

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

Going into the Underworld

by *Cynthia Jones*

Some say only the plants can remember their time in the Underworld. Some say they will never tell the secrets of that place. Some say that gardeners are the true Hierophants. They tend the Mysteries. In the ever-returning cycles of perennials and the repeated greening of the trees, Persephone gives her benediction to the world.

I, too, will not tell you the secrets of Persephone's home. But I will tell you five secrets:

Anything can be healed.

Persephone knows the patterns of regeneration.

The trip to the Underworld must be made alone.

Turn prayers into promises.

What you give to her for healing, you must relinquish.

The magic in life is ever present and visible in the spring. It is just as apparent in the fall but it must be seen with a different eye. Regeneration begins when we give in to stillness. It begins with a journey within, a journey to the depths. Autumn.... Leaves drop. One by one, they cover the forest floor. A seed that did not dig its way into soil finds itself covered with leaves. The leaves take it down as they return to the root. Darkness claims the day, a little at a time. Minute by minute, darkness takes the day away from the light.

At this time, the story of Psyche sends us to the depths. "Ask Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, healer of lost souls and the keeper of the seeds, for a cask of her magic," Aphrodite says to Psyche. "Persephone's secrets are simple. They are seeds, essential truths about the mystery of healing."

Anything can be healed. Anything...but not everything. For healing to happen, we must believe that healing is possible. Anything can be healed, but not everything. Or perhaps, everything can be healed but, at times, life ends before the healing is done.

Persephone knows the patterns of regeneration. Believe in life. Believe in the natural, organic wisdom of life, the seasons, the cycles, the power of renewal and the wisdom within each of us.

The trip to the Underworld must be made alone. Believe in yourself. Surround yourself with support. Ask those you love and those who love you to wait for you at the crevice to the depths, but go alone into the place of mystery that lives within you.

Turn prayers into promises. Belief *is* action. Belief is not an alternative to right action. Faith gives us the strength to do. Faith gives us the will to act, to continue acting in our own behalf and to make right our world. The power of the divine has a greater purpose than to do for us what we will not do for ourselves.

What you give to her for healing, you must relinquish. Isn't all faith a belief in magic, in a power beyond self, beyond the grasp of logic? Give up the burdens you release through prayer or ritual. Let your wounds rest in the hands of divine, no matter what you believe the divine to be. Be it life, love, God or a pantheon of gods to whom you give what needs to be healed, step away from what hurts you. To support change, act as if things are different.

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 School year. Cynthia co-founded Diana's Grove with Patricia Storm in 1994.

Initiation: Rites of Passage

by Constance Fleming

Constance was asked to tell this story to the Rites Team at the end of the Rites weekend in 2000.

This is a true story, not a myth ... a real-life tale of one of the miracles of nature. This is the story of the caterpillar and the chrysalid. It doesn't start with a chrysalid, but with an egg no larger than the head of a pin. That egg is laid by a marvelous creature of air and nectar, a creature quite unlike her offspring.

The egg hatches, and inside, there is a tiny caterpillar—a very hungry, very tiny caterpillar. She is so hungry that, first, she eats her eggshell. She consumes the shell that contains all of who she was, and she forever afterward carries this essence within her. Then she begins to eat of this world. Her mother placed her egg exactly where it needed to be. The caterpillar eats the plant that her mother so graciously placed her on so that she would be surrounded by nourishment.

The caterpillar's imperative and instinct is to seek food and grow.

He eats and eats and eats. He grows and grows and grows. He grows until he can grow no larger. The caterpillar discovers that he has run into a barrier—his skin has become too tight. It is too small, too limiting. What will he do? He rests. And then he sheds his skin, revealing a new skin that has more room to grow.

Again, the caterpillar seeks out nourishment. She grows. She grows until she can grow no further. She rests and repeats the process of shedding her skin.

The caterpillar sheds its skin five times. By the fifth shedding, the caterpillar has grown almost 3,000 times larger than when she started. But now, the caterpillar doesn't just grow a new skin and stay a caterpillar; she undergoes a more radical and complete transformation. Essentially, the caterpillar dies.

He dies, and what emerges from that final skin is a completely different being—a chrysalid. The chrysalid is a being, or rather, it is a state of being. It is the state of being a great mystery—not a caterpillar, not a butterfly. The chrysalid is the repository of all of the nourishment and growth of the caterpillar. It is all of the promise of the butterfly.

The chrysalid is living liquid. It is undifferentiated organic material—total potentiality, total possibility. And, somehow, it has a pulse. It throbs with life. As a chrysalid, the caterpillar deconstructs her very tissues to allow a total reorganization of all that she is. She allows herself to be made into a new creature not hinted at by her previous form. The chrysalid marks the caterpillar's rite of passage. It is a passage from a creature that inches along, seeking food for itself, to a creature that soars on currents of air, a creature whose imperative it is to feed Life by creating a new generation.

Have you ever undergone a similar transformation? We all have rites of passage in our lives. Isn't your story just as true as the caterpillar's? The divine seeker in each of us is hungry. Life gives the seeker in us food. Many of us find nourishment for our hearts, minds, and spirits at Diana's Grove. Sometimes we discover that our work here enables us to go through a process of transformation.

Each of us has eaten and grown. We have come to barriers and moved through them by shedding personal limitations that have held us as tightly as our skins. We have grown new skins and allowed ourselves to stretch even further. In our rites of passage, we move into the world of the chrysalid. We die, and new beings—beings of total possibility—organize. We self-define and emerge with new identities and imperatives. Our full potentials, the new beings that we are, will continue to manifest over time.

Constance Fleming was a student of nature's wisdom in her youth, when she spent long hours exploring and studying the woods and prairies around her home. As a Monarch butterfly farmer, she became enchanted by the magic of the chrysalis. As a priestess at Diana's Grove and the case manager for Diana's Grove Dog Rescue, she is now witness to a different kind of transformation: the healing power of human love in the lives of emotionally-wounded dogs.

The Final Challenge - Go into the Underworld...

by Cynthia Jones

Seeds sorted, fleece gathered, cup full—filled full—three challenges behind her, one before her. Psyche's last challenge is to go into the Underworld and ask Persephone for her magic. "Go into the Underworld and bring me Persephone's power, the cask that holds the magic of regeneration."

The Underworld, the land of the dead, the land of the sleeping seeds.... Persephone spends six months, the growing months, with us in the land of the living. During those six months, she is her Mother's daughter, daughter of Demeter, daughter of the earth and the grain. Then, six months she spends with her lover, Pluto, Hades, the God of the Dark, the God of the Underworld. When Persephone is in the Underworld, she is a goddess in her own realm and not merely her mother's daughter.

When on earth, she is the process of growth. In the fall, she brings her magic, the power of regeneration, to all that is beneath the surface. If this story offers us the challenges that enable us to be in relationship, to be truly present with each other, the last challenge takes us into our own depths. It takes us into our personal depths and asks us to visit the forgotten moments and seeds of experience that slumber within us. To heal the plant, we must heal the root.

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- *Anything can be healed.*
- *Persephone knows the patterns of regeneration.*
- *The trip to the Underworld must be made alone.*
- *Turn prayers into promises.*
- *What you give to Persephone for healing, you must relinquish.*

See *Cynthia's* bio after her article, *Going into the Underworld*.

Astrology for the Journey – Dark and distant regions

by Teri Parsley Starnes

“How do you face the demons that keep you unconscious, that keep you in the depths, living the story that your wounds and fears tell you is the truth?” Cynthia Jones in *Moon Shadows 2006*.

At some point, every initiation takes us to this place, the place of our depths, wounds, and fears. At some point, we are asked to go beyond the farthest edge of ourselves – sometimes we are invited to go there and sometimes we are taken – but at some point we all stand before the gates to the Underworld.

This passage through the Underworld is so pervasive - found in so many myths in so many cultures - that it becomes one of those original patterns we call archetype. Part of us just knows there is such a place – a place that holds what we are afraid to face, and a place that also offers healing when we surrender our wounds to its power. Where would we be without such a place? What would we be?

Modern astrologers have relied on one planet, Pluto, to be the guardian of that deep place. This planetary initiator has been in the news lately as astronomers have refined the definition of “planet”, and now say that Pluto is not one. Pluto was discovered in 1930. At the time, scientists discussed what to name this new Planet X. There is a story that an 11-year-old girl first thought of the name Pluto and suggested it to her influential grandfather, who in turn passed the idea on to the astronomers. This little girl did exist and she did think of the name, but others were also drawn to the name Pluto at the same time because this planet, so far out on the edges of our solar system, captured their imaginations in much the same way.

The New York Times headline of May 26, 1930 read, "Pluto Picked as the Name for New Planet X Because He Was God of Dark Distant Regions." Names are important in astrology. One name suggested for Pluto was Minerva, goddess of wisdom. If this planet had been named after wisdom, would we have developed a different relationship to the darkest regions of our solar system and, by symbolic transference, the darkest regions of ourselves? Or were we collectively determined to name Planet X after the Lord of the Underworld because we could not understand this hidden place any other way?

With the decision by the International Astronomers Union to “demote” Pluto to dwarf planet status, I believe our collective story about the “dark distant regions” is also changing. In the discussion I have heard so far, some astrologers theorize that the demotion signals that Pluto has done his job and we are now more comfortable with the Underworld shadow, while some theorize that we have pushed Pluto back into the shadow because we have become less comfortable with what he has shown us. There are good arguments for both points of view.

When Pluto was discovered in the '30s, the science of psychology was just beginning to become an important way for humans to understand themselves and question their own dark, distant regions. Psychology has come a long way in those 76 years. We do know a lot more about ourselves, but has this knowledge helped to change us into more enlightened and compassionate beings? I wonder. But have we found healing in the Underworld? I truly think so. I witness the transformations I have seen in myself and others through the deep, inner work offered by Diana's Grove and other human potential movements. Pluto is the guardian of that transformation.

The scientific rationalization for redefining what a planet is points to the new role Pluto may be taking on in our relationship to the Underworld. There are just too many other Plutos out there. At one time, Pluto stood guardian at the farthest reaches of our solar system. We did not know that even farther out, past that edge, there were more bodies like Pluto circling around the Sun. The Underworld has been revealed to be full of vaster, deeper regions, tenanted by other archetypes. Out past Pluto we now have Sedna, an Inuit goddess of the sea whose story is about pride, betrayal, abandonment, and anger—some of the demons we can find in the Underworld. We also have Quaoar, a being from the Tongva, indigenous people found in Southern California, who is the great creator who sings and dances other gods into existence—symbolic of the healing potential also found in these depths. The final nail in Pluto's coffin came from the discovery of an object in our solar system larger than Pluto. At the time this object was called a planet and was nicknamed Xena by its discoverers. Names are important in astrology. Xena's name has now been officially changed to Eris – goddess of discord.

Eris' story from Greek myth tells us about the latest demon that we may be ready to take on in our collective evolution. She wasn't invited to a very important royal wedding. To show her displeasure and to cause discord, she came uninvited and tossed a golden apple inscribed with 'to the fairest' amidst the other goddesses gathered there. Fighting broke out between Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite. Zeus declared a mortal should decide who was fairest. Paris was chosen, he was offered Helen of Troy in exchange for giving the apple to Aphrodite, and thus the Trojan War began. Before I demonize Eris, I should remember the times in the not so distant past when I have wished bad luck on others because I felt excluded. That demon lives in me. And I see it around me too.

What role will Pluto play in helping us to meet these demons? What role will he play in helping me surrender my wounds in order to dance and sing the new gods into existence? I believe he is becoming the bridge builder between the old edges and the new ones. In the 1970s Pluto's moon Charon was discovered. Names are important in astrology. Charon is the ferryman who ferries the dead across the River Styx. In the recent remodeling of our solar system, we now find out that Charon isn't a moon but is a binary dwarf planet along with Pluto, because the center of Charon's orbit is not located within Pluto but in the space between the two. Charon's role has been elevated. Pluto and Charon can ferry us into even darker and more distant regions of ourselves. And because we named Charon, I believe we are ready.

With or without full planetary status, Pluto remains an important symbol for an absolutely essential place of initiation – the Underworld. In our story, Psyche stands alone and must decide how she will face her demons. She has a choice to make – to live the story of her wounds or to release them into healing. The choice she makes is the choice I also make. Will I throw the apple of discord, or take up the balm of resolution? Demons arise quite easily; it isn't necessary to go very far down into myself to see them. However, to

claim the power of healing requires a journey. I claim Pluto as my ally in that rite of passage.

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 www.starsdanceastrology.com.

Ritual Artistry: Facilitating Ritual in the Underworld

by River

This month we follow Psyche on her journey to the Underworld to meet Persephone and ask for a magic balm that provides healing and regeneration. Mythically, I often equate the Underworld with that place where my desires, fears, and unconscious patterns live, and ritual is one of the ways that I can work with and understand those deeper parts of my self. As ritual artists, we are often called upon to facilitate a ritual that requires us to hold the group in a difficult emotional process that ultimately leads to healing. Facing a fear, renegotiating a contract that no longer serves, making a commitment to change a self-destructive pattern ... all of these are intentions that need to be handled with reverence.

My new roommate is a mental health professional, as well as a practitioner of Earth-based spirituality. Recently, he and I have had some fascinating discussions on the nature of ecstatic ritual and the people who are attracted to it. In one such conversation, he asked me if I thought that there was something about this work that draws a larger percentage of people who are emotionally wounded to it than other spiritual traditions do. I told him that I didn't think we had more than any other practice. However, I think that the nature of ecstatic ritual can call up reactions or results that are more noticeable than what other traditions invoke. Ecstatic ritual tends to work with all of the senses, and the goal is to make the unconscious world more conscious. And conscious often means "visible." So while it may seem that this tradition attracts those with "issues," I believe that these are human issues, and not merely the issues of those who practice Earth-centered spirituality. Ecstatic ritual gives these issues form and substance in order for us to be able to dialogue with them and, ideally, move toward healing.

I heard an interview on the radio recently of a woman who is a choreographer of a dance troupe. To paraphrase her, "When art is done well, it transcends all the senses." In order to transcend the senses, first you have to open them up. And the trick of ritual is to open the senses much further than we are comfortable with in our mundane lives. Suddenly, that barrier that we put up between the mythic world and the mundane world is gone, and the result of that "cracking open" can cause some hefty sensations. Watch a newborn chick who has just broken free from her shell—she's incredibly disoriented at first. When we break free from our own shells, it takes some time before we learn how to

live and move in our expanded selves. Ritual can be life-changing, but it takes commitment to make that change stick. The feeling that comes from those ecstatic moments of clarity during a trance or a chant is merely the catalyst that delivers us to healing. Ritual is the prayer. If we commit to continuing the work, then we become the promise.

There are a number of things that I try to keep in mind while I'm facilitating any ritual, not just the ones that I believe might be emotionally charged. My number one rule of ritual is that I can't ask the participants to go anywhere or do anything that I wouldn't be willing to do myself. If I'm going to facilitate a ritual about facing our deepest fears in order to claim our power, then I need to be willing to face my own fears as well. I can't separate myself from the intention of the ritual simply because I'm the priestess. If anything, I need to have already done or experienced the work before I offer it to others.

Step two is authenticity. If you don't believe what I'm saying, you're not going to trust me to create a safe container for your experience. What's the best remedy for that? I need to say what I believe and believe what I say. Trust in the intelligence of the people who are coming to your ritual. Just as you are able to tell when someone is being less than authentic, they will be able to tell with you. So be real. Be yourself. It will make all the difference in the world, and it will deepen the magic of the ritual for everyone, including you.

Make it clear from the outset that the participants in the ritual have choices. *They* get to decide how far they can or want to push their edges, not you. This doesn't mean that you need to dilute the power of your ritual in order to accommodate everyone. If choice is one of your values, then embody it. State it clearly in the information session that precedes the ritual. Use permissive language throughout the creation of sacred space. Have another option ready for those who can't do a piece of the ritual, or, barring that, be ready to think on your feet and offer another choice in the moment, and honor their process.

That being said, don't assume that your participants won't go to the deeper places that you want them to go. Personally, I go to ecstatic rituals in order to make my subconscious reality more visible to myself so I can learn how to effectively integrate it into my everyday life. In other words, I go to ritual because I *want* it to have a dramatic impact. Sometimes that's the only way that I can kick myself into gear to make effective changes in my life. Don't sell yourself or anyone else short. Provide the experience. Just give the participants choices as to how they'll deal with it.

Finally, the main thing to remember is that if you take the group to the Underworld, there needs to be a possibility for healing worked into your ritual. One thing I learned from Cynthia is that ecstatic ritual is not designed to be therapy, but it is designed to be therapeutic. It's essential that you offer a way for the participants to find resolution, or at least a way to make a commitment to finding resolution in the future.

As a ritual artist, knowing that wounds and old stories can and probably will come up in ritual whether you've planned for them to or not requires a higher level of responsibility and discernment. Facilitate ritual long enough and you will have the participant who shuts down because the ritual is too emotional. You will have the participant who gets angry at you for bringing up a memory that they would rather have forgotten. And that's just the participants. What happens when you are the priestess who gets triggered by an

otherwise innocuous comment, or when you find that you go to a mythic place after an intensely emotional moment because the intimacy is too much to bear? Facilitating ecstatic ritual demands that I strive to know myself and my boundaries and that I know how to use my tools well. Priestessing in the Underworld asks that I hold sacred space with care, compassion, and respect for others in the ritual circle, and for myself. As priestesses, if we are able to do that, then Persephone will hold out her balm of healing and regeneration—and we can all take that magic in our hands.

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? The Personal as Universal

by sisalfish

“In your Rites year, the Shadows that you cast are the shadows our community will walk through. The light you claim and uphold will illuminate the coming year. You are the personal that will give us our universal.”

— Cynthia Jones, *Rites of Passage 2005*

A number of spiritual traditions suggest that one of the primary goals of life is to make our peace with death. That idea is embodied by such archetypes as Inanna, Osiris, Odin, Christ and others. Most of the approaches to making peace with death involve becoming more familiar with death, and with the thought of our own death, in a number of ways.

Like many Mysteries, I do consciously try to make my peace with death and the death archetype. I work with the Death card in the Tarot, dying to myself so a new self can be born. I work with ritual — and I’d suggest that the mystery most ritual embraces, and the risk I take in that space, serve as a rehearsal for the mystery and risk of my own death. I work with the challenges of death and change through meditation and trance. Like FireDancer, Elizabeth Wilson, Laurie Dietrich and other Mysteries, I work in a hospice setting with those who are dying. In all these ways I allow death — and the conscious realization of the inevitability of my own death — into my life, every day.

And beyond that, I’m completing a Rites of Passage year, as one of the five members on this year’s Rites of Passage team. This month, on a chilly October night, the five members of the Rites team — Barbara, Cedar, Lucinda, Walker, and myself — will mark the work we’ve done this year in a rite of passage in which we will become the archetypes, our experience serving as a pattern for the community. As the archetypes, we will die so the community can die through us. What is personal to each of us will become universal to others. That pattern — of dying to my individual self in recognition of the personal serving the universal — has been the pattern of this year for me.

I have spent this year learning what it means for my personal experience to become the universal experience of the community. It has been both inspiring and terrifying. It has meant that I was able to see the good things I bring to leadership magnified in such a way that the community benefited. I came to this work loving this community, so it has been quite a blessing to see the community I love grow through the good things that I brought to it.

And on the flip side of that coin, I saw how my shortcomings were magnified in such a way that the community suffered because of them. Because I came to this work loving this community, that felt — oh, choose an adjective ... heartbreaking. Repulsive. Sacrilegious. Ultimately, it was just not acceptable to see what I loved and held sacred lessened by what I brought to it. So unacceptable that I finally became willing to do whatever it took to address my own shortcomings. I think I am like many folks in that my shortcomings were a big part of who I was. So I feel it's accurate to say I pretty much died this year. Certainly I let so many things go — things I had wanted to change for a very long time — that I don't entirely recognize myself quite yet.

This year, each of the five Rites Team members has walked something of that same path, in preparation for the death each of us will step into on a dark night later this month. In that space, I'll be surrounded by the community I have served. I'll serve them again by dying, as the archetype; just as the community will serve me again by giving me reason to do so.

I've learned a great deal from this dying away. Not least, I've learned what it is to give up who and what I am. It's extraordinary, now, for me to realize it was community that made such change, on such a deep level, possible. Because my personal became the universal — as it does with each of us in this community, I think — I found a reason to take on the challenges of change, and reason to keep facing those challenges and succeed at them, no matter what the cost.

I know that at least two more deaths await me in this lifetime: the one I'll experience later this month, and the final one. And I believe in the possibility of many more deaths in my life, some welcome and some not so much so. The rite of passage the Rites Team celebrates this month will open the door to energies and dynamics that the community can choose to experience through us, or that they can choose to step into themselves, to experience their own rite of passage. Either way, I know I will experience something of my own death, while surrounded by my community. And because, in community, the personal becomes universal, I will have a deeper experience when those around me step into that energy as well, and their experiences become my own.

In the end, I believe that this community grows exponentially through whatever good those of us in the Mystery community achieve, whatever changes we master. The community is greater than the sum of its parts. It lives and breathes, I believe, because we are so willing to die to serve it; and in serving it, we serve ourselves. Among the ways in which this year has served me is that I have indeed allowed death — and the conscious realization of the inevitability of my own death — into my life, every day. In return, I've seen what good things can be born if I face that fear, surrender to its inevitability, and am willing to step into what I do not understand, and may never fully understand.

Here, almost on the far side of this year, I've come to fully appreciate the uses of a good death. What about you? As the trees and living things around you return their energy to the root, in preparation for rebirth in the spring, what rite of passage are you called to, in your own life?

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 works as an editor and writing coach for poets, fiction writers, novelists and writers working with spiritual subjects, and is currently working toward certification in Thanatology, the study of death, grief and bereavement. You can contact her at sisalfish@satx.rr.com.

Going Deeper

by *Synnove*

Go to the Underworld, Psyche. Go to Persephone's winter realm and bring me back her magic. Bring back the potion that has the power of healing and regeneration.

Where is this magical realm? All I need to do is follow the blood of the trees back to their roots. All I need to do is follow the vitality of the plants as they return to winter's hiding place.

- Cynthia Jones, *Moon Shadows 2006*

As the season moves more deeply into fall, I notice a multitude of signs that we are moving into the dark of the year. In my neighborhood, everything around me seems to be preparing for a journey into Persephone's winter realm. Nature is mirroring the story of Psyche and Eros, inviting me to journey into Persephone's realm by communing with the plants and trees.

Will you join me? Will you join me on a walk outside? Slow down and begin to notice the world of nature. It doesn't matter whether you live in a place that is surrounded by nature or a place where the natural world peeks out through breaks in the concrete; plants everywhere follow the cycle of the seasons, and go into the Underworld in their own way.

As you walk, notice each of your senses and take time to explore the physical sensations of taste, touch, smell and sight. How does the air feel on your skin? What does it taste like? Do you see leaves transformed into the burnished shades of yellow, orange and red of autumn? Are they still on the trees? Can you see any plants that have retreated into the earth, leaving the tops to wither away? What sounds do you hear?

Walking through my neighborhood, I notice how some of the plants seem to die away completely, leaving no visible evidence of the life that I know is hidden deep underground. In my yard, I can see the brown, withered remains of Day Lilies that bloomed earlier this year in shades of gold, orange and red; they will be back next year. Other plants, such as the Rosemary that is planted next to the road, still look green and

bright, seemingly unchanged, until I explore further. Touching the stiff branches and feeling the hardened bud at the tip of each branch, I remember how, each year, these buds soften into new growth. Many of the flower and vegetable seeds I scattered earlier in the year have already shot up and produced their bounty. Now these plants have withered and died completely, leaving only a fresh scattering of seeds, each with the potential for new life.

What clues do the plants give me about my own journey through Psyche's story? How can I experience healing and regeneration?

Slowing to a stop, I sit on the ground, lean against an old Cedar tree and inhale the refreshing fragrance. Feeling the support of the tree against my back, I consider my own journey and my mind slows down to match my physical repose. I ask myself, "In what way am I like a plant?" It feels good to slow down. Much of my life is changing; and I feel myself connecting with the plants that die away completely each year, leaving their essence underground, resting in the earth until it is time to be reborn.

What needs to die away so that my essence can be regenerated?

Thinking of myself as a plant, I examine different aspects of my life to discover areas that need to die to support new growth. I pay attention to those places where my energy and actions do not reflect my most deeply-held values. When is it easy for me to respond in a positive way and when is it hard? What is nourishing and supportive to me and what is not? Where am I behaving in ways that are not consistent with my values? As I consider all of these questions, patterns begin to emerge.

Much of my life has been spent reaching for a goal and, when I reach it, moving on to the next goal and then the next. I'm good at staying focused on the steps I need to take to reach my goal, on finishing each task. Many of the most positive aspects of my life are a result of my willingness to stay focused, even through difficult times, until I meet my goals.

However, focusing on goals and tasks has not helped me with personal relationships. When I interact with others, my attention automatically moves to a common task or goal. Supporting a friend through a difficult time can quickly shift into problem-solving. It is hard for me to sit still and focus on the person instead of on my next task or activity. After a few minutes of conversation, I get an overwhelming urge to do something, anything, physical. For me, an intimate conversation is best when combined with a nice long walk. It provides something physical to keep my unconscious occupied, suppressing all other urges so that the rest of me can remain focused and involved with the other person.

What aspects of myself do I want to nurture? What new skills do I want to grow?

I want to develop the ability to focus on the people in my life and put the goals and tasks aside. I want more intimacy in my relationships. What will it take for me to let go of that overwhelming urge to create distance by doing something? How can I release it into the earth?

Sitting here, with my back against an old Cedar tree, the Underworld doesn't seem very far away. I can imagine following those roots down, into the earth, into Persephone's

winter realm. And just as the Day Lilies in my garden die back during the winter, nurturing their essential core in the earth; I imagine the earth nurturing my desire for greater connection, strengthening that core essence of me. The earth also supports me to release anything that keeps me separate from others and allow it to dry up and wither away.

As the seasons change, I trust the earth to take away anything that keeps me from my desire for greater connection with others. What do you want? Is there something you would like to give to the earth?

Synnove 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.

Interview with a Mystery: Rev. Carlos Elvir *by River*

One of the things I love about my line of work is that I get to encounter all sorts of people walking a spiritual path. I count meeting this month's interviewee as one of my greatest blessings. At first glance, you'd never know that this snappily dressed man from Honduras with a classically trained singing voice, who loves to dance, and is a self-proclaimed computer geek, is also a Methodist minister! In the few short years that I've known him, Rev. Carlos Elvir has become a close friend, kindred spirit, and personal inspiration. As a fellow ritualist, albeit in another tradition, we swap ideas whenever we can. His dynamic personality and charismatic knack for opening the way to Spirit is truly a sight to behold, and I can see why his congregation adores him. I hope you enjoy getting to know Carlos as well.

Although Mystery School welcomes all faiths and beliefs, much of the work is geared towards Earth-centered spirituality. How does it feel to be a Methodist minister doing this work? Does it help your own spiritual practice?

I believe we belong to a higher order, which I call "sacredness," that permeates everywhere we turn our eyes, everywhere we go, and everyone we come into contact with. Many philosophies call it different names—for me, it is just one conversation with many faces. As a Methodist minister, I have found this "Earth-based" spiritual practice a huge asset, given the fact that I strive to help people reconnect, interact, and find ways to respect each other—teaching them that everything is connected, and that mutual respect is a way of living, not just a concept. It increases my spiritual awareness of the value and worth of all that is in the eyes of the sacred One.

I understand that you had several different jobs and life paths before you settled

on the ministry. How did you come to be a pastor?

My life has been about seeing my life as a puzzle and finding ways to put the pieces together. As I grow older, I want to share with others many of the paths I have taken in the past so they might find a personal way to piece their lives together. Throughout all the years of my existence, I've been taught how to put those fragments together. As I build the final picture, I want others to understand themselves through a ministry that is personal and a community work, too. We all paint different pictures together. Personally, I believe a miracle happens when two or more people are involved in dreaming different parts of the same dream. I chose to be a minister in order to see the larger picture and create a new experience.

What was life like for you as a young boy growing up in Honduras? Are there any significant moments that led to who you are today?

My childhood seems surreal. I wouldn't change any part of it, but it seems that it was simple and fun. I was lucky to have the family I grew up in. Since it was both challenging and insightful, it forced me to mature faster and to be aware of who I was sooner rather than later. Even though I don't believe in coincidence, my life is a collage of miracles that has prodded me closer to where I am today. Finding my footing in a foreign land, going to school to prepare myself, having a job that is rewarding enough for me to be in—those are miracles I value very much. The love of those around me, and being able to see how they have changed through my interactions with them, are fortunate events I wouldn't change for anything in the world.

Who is the most influential person in your life, and why?

My grandmother. She lived to be 94 years old, and she was so witty and clever. She taught me that life is not about pondering, but about just living it. She taught me to give it thought afterwards, regret things that have been done but not the things I didn't do, respect all, love all, and remember that I am part of the universe, not the other way around. She often said that what you do will come back to bless you or bite you!

What's the next step for you in your own personal and spiritual evolution?

I have several next steps, such as finishing school, finding the path to work more closely with other human beings, and being closer to the ocean. Water is my element, and water is calling me up! I can see myself becoming like water: consistent, liquid, flowing easily, enjoying just what is ... I think that is a possibility!

For River's bio, see her column, *Ritual Artistry*.

The Shadow of Transformation: Releasing the Shadow

by sisalfish

“Go to the depths of Persephone’s realm and bring back her magic ... tell Persephone what you will leave in her care. What is unhealed? What is unresolved? What will you give her?”

— Cynthia Jones, *Moon Shadows* 2006

I love the idea that I can release my shadows — the unconscious, undeveloped, and denied aspects that hold so much insight, so much power to transform my life — as offerings Persephone, leaving them in her care. As we move into the dark time of the year and the energies return to the root, the idea of returning my shadows to the Underworld seems appropriate.

I think of Psyche making her journey there, and I see myself, enveloped in my own shadows, making my way downward. Maybe having tea and a few pomegranate seeds with Persephone before leaving my shadows in a place of honor (I’ve learned to honor them) and returning to the world above.

If only it were that easy, right? But truly, I think it can be. I think the shadow needs to return to the underworld, the unconscious — to return home, once my work with it is done. Once I bring the shadow into the light, the light changes it. Once I know my shadow — recognize it and name it — I can never really un-know it again. Once I’ve incorporated aspects of it into my life, consciously, I find that what’s left over (generally, the sorrow and frustration it’s brought me in the past) is not useful any more. I think the pattern is this:

- Shadow unnamed and unrecognized in the unconscious is dangerous (or, at the very least, unrealized potential).
- Shadow in the light is potential, manifesting.
- Shadow incorporated into my own life and returned to the underworld is *healthy*.

But although you might think that releasing the shadow is an easy thing to do, it doesn’t always prove to be that simple. Two things make this last step hard for many people: the ego, and the ego’s inability to surrender.

While surrender comes easily in the natural world, surrender isn’t so easy for the ego. In nature, the leaves turn and fall; the perennials return to the root. But my ego has no use for surrender; it wants control. Release — recognizing that I may not understand or be able to control everything in my life — is very threatening to the ego. I know my own ego fights fiercely when I urge it to surrender. I swear, I feel it rise up like a tantrum-throwing three-year-old, crying “No!” You’d think it was the end of the world, from its response. But in truth, accepting mystery and surrender do feel like the end of the world to the ego.

Have you found that every cell within you fights when you attempt to surrender to shadow, or to release it? David Richo, author of *Shadow Dance*, says the ego fights surrender because when we first release the shadow, the ego is like the caterpillar that becomes a yellow, gooey mass before it shapes itself into a butterfly. Without the shadow, the ego feels without shape; in desperation, it tries to hang on to the shadow.

So how can we surrender to accepting the shadow and then releasing it? I've found it helps to practice, and that greater ease with surrendering comes with time. I've had to practice saying, "This doesn't serve," or "There's nothing I can do to change this situation," or "This relationship is unhealthy — and I'm letting it go." And I do let it go. Yes, my ego often takes it back. But through working with my own shadows, I've found that the ability to surrender is like a muscle; if I practice exercising it, it gets stronger.

And I've found it useful to practice release and surrender in the body, as well as in the mind. Working with the body circumvents the ego; shadows that I've worked to release from my body through breathing, meditative dance and yoga, have less power to return. For example, I'm in the process of letting the "mother" shadow go; after 30 years of work with this one, I think I've harvested its positive potential and made my peace with its dark side, and I don't think it has anything new to teach me. So I've been working to release it physically. I let it rise when I dance, until the dance seems to take up all the space in my body. I release it in yoga postures (yoga is a great way to practice release).

Release doesn't mean the shadow won't return. It often will. And when it does, I've found it useful to look at it and see if it has something new to show me — and then have a little compassion for myself, and for it (to me, compassion is often another form of release). Then I gently release the shadow to Persephone's realm again. And again. Eventually, I've found the shadow likes it in the underworld and chooses to stay there. That is, after all, the shadow's home, and a place where I hope some use can be made of it, now that its uses to me have faded.

What of your own shadows? What ways have you found to release them? And what fills the space they held, when they have returned to Persephone's realm once again?

For sisal's bio see her column, *Will You Dance?*

Stewarding the Land

by Patricia Storm

This month, Patricia's column is several photographs. Please see the html or graphic version of *Between the Worlds* found at: <http://www.dianasgrove.com/magazine/index.html> to view these photographs.

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.
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Journey in Words

by Shaun Perkins

Tell me a story. That's one of my favorite sentences. I've heard many wonderful stories while facilitating the Journey in Words class this year. This month, I would like to share a piece of one of those stories. Laura Lee Hayes went back 30 years to reclaim memories of the year she turned 21 and traveled with a circus. She is in the process of writing a memoir about her year with the circus.

In my feedback to one of Laura Lee's exercises early in the class, I said I would like to see a scene that showed the main character's ability to draw stories out of others. Laura Lee wrote this scene in response to that request.

The circus train had arrived in a little backwater town down south, and there was time for a short adventure before the evening show. Sam and I wandered off towards the bayou on a sparkling morning in late spring. We found a canoe out behind a local church, which the janitor said we could rent for \$10 for the day.

What a canoe trip that was! It took a lot to leave the beautiful bayou behind. We were hard pressed and breathless by the time we made our way back to the church, and hoofed it back to the show in time for Sam to apply his clown makeup. That was a good thing because it got me into the wardrobe early to help start getting things set up.

Bettina took one look at my face and said, "What have you done to yourself?" in her heavy Hungarian accent. There was no hiding the sunburn that just kept on coming out as the night progressed.

The light was bad in that corner of the damp old coliseum, and I hoped the boss wouldn't notice that I had lost my paleface. The boss, Martha, was sitting over by the door studiously ignoring us all with a newspaper tilted towards the light bulb out in the hall. She didn't like it when others had stories she couldn't top.

Linda squealed at my description of a big black water snake. "You didn't go into that water?!" she said.

"Sure I did, it was hot out in the middle of the river and that snake was more afraid of me than I was of him. I didn't climb up in that big old tree like Sam though; he was swinging off a thick long old rope with a perfect Tarzan yell. It was really weird being in the middle of a cypress forest with river around us for as far as you could see."

"Weren't you afraid of getting lost out there? I hear tell of people going out fishin' in the Bayou, and they were never seen again," said Mildred in her soft drawl, then lowered her voice and whispered, "There's some mighty big alligators living out in those waters."

You could hear harrumphing and heavy rustlings of the newspaper.

“Well it was pretty confusing out there, but that was part of the fun. We were only gone a couple of hours, mostly tied up by that old climbing tree. I was on a roll now caught up in my story.

“It was so shady and cool, not anything at all like what I thought a swamp would look like. It was like a fairyland with all this green gray stuff like dwarves beards hanging off all of the trees.”

There were more disgusted noises from behind the newspaper as Mildred rolled her eyes at me and said, “Oh that’s called Spanish moss, that stuff is creepy, and I still think you’re just plum crazy. What else did you see?”

“Well I saw plenty of frogs and I’ll bet the fishing was great out around those cypress knees and there were tons of those big round soft shelled turtles, and what a maze of little side streams and those huge ancient trees everywhere with magnificent tree-sized branches.”

When I paused for a breath, Mildred jumped in with a few memories of her own girlish adventures in northern Florida and then launched into a “Hairy Man” story that I’d never heard before, and while I’ve heard it several times since, her version was the most hair-raising, told in that dark corner in a low soft Southern drawl that drew us in and held us . . . till suddenly the showgirls came rushing in for the finale and we were all filing past the punch clock and waiting for the circus bus for the ride back to the train and a late supper.

Long into the night stories spread and sparked more tales of the swamp and the eastern Europeans told a few of their own creepy tales from back home.

Martha caught up with me the next morning, scowling at my rosy cheeks, muttering about how she’d never consider wandering off into “nigger territory” like that. She said I was just plain foolish and irresponsible. What if I hadn’t made it back in time for the show? Did I ever think for a minute about Sam? He could have gotten fired.

I just let her rant a while and held my tongue about Sam. He was a grown man and could make his own decisions. But as always there was a seed of hard truth in her words, I just didn’t like the way she talked to me. It was like getting a bucket of cold slops in the face.

Mildred said later, “You know she’s just jealous of your freedom and spunk. Her daddy kept her pretty locked up when she was a girl. Things were different then. Martha’s daddy woulda never let her outta his sight except maybe to take a crap and then he’d be making sure it was the correct time a day for that activity.

“He was a real stickler and had her training with the horses every day at dawn. She was terrified of getting stepped on and the horses knew it. It’s funny though she managed to hide how much she hated the horse act from her daddy and he was so thick he never noticed. But the horses knew it. It was just sad. She coulda been a good aerialist you know. Martha had the head for heights, but that daddy of hers had different ideas about what she should be doing, so she never got to fly.”

From Mildred, I got a different picture of why Martha was so sour sometimes, and it helped me understand why I wanted to draw her out, learn about what she really loved.

But she always did everything she could to puncture my balloon whenever I told tales of my adventures--making me doubt my natural instincts and insights. But Mildred and Bettina both reassured me whenever Martha let me have it--and also warned me with looks and covert comments when I should just button my lip and give it a rest.

It's true I surely didn't know how to keep my mouth shut and I had a real knack for going too far and saying too much when a little would have been plenty.

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.

Dreaming with Morpheus: Dreams as the Underworld

by Shauna Aura

Most of my dreams do not take me to the mythic Land of the Dead however, the dreamscape is often very similar in character to that Underworld. This month, as Psyche travels through the Underworld to procure the cask of transformation from Persephone, I am reminded of how many qualities the Underworld and the dreamscape share.

Psyche journeys through the Underworld in the final part of her journey, the final part of her initiation and transformation into a goddess. In this story, I find synchronicity not just between the Underworld and the dreamscape, but also between the powerful metaphor of transformation and the mythic space that is required to do such work.

The Dreamworld and the Underworld

When I dream, I am in a subconscious state. The duality of conscious and subconscious is much the same as the duality of outer and inner, day and night, active and passive. The subconscious speaks in the language of myth, metaphor, and emotion. As I've mentioned in previous dream articles this year, the nonverbal quality of dreamwork is what can make dreams so difficult to unravel.

The Underworld, or Land of the Dead, is a land of shadow, a land where my fears may sometimes come upon me in huge, mythic proportions. And yet this landscape is sometimes the only place where I can find the healing and resolution that I need, the only place in which I can speak and work with my own shadows and fears.

Dreams and the Underworld speak in the same mythic language, and both are sometimes the only place to find the magic of the transformation I seek for myself.

Conscious, waking work has its place. When I'm working with an emotional issue or going through a process of initiation and transformation, the work might be to take an action out in the world. But the process of transformation is served by working with both the conscious and the subconscious.

Transformation, Dream, and Trance

Sometimes before I make a conscious transformation, I must deal with transformation on a mythic level. There are many ways I can work with my subconscious, ways in which I can approach my own Underworld issues using the language of the Underworld.

Dreams are one access point. I find that when I have fears, shadows, or initiatory work, my dreams will serve to help me work through those issues. Although the work may sometimes be in the form of nightmares, I know that all dreams are in the service of my own mental, emotional, and spiritual wholeness.

Trance work, and other work within mythic space during ritual, can also speak to my subconscious in the potent language of metaphor. Trance in the Diana's Grove style is very similar to dreamwork in that the imagery that is used is left up to the individual. In my dreams, my subconscious speaks to me in my own symbolic language. Trances provide open imagery that also allows my subconscious to use my own symbolic language.

Work that I do with trance and dreams will help me learn the language of my own subconscious. Learning this language helps me embrace the shadows that I meet in dreams, learn the lesson I need to, and continue on to transformation.

Is it Transformation When I Don't See it Working?

Persephone knows the mystery of the Underworld, the mystery of the sap returning to the root, of seeds that must be planted in the earth and then wait for spring to come. She knows the mystery of transformation that happens under the earth. After this transformation comes growth.

Sunshine brings life out of the subconscious earth into the waking world and consciousness. Much of my own personal transformation has begun in the earth, working directly with my subconscious.

The Underworld and Initiation

When have you had Underworld work to do—transformations, initiations, or dealing with shadows?

I had a trance experience that showed me a part of myself that needed to transform. Like Psyche, I had a part of me that I needed to let die. My trance communicated this to me in the following mythic language:

After being led down a path into the future-that-could-be, I see my grail, but I'm kept from it by a thick glass door. I can pound on the glass, but I can't get through. The fear riding me is apathy, depression. I feel so tired pounding on that glass, like I'll never have creative fire again. And I think, isn't it worth it? Isn't it worth it to break through this, to reach for that? The glass feels so flimsy, and I feel so powerless to break it. I pound and pound and pound on that glass, but I can't break through. I look for a chair, a tool, anything to break through the glass. As I feel the tool in my grasp, I'm led back down the path to the moment that is now.

Later I became aware that the glass I wanted to break was myself. I was holding myself back from my destiny, my grail. Part of me needed to break, needed to die, and I needed to be the instrument of that breaking.

And, as I wrote in an earlier article, it is images of our own death in dreams that can be the greatest harbingers of transformation. Initiation often shows up as death in the language of myth and dream.

The personal growth and leadership work at Diana's Grove often asks, "What must die so that I can be more than I am? What do I let go so that I can transform into that which I want to be?"

Seeking Initiation

I have to have a pretty good reason to risk the uncertainties of the Land of the Dead. Knowing what I'm reaching for is often the first step in seeking initiation. Getting a feel for my own internal symbolism in dream, or in trance, can also help me when I'm dealing with work in the Underworld. Here are some questions I might consider if I'm seeking initiation in ritual, trance, or dreams.

What reason did I have for stepping on this path in the first place? What would I risk walking through the Underworld for? What is worth reaching for? What do I desire enough to risk transformation?

What holds me back from it? How does it feel in my body to want that and to not be able to get it? What does that look like, sound like, smell like? Have I felt this in a dream?

And in that desiring, what will I risk? What would I shed? What in me must die so that I may transform? What does initiation feel like? Have I transformed in a dream? What was that like?

And after that moment of initiation, what does it feel like to be transformed? To be that which I have been reaching for? To achieve more than me-that-was could have achieved?

When Something Dies

In order to transform, sometimes I must crack open something in myself. Sometimes this breaking means that I must address something in myself that I would have preferred to avoid.

Psyche, what work will you do in the waking world, and what work will you do in the subconscious land of myth and dream? What will you let die?

Shauna Aura is an artist and designer who has been working with dreams since she was 12, and believes dreamwork is an integral part of her personal, spiritual, and creative practice. She can be contacted at shaunaaura@gmail.com.

Appalachian Trail Tales: Death Again

by Lorely Lather

This column has been my personal story of hiking on the Appalachian Trail (the AT) in 1993. But, as my Tales near their end, I must tell you about standing on St. Patrick's Mountain on the west coast of Ireland as the Winter Solstice approached. It is a long way from the Appalachian Trail to St. Patrick's Mountain yet this overseas travel was part of my healing journey. I had to look into the face of death again after my hike; I had to spread my partner's ashes.

Ashes are completely chemically sterile. My friends and I investigated this fact when we considered placing ashes in a delicate cave environment. Yet, chemical purity does not mean they are void of mythical significance. My partner's ashes were heavy with memory for me. I felt anguish when I opened the box. It was difficult to spoon out three tablespoons into three 35mm film canisters. I felt the overwhelming sadness of losing him again and I cried. Yet, I felt dedicated to the project I set for myself of dispersing his ashes in meaningful places.

My partner's only request had been that his ashes be placed deep in a huge cave system in central Missouri, 40 miles from our home. His illness had first become obvious when he had tried to reach the depths of this cave in 1983. He wanted his ashes to be part of the underground river he had failed to reach in his life. His specific request was the most difficult dispersal for me to accomplish. Cavers were denied access to the natural entrance to this huge cave shortly before his death, so I was resigned to hold a film canister of his ashes until September of 2002. By that time, cavers had leased land a few miles away but still above the cave, and blasted a new entrance.

But my story here is about the first three dispersals in 1993—the time of my greatest challenge to return to death and the Underworld similar to Psyche's last challenge. After the AT, I felt I had overcome his death; I felt my life should center on joy now. Yet, I needed to decide where to place his ashes and I needed to involve people who had loved him in order to reach a deeper spiral of completion for all of us left behind. My AT hike had only postponed this task.

On my return home after my hike, I found that the oak tree my partner planted had died. Multiple spouts grew up from the base, but the 4" trunk was dead. I cut down the trunk and saved one sprout. At the base of this cut-off trunk with the one weak little sprout, my friend Sandra and I buried the first tablespoon of ashes, hoping the sprout would re-grow to be the tree my partner had planted. (Today it is a 40' tree.) We buried ashes there to leave a bit of him near the home where he had reached self-actualization and then passed away. Sandra had been consistently present at his 2-month vigil. Burying his ashes in my yard created a contemplative afternoon for us both.

As the fall season of 1993 progressed, I made plans to take the box of his ashes to a cave in Oklahoma named *McGee's Cave*, in my partner's honor. He had contributed enthusiasm and leadership to caving efforts in northeastern Oklahoma. A year before his death, I tried to take him to see this small cave named for him, but he became critically ill

enroute and I was forced to turn back. He never saw *McGee's Cave*, but I decided it was fitting that the bulk of his ashes rest there.

I joined my friends for a caving and camping weekend in Oklahoma to complete this task. That Sunday was a year to the date of his death—October 10th, 1992. As we hiked toward the cave, I handed out bags of crocus bulbs to plant near the entrance. My friends and I had not discussed exactly what we would do at the cave because we thought little of ritual or ceremony.

As I stooped down to go through the small cave entrance, I realized that no one intended to follow me in. My friends assumed this was my job to do alone; they were already busy planting crocus and avoided eye contact with me. I took a deep breath, gathered my determination and stepped into the cave. Despite the lack of ritual, I felt the sacredness of my act. I took some time to adjust my vision to the dark, study the cave environment and quiet my heart. Reverence for life seemed to surround me so I did not feel like crying. A deep pool of water filled the narrow cave passage only 30' from the entrance. I poured the ashes into this pool and then stepped back when the ash dust on the water's surface reached my boots. I watched in meditative silence as the water slowly cleared and the cave seemed to accept my offering. I exited only when my friends called out repeatedly that they had finished planting the crocus bulbs.

Taking his ashes to Ireland was not my idea. I went to Ireland with my partner's sister. She promised her brother she would take some of his ashes to his ancestral home. She also promised him that she would take me along on the trip. My partner's sister resembles him; she has some of the same gestures and uses words in similar ways. They grew up in the same impoverished home, only two years apart in age. Being together opens up deep feelings for both her and me. I helped heal her broken image of her brother, while she has explained aspects of my lover I never understood. From our initial meeting, she and I have been crucial to each other's healing and growth. This was especially true on our journey through the British Isles in 1993. Ever since that trip, we call each other "sister."

The day we arrived at St. Patrick's Mountain was a bitter cold winter day, but we intended to return to the depths by climbing to the highest point in Ireland regardless of the weather. I found myself once again on a steep mountain in adverse conditions and once again on a sacred quest. Nearing the top, we climbed over a field of boulders, sometimes on hands and knees; it was as steep as any trail I had climbed in America. Reaching the top, the north Atlantic wind nearly knocked us over. We huddled together to open the film canister and his ashes swirled out immediately. We had no time to say ceremonial words. His ashes dispersed across Ireland in an instant. Chilled and concerned about the weather, we made our way back down the mountain as quickly as we could. My partner would have smiled at this moment. In a physical, mythical and essential sense, his sister and his lover had returned a bit of him to his ancestral roots. He flew freely across Ireland.

I felt at peace with it after Ireland. With each placement of his ashes—at my home, in our dearly beloved caves, and at the highest point in Ireland, in 1993 or 2002—I have done the best I could. I have faced death again, in yet another aspect, and have felt at peace with it.

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.

October Hound of the Hill: Momma Cass

I am not interested in why they think they must pass this way. I have a job to do here, and things will be done the way I say. Or else. They will back off if I demand it. They will pay the price if I demand it. And they all listen because they cannot help but listen. When someone has a secret, everybody wants to listen.

What do they suppose I know? I could give you a long list of items. Perhaps it is that I know how one life bleeds into the next and into the next, and the scars reopen or the scars heal or the wound is too deep and then there is nothing but the pain. It does not matter: None will ever read this list because they rarely approach on their own. They have not figured out that there are times when being in a pack has to give way to just being.

Some may want to give an offering. They bow before me. They leave the biscuit untouched. They lie on their backs when I approach. What is that? This is not a trained flea circus. We are not a collective, the worker bees doing my bidding. And yet . . . Queen Bee does not have such a bad ring to it after all. After all . . . someone has to make sure they do not get ideas—ideas about sliding by, about faking their gift, about pretending to honor another more than they honor themselves.

One might wonder: Am I the black beast in their nightmares? The one who guards the path to the place of unearthly enchantment? Does saliva drip from my teeth? Am I so dark that my red eyes, dripping teeth, and white tips of my feet are the only things they can see? They stand there before me, and the slap of shadowy water presses in from somewhere ahead of us. Or is it at the side? Or is it now behind us? And how did that happen without anyone having gotten wet?

Do you want to walk past me? Are you willing to accept that I will challenge you? That I will challenge you most without sounds or actions or touch? I will challenge you by being here and knowing the secret.

Some of those here have not been on the road that I have. One home is all they have ever known. Some took many roads before they came here. I am not inclined to feel differently for any of them, regardless of that journey. The magic to the madness of this life is that we come to a place and a time when we divine the ditch from the path — with a little help.

Many of them do not yet realize that they need my help. They do not even recognize what help is. I am not going to kiss their wounds and give them free passage. That is not help. When they recognize what help is, perhaps then they will be ready to hand over that part of them that is no longer a part of them.

Mystery's Light: Radiance, Even in the Dark

by Canyon

As I write this in mid-September, the Mystery e-list has been glowing for a week with golden radiance, with the light of life's power. A few lines from the August chapter of our Psyche and Eros story got us started. Cynthia Jones wrote "Describe your state of being when you are filled with radiance, when you are fully alive, vital, energized" and, as a community, our passions leapt at that invitation.

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

The words of poet James Wright, from his poem *The Blessing*, capture one essence of radiance, the "burgeoning, blossoming, transforming" transcendence that fills the body to bursting. Wright wrote of an experience that made him feel that if "I stepped out of my body I would break / Into blossom." This feeling, the "luster of life in the moment," can come from seeing something free and wild, or from sharing "an easy laugh, a goofy joke, a private giggle." What lustrous moments of life break you into blossom?

This transcendent luster is not the only aspect of radiance. "Radiance is also knowing myself. Radiance is being where I am supposed to be, and giving the piece that only I can give." That sense of grounded presence, of conscious contribution, of sitting at peace in my integrity, is also a moment "when I'm shining in Radiance; I'm not trying to control anyone or anything. I'm just being my full-out Essence. I feel free in that state of being."

I can generate that same feeling of freedom by moving my body. "Radiance fills me when I dance to music that inspires my passion. I have merged with the music and with my body, and I move and smile without self-consciousness, without thought, just movement in devotion to joy." The music and my body's response unwind all the stuck places, releasing dammed-up energy. "I dredge the channels until they are open and then I fill them with divine light until I am filled with joy and radiance." When was the last time your body's movement generated divine light and joy?

Communing with my body leads me to notice how "communing with nature, with air, fire, water and earth, fills me with radiance." Kneeling or sitting on the ground, "with my hands rooting around in the dirt ... I comb through the soil, feeling its cool texture. I plant my intentions ... and now those seeds are tucked into their bed. These simple acts bring me back to myself." Sometimes this connection with nature comes at a random moment on a walk in familiar territory. I raise my eyes from my feet and, suddenly, I am "a part of all that I see and feel; I am the sun, I am the twirling leaves, I am the breeze, I am the bounding dog, I am the cool quiet, I am the earth." When I travel from home, whether far or near, "I can experience bliss, connection, transcendence, belonging, elation, strength, awe ... [where] the landscape and vegetation feel alien and pristine, uncharted." Do you feel your power when you connect with the land, with Earth?

I return from journeys into the world ready for the radiance of home. Coming in from the endless and eternal altar that is nature, I gather with those I love most at the hearth altar of home, where “my experiences of radiance are connected with trust,” trust of self and trust in others. My open heart creates a space from which I can offer my radiance and into which I can receive that glowing heat from others. “I allow the life spark that dwells within me to connect with another” and the radiance of our love for each other warms our common world.

This heart-to-heart radiance is the one that, sometimes, must find a way to glow on in the darkness. For loved ones leave and loved ones die. Any day when there is loss—when separation comes or Death brushes by my life—any day of loss can be a day that personifies radiance. Maybe a day of loss is marked by a silver, sullen, dripping gift of life-giving moisture, or maybe by “a golden late summer sun, puffy clouds, a warm, soft breeze, and the colorful garden harvest.” The radiance is there, but “I cannot feel it. All I can feel is a grief so intense it's like a ton of bricks pushing on my chest.” With memory's eyes I see my lost loved one as “a picture of radiance, living in the moment and enjoying it, without comparison or regret,” and I feel my anger that those moments are gone. I cannot allow myself to see radiance again until I open to the truth that, stepping alongside my grief, “there is still life. There *is* pain and sorrow, and up against it there is beauty and passion. I have to be big enough to hold both.”

The capacity to hold both is sometimes there; sometimes a long time coming. There are times when sorrow is not grief but depression, and the darkness is a blanket that I cannot throw off, familiar and suffocating. “I weave in and out of feelings of numbness and sadness and try, often desperately, to surround myself with love and hope and joy and laughter and other people.” This is how I encompass radiance in that long dark. I “hold both the unnamed sorrow and the striving for deep beauty and passion,” even though the striving may be effort without outcome. I may not be “fully alive, vital, energized,” but I am next to that radiance and, through the folds of my dark blanket, I can feel its warmth, just a little.

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 recapture treasures from childhood for a more productive and fulfilling life now. She offers programs and publications that support you in your striving to become who you truly are, who you were intended to be.

Eclectic Bibliophile

His Dark Materials: The Golden Compass by Philip Pullman
by Sherrid Wells

There is a rhythmic continuity at this time of year that I really relate to... it is as if the world is practicing rhythmic breathing to remain centered in a time of chaotic change.

Over the next three months I have decided to review the trilogy *His Dark Materials* by Philip Pullman. Not only are the books in this trilogy wonderful in themselves they also have that rhythmic continuity that I find so prevalent in the chaos of this time of year.

The first book of *His Dark Materials* is *The Golden Compass*. The heroes of the series are a young girl named Lyra and her daemon, Pantalaimon, (Pan). Lyra is a wonderfully adventurous and noble child who in no way could be called conventional. The world she lives in parallels ours in many ways, and yet is very unique.

I look around my world and have noticed that Persephone has started her journey back into the arms of her lover, back to the Underworld. I love the fact that Psyche means soul and that her journey is the soul's journey. I believe that the soul is that spark that demands that I live. It is the thing that is eager for change and experience; it craves life. It is a part of me that permeates into every aspect of who I have been, am and will be. I believe my soul provides that continuity of rhythmic breathing that centers me in a life of chaos, but it is not separate from me.

In Lyra's world the soul is separate from the person. It is formed as the child is born and it manifests as an animal they call a daemon. As the child grows the daemon can take many forms, shape shifting as the child's needs and experiences change. When the child matures the daemon is limited to the form that best relates to the child's personality and needs. One wonderful aspect of this is that the soul has a separate personality and agenda and the child and daemon must learn to cooperate to fulfill their separate needs. Although they are separate they must remain in close proximity to each other or they feel the terror and pain of severing their bond. Can you imagine being soulless? I believe the soul is how we connect to each other. The soulless person I believe would be an emotionless drone going from task to task without passion in any form. I have experienced times when my soul and I had separate agendas and the conflict and agony this created was terrible, but to imagine being without my soul? What a horrible half-life or a type of walking death.

The Golden Compass is about the darkness of human nature that wants to sever our souls from our lives, and those who would push that agenda. It is about learning that those we admire and trust may not be trustable, and it is about trusting ourselves. It is about the journey of a child and her soul learning to be their own heroes. Learning to make the decisions required to live life on their own terms.

Lyra and Pan have an almost idyllic free young life with few restrictions; well, few that they pay any attention to any-way. Lyra and Pan are drawn from their safe haven of living at university, under the supervision of loving if distracted scholars, into a world of kidnapped and exploited children, scientists and witches, talking bears, magic bugs, elegant dinner parties, death, long trips by foot, boat, hot air balloons and dog sleds, and manipulation from so-called adults. As in our world the bad is balanced with the good and they also meet loving families, make some loyal friends, and meet adults who trust children and tell them the truth.

To help them on their journey they receive a mysterious golden compass that can tell the future, and always tells the truth. However, Lyra has to learn on her own the purpose of the compass and how to use it, to prevent others from taking it from her. Lyra learns that by being centered in her heart and trusting in the information the compass provided she could use it to guide her and her friends journeys. Using the heart as a compass — what a concept.

Her own journey provides wounds, but it also provides opportunities for healing. The wounds themselves provide the catalyst for her journey, both in her world and into herself and her own personal growth. It is often true for me that my wounds provide my greatest catalyst for change and growth. Do your wounds catalyze or cripple you? Mine do both, depending on where I am in the growth/healing process.

This month Psyche is directed to go to the Underworld and bring back Persephone's magic. The Underworld is a place of contemplation, and Persephone's magic is that of healing. Aphrodite is asking Psyche to go within and heal herself. The Underworld, my inner world, is that place I can go to that will allow me to release what needs to be healed. The trick is, well, what did you expect? There is always a trick when dealing with Gods! The trick is that I have to relinquish control of my own healing process (choke!). Have you ever noticed that when you are initiated into "becoming" or healing they never ask you to do something easy... for once I'd like them to ask me to give up soap operas or liver! Oh, well, the process of healing and becoming was never advertised as being easy.

Lyra and Pan take their journey and they pass Cerberus and the fears that kept them in that imagined world found deep within those fears. What imagined world do your fears create that prevents you from taking your own journey and passing Cerberus? How do you go to your own depths, your unconscious, and find the magic within you to heal? I believe that only through my fears can I enter into healing. My wounds are known, they are safe, but to heal I have to face the fears that healing brings. I have to face my own Cerberus.

The Golden Compass is a wonderful book, a fantastic introduction to a parallel world that is both familiar and alien. Lyra and Pan's journey has just begun in this first book, but it is a rich beginning. Her story is a wonderful masterpiece of intrigue and mystery. I highly recommend it to anyone. Although classified as a young adult book, its message is universal for all ages. Healing our wounds and our souls is not limited to our youth. For many of us the task grows more important as we age, and opportunities for wounds and healing present themselves more frequently. But sometimes reading a story that makes a hero of the healing journey has the effect of encouraging me to take those steps myself. Lyra and Pan's story does just that. It helps me go deep and then face my own Cerberus in order to take that healing step. I hope it does the same for you. Salute!

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.

Moving Images

Everything I needed to know I learned from filmmaking

by Dan Wilson

I am the person responsible when everything goes wrong. I've established myself as the person who makes the tough decisions, negotiates the final deals and finds the money to make the film. I've done this in a milieu in which I know that multiple things WILL go wrong and that, having made the decisions, negotiated the deals and found the money, it's also my problem when things don't go as planned. I must maintain morale, appease investors, and not lose faith in the project.

This year, I've been examining the parallels between Psyche's journey and that of film production. For me, Psyche's descent into the Underworld has always represented the depths to which characters must go in order to transform.

Filmmaking provides ample opportunities to experience those depths, as well as the heights of emotion. Whenever there's a concentration of strong, creative people, there will be conflicts. Whenever there's a process that can be affected by multiple, random variables, Murphy's Law dictates that whatever can go wrong, will.

Making a film is a test of endurance. After weeks of too little sleep, too little exercise, too much coffee, and higher-than-average mental exertion, nerves are frazzled and tensions run high. Throw weather delays, equipment breakdowns, budget over-runs and film shipments getting lost by FedEx into the mix, and you'll experience depths that you didn't know existed.

Many times, overly tired and stressed, I've wondered if it's all worth it. The long hours, the feelings of rejection when investors don't want to throw in any money, the frustration of seeing significantly WORSE films in wide release when I can't even get mine made, the anxiety of wondering if it'll actually all come together properly, and the strain of managing multiple personalities on a project can be daunting at best and, at its worst, it's a journey to the darkest, deepest parts of the Underworld.

It's in those moments, at the bottom, that I tend to learn a lot about myself. I learn, most often out of necessity, about what I am capable of enduring and accomplishing. I discover aspects of myself - of my personality and my ways of interacting with people - that I may not have known I had. Some of these discoveries are wonderfully serendipitous, while others are downright scary. But I recognize and welcome the gift of self-discovery that comes from these journeys to the depths.

As a filmmaker, I am committed to compelling storytelling, and I believe that the best stories involve the heights and depths of emotions. These stories resonate with us because they help us better understand our own feelings, perhaps validating what we've felt in similar situations or validating a reaction that we've had to an experience of our

own. Understanding these extremes in storytelling leads us to our own discoveries about our experiences.

As Joseph Campbell wrote in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, transformative voyages are a staple of mythology. Persephone, Inanna, Odysseus and a host of others were charged with journeys to the depths of their souls. Each of these characters came through their respective journeys with new discoveries, new gifts or new skills. While the journey may have been long and difficult, the end result was positive.

I realize that without the journey to the depths of the dark places, without taking that trip to the Underworld, I can never fully understand the heights and the joys of the light places. As uncomfortable and crazy as that journey may be, as much as it hurts, and as much as I question if it's all worth it, I remind myself that it's part of the process. Like yin and yang, the heights need the depths. The lessons I learn and gifts I receive from the journey far outweigh the losses I may suffer.

Ultimately, in taking responsibility for the career I've chosen and the projects on which I find myself involved, I remind myself that whatever the journey, it's more about the process than the destination. The mantra I repeat to myself is that it is what it is. In the moment, nothing else matters, and then that moment is past. I can choose to glean from that experience a shred of wisdom to help me grow. I can move on to the next moment with a clear conscience that I did the best in that situation that I knew how, and step forward to face the next challenge—the next take, the next shooting day, the next location—with enthusiasm and anticipation for whatever the experience may bring.

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

Lonely Hearts: Miracles in Process — Anything can be healed *by Cynthia Jones*

This month, Psyche goes into the Underworld to ask Persephone for a cask of magic, a cask of the power to heal and regenerate. On her journey, she finds that the underworld holds five secrets of healing. The dogs know two of the secrets very well. When we add love, food, medicine and the wisdom of a good vet to those secrets, miracles happen. Healing happens. The two secrets dogs don't question are: *I can heal* and *Life knows the mystery of regeneration*. Yes, dogs are imprinted by their past, but in healings of the body and soul, we see miracles every day.

Each day, I send our Web Wizard, Elizabeth, pictures and stories about our dogs to put on the Petfinder web site, but we have far more dogs than the ones on that published list. Dogs come to us more frequently than time allows me tell you about them in those monthly columns and we have many dogs in recovery. At this time, we have 16 puppies

and six adult dogs who are recovering from illness, abuse, malnutrition, and mistreatment. We don't tell you about them until they are emotionally and physically healthy, until they are more desirable as a family pet. By not telling you about these dogs, we hide a miracle in the heart of our work.

Maybe some of you, or just one of you, would like to be a part of such a miracle. Even if you don't want to care for such a dog by offering an adoptive or foster home, you could support these continuing miracles in other ways. The healing these dogs forge is inspirational. We see it every day. Courage, regeneration, a willingness to trust, the body's and spirit's abilities to recover from illnesses caused by neglect.... We get to see abused dogs learn to trust life. Then they learn to trust themselves and, finally, they learn to trust people...or some people...or sometimes, just one person.

Diana's Grove Dog Rescue now has its own website: www.takeafriendhome.org. Eventually, our *dogs in recovery* will be on that site. But until then, let me introduce you to a few of our resident *miracles in process*.

Isis is a beautiful white German Shepherd. When she came to us, she was in pain and depressed. She went into her doghouse, her first shelter in her two years of life, and didn't come out. Although she was not at all aggressive, we couldn't approach Isis. We crawled into her doghouse to give her medicine and treat her badly infected ears, ears so swollen that she couldn't hear. Daily, people went into her pen and sat without trying to touch her. As her ear infection began to heal, volunteers read to her so she could get used to the sound of a voice. It was a daily walk that brought joy into her life and joy began to heal her. When she first came to us, I thought it would take six months for Isis to respond to people, but two-and-one-half months later, Isis comes to the gate to greet her person. She can be off-leash when she takes a walk; she bounds back to her person. She plays with other dogs. Although still a *special needs* dog, Isis' special needs are kindness, love, patience and a daily walk, the longer the better.

Janie had her leg amputated just ten days before her photo was taken. Janie has never been a *special needs* dog, not according to her. Playful, spirited, eager to be with people and other dogs—it will happen soon, Janie, I promise—Janie lost her leg when she was eight-weeks old. Kicked by a horse...then mishandling of her broken leg led to more serious complications. Janie is just over 12 weeks; her only *special need* is to find a person with vision who can see that she is more than her handicap.

Shannon came to us with a great need for companionship and very few social skills. She jumped, she bounced, she put her mouth around your leg to say "hello," "I like you," "come with me." She irritated other dogs when she tried to play because she didn't know the Basic Rules of Puppy Play. It was clear that she had been taken from her litter to an isolated situation when she was very young. If Shannon was a little dog—a Poodle, a Yorkie, a Cocker Spaniel—lots of people would be willing to help her figure out a better way to relate, but Shannon is a big Black Lab. A big black dog is the last to be adopted even when she is the obedience school star. With love, attention, and foster care, Shannon is learning to be a fine family member. Devoted, clumsy and still learning how to be a good dog, Shannon's *special need* is for someone to love her, take her to obedience school, and work with her daily. Her main handicap: she is a big, black dog.

Here are few more Special Needs Kids. Madison and Little Magic are two of a litter of seven who are recovering from a skin condition caused by malnutrition. Aleasha's five

pups are at the very end of a three-week bout of bronchitis. I could introduce you to Cody, Maggie Beagle, Jennie and two new and very timid Walker Hound pups. I could introduce you to.... So many miracles in progress; all of our special needs dogs are or will be available for adoption. Their needs lessen as their healing progresses. Many will be in fine health and spirits by the end of a month. All of them will heal faster in a good home. If your love is a gift that you would consider giving to a recovering dog, you can hold a miracle in process in your lap.

Cynthia Jones co-founded Diana's Grove with Patricia Storm in 1994. In addition to being the driving force behind the Mystery School program, Cynthia is also one of the visionaries behind the Dog Rescue operation along with Constance Fleming.