to go to, I have asked my partner to sleep on the couch for the night of my dreamwork.

When I do a dream ritual from full moon to full moon, I

- Commit to writing down my dreams every day for the entire month
- Reread my dream question every day
- Create an altar to my question, or to a deity or archetype I'm working with
- Immerse myself in the symbolic language I wish to dream in. For example, when seeking insight into my own spirituality, I read a lot on pilgrimages, labyrinths, mythology and heroic journeys, grail quests, etc. These symbols were present in my dreams for the month and gave me a head start on dream interpretation afterward.

Fasting and purification

Some dreamwork traditions recommend fasting before dreamwork to purify the body. In my experience, this can add to the potency of that night's dreams, although being too hungry may make it harder to fall asleep. Many ancient dream temples required celibacy before dreamwork. This recommendation often falls under the category of purification, though I feel it has more to do with life force and energy. In my dreamwork, I've found that a month of celibacy increases the intensity of my dreams.

The night itself

I usually take a purifying shower, especially if I'm coming home after work. I cleanse my bedroom, both physically and energetically. I create sacred space in my usual fashion. I'm usually working with a particular deity, and I invoke Her. You might be working with a different archetype, or your Soul, your expanded self.

I meditate on my dream question while burning some herbs and while making a dream pillow. I use mugwort, bay, and vervain, although there are dozens of herbs that are recommended for dreamwork. I also use an essential oil blend and drink an herbal tea. I've found that working with herbs promotes more intense dreaming. I often finish up by raising some energy towards my dream intention before preparing for sleep.

There are ancient references to assuming a special posture of sacred sleep. Some change the position they sleep in; I wear a particular ritual gown to bed. The gown is less comfortable to sleep in, and in my experience, sleeping in an unfamiliar fashion makes it more likely that I will awaken after a sleep cycle and thus will be able to write down more dreams.

"Dreams are a channel of access to the divine realm, or the more subtle levels of consciousness. They are also a medium through which the numinous unfettered reality communicates to us directly."

—Wayne Teasdale

Follow-through

Upon waking, I honor the work I've done, and any deity or archetype that I've worked with, by writing down my dreams and working to interpret them. February and March's "Dreaming with Morpheus" articles offer some dream interpretation tools that you might find helpful. I've found that big dreams can take a while to unravel; however, sometimes it's the emotion I have on waking that gives me my answer. If I've done a whole month of dreamwork, I'll read through them all; sometimes then images or symbols will achieve meaning. Even when it's hard to unravel a dream after incubation, I feel nourished by the work.

Dreaming actively—lighting the light—is something that I've found to be one of the most powerful personal practices I can offer myself. I gain direction and help with pivotal choices, and I feel relentlessly supported by the sacred.

Shauna Aura is an artist and designer who has been working with dreams since she was 12. Dreamwork is an integral part of her personal, spiritual, and creative practice. She believes that the dreamworld informs the waking world, and that dreams deepen our insight into ourselves, our lives, and our spirituality. She can be contacted at shaunaaura@gmail.com.

Moving Images: Everything I Needed to Learn I Learned from Filmmaking

by Dan Wilson

This year's "Moving Images" will explore the how films are made and the life lessons learned from the production process as we follow Dan through a semi-fictionalized year producing a re-telling of Cupid and Psyche in Milan's fashion industry.

I am a decision-maker. When I am working on a film, I have to make many choices, both creatively and pragmatically. As the producer, I am the ultimate decision-maker, and although I take input and recommendations from the other collaborators on my creative team, the final decision rests firmly on my shoulders, and at the end of the day, I'm the person who will be responsible if something goes wrong. Many times, I'm the person that needs to communicate decisions that have been made by others on the creative team to the people involved with the production.

It's an interesting position to be in. On the one hand, there's a certain sense of control that lends itself to getting things done efficiently, but on the other hand, there's the difficulty of effectively balancing everyone's needs. Every decision has consequences, and in addition to feeling good about the decisions I need to make and supporting the decisions of the creative professionals in whom I've placed my trust, I also need to live with others' reactions to those decisions. The latter can become problematic when there's an unhealthy reaction to those decisions. The excitement of the collaborative process can quickly disintegrate into a less-than-fun experience of second-guessing my decisions and trying to figure out what I could have done better.

Of course, there are parallels to this experience in our story this year. After Psyche had chosen to live in Paradise, she invited her sisters to visit. Maybe it was out of jealousy, maybe it was that little thing that some people do to make themselves feel better by bringing others down a notch, or maybe it was fear of the unknown, but the sisters planted doubt in Psyche's mind. They planted the seed that Eros might be a monster. Psyche, of course, began second-guessing her decision, and ultimately she chose to look upon the face of Eros as he slept, betraying the covenant that she'd had with him.

When I am working on films, plenty of "sisters" come forward to cast doubt on my decisions. It may be someone saying, "You want to hire *her*? She only speaks Italian," or someone asking, "Are you sure we can afford to shoot in Europe?" Although I will make a conscious effort to evaluate the validity of those concerns before I make a decision, sometimes I'll just screw up. I listen to the opinions of the people on my creative team, but I have to go with my feelings of what's going to work best for the production. Sometimes it's a good decision, and sometimes it's questionable.

I once produced a film for a first-time director. Funding was shaky, but I decided that I wanted to do what I could to help him through the process. When the project ultimately didn't work out, I endured a series of comments along the lines of "Hmmm. I had a bad feeling about that project" from people who were close to me. What those people didn't realize was that I needed to make that poor decision about my involvement in order to learn the life lessons that the experience taught me.

I've been involved in projects in which an actor who had been hired for a role just was not getting it and needed to be let go. That's a difficult situation to be in. When someone's pouring their heart and soul into a role but needs to be told to pack up and go home, it's never easy. The actor may be counting on this role to enhance a résumé or may have turned away other work for this role.

I've worked on films in which I'd negotiated a wonderful deal to use a location for some scenes, but needed to go back to the family, who were all excited about the film coming to their house, and tell them that the writer had just axed all of the scenes taking place at the location.

The film that I'm producing right now just unexpectedly lost \$24,000 worth of funding. The difficult decision that I need to make as a result is which two interns to let go. They're all so bright and enthusiastic, and they're all relying on this project to round out a slim résumé and to learn valuable skills for the job market.

These are the types of decisions that I need to make or to communicate as a producer. I'll use my best judgment and the best information that I have available to me to make a decision based on what's best for the film, but they're still difficult choices that could result in breaking promises I've made to crew members, actors, or vendors. The results could be disastrous to the film as well.

Everyone makes choices, and just as Psyche chose to look upon the face of her lover, I've sometimes made poor choices based on misunderstandings or on bad information. Ultimately, the only covenant to which I need to stay true is my own—the covenant that I made with myself to live consistently with my values. In this case, that means doing the best I can do for the film.

I would contend that Psyche did nothing but make a choice. For whatever reason she had going through her head, she chose to break her covenant with Eros the moment she lit the lamp to look upon his sleeping face. There were consequences to that decision, and I feel that Psyche's acceptance of those consequences, as we will learn in coming months, was part of the life lesson that she needed to learn.

When I make a decision about my film that affects others to whom I may have promised something, it's inevitable that there will be consequences. How I choose to deal with those consequences, how I choose to shape myself in light of those consequences, and how I choose to respond to those consequences is how I grow. I like to think that I learn from my varied experiences and interactions, making it easier to handle situations as they occur in the future.

Dan Wilson describes himself as being from Milwaukee, WI. INTF. Art. Music. Film. Scorpio Sun, Leo Moon, Scorpio Rising.

Lonely Hearts: What to Expect on a First Date

by Cynthia Jones

I'm wondering what the first date must be like from the dog's point of view....

My person comes to get me. Leash to collar, are we going for a walk?! But no, this hall is unfamiliar. She leads me into an unfamiliar room. A barrage of unanticipated smells comes over me - people, other dogs, puppies that I have never met. I want to explore. Am I safe? Should I run? Why am I here? What should I do?

Strange people are calling...is that my name? It sounds like my name but the voices are unfamiliar. Confused, I take a step back. I see them tense. They exchange looks; I know that I am in some kind of trouble. How can that be? I have never been here before. The man whispers, "What's wrong with him?" I feel a chill. I hang my head. Do they wonder why I'm not running over to greet them? But who are they? I have never seen these people before. I am afraid, uncertain, confused. I'm not at all shy with the people that I know. I live for their visits and the sight of a leash. I jump in joy at the sound their approach, but...who are these people? I stand behind the legs of the one who has led me to this place. I peek around her to get a better view. What should I do?

Irritation. The man's hackles rise. He speaks, he growls, just a low rumbling grrrrrrr. "This ad said he's a very affectionate dog. But..." He tosses a look my way. The woman next to him reaches out to me. I want to go to her but...have I done something wrong? My person pats me on the head. She kneels down and talks to me. Sweet voice, kind touch, I kiss her face and put my paw on her leg in an attempt to get closer. I lean against her just to feel her warmth, just to be with her for one more minute. "I guess it's just not your day," she says. I wonder if

there will ever be a day that is my day. Will someone come one day, and kneel down and wait for me?

Eight years ago, I saw a poster for an extremely pretty, long haired Shepherd Mix. She was described as being very shy and afraid of men. Due to the high level of activity at our place (a retreat center with 40 guests a weekend is not a quiet home), we didn't inquire about her. Two years later, we saw the poster again. Two years later, we went to see the timid Pansy. I was sent back to her pen, but I couldn't find her. When the attendant went back with me, she pointed to a ball of fur curled up on the floor. Pansy didn't raise her head or look at me. When she was brought into the little office that served as a meeting room, she ran under the desk and curled into that ball again. "This is more than we can do," I said, but with my family's encouragement, we pulled her out from under the desk. I carried her to the car, and placed that ball of fur on the floor of the back seat. We went home. Three days later, head held high, Pansy was running across the meadow. Her body recalled the joy of being alive. Six years later, we grieved our loss when she died from a spinal injury. There was never a day that I regretted our decision to share our home with Pansy.

I am not asking you to ignore chemistry. There is a magical connection between a person and a dog that happens when you find the right companion. But at your first meeting, take a moment. Dogs are people too. You're a stranger. Have a conversation before you expect a kiss. Let the dog smell you, talk to her, take him for a walk, ask his caregivers who he is. Relationships develop - they don't come ready-made, not with people and not with dogs. You might have fifteen years together ahead of you, so go ahead and give the introduction an hour.

If you are adopting a shy dog, give her three days to get settled; you will see her change every day. She may be exuberant, or she may be shy, and either way, you won't really know your new dog until she has been at your house for those three days. The next big change is at two weeks. Then at three months. Just plan to bring kindness, respect and compassion to your first meeting, to give that magic a chance to happen. Plan to give an hour...after all, how long is that in dog minutes?

Find out more about **Cynthia Jones** at the end of one of her regular columns for this magazine, the cover article on page 1.