

Sample packet: An excerpt from May

The Choice

Out of the woods stepped the personification of nature. Half-man, half-goat; his hooves stirred the earth beneath him. The musical pipes in his hand revealed his identity. He stood on the shore just across the river from me and read my story in the stones. I was Death; he was Life. Our eyes locked in absolute recognition.

Holding my gaze, he slowly raised the pipes and began to play. His music filled the air. His music filled my body. It twisted and curled; it danced in the wind. It touched my skin like a caress. The trees stopped attending to the breezes and opened their leaves to listen. His music awakened the world around him and the world within me. The very cells in my body were filled with desire, a desire to be. Alive. Alive.

I remembered the warmth of the sun. I wanted to breathe in the smell of the earth. I hungered for life as I had hungered for the embrace of my lover. The world of my grief was a gentle, dark place of grey mists and barren trees; soft and dark, without color, sunlight or change. I didn't know how long I had been in the land of the dead or how many moons had passed since I arrived here. Memories of seasons filled me with sweet yearning.

I wanted spring to wash over me with all the beauty of her soft days and new growth. I craved the lushness of summer and the smell of green, green grass. I longed for the cold nights of early autumn and the taste of just-picked fruit. I yearned for the star-filled black nights of winter. Desire. I wanted life. I wanted to live.

He played the pipes. My legs filled with the energy. I wanted to run, to dance, to leap into the air. My arms wanted to open wide and embrace the earth, the air, the sun, the water. I wanted to be alive. I was looking out, looking out and across the river into life. I had been attending only to my own internal landscape. Pan's pipes recalled the world and I wanted to join the dance. Pan, the spirit of nature, stood on the other side of that treacherous river and played. He held my soul in his eyes.

Each cell of my body seemed to remember the truth of its own being, to recall its purpose in the whole of me. Each cell was filled with the desire to join with all other cells in the creative interaction that was and is my body. I was filled with passion and passion manifested within me as health.

I was torn between two worlds; the joy induced by Pan's mystical pipes and the deep grief of my loss. How could I honor my loss if I were filled with the sweet music of life? Was I betraying my own misery and, therefore, Eros? Who was I if I was not my grief? Should I hold my ears and resist the music of life?

"Do you think this is what Eros wants for you?" Pan asked. "Is he served by your misery? Is your love consecrated by grief?"

"Does my pain honor my love or my lover?" I asked myself. "Has it served me in regaining Paradise and restoring my marriage?" No, my grief filled me; it defined me, but it did not absolve me of my choice to light that light. It did not bring Eros back to me.

Grief brought me to the shore of despair. Life - music, color, growth, passion, change, risk - was

just across the river. Should I cross?

I was in the land of the dead. Pan stood in life. I took off my black silk shroud and laid it carefully on the ground. I folded it in half, and half again, and half again, and half again. With each fold it became smaller and smaller. Finally it was the size of my clenched fist; the size of my heart. I put it in my pack. Not gone; my grief no longer covered the entirety of me. I walked to the shore of the river Styx, the river that runs between the world of the living and the dead. Deep and wild; how would I cross?

Downstream I saw the water break and swirl, causing little whirlpools. There was a path beneath the surface of the rushing water. I had placed myself in this Shadowland. I knew that the path out was only visible to those who did not belong here. I was a ghost in the land of the dead, just as the dead are ghosts in the land of the living. It was time for me to return to my world.

Down the bank I slid. Into the wild water I put my feet. My toes sought the slippery rock steps. The cold, cold water numbed my feet and legs. I knew I could be swept away. I could not take a step forward without risking death, regardless of my decision to live. Desire for life, with all its wonderful and awful torments, filled me. I might never know another spring, another kiss, another sunrise. The music of Pan's pipes filled my ears. My feet remembered their connection with the earth. I found my footing.

Step by step, I crossed the river. Up the bank, I followed the music of life. Into a clearing, I emerged. There I dressed in the colors of summer. Spring was now behind me. I was face to face with Pan.

"Welcome back to life," he said. A deep sigh was my only answer.

"I have read your story in the stones," he said. "You are a dedicant to Venus. Her son is your lover. Your relationship lived in blindness. You lit the light. Are you willing take on the work of becoming a Priestess rather than a dedicant?"

I had not considered restoring my union with my lover though Venus. She was, many said, the source of my pain and the author of my loss. Pan continued, "You can walk out of this glade and continue your life as a woman, a remarkable woman. You can take another path and become a Priestess, perhaps even a Goddess. But if you do, you will be challenged to face yourself, to choose your actions, to be accountable to your own intention. Psyche, is this the path you want?"

I nodded. He didn't believe me. "Be a mortal woman," he said. "Ahead of you is a wonderful marriage, children, security and respect. Your return to your kingdom will be celebrated. You will be received home with great joy."

"But what of Eros?" I asked.

"You will have your memories. No one can take that from you. You will always be a woman who was loved by a God, defied the covenant and looked upon his face."

"But will we be united?" I asked. "Will I be his wife?"

"No," Pan answered, "but you have risked so much. Don't you want comfort?"

“What will my life hold if I want to be Eros’s partner?”

“Challenge,” he said, “great and intentional challenge. You will have to give up the laws and freedoms that govern and forgive mortals. If you decide to be a Priestess and the partner of a God, you will be subject to the laws of the archetypes. You will face and confront mythic challenges. Your victories could be great and your losses could be greater. If you fail, you will die.”

“If I return to mortality,” I thought, “if I succeed, I will die. Is this the only way?”

“Yes,” he said.

“It isn’t fair, Pan!” I said. “I have done so much; why should that earn me even greater challenge?”

“In our realm, knowledge comes with the responsibility to be wise, power with the responsibility to heal, vision with compassion for what is seen. I have learned to play the music of life; I have forsaken the option to play only for my own amusement.

“It is fair, Psyche. There is no other justice,” he said. “If you light the light, Psyche, you have both the gift and the responsibility of sight. If you bite the apple, you have both the gift and responsibility of choice. If you tame a wild thing, you are responsible for its domesticity. If you become a Priestess, you take the gift and responsibility of Priestessing. And if your path leads you to marriage with a God, and you want that marriage to be one that you enter with full vision, you will be a Goddess. Psyche, you can go home. You can go home to your kingdom and live the life of a mortal.”

“Can’t I just choose to be a Goddess, the equal partner of Eros?” I asked. “I know the nature of divinity and the truth of my own potential. I want this union with my entire being.”

“Your desire enables you to do the work; it does not exempt you from it. I cannot give you your immortality and divinity. Not even Eros’s great love for you could give you what you must earn through your own doing. Success can only come to you through your own labor. The challenges ahead of you are almost impossible. They will require that you become more than you think you can be.”

“Who were you, Pan?” I asked.

“Me?” he said. “I was once a shepherd, a shepherd and a flutist. I wanted to play the music of life. I wanted to sing the song of the woods. I wanted to inspire those I loved to love. I wanted to be an instrument of passion. I wanted this more than I wanted life itself. I took the road of challenge and my passion gave me strength beyond mortal possibility. Now, I am as you see me. I do not regret my choice, but Psyche...go home.”

He began to play. Before me I saw two paths. One led me home, back to the life I left, back to the world of my home and my family. What awaited me there was a life that any woman would want; a meaningful relationship, work as a healer, fame for the portion of the story that I had already lived. All of that...and haunting dreams of Eros and a Self that I would never be.

The other path led to the actualization of the potential within me...and to Eros. I could not see

the future that this road offered. I could see no further than the beginning. I could see an altar to Venus. The offering that I would have to make at this altar was myself.

I looked to Pan for guidance, and he was gone. His music filled my heart. It filled my body. It filled my feet. My feet took me, body and soul, onto this path.

Sample workbook: An excerpt from May

The Choice

Pan speaks to you:

You, like Psyche, can choose. Do you want to return to your life? If you do, you will be honored for all the work that you have done thus far.

Do you want to move into the Challenges that Venus issued to Psyche as an initiate?

This choice is yours, but if you choose to do the work and develop the skills that Venus offered Psyche, you will be responsible to use them as a Priestess, a healer and in service to your community and your dream. This mandate does not come from me; it comes from the interweaving of history and from the timelessness that is mythology.

If you take the road of the Priestess only to serve yourself, gain power, and create a magical persona for yourself; that identity will fill you with an insatiable hunger for recognition that will demand endless feeding.

If you take this road and then turn away from service; you will condemn yourself to emptiness.

If you take this road and grab the labor of others as your own the reward; you will wear borrowed magic that never truly fits your soul.

Four challenges await you: Self-fulfillment, Personal power, Discernment, and Healing. You now know more about this journey than Psyche did. The choice is yours.

If you decide to go forward, I advise you to create a map to help you find your way in the maze that awaits you.

The Map

A map enables you to plot a course, to find your way. Two pieces of knowledge are needed for a map to be useful. You need to know where you are going; you need to know where you are.

Where are you going?

What do you want to stand for as a Priestess, healer, teacher, leader or professional?

What do you consider to be essentially and innately of value?

As a teacher, Priestess, leader, friend or parent; what values do you want your life and actions to express?

Do you want to wrap your life around empowerment, nurture, or kindness? Respect for life, freedom of choice, diversity, equality, egalitarianism, independence? List the values that you hold sacred. Then review your list and underline the ones that are your core values, the values that your other values are built upon.

Which of your choices and behaviors support and express your values?

How do you see yourself five years from now? What are you doing? What is easy for you then that is hard for you now? Who is with you? What is the most important skill that you have developed?

If this is the destination for your journey, mark it as the destination on your map.

Where are you?

Your life is a mirror. Look out at your relationships and interactions, at your dreams and your creations; your life will tell you where you are. Look into the mirror of your interactions, your relationships, your work and your play. Do your relationships with your partner and close friends express your values? Do your relationships with your children, students, and teachers express your values? Look at your relationships with your co-workers, employer and employees, and magical community.

Stop, look and listen. Then ask...

If you want to be empowering, are others empowered by their interactions with you?

If you want to be supportive, are other supported by your actions and your choices?

Does your behavior allow others to find their own personal authority? Are they supported in their strength? Do you enable others to take risks, to succeed?

What feedback do you get from others about your style of sharing information?

If you want to be nurturing, are others nurtured by their interactions with you?

If you value diversity, how do you relate to people who are different from you? How do you treat people who want to do things differently? Are you comfortable with contradictory opinions, styles of expression, or political viewpoints?

If one of your values is healing the division between the genders, how do you treat individuals of the opposite sex? What behavior do you support in members of your own sex?

If you value healing, notice when your behavior and style of communication heals and when it wounds.

Look into your personal interactions in the last month and let them tell you where you are in relationship to the values you hold. Ask people in your life, rather than assume that you know how they feel and how they experience you.

What are the opposite expressions of the values that you hold dear?

Examples: Trust's opposite expression is control
Empowerment - strict authority
Diversity - enforced sameness

List 5 of your values

and their contradictory expressions.

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