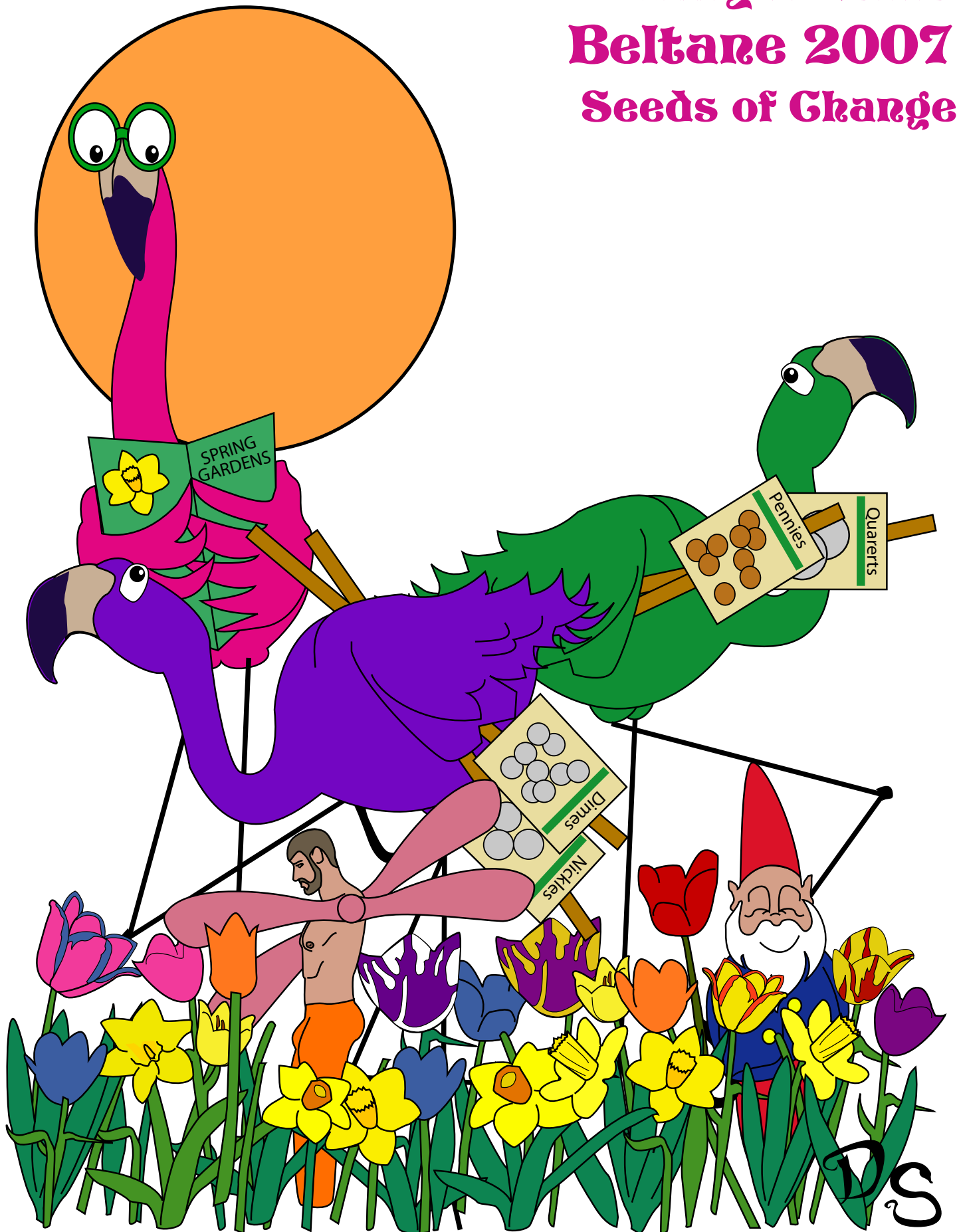


**Airy Faerie
Beltane 2007
Seeds of Change**



Publisher's Notes

Greetings, faerie readers, and welcome to the Denver Faeries' 2007 Beltane issue of the Airy Faerie. Rain is gently hitting my window as I type up my publisher notes. A great reminder that winter is over! It is so soothing and relaxing I may need to turn on the radio before I fall asleep here at the computer. For some reason, I am having a hard time waking up after this chilly winter. The chill in the air is making it hard to resist the warm cozy bed that seems to be calling me. I am not why I am so tired this year. Hopefully I will wake up when the summer comes.

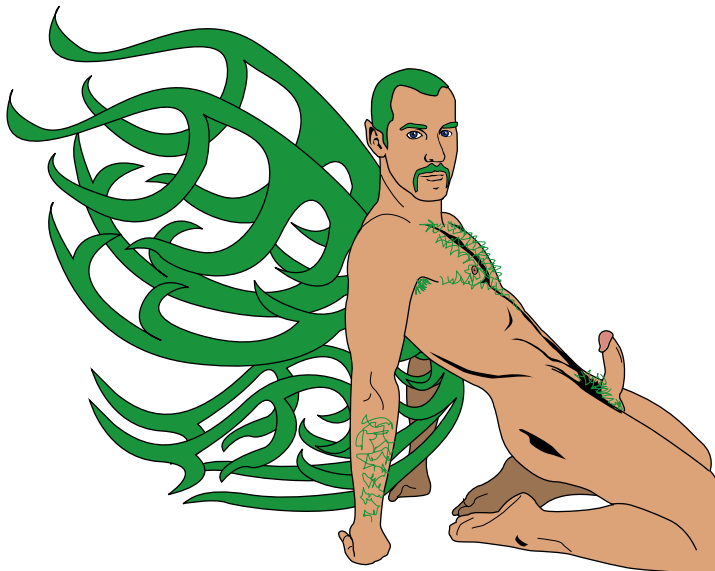
Last year Phoenix and I had our hand fasting at Beltane, (Happy anniversary sweetie!) At our ceremony we offered our gift of a new tarot deck to our community. Approaching the one year anniversary of that day, we are very proud of the progress we have made on the deck. I never knew cloning sheep was so much work! You'll understand when you see the "sheep card". You will find the next five cards in this issue. You will also find the continuing tales of a young prince as he faces the challenges of uniting the three kingdoms of his forefathers, as well as the challenges of growing up. Cubby keeps us up to date on the progress of the remodeling of his home while the TV cameras are rolling. Tom's page also returns with various items from his journals. Our Ostara ritual inspired the tribe and have a couple submissions from that and welcome Mage to our list of writing ranks.

We are also excited about a contribution from a reader. Anja sent us an article and some incense recipes. It is fun to get feedback and submissions from readers. -HINT, HINT!

As always there is the artwork of naked men and men enjoying each other. So if this is your first time reading the Airy Faerie and you do not wish to view naked men or gay sexual acts, please stop right here and now. If you are viewing on a public or work computer, please be careful. We would hate for you to get into trouble viewing our little fae zine.

Well, I will let this be the introduction into our Beltane issue, and head off to my warm cozy bed. Sleep well, um I mean enjoy reading the Airy Faerie! Then you can catch some z's.

Naked Hugs,
DragonSwan



Publisher's Notes Too

It is always interesting watching how an issue pulls together. Sometimes it goes slowly and then magically comes alive when I'm ready to do the finishing touches. This was not one of those issues. This issue filled up quickly with Anja's incense article and the contributions that were a result of our Ostara ritual. Add in my decision to do a double article on the new tarot deck and the issue became very full. Which, of course, is grand irony since the central thought behind the four animal cards for this issue is related to a lack of space.

Working on the deck through these pages has been very good for us. It has helped us keep focus and forces us to make steady progress. And it is really fun to sit with DragonSwan and talk through the creation of each card and watch how he takes the ideas in my head and gives them life.

Faerie Kisses
Phoenix

Airy Faerie



Beltane 2007

The Airy Faerie is a publication of the Denver Radical Faerie Tribe.

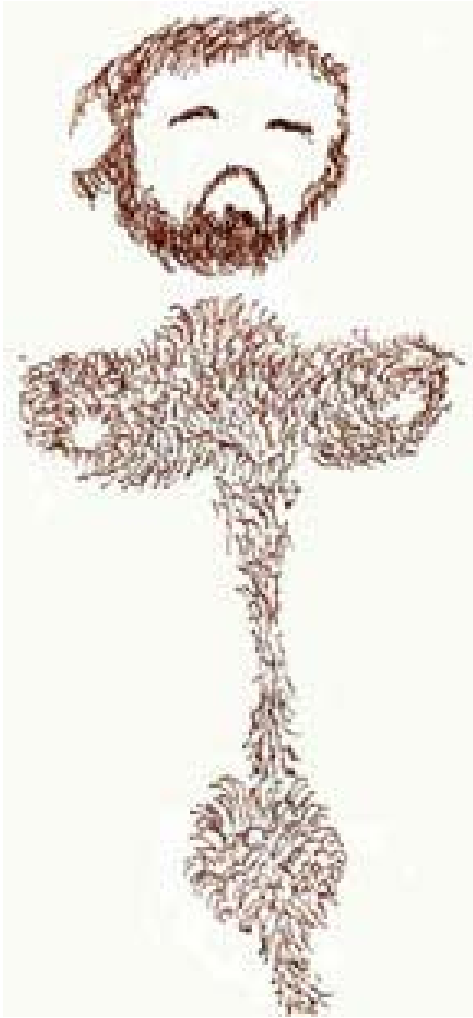
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Tom's Page

Art and writings from Tom's journal



Magic seasons
to dance spontaneous
feel the curve of my
moving body
ecstatic movement
where the heart is wide
and naked, sublime
mystery, free

The passionate rush.
a raptuous journey
an exhilarating trip
to the revolution, injection,
intoxication of the cosmic
experience the immense dimensions
of inner experience of absolute
duration and immeasurable space,
it carries its own weight and energy
and liveliness.

Vault of liquid thread
pre-cum ooze
creates a web without
the spider
a translucent beginning
the face of creation
a beginning of penetration
where we cross through
the rainbow
where the interior
explodes into the
miraculous

dream of fulcrum
brothers
duplicity of love



The Dragon and the Mage by Mage

Once upon a time, there was a quaint little town in the mountains by the name of Nitsej. Every few weeks, an evil dragon that rampaged relentlessly beset the town of Nitsej. It destroyed buildings and chased the townspeople and their animals to and fro. It breathed fire and its steps shook the ground.

One day, a man wearing a heavy cloak rode into town. From the looks of him, he was some kind of magician, for he bore a staff and wore a robe. He also carried a powerful aura about him. The mayor stepped forward and said, "Ho there mage, what is your business with the people of Nitsej?"

"I understand you have a dragon problem," he spoke. "It so happens that I have a dragon solution." He stepped down from his mount. "If you would like, I can try it out on your dragon."

The mayor scoffed, "This is no ordinary dragon. This is a dragon queen, a brood mother." The other townspeople chimed in to support the mayor. "If you feel like you're brave enough to give it a try though, we can't stop you."

"Very well then," said the wizard, "where can I find this dragon?"

"You'll have the easiest time finding her here," the mayor said. "It's been a few weeks since her last rampage. She should be around anytime."

So they camped in the ruin of the town church for two days. Then on the third day, one of the lookouts heard something coming to the west. "She's coming," yelled the mayor. "Gather everyone on the east side of town."

Then she came, crashing through the trees. The magician climbed on a rock between the dragon and the townspeople. The dragon breathed fire, but a strange shield around the mage harmlessly deflected it. He waved his hands and cast a spell.

The first effects were not immediately apparent. But then, the dragon began to sway and slide into the snow. She turned around, and crashing through the trees, receded back into the forest.

"It's alright now," the wizard said. "She'll go back to her lair and go to sleep." The crowd sighed. "She may wake up again from time to time, but she will be sleepy and groggy and in no condition to rampage." With that, the magician left Nitsej behind and a sleeping dragon in the woods.

Faerie 101: Potluck Ritual By Phoenix

This is more than having a potluck before/after ritual. This is hosting the ritual potluck style. Just like the meal version, people come to the ritual with a covered dish of sorts. Only instead of food for the meal, they bring something to add to the ritual such as an invocation or song. The fun aspect of a ritual like this is that no one person will know everything that is going to happen during the ritual. Some "dishes" maybe potluck favorites that show up at every ritual. But some will be fresh and new and in the process you may discover some hidden talents in your group.

I am sure there are a lot of ways to make this kind of thing work. Here is what we did at Ostara:

We asked people to think about the basic parts of ritual such as the pre-casting activities (such as grounding), the casting, calling quarters, invocations to the deities, the main part of ritual and the closing. Since it was Ostara we asked them to think about spring and balance. We asked them to write things down. Once they got to the ritual, we placed their contributions in plastic eggs and proceeded to have our Ostara egg hunt. Whomever found that particular egg got to act upon what was inside (trading was allowed as was sharing, which was a good thing since I hid the eggs so didn't get to go find one.) Some people held on to their contribution so that they would be the one to share the poem or story that they brought. The facing page has a sample of the many wonders that were brought.

The role of the host/leader is to help pull everything together into a cohesive whole. As things were revealed, we discovered that like most potlucks, we had more of one "course" than another. An all dessert can be fun but a ritual consisted only of seven variations of calling East might get a bit monotonous. At a potluck ritual, the host/leader then reaches into their "pantry" to pull out something to fill in the gaps.

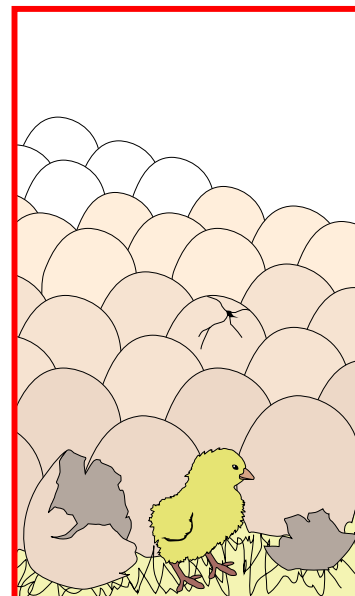
Think about the many fun ways you could vary this. How about for Samhain making a Trick-or-Treat event? Along side the basic ritual things add some tricks? A birthday or anniversary ritual could have some things related to doing something with the honoree(s).

The possibilities are endless. So be creative and have some fun trying out a potluck ritual.

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Ask either the eldest or the youngest to join you in blessing the food.

Quarter Calling–North
I call upon the guardians of the watchtowers of the north, servants of Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. May the god Vulcan, and the great titals Gaia and Chronus send their grounding energy to this sacred space to hold its place in reality. Great stones of the north, fill us with stability and give us a foundation for our ritual.

CALL THE WEST

Come flowing Spirits of the West
Of deepening shadow, the blue hour
Of sweet buds, near bloom, covered with twilight dew
Of the deep well from which we draw
All love, all joy, all sorrow too
And strength of laughter, strength of anger
All that makes us human
Come to our circle now.
Draw that which is of you in us
Out,
To meet you as you come.
Spirits of the West, you are here.

Lead the circle in your favorite chant

Quarter Calling–West
I call upon the guardians of the watchtowers of the west, servants of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces. May the gods Artemis, Hades and Poseidon send their mystic energy to this sacred space, filling it with intensity and depth. Great waves of the west, fill us with awareness of the things unseen and deeper truth.

Closing the circle
Let us go forth and spread this magic to others in our unique and playful ways. We are the emissaries of the celebration of existence.

CALL THE NORTH

Come mighty Spirits of the North
Of Midnight's hour, revealer/veiler of mystery
The flower complete, petals now falling
Pillar of Obsidian, of foursquare strength and structure
Function and Form
And of the dark place, beneath, where all form dissolves
To be made again.
Spirits of the North, come to our circle now.
Draw that which is of you in us
Out,
To meet you as you come.
Spirits of the North, you are here.

Sing Dear Friends to close the circle.

Quarter Calling–East
I call upon the guardians of the watchtowers of the east, servants of Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. May the gods Hermes, Aphrodite, and the great titan Chaos send their healing energy to this sacred space and make it a communion. Great winds of the east, fill us with understanding we can all use to participate with full knowledge.

Cast the circle by passing a hug and a kiss.

CALL THE EAST

Come, bright spirits of the East
Of dawn's light that illuminates the truth
Of the idea that seeks birth in words
And takes flight on the wings of birds
Come to our circle now.
Draw that which is of you in us
Out,
To meet you as you come.
Spirits of the East, you are here.

Lead a grounding exercise that includes the image of walking along a path lined with cherry or apple trees in full bloom.

Quarter Calling–South
I call upon the guardians of the watchtowers of the south, servants of Aries, Leo and Sagittarius. May the gods Athena, Apollo and Zeus send their creative fire to fill this sacred space and cleanse it of any unworthy energy. Great flames of the south, fill us with your creative light that we may burn away the illusions placed before us.

CALL THE SOUTH

Come fiery Spirits of the South
Shadowless flame, noontime sun
Hearth fire, forge fire, Candle glow
Plant the seed, the creative spark
That which between two lovers arc
Spirits who bind us one to another
Atom to atom, and lover to lover
Come to our circle now.
Draw that which is of you in us
Out,
To meet you as you come.

Spring is _____

The 4-F Tarot: Energy Lesson

by Phoenix

This is the anniversary of our announcement that we were undertaking the task of creating a new deck. This issue, we will have two different sections related to the deck. Elsewhere, you will find information about this issue's animal cards and the full page version of this issue's feature card.

Since one of the first questions people ask me when learning about the deck is "Will there be a book?" I thought that would be a good spot to start when talking about what we've been doing this past year. You are reading what will be the core of "the book." I know that I can't be standing over your shoulder when you use the cards. I don't want to limit you by writing a traditional book that goes card by card and tells you exactly what you are supposed to be seeing. I would rather be the teacher who gives you the basics and then lets you explore the cards on your own.

I have referenced our energy grid in the past and thought I would use this issue's "lesson" to help you get inside the grid for a moment so you can see it in action. You will never see this grid other than here, but it was an early tool for me to make sure that each card had its own identity. The grid helped set in my mind what power resources a deity had at their disposal. The relationship between the God and Goddess helped me shape attitude and personality. Additional layerings help set the season, mood, and relative ages of the deities. I shall also take this opportunity to remind you to not get too used to "God of..." type labels. This is a tool to help remind me of where the card lives in relationship to others. Once we build all of those relationships, the label will fade into memory.

A "feather's" power square would be feather+air. A "flower's" home would be flower+fire. And so forth down the diagonal. Likewise for the elements. Since this issue's feature card is the Goddess of Air and last issue was the Goddess of Water, we will look at the elemental deities.

One of the early "rules" for the grid was that the sixteen gods and goddesses had to have their own home. Each had to have a unique power base from which to draw their strength.

The second "rule" was that their home had to be in their row or column. Since there are only four power squares, the first real challenge of the deck was to figure out how to find homes for everyone. Some are still fuming over the decision as you will see.

The third "rule" was that an elemental deity was relatively stationary and drew energy toward them (think "magnet"). The 4F deities on the other hand moved through their realm.

Last, the God dominates over the Goddess...or so he would like to believe. Think Top and Bottom, but sometimes the Bottom is really the one in control of the situation. In looking at the energy lines on the opposite page, the Goddess is in red and the God in blue. Since the God dominates, if they share a square, the God gets control. The Goddess can only use that energy if the God allows.

Air

The Goddess is our feature card this issue, so we will start here. She has left her native kingdom of the feathers and has set up shop in the fins kingdom. Kind of an odd home for her, don't you think? Well, she is powerful and has lots of energy coming her way. But, she doesn't want a lot of responsibility either. She makes the citizens of feathers come to her. And she really doesn't care about the flightless birds that are stuck on the ground. When it comes to

being grounded, she only has one foot on the ground. Our first incarnation of this card was exploring the possibility of her being a flamingo based card. The energy is overall uplifting, but there is something holding her back (the lines from the right). This is someone wanting to get outside into fresh air but still has some responsibilities. This is why the Goddess is manifesting herself in the park. She got out but didn't get away.

The God, on the other hand, has energy that is taking him up and out. He allows the Goddess to tap her full energy so he doesn't have to work hard. He can take it from her anytime he wants. When you finally meet him, he will aiding a hot air balloonist get away from it all.

Water

Since you met this Goddess last issue, we will look at Water next. She lives in the floral kingdom, rather than among her subjects, the fins. They come to her...all except for the fins of air that have decided to leave her embrace (think flying fish.) She is like a pool in the middle of a forest, hence the image of the lake that emerged.

The God rests in a spot where he draws strength from the Goddess. There is a massive downstream kind of flow going on here and he lives at the end of the line, the ocean. He willingly sends energy back to the Goddess because he knows that she will return it to him.

Fire

The deities of fire have a very different relationship. Here the God stands in his strongest position, flower + fire. The Goddess has been pushed to the side and can't draw one ounce of energy without his permission. The God has learned the dangers of uncontrolled fires and is ever on the alert He is the Park Ranger watching for the first sign of danger. The God of Fur is the Fireman who has stationed himself on fur + fire so he can move quickly if the Goddess escapes.

The Goddess is anything but happy about being contained. She will do anything to break free of the God's control. Her working nickname is "Hell hath no fury..." so that should tell you what kind of person she is.

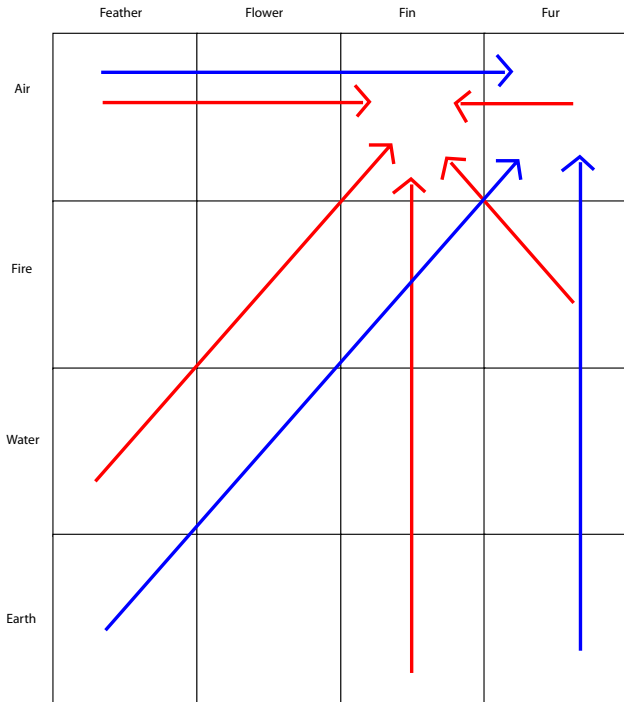
Now, take a moment to picture the grid if their positions switched. The Goddess would have free reign over the grid and the God would pull in his own energy plus all of hers. He would be fire totally out of control. And heaven help us if the Goddess found a home in fur + fire! The two would be unstoppable.

Earth

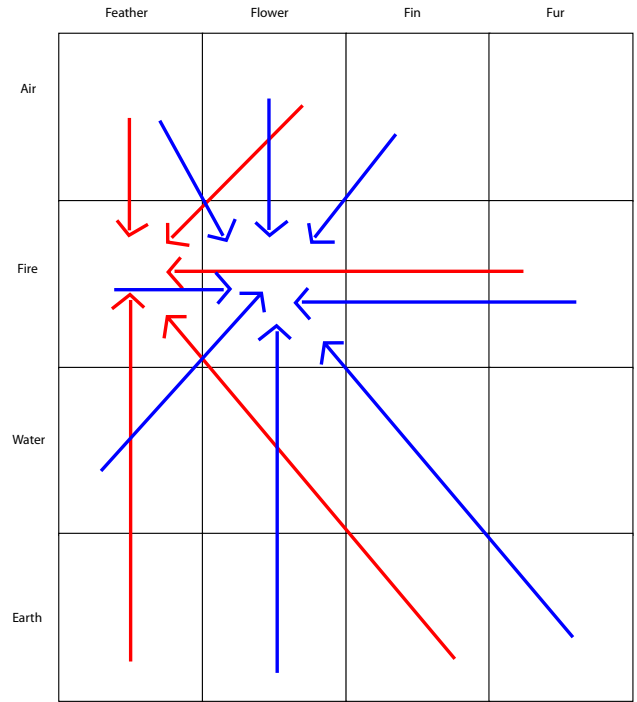
The Goddess has free reign of the energy and the God is holed up in the corner. He is working from his strong point, fur + earth. Living in fin + earth, the Goddess is like a fish out of water, and she isn't happy. She is doing all that work and he has turned his back on her and is focused on his work. She is plotting for the day when she can gather enough strength to either push him aside and take over his grid or find a more attentive partner.

The God is a workaholic. He is sitting on the major power line and is drawing the best people to him. Ultimately, it does weigh him down and is a cage that he can't escape. He is doing it to support the Goddess who holds the key to the cage. Unwittingly, he is giving her more energy to find the crack in his armor.

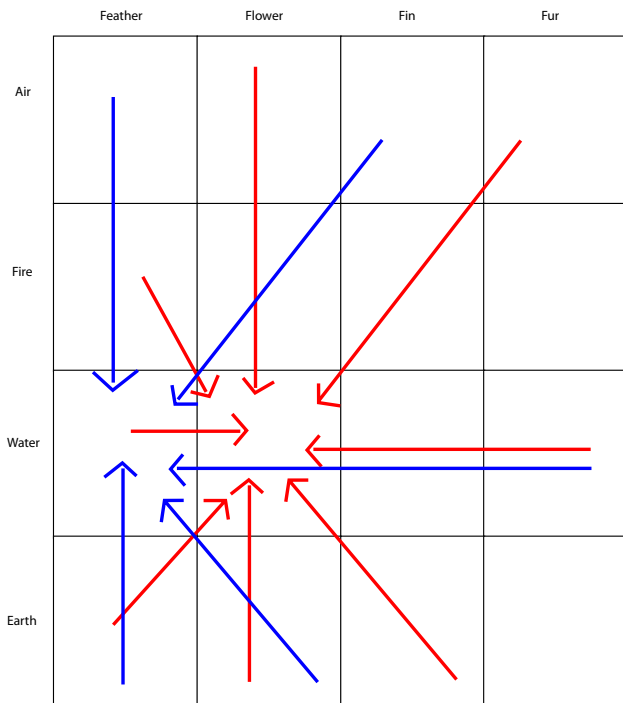
Deities of Air



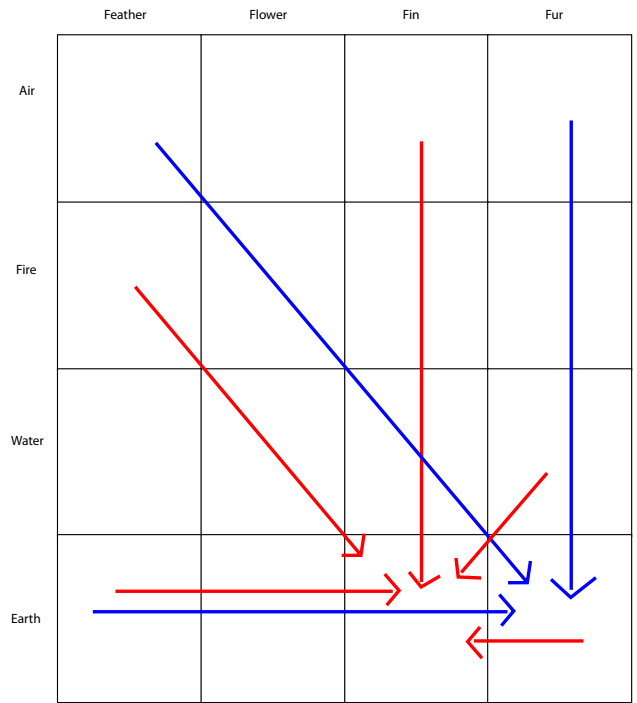
Deities of Fire



Deities of Water



Deities of Earth



Quest for the Crystal Phoenix

Chapter 20: The Terrible Trio

by Orpheus

Every day for the week after their return to Riangle, Prince Apollo returned to the Garden of the Queens at sunset hoping to have a talk with BeBeep, the toad. As he entered the garden one evening, he heard the unmistakable rumbling voice of the toad. He was engaged in conversation with a light, feminine voice that sounded vaguely familiar but he couldn't quite place it. Upon passing under the rose covered trellis, he heard the sound of a splash.

Announcing his presence, Apollo said, "I hope I'm not interrupting something." He looked around in mock surprise at finding the maiden alone. "I'm sorry. I thought I heard you talking to someone."

"I was. Or at least I think I was." She looked at the fountain as if to conjure something from its depths. She had long blonde hair that floated in curls down to the middle of her back. When she turned back to face him, Apollo was lost in her blue eyes; a blue that matched the deep waters of the lake in the Valley of the Kings. "I was sitting here enjoying the beauty of the garden when a toad jumped out of the fountain and started talking to me. I must have been daydreaming or something because I know that toads don't talk."

"I don't know about all toads, my Lady, but I do know of one who favors this fountain that does. I had hoped to have a conversation with him this evening."

"Oh, I was right to leave the country. If this is any indication, castle life must be far more interesting than I ever imagined."

"You are new here? You seem familiar as if I have met you before."

"I'm sorry, from the way you spoke so casually, I thought you remembered me. I was with Ama, Queen Amaranth that is, last winter."

Apollo thought a moment. "Am I correct in remembering the name Crystal?"

"I am flattered that you would remember. One girl out of the many you must have met that week."

Bringing her hand to his lips for a light kiss, "Lady Crystal, how could I forget one as lovely as you?"

Crystal blushed. "I am no lady. Please call my Cori. That's what my friends called me back home in Star Corners." When Apollo got a puzzled look on his face she explained that she always felt that her name was cold. Ever since she could remember, during the summer, she would pick coreopsis blossoms to weave in her hair. She so loved the bright yellow flower that people started calling her the Coreopsis Queen and soon the name stuck.

"I am sure that the finest golden crown would look dull in comparison to your wreath of flowers, dear queen." Apollo bowed to her as he spoke.

"Your fair words make me forget that I am country girl and not

the princess in the faerie tale as Sir Toad would have me believe."

"And just what did Sir Toad tell you?"

"He said that he was an enchanted prince and only the kiss of a fair maiden..." Cori paused a moment. "No, he said only the kiss of the maiden deemed the fairest of them all would break his spell. I asked if it was true that kissing a toad caused warts and he told me that was a viscous rumor that his wife spread to deter young maidens from kissing him. To which I replied that if he was married, it would be wrong for me to kiss him. He said it was his curse to always find the pretty maidens with such high standards. With that, he jumped into the fountain and disappeared."

"If all it takes to break a spell is the kiss of the fairest maiden, you would win my vote."

"I'm hurt," came the voice from behind him. "I thought I was the fairest in your eyes."

"Forgive me, grandmother," said Apollo, giving Rose a hug, "but while you are the fairest of them all, to break the spell that has apparently been cast on Sir BeBeep, he needs a maiden fair and you no longer qualify."

Rose drew herself up, "Are you saying that I'm old?"

"Nay, but I was under the impression that maidenhood ended with marriage."

"I do believe that motherhood is the current standard. Either way, you are correct, I am no longer the maiden I once was. Now who is this fair maiden who graces our garden?"

As soon as Apollo named his companion to his grandmother she remembered that Crystal had been with Queen Amaranth. "My sister has spoken highly of your care of our mother. How long are you going to be with us? Where are you staying? I'm surprised that Princess Heather didn't send word of your visit so that I could present you to the court."

"Mother Heather doesn't know I'm here. Nobody does for that matter," said Crystal. She explained that her fiancé, well not really her fiancé but everyone knew that the two of them were going to be married, disappeared during the summer. He had gone to a show by a traveling troupe and in the morning she found a note on her door. Her eyes got a distant look as she remembered his words, "Dearest Cori, You are the nicest girl I know. I will always have love for you in my heart, but now I know that loving you with my body would be a lie. I have seen the path to my true love. Please know that it is not you, it is me. Someday, you will understand and forgive me. I hope we can be friends in the future. Love always."

"That's terrible," said Rose. "He couldn't even tell you in person?"

She went on to tell them that she heard that the star of the troupe flirted with him throughout the performance and lured him backstage during one of the scenes. No one saw him after that. She knew that he had run off with the hussy who was strutting her stuff on the stage. What did she have to compare with the glamorous life



that was offered? When people realized that he was gone, she couldn't stand the pity and knew that she had to leave. Her mother had been close to Mother Heather before she was 'called home' as they always told her, but she knew it meant she would never come back. Crystal figured that if her mother had been a maid for the princess, then maybe she could get a job at the palace.

"Then why are you here, and not with my sister Susan?" asked Rose.

"Oh, I couldn't go there. She would just tell me to go home. All my life I heard the tales of how awful palace living was; how it destroyed Mother Heather's life and her baby. But I still had my dream of what it would be like to live in a palace. Aunt Susan always spoke about how she and you never spoke, so I..."

"You figured that by coming here your secret would be safe?"

She nodded in agreement but got a panicked look on her face, "You aren't going to tell them, are you?"

"I should." Crystal's eyes pleaded with her. "But I shan't. I once turned my back on everything Amaranth told me and paid the price. If she feared for your safety in the courts of Rysbal, then maybe I can offer some safety here in the courts of Riangler. Now come with me Lady Crystal and we shall see about getting you settled."

"If I may, could I have a new name to go with my new life? I don't want anyone to connect me to my old life. I am sure someone would eventually tell and I would be forced to return to Star Corners."

"What about Lady Cori, as it was in your letter?" offered Rose. "If your beau hears of a lady by that name, maybe he will come looking for you."

"Oh, could we?"

"If that is what you really want, child, then we shall make it so." Rose gave her a hug. "Now let's find you some suitable quarters where I can keep my promise to watch over you."

The next day Rose began to introduce Cori to the court. Her simple country ways won her many whispered comments. One evening, Apollo found her weeping in the garden.

"Ama, was right. I shouldn't have come. I don't fit in. They are all so beautiful and I'm so plain."

"But you are beautiful, Cori," said the prince. "In fact, would you like to be my guest for the Autumnal Ball?"

"Would I? My first royal ball as a guest of the prince? Oh YES!" Her elation quickly died, "But what should I wear?"

"Let's talk to grandmother. I'm sure she can help you."

The evening of the ball arrived and Apollo dressed in the new outfit Rose had made for him. It was a peasant style shirt, vest and trousers to honor the country nature of the harvest festival. The vest was made of russet velvet and had golden oak leaves on each side. When he arrived at Cori's quarters to escort her to the ball, he discovered that her gown had been made of the same fabric. The russet color of the dress made her hair look like a river of gold. She had a wreath of bright yellow flowers on her head.

"What do you think of our country princess?" asked Rose.

"I think that you wasted your time embroidering this lovely

vest for me. No one shall see me for the splendor of my companion shall outshine it."

Cori blushed at the compliment. She curtsied to the prince. "Any shine I have is a mere reflection of your own."

Rose smiled as she saw the two's eyes lock and her grandson blush under Cori's attention. She watched him struggling trying to find something to say in response. The queen thought that this was the first time she had seen him flustered. "I do love this style of gown. It is so much lighter than the formal gowns we have been wearing for years. I think I am going to have to start a new fashion trend and make these the standard."

Apollo looked at his grandmother and realized that she wasn't wearing a gown that didn't have layer upon layer of fabric. Instead it was a simple cut of loose, flowing fabric. "The peasants have the right of it," she said. "I feel like I can breath again."

"And I can put my arms around you again," said William. "I had almost forgotten how truly beautiful you are, my dear, hidden beneath all those layers."

Rose pouted. "Are you saying that I was not beautiful?"

"Never," replied the king. "But the richness and fullness of the fashions hid the beauty I knew was there. Much like thistles, beautiful in their own right, can be too much and once overgrown, they choke the rose."

"Having pruned the garden, shall we enjoy an evening of relaxation?" Rose kissed her husband. Hand in hand, they led the way to the Grand Ballroom.

Cori gasped at the sight before her as she entered the ballroom. She suddenly realized that everyone was staring her direction trying to figure out who the prince's guest was.

"Relax," whispered Apollo. "And remember, no matter what they think; no matter what they may whisper; it is you who is walking down the red carpet and not they." He gave her had a squeeze. "Hold your head up high. Tonight, you are the princess you have always dreamed of being."

After their initial dance, Apollo was obliged to dance with other ladies of the court. When he took a break, he spotted Cori dancing with Johnny and waved at them to join him. Cori was giddy with delight.

"This is everything I dreamed it would be. Thank you for asking me to the ball."

"I could not think of a lovelier companion."

At the conclusion of the next dance, the heralds trumpeted the arrival of a new guest.

"Announcng Queen Holly Jasmine, Lady Lily Hortensia and Lady Viola Saxitillis."

A sparkle of light streamed in from one of the upper windows and coalesced into a ball of light in the middle of the ballroom. When the glow faded, the three were standing there. Holly was in a gown that was similar to this grandmother's dress. He figured this must have been what inspired Rose. Viola was in a rust and gold kilt. Lily was in her usual white. The stark whiteness of her large gown stood out in a room filled with the golds, oranges and browns

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of a harvest festival.

"I can see one of my first lessons is going to be about fashion." Apollo heard his grandmother mutter. When he looked at her with a puzzled look, she added, "You should never wear white before Ostara or after Mabon. Everyone knows it is bad luck."

Rose greeted her sister and led her to the chair at the head table that had been reserved for her. Lily started to sit down. "I'm sorry dear, but that seat is for Prince Apollo's guest, Lady Cori," said Rose.

"What? I am a princess and should be seated next to my prince."

"Alas, I did not know that you would be attending this evening, else I would have asked for your companionship," said Apollo.

"What?" cried Cori. "Were you just being nice to me? Was I second choice because your girlfriend wasn't around?"

"No. You are the fairest maiden I know and I am honored to have you at my side."

"I thought I was the fairest," exclaimed Lily.

"You are. You each are in your own way. Cori is as the sun and you, the moon. Each is lovely, just different."

"So you are saying that I am pale in comparison to her?"

Before Apollo could dig himself in deeper, Rose interceded.

"Alas, the fault is mine. For the celebration, I wanted to emphasize the balance that comes with the equinox."

She explained that she planned to have equal numbers of men and women at the table. King William and she had invited Duchess Hilda and Lord Cetee to join them to represent the older generations, Lady Viola, the court Faerie Godperson and Lance, one of Apollo's guards, were invited to represent the next generation. Prince Apollo was asked to invite someone join him to represent the youth. When they learned that Queen Holly was planning to attend, Hilda relinquished her seat in favor of her queen. Rose didn't think it fair to disinvite Lady Cori once the invitation was extended. Once she realized that the four ladies at the head table flowers of all four seasons, she hadn't given the matter much more thought and had arranged for Lady Lily to join with the duchess.

"That's Princess Lily!"

"That may well be when you are at home, my dear. But I have been informed by multiple people that the only people entitled to use that title outside your home court are the children of your queen or the children of the queen's heir. I believe that Lady Viola would qualify but she has declined that honor. Although, like a daughter she is to me, she did not want others to think she was trying to replace Princess Iris in my heart."

Apollo tried not to laugh as he remembered his grandmother's initial reactions to Viola's outrageous behavior. He heard Johnny whispering to Viola, "Laying it on pretty thick, don't you think?"

Whispering back, she said, "Don't ask me to think at a time like this. I want to catch every word so I can quote it later."

When Apollo turned his attention back to his grandmother, Lily was protesting the humiliation of being seated with the commoners.

Holly spoke sharply to her granddaughter, "Get used to it. Queen Rose has an unerring talent for humiliating both faeries and unwanted guests. I should know since I have been on the receiving end of her gifts on more than one occasion." When Rose started to protest Rose held up her hand. "I have forgiven you and have done

my own share of dishing out humiliation, both here and at home. Now if it will end today's tantrums so we can enjoy dinner, I will relinquish my seat and join Hilda and Johnny at their table. I can catch them up on news from home." Johnny offered a hand to his grandmother and helped her step down from the dais.

Lance realized that the new table assignment would put Apollo seated between Lily and Cori. "Excuse me, your majesties, but if we are going to rearrange seating may I request that Lady Lily be my table companion. While the happy face of the viola always delights me, the majesty of the lily inspires me. It would be my hope that Lady Lily would be gracious enough to equally inspire me."

When Lily blushed at his words, Apollo mouthed a silent "thank you" to him. Without waiting for confirmation from the queen, Lance pulled out the chair next to him and Lily sat down as if that was where she was supposed to be seated all the time.

As dinner was served, Cori lived up to her real crystalline name and was an ice maiden to anything Apollo asked her so he turned his attention to Viola.

"The palace has been dull without you. It is good to have you back."

Cori broke her silence, "Oh, where have you been?"

"I have been traveling," replied Viola. "I rejoined my old company to recreate one of my most famous opera performances."

"Oh?" chimed in Lily. "I didn't know the circus let the bearded lady sing."

"I will have you know that I was nominated for both best actress and best actor for my performances at the Arts and Tarts Festival," countered Viola. "I would have won both if that boy who joined us in Star Corners didn't look so cute and blush so fully. He stole the show each time he was 'picked' to join us on stage in the tavern scene."

"I will say you were radiant on stage. I can't recall seeing a more beautiful lady," said Apollo. Not quick enough to avoid flaming glares from both Cori and Lily he added, "With all three of you fair ladies at this table, it is hard to judge which is the true fairest. So beautiful are you, it would be like picking a favorite..."

"Star Corners?" Cori's eyes flashed. "You? You're the tramp in that perverse show 'Godiva Rides Again?'" She pointed at Viola. "She's the one who stole my boyfriend!"

"Oh, she's good at that," added Lily with glee, watching someone else taking sides against Viola. "She's stolen enough of mine over the centuries."

"I have never stolen anyone's boyfriend," said an indignant Viola. "I may have borrowed some upon occasion, but I have always returned them. But in your case, darling Lily, I would think you would be grateful, since everyone of your castoffs has turned out to be gay."

"That's not true! They just seem that way because after being with me they know that any other woman would fall short of their idea of perfection!"

"I hate to burst your bubble, but the boys at Ladsrus Sactuary host the 'Lily Hortensia Ex-Boyfriends Reunion' every year. I hear it has grown so popular that they have to hold fifty registrations aside every year for first time participants."

"That doesn't prove anything," said Lily.



“Maybe not by itself,” countered Viola, “but the winner of the Lily Look-a-Like contest gets to demonstrate their virtues to the rest of the attendees and I have yet to hear that anyone prefers the original.”

Cori got up from her chair and forced Viola to look at her. “Well, this time he has not been returned to the rightful owner. What did you do with him?”

“Well, first we...”

Rose spoke up, “Viola, this is quite out of hand. Is this truly the time to gift us with a tale of your sexual exploits?”

“You are correct. Fortunately, or unfortunate for me, there was no sexual exploits to tell. Manin joined the company as a way to get out of Star Corners. He said that he felt stifled in that town and wanted to find a place where he could be free to be himself.”

“He was free to be himself,” cried Cori. “Mother Heather and I did all of the domestic chores. He was free to do whatever he wanted during the day.”

“I believe he said that was one of the things he wanted to be free from,” said Viola.

Cori ripped off Viola’s sash, which caused the clasp holding the kilt to drop to the floor. Lily had left her chair and was wildly swinging her shoulder bag.

“Take it back!” they shouted in near unison.

Viola bent down to grab the falling kilt and avoided being smacked by Lily. Unfortunately, Apollo was not so lucky when her bag connected with his head. The weight of the contents in the bag and force of her swing was enough to launch the prince forward and his head connected with the table with a loud thud.

“ENOUGH!” shouted Holly, as a sudden downpour drenched everyone on that end of the dais.

The silence that followed was so complete, a feather dropping to the floor could be heard.

“My apologies for spilling water on your beautiful floors, sister,” said Holly, “but that is the only way I could think of to stop a cat fight.”

“No apology needed, sister,” replied Rose, who was checking the prince’s head. “I had just sent a page to fetch a bucket of water so I could do the same thing.”

“Oh, dear prince...” started the combatants.

“As Queen Holly said, enough! Not another word from any of you,” commanded Rose. For the first time in weeks, the original color of her dress had drained away and was a brilliant fiery red. “I will expect to see each of you in my chambers in the morning to explain your behavior.”

Holly came up on the dais and stared at her granddaughter. “Princesses indeed. I hereby decree that until further notice your official titles are Spoiled Brats. Until you can live up to the minimal expectations of ladylike manners, you shall be announced by that title.”

“You can’t do that,” cried Lily.

“I can and just did,” said Holly with the chill of an arctic blast in her voice. “If you redeem yourselves in Queen Rose’s eyes, then she, and only she, will be able to elevate you back to being addressed as Lady while you are in her court.” Turning to face her sister she added, “I mean just that, sister. I will defer to your judgment on easing this edict.” Turning back to the girls, “However, you will still need to answer to me if you ever wish to be addressed as Princess when you are in my court. Is that clear?”

Apollo thought it was a reaction to the bump on his head, but he thought the air got suddenly cold. He noticed that ice was starting to form on Viola’s dress.

“Yes, grandmother,” they said softly.

“And I think it fitting that I include a similar edict for Cori,” added Rose. “If you are going to live the life of a lady, then I expect that you act like one, even if you don’t like the situation. Is that clear?”

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

“Now I think its time for the lot of us to retire and allow our guests to enjoy the rest of the celebration without your form of

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entertainment.” The girls looked out and realized that everyone was staring at them. “Oh, I see you finally remembered that others have been forced to listen to your petty squabbling and witnessed you striking a member of the royal family. That memory will be hard to erase in the days to come.”

Rose reached out to her husband and took his extended hand and led the group out of the hall. Much to the people’s credit, the noise of the sudden onslaught of restarted conversation did not start until the doors closed behind them.

Over the next weeks, Apollo felt like a hunted animal. At every opportunity one of the three cornered him. Sometimes it was the overly saccharine attempt at apologizing for their part of the farce that played out, while at the same time making sure he knew that the fault lay with the other two. Sometimes it was the overly flirtatious attempt at trying to get him to admit that the speaker was indeed the fairest one in his eyes. Apollo would watch pairs of them engaged in friendly conversation. It gave him hope that the fur was finally settling. But as he approached to join them he realized that the conversation was about the missing third person’s most recent temper tantrum.

At the Samhain Feast Cori was the first to be released from the queen’s edict. She had come to accept that Viola had no involvement in persuading Manin to leave her. Her chats with Viola left her hope that once he found himself, he would realize the empty space next to him could only be filled by her.

Hilda got tired of listening to Viola’s constant whining about her cousin. She threatened Viola with telling Queen Holly that Viola was unsuited for ever being a Faerie Godperson and that she was going to recommend that Johnny be given the duty in her place. Hilda was pleased with his restraint in not adding his own barbs regarding his sister’s behavior. Of course, if anyone commented on that to Johnny, he would simply smile and tell him he had nothing to say since Lily didn’t seem to need any help in that arena.

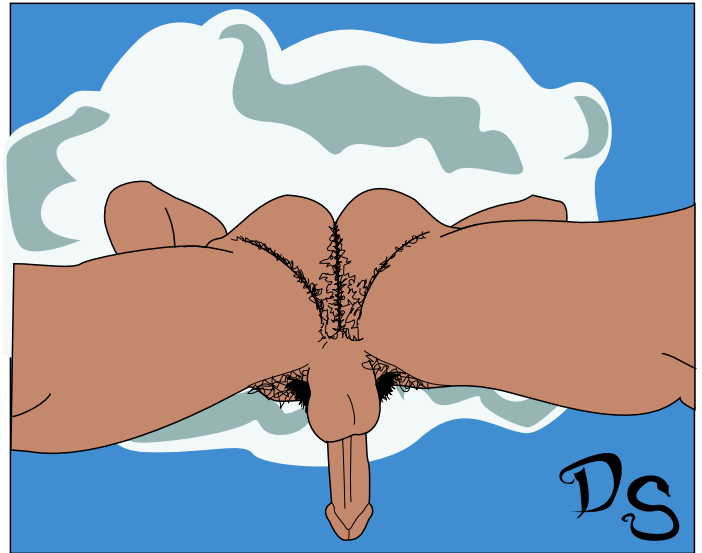
Finally, after two weeks of a confirmed cease fire in the battle of words, Rose finally lifted the edict on the two faeries in time for Apollo’s birthday celebration. When Apollo arrived at the Great Hall for the birthday feast, the girls had already been seated. Viola shaved her beard for the occasion and all three were dressed in identical gowns of deep green velvet with holly trim. The deep rich color brought out the best in all three’s coloration. They were not going to make it easy for that moment after dinner when he had to pick one to be his first dancing partner. He knew that no matter which he picked, it would be the wrong choice for the other two and the bickering would begin again.

At the end of the banquet, the ladies of the court retired to freshen up before the start of the dancing in the Grand Ballroom. Apollo took the opportunity to retreat to the garden. He sat on the bench by his mother’s memorial and put his head in his hands.

“Why so glum, chum?” came the bass voice of the toad. “There’s a party going on inside and you are supposed to be celebrating.”

Apollo hadn’t seen the toad in several months so he explained the situation.

“Well, first thing kid,” said Bebeep, “if you haven’t figured it out already, never ever tell a maiden they are the ‘fairest of them all’ until you are finished with the last maiden you told that. It is



certainly bad luck to have multiple ‘fairest of them alls’ around at one time. Sure as shooting they will come together in a room and then you will have to decide between them.”

“So I’ve found out.”

“And look at the mess my brothers made of things when we brought our three ladies together.”

“You really are Black Bart?” asked the prince.

“Yes, indeed, but that can wait. Let’s figure out what to do so one of your ladies doesn’t decide to take a page from the history books.”

“What do you mean?”

“My ‘fairest of them all’ liked to kill the competition. And they called me the Beast!”

“So what do I do? Go ‘Eenie, meanie, minie, mo?’”

“No good,” said the toad. “First off, they know that with three choices where you start is where you finish, so the random factor doesn’t exist.”

“Drawing straws”

“Cop out.”

“Age before beauty?”

“Worse” He spoke in squeaky falsetto, “Are you saying I look old, not beautiful?”

Apollo groaned. “Pearls before the swine?”

“You are digging yourself an early grave with that one.”

The two talked for a long time. They were interrupted when Johnny joined them to announce that everyone had gathered in the Grand Ballroom and had been waiting for him.

“Thanks, BeBeep. I think your idea is brilliant. If I were a girl I would kiss you.”

“If you were and you did, I would be eternally grateful. Get that pretty girl, Cori, to lower her standards for a moment. She won’t be disappointed.”

“I’ll see what I can do.”

Apollo and Johnny headed back into the castle. The crowd parted as he made his way to the dais where his family and friends waited. He took a deep breath and tried to ground himself before he spoke.

“I have made my decision as to the lady who shall be my first dancing partner. With such lovely choices, it is not an envious task. I know that in my future there will be a maiden who will wear the

glass slippers and sit by my side. The first dance of the evening should be for her.” He signaled to Johnny and Hilda, who came in carrying the pillow with the slippers.

“We will try the unbroken slipper on each of these three lovely ladies in the order that they are standing. Since it is the slipper for the right foot, we start on the right.”

Apollo took the pillow from Johnny and set it on the floor. When he tried to pick up the slipper, it stuck to the pillow. He stood up and they all gathered, each trying to separate the slipper from the pillow. They discovered that they couldn’t even put their hand inside the slipper.

“Queen Amaranth must have placed a spell on them to prevent them from breaking further,” announced Viola. Lily nodded her head in agreement.

“Well, then, failing that, I shall have to trust in the judgment of my wisest teacher. Even after meeting two of the three of these lovely maidens, my father still proclaims that Queen Rose is the ‘Fairest of Them All.’ Until the day, I can stand with equal authority, I shall

defer to his proclamation.” Apollo held out his hand to his grandmother. “May I have the honor of having this dance?”

When they started dancing Rose said, “That was very diplomatic. It is strange about the slippers though. I seem to recall picking them up to examine them after mother died.”

“It isn’t so strange. I had a talk with BeBeep and he suggested the slippers. On the way inside, I told Johnny that I wished that there was a no way to pick up or try on the slippers until we had found the missing piece. He took me to visit Hilda and she allowed him to grant me my first wish.”

Rose laughed. “You are a sneaky lad. But you know this only postpones the inevitable. Your three companions are waiting.”

“I know, but with BeBeep’s help, I have a plan.”

The song ended and Apollo led his grandmother back to the dais.

“Please end the suspense. Which of us gets to go next?” asked Lily.

“I have decided to follow an age old tradition and pick age before beauty.”

“Well, that would be you, Viola,” said Lily smugly. “You are fifty years older than I. That leaves me to be the beauty.”

“Don’t forget that Beauty was grandmother’s horse,” snapped Viola automatically.

“Well, in this case, you are wrong, Lily,” said the prince. “Duchess Hilda, would either you or one of your sisters care to dance?”

Hilda stood up and looked directly into Apollo’s eyes. “Why choose? Sometimes you can have both.”

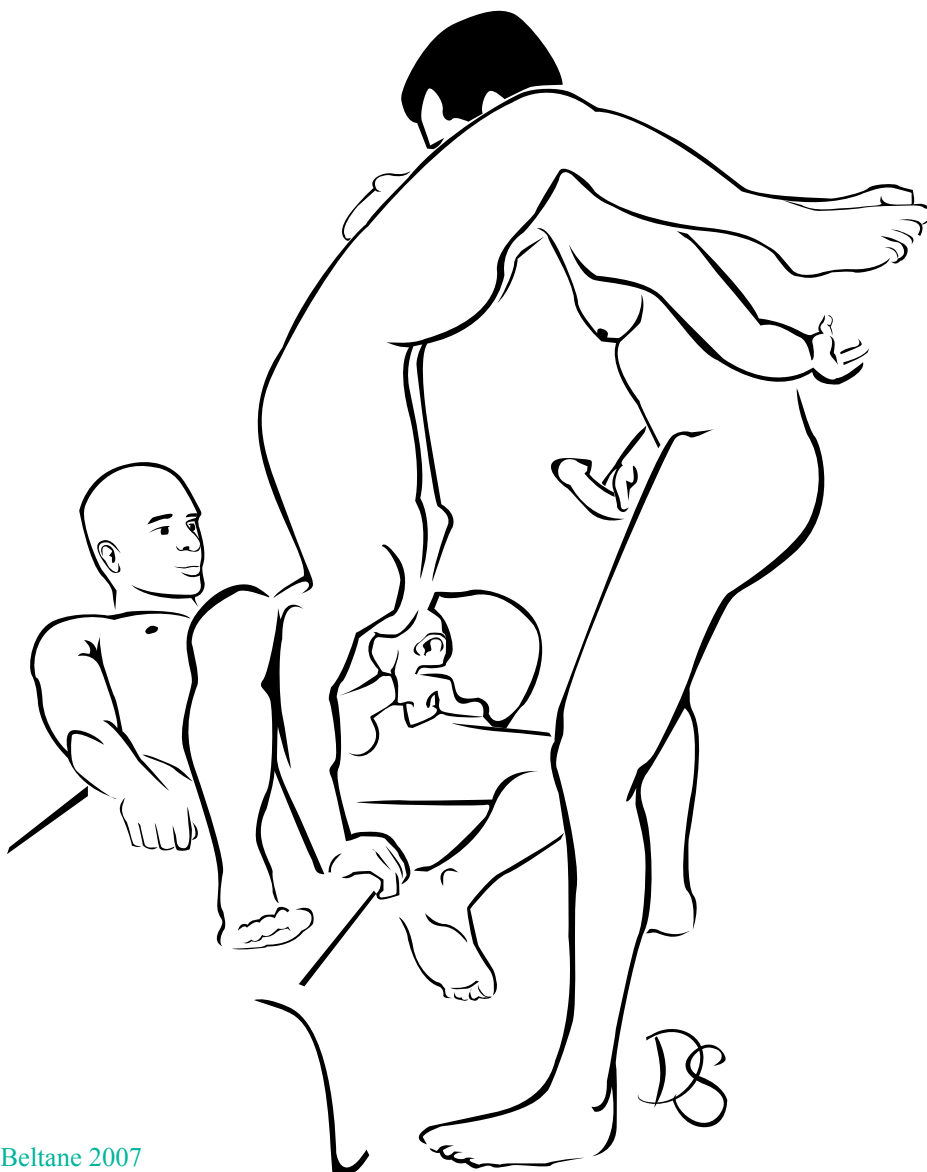
Hilda split into the nine identical sisters of the Hilda Guard. They were not in their usual leather battle gear. Instead, each was in a sparkling gown. Collectively the gowns ranged from the deepest red to an equally deep violet. The crowd let out a collective “Oh!” at the living rainbow that emerged before them. “We all would. Thank you.”

Rose gasped, “Are those Amaranth originals?” They nodded.

He bowed to Lily, Viola and Cori saying, “I am so sorry ladies, but it looks like my dance card is full for the evening.” He turned back to the Hilda and offered his hand.

Hilda Yarrow, in the yellow gown, stepped forward. “Sisters, I believe it is my turn to go first.”

As she gathered her skirt to step down from the dais, the light sparkled off of her glass slippers. She turned back to the girls and said, “By the way girls, Queen Ashleigh Ellen used to borrow my slippers when she couldn’t find her own.”



The 4-F Tarot: Work and Play

by Phoenix

One year in the life of creating the deck, part two. The four animal cards present a milestone. They are the last of the working elements, so time for a quick recap of where we are at. In each of the 4Fs (Feathers, Flowers, Fins and Furs) there are two cards for each of their relationship with the four elements (Air, Fire, Water and Earth). One of those cards is playful and the other represents work. The difference being that “playful” translates to the animal has the element in abundance while “work” translates along the lines that the animal has a lack of that element in their lives and need to work to get it.

For Samhain it was Work + Air. I interpreted a lack of air as being a precursor to death. After all, no air pretty much leads to death. So we picked four animals that seemed to have some relationship to death energy: the vulture, a fly stuck in amber, the catfish and the hyena.

For Yule it was Work + Fire. No fire leaves me cold, so we turned to the cold climates for our inspiration of the penguin, the crocus blooming in a snow bank, white koi (no fire = no color in this case) and the polar bear. Since that time, DragonSwan and I have seen *March of the Penguins* and have completely new respect for what those creatures do to survive. And I think DS would like me to revisit those death cards and figure out how to work in the leopard seal! His image of the cute seal drastically changed after watching the movie.

For Imbolc/Ostara it was Work + Water. No water quickly sent me out to the desert for inspiration. We came back with a road runner, some cactus and a scorpion, a lizard and a camel.

Now, it is time for the last set, Work + Earth. This took a little longer to conceptualize since what does lack of earth entail? We finally came up with a couple of ideas which center around the concept of lack of space. As we looked at the creatures in those crowded spaces we also realized that they have a lack of individuality. We rarely think of these creatures as a single entity. We have the chick breaking out of its egg (talk about having no room!). There is a field of clover and the busy bees gathering honey (do you ever think about just one of those as a single thing? and isn't amazing how quickly we can associate these two?). There is a tank of guppies (all are beautiful but when was the last time you saw just one in an aquarium?). And for the furs, we have a flock of sheep.

As I have said before and will say again, it isn't what I think about any one of those sixteen cards that matters in the long run. What is important is that you, the card reader, have some kind of association with the creatures. It can be a simple surface level understanding such as the common picture of penguins diving off a cliff and gliding through the water. Or it may be a deep understanding of how they walk for sixty miles to get away from the coast and how the male stands for months in subzero temperatures with the egg on his feet and the slightest fumble could condemn the egg to instant death, and so forth. It is that gift of understanding that you bring to the table when you use these cards in a reading.

For our featured card this issue we have the Goddess of Air. As noted in my other 4F column, this card grew into being something about getting out for some fresh air. What better setting than a day in the park? This is a goddess card which is full of energy so we can't just keep it simple. Beyond the energy rules I talked about,

one of the things we have woven in is the energies of the Sabbats. Look at the hill and you will see a group with their Maypole and ribbons. Maybe the important thing for your reading is to get out and join in that dance, or go over the hill and join the drumming you know is going on.

In honor of our late friend Ilex, we couldn't pass up paying tribute to his saying “Hooray! Hooray! The First of May! Outdoor fucking starts today!” Are you the top or the bottom if that is what is important? Or is it that fact that you are out in the open and having sex? Are you hoping someone is watching?

How about the guy in the kilt? Do you think he was embarrassed or excited by that gust of wind? Or is this a playful whim of the Goddess just wanting to check out the goods?

And we talked about the dog and his master back at Samhain as they link some of the stories of the lives of the characters in the deck. But regardless of how you look at the progression of their relationship, this card represents this moment in time. What happens next is totally up to you. Is Daddy so wrapped up in his kite that he ignores the dog he brought to the park to play with? Or will he reach down in a moment to pick up the ball and toss it?

Did he see the flash of bootie and get a hard on? Is he hoping that the Goddess will tire of playing tug of war with his kite and cause it to crash land at the feet of Mr. Kilt?

Or is Mr. Kilt his lover and had just gotten up from the blanket?

Or, as it was suggested at Samhain 2006 in *Dog's in the Cradle*, is one of the pair in the bushes the kite boy's lover? If so, does he care? Is he being so focused on his kite so he can ignore what is going on? Does he care since they have an open relationship? When the tryst is done, will the lover join him and they go walking hand in hand along the lake to join the Beltane celebration? Or is the grey cloud a sign of the pending storm when he turns and sees them?

The possibilities are endless which is one of the biggest reasons I will shy away from writing “THE BOOK.” I am thinking of telling a series of stories. In some of those stories will be something like this park. The lead character in the story might be kite boy. Maybe it will be from the perspective of the dog or Mr. Kilt. In any event, the story will not be the same story from a different viewpoint. It will be its own story designed to help you see the possibilities hidden in the potential of the cards.

In the Mabon 2006 issue, I mentioned that there would be some “baby” cards which for an elemental will be something a person picks up to learn about that element. For the 4Fs it is something they need to learn about in order to survive. Each of those babies will make a second appearance to show someone having learned or forgotten those lessons.

You won't see the first of these until Yule, so let me introduce one to you now. The “Baby of Air” is a kite. It will be sitting there waiting for you to pick up and play. On the table, it has no real purpose. But get it outside and start singing “Let's go fly a kite!”

Of course, in the world of grand irony, here I am, a person who used to have a bird name (Falcon for new readers) and as a kid, I never could get it up. I meant a kite of course. What did you think I meant?



Beltane Incense Blends

by Anja

From Phoenix: Anja is one of our regular subscribers. She lives on the Oregon Coast where she has a magick shop called Ancient Light (<http://www.ancientlight.info/>) that is faerie friendly. She got involved with the Radical Faeries in the late 80's. She is both Wicca and Feri tradition and one of the leaders of a Circle that meets and teaches at her shop.

For a festival of love and lust like Beltane what better than incense to help set the mood? Most of the incense blends that are out there are formulated for heteros, though, not us fairies, so I've started making some, both for spell use and ritual and for times when you want to set a mood.

The directions below are written for someone who has not made or used incense of this type before! Please forgive me if you have, and just skim through.

Finding the ingredients

I grow a lot of herbs and dry them myself, but many folks don't have this luxury. Also, things like cinnamon are hard to grow anywhere but in the tropics. Some of these recipes are simplified from the original because it's hard to find some of the exotic ingredients. You should be able to track down quite a bit of this in the spice section of a grocery. Sometimes the "organic" section of large chains even has things like dragon's blood or frankincense tears and there are herb and other specialty shops that carry them. If you can't find things locally try Azure Green (<http://www.azuregreen.com/>). All of these things are in their catalogue.

Only use essential oils in these blends. Fragrance oils just don't work and can add a sickly scent to the burning mixture.

Making these incenses

The steps for making the blends are simple.

1. Find your ingredients
2. "crunch" any that need it
3. Measure carefully into a glass or ceramic bowl
4. Mix well.
5. Store properly.

Simple eh? Well, if you over-grind resins they turn gummy, that's why I said "crunch", not "grind". And "mix well" can be some pretty good work if you make a large quantity. You have to measure carefully. Else, simple...

We grind incense blends pretty fine for what we make in the shop, which are a bit more complicated than these. We are also trying for a very even consistency in each package. You don't have to do that, in fact it can be nice to have the scents change a bit as time goes on, but you're going to want to get the pieces small enough (no larger than a pinky nail) that you can get a mix on each "dig" into the blend.

We use a large marble mortar and pestle to crunch and grind ingredients. You can improvise with a flat bottomed bowl and a wooden potato masher or cookie stamp or even a small rolling pin, you can use a small hammer if you can control how hard you're hitting. I'm not kidding. I've had shards of bowl and resins flying through the air and making quite a mess! If you get to pounding on things you'd better use a wood or plastic bowl. I don't normally recommend that because you will not be able to use them for food afterwards.



Mix in a glass or ceramic bowl and wash thoroughly afterwards. If you use a disposable plastic spoon for mixing you can just chuck it when you're done.

Measuring the ingredients

We measure for these blends using a scale for accuracy. Each "part" below is a ½ oz. If you make larger quantities, just multiply! You can also measure using measuring spoons. Assume that each "part" is a heaping tablespoon and you'll come out about right, or at least in the ballpark.

Storing the blends

Store these airtight. Dark glass containers are the best bet, but freezer-weight Ziplocs® work, as do plastic lid containers. If you decide to store in a plastic container, mark it carefully, since you can't use it for food afterwards and probably won't want to store another blend in that container, either.

Burning these incenses

These incenses are intended to be burned on charcoal discs. This eliminates the problem of molding and drying which is pretty hard to get right on the first try. If you have trouble finding discs in your area, get hold of me. There are a number of suppliers that will sell online, including Azure Green.

Light your disc, outside if possible, using a lighter or candle. You can hold it with tongs, but if you light the disc opposite your fingers you won't scorch yourself. A line of sparks will travel across the disc as it lights. When they're about ½-way, a red spot will appear where the disc was first lighted as the charcoal itself lights. At this point set it in a heat-proof container that won't transfer heat from the bottom to a flammable surface. IOW, the brass incense burners for cones need to be set on a ceramic plate or set in a dish of sand or something. I usually use a 4" bowl with at least 1 inch of

The Tree of Life

By Beast

sand in the bottom and set the disc in the center, or a screen burner with plenty of ash in the bottom set on a plate.

When the sparks have gone all the way across you can sprinkle a bit of incense on the coal. Don't overdo. Most herbal incenses smoke more than you might expect and are *far* more fragrant than commercial cones or sticks. I start with a small quantity, maybe the size of my thumbnail. I usually use a spoon so that I'm not getting my fingers sticky. Souvenir teaspoons are the perfect size. Sprinkle carefully. If it doesn't go on the coal it won't burn. When it stops smoking you can add some more, scraping off what's left on the coal, so you don't get a scorched smell. Depending on the size charcoal discs burn for 45 minutes to 1 1/2 hours.

Recipes

Beltane Incense

This incense was formulated for an outdoor Beltane where the wind was likely to carry away most of the smoke. This was actually sprinkled on the Bael Fires that we had around our Maypole dance area. If you are going to make some for home or indoor use drop the oil amounts down to 4-6 drops each, mix well, and add to charcoal carefully. This was intended to increase the feelings of love and affection in the participants, definitely not lust, in an open-to-the-public ritual!

- 3 parts frankincense tears
- 2 parts sandalwood chips (or powder)
- 1 part dried cinquefoil
- 1 part white, yellow and Peace dried Rose petals
- ¼ dram Jasmine oil (too much for indoor use!)
- ¼ dram Neroli oil (too much for indoor use!)

True love Incense

This incense is a simple one for committed couples or groups. It increases affection, love and lust.

- 1 part cinnamon
- 1 part orris root chip or powder
- 3 drops patchouli essential oil or ½ part patchouli herb

Daniel's Love Blend

I developed this one for my twin in spell use, but we've since found that for male/male it works beautifully, whether in ritual or whatever. It is a love & lust blend.

- 4 parts Dragon's Blood resin
- 2 parts orris root
- 1 part cinnamon chips (or ground)
- 1 part dried red rose petals
- 7 drops Neroli oil
- 2 drops Patchouli oil

Kyaara's Blend

This is rather similar to the Beltane recipe above, but with the "lust" part added back in. This is for female/female use.

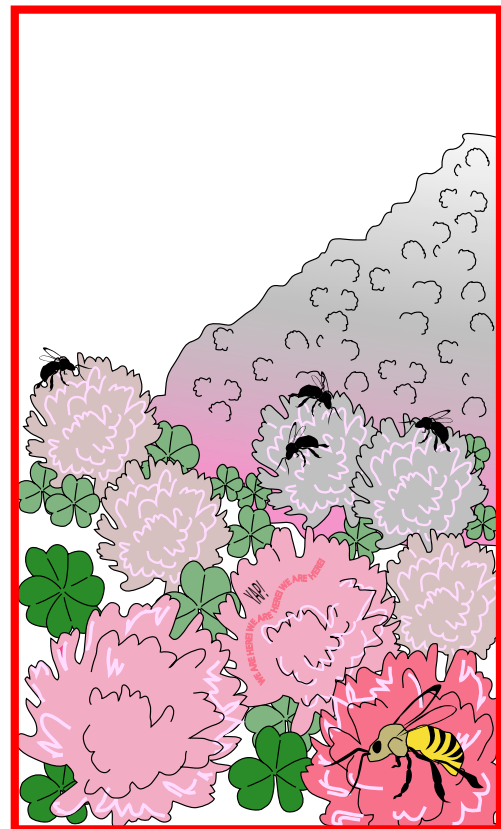
- 3 parts frankincense tears
- 2 parts sandalwood chips (or powder)
- 1 part dried woodruff leaves and flowers
- 1 part dried red rose petals

I was an odd kid (big surprise). I spent a lot of time alone, and like to walk in the "woods" by my house (the woods were actually a wind break of pines that had been planted near where I lived in Mines Park in Golden). One day when I was seven or so, I was walking in my woods when I came to a natural clearing. It was a clear, sunny day in the early Spring. The only sounds were the breeze sighing through the pines and the call of birds. But in the place, the clearing, I heard another sound—a buzzing—I followed the sound and came to a wild plum tree in full bloom.

The buzzing sound came from the hundreds and hundreds of bees that covered it. I approached it cautiously—a little afraid of these stinging insects. But I was fascinated by the sight of this tree, so alive with some kind of wild and alien power. The green energy that had slept all Winter in the roots of this tree now drove upwards and pushed the flowers open. A strange and wonderful scent filled the air—sweet with new life, but also with decay somehow—powdery and musky and apparently irresistible to the bees that ravished its flowers in a frenzy. I stood there and, though I didn't understand it at the time, felt all of the fearsome power of life and death with this wild plum as its focus, somehow.

After a long time contemplating the Tree of Life, I walked home, but something had been touched, awakened in me, some deeper awe had been shaken awake, and it has never gone back to sleep...

Ostara, 2007



If you look close enough, you will find a subtle reminder of the story that says "a person's a person no matter how small."

The Gabby Diaries: The Remodel - Part 2

By Gabby

The past couple of weeks have been, well, let's just say I would rather move and I hate moving! On paper this sounded like an interesting idea, but once the design divas started arriving...well, I'm getting ahead of myself.

The first show that was invited to film was *Tracks in Action*, the model railroad showcase. As much as I love Uncle Phil's train set, we decided to donate it to the model railroad museum in Union Station. My uncle had been featured in several magazines so they were thrilled to have it for their collection. His trains were his passion. The layout was a mountain type setting with a modern city in the valley. The remains of an old mining town were on the outskirts of town. The sleek passenger train and old steam locomotive wound around the tracks in equal contrast. On the first day of filming, I took the controls and showed off Phil's handiwork. Their jaws dropped when I directed the locomotive to the Magic Mine entrance. The train entered the right side portal and in a moment, the passenger train exited out the left side; the locomotive was nowhere to be seen. I pointed to the side of layout where they could see that Phil had built a double deck system and the locomotive was now chugging along in the carved caverns below.

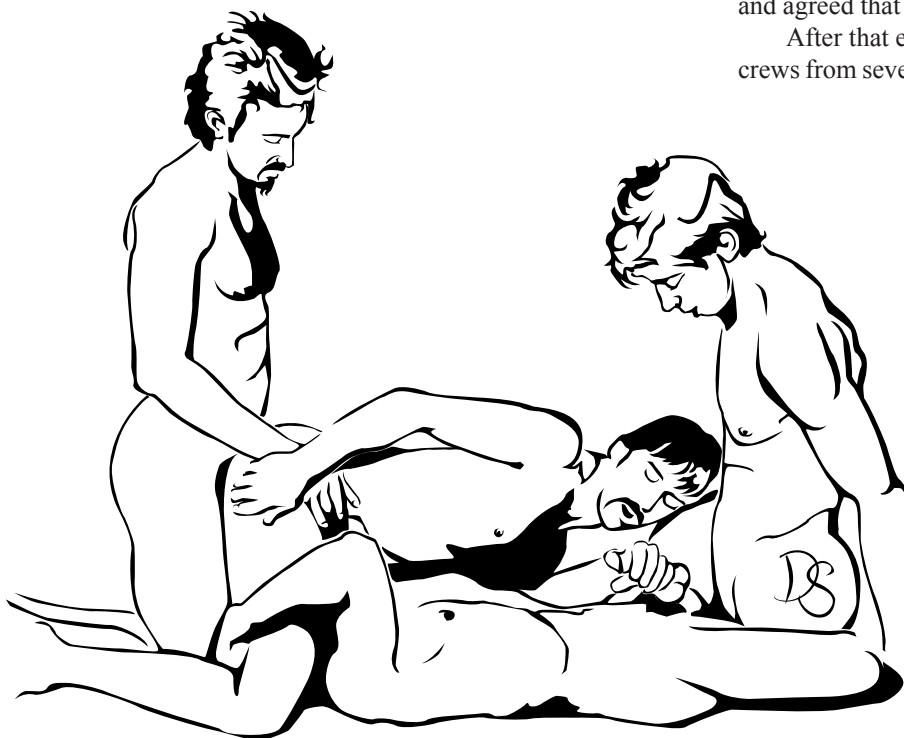
The next day they came in with their miniature cameras mounted on an engine and filmed their train's eye view of the layout. As they watched the monitors, they were amazed at how much detail Phil had put into the buildings and foliage. Cindy, the overall series host, came in and started watching the monitor. It took us wiggling a finger in front of the moving camera to convince her that this wasn't footage of a real train. After that, play time was over and we began to pack up everything. The team estimated that it was going to take a couple of days to dismantle everything to a point where they could carry it out the door. I knew better. Grams insisted that Phil build in such a way that he could get it out of the house if he ever moved. He

built it in modules with simple landscape features that could easily be repaired covering the joints. With the train gone and the room empty, Cindy came in to film the closing comments for that segment and asked what we were going to do with the extra room and I realized that I hadn't thought that far.

When the network announced the filming schedule for the following weeks, I realized that I couldn't keep working. With a heavy heart, I went into the shop to tell Georgeanne the news. When I walked in, I could hear her swearing a blue streak. She must have heard me because she stopped and I heard the phone being hung up. She apologized and I said I never thought I would hear her say something like that to a person. "And you still haven't," she said. She didn't start swearing until after the other person hung up. Instead of telling me what had her upset, she handed me a piece of paper. Our landlord notified her that he had sold the building and our lease was being voided at the end of the month. Demolition was scheduled to begin the following month. I was outraged and started to call Jim for advice. Georgeanne stopped me and said that she thought it was for the best. She said the fun was gone and it was time to move on. She said the days of the ma and pa floral shop were numbered and she had been waiting for the moment to tell me that she had been considering Fleurs4You's offer to buy her out. We reminisced about different customers we had known over the years. Steve buying flowers for his first date only to find out that Dedee was allergic to everything in the bouquet. He bought the same flowers for Janice and they have been together for years. And then there was Mr. Murphy, who would stop in each day to buy Mrs. Murphy a carnation. It was six years before they found out that she had been dead for nearly twenty years. We talked for hours and the phone never interrupted us. Georgeanne looked at me and asked if I realized that none of our stories were about people who had been in the store in the past year. We realized that we didn't have any since most of our business was by phone now. We gave each other a hug and agreed that maybe it was time to close the doors at the shop.

After that emotional day, I came home to a disaster zone. The crews from several of the clean it up or get it out shows had stopped

by to begin deciding how they were going to work together. The plan was that collectively they would help us sort out stuff and host a garage sale. The two teams that sold the most during the sale each got to design one of the new rooms. I opened the door and immediately tripped over a tricycle and some building blocks that had not been in the foyer in the morning. I looked at my once clean home and it looked like a hurricane had blown through. I found the teams with Cindy and Gregg filming a sequence in the "redecorated" family room and called an immediate halt. They insisted that the house look cluttered so that they could get good before and after photos. I pointed out three simple things. First, the house already been filmed several times so people would know that the clutter was fake. Second, there were no children in the household and



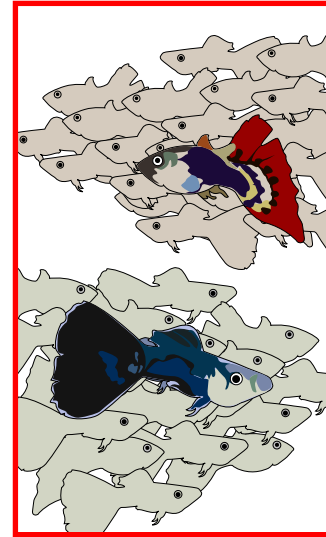
that the last child to spend time in the house was now a college graduate. And third, the executives of the major magazines were going to be there after dinner to start the design competition. When Victorio tried to pull his “I’m the star and I know what’s best” act, I looked him in the eye and asked if he was such a poor designer that he had to start with a trash can in order to make his inadequate designs look good. When Victorio yelled at Gregg to stop filming Cindy cancelled the order. She said that she had tried to tell him but he wouldn’t listen to her. From the look of the rest, they were enjoying Victorio’s discomfort but they had all had a hand in adding to the disaster.

I headed upstairs to change out of my work clothes and get ready for company. I didn’t look back to see what the teams were doing. I had just stepped out of the shower when I heard a tap on the door. Gregg poked his head in and asked if the teams could shove the stuff in the retreat until the morning. I barely had time to respond when I heard Hamlet’s bark and Cindy scream. Gregg flew out and I wrapped the towel around my waist and followed him. Peter was holding Hamlet by his collar, which would be like holding a semi-truck by the bumper if not for Hamlet’s obedience to Peter. Once Hamlet was introduced to the strangers in his home he settled down. As Peter led Hamlet outside, Cindy said, “I knew you had a dog, but I didn’t realize he was so big!” That’s when I realized that Hamlet had been outside or at the clinic each time she had been to the house. Gregg whispered in my ear that my towel had slipped and if I didn’t hurry Cindy was going to be saying the same about me. I grabbed the towel just as it slid from my hips but not before Victorio got an eyeful of my dick. There was a distinct bulge in his silk pants that had not been there before. I turned and headed back upstairs. I noticed Victorio trying to steal a glimpse around the corner so I dropped the towel and gave him another eyeful before heading to my room.

When I returned downstairs, it looked ready to receive guests. Jim and the network decided that the competition was going to feature six teams. I was not to know which designers were on which teams so that I would judge on design, not TV personalities. Each team was going to be represented by the editor of one of the remodeling magazines. The editor would sit with the designers and be involved with the discussions but only they would make the presentation to my clan. This night was when we were going to present the first challenge to them – the master bedroom. The rules for this challenge were to simply present a concept of color, texture and style of their impression of my personal style. They were to look at the things in the house and create a design that would fit the house if this was the only room that was being redecorated.

The next two days were filled with pulling things out of closets and sorting them into the “we use,” “oh, that’s where it went,” and “what is it” piles. Steven of *Use It/Loose It* gave me the best advice when he said, “If you haven’t used it in over a year, why are you keeping it?” Even figuring that we had stuff from Peter’s old house, my old apartment and Gram’s things, I was amazed to find that we had six and seven of the same appliances tucked away and some were in the original boxes. Stacy from *Bountiful Baths* had a good point when she went through the linen closets and tossed out eight generations of old towels and sheets. She said that most people rarely use more than two sets of each on a regular basis and with the upcoming remodel, why would we want to put old towels in a new bathroom or sleep on old sheets?

Victorio was the funniest, but most of it was things that never made it to the camera. He insisted on helping clear out the old clothes in my



closet. He insisted that I try on each and every article of clothing to be sure it still fit. He must have been a valet before going into design because he very efficiently helped me put on and take off the shirts. He would adjust the collars, seeing how tight the sleeves were on my arms and smoothing the shirttail over my ass. As soon as a shirt came off, it was neatly folded and placed in the appropriate pile. When it came time for the pants, I looked at him and asked if I was safe around him and he gulped and said “probably not.” I said that if I was going to drop my pants, then he would have to too. As soon as our pants were off, he opened a condom and put it on my dick. I had barely entered him when Peter walked into the room. Victorio jumped in surprise but Peter just stripped and leaned against the door and jerked off while he watched me fuck the star of *Straight Guys Have Style Too*. We were laying in a sweaty heap when I heard Cindy calling for Victorio. “Honey, where are you? It’s time to go back to the hotel.” He quickly dressed and went out, gave Cindy a kiss and headed downstairs.

The following morning was spent listening to the designers. Each team had fifteen minutes to present their concept. That afternoon while I was upstairs reducing the “keep” pile with the aid of Spencer from *I Need More Room*, the teams did their version of the dictionary game. They voted on the design I was most likely to like and the one I was going to eliminate. They would get cash for their charity with each right vote. Cash that wasn’t won was to be split between the charity of that round’s winner and my charity (The APENIS Foundation – naturally Jim took impish delight in watching Cindy carefully announce that). Mid-afternoon, Spencer and I got into an argument that drew Cindy and several of the others upstairs. I looked at them and asked if a collection is a single thing? They looked puzzled until I said that Spencer told me for everything I kept I had to find two things to get rid of. When I kept my DVD collection, he said that it was really 250 things so I had to get rid of 500 things in order to keep it. Cindy looked at us and said, “A collection IS a collective noun. A collection uses the singular tense of a verb so therefore it must be considered a single unit.”

At dinner, we discussed the designs and were in agreement. Orange Team was by far the worst with their ultra femi-

–continued on page 20

The Gabby Diaries - continued

nine design. Four of the teams had voted for them as best and were shocked by our decision. They all felt that the room was a nice contrast to the masculine tones in the house and would be a nice retreat for when my lady friends came over. They used the skirts in the closet to support that idea. We pulled out those “skirts” and showed them that they were kilts and pointed out that the overdone floral wallpaper and curtains was exactly the kind of thing we were eliminating. The Blue team had received five votes of worst design and was our favorite. It was simple. The other designs had all the fancy gadgets and this was subdued and fit the rules that it was supposed to flow with the rest of the house.

Green team was eliminated on round two when the challenge was the Rec Room. They decided that because we had some football pictures around the house that the room should be like a sports bar. They looked pretty sheepish when Aeric pointed out that we weren't sports buffs but the player in the pictures was a neighbor. The design ideas for the senior retreat were all good and we were stumped on whom to eliminate. Lady Macbeth walked in the room and knocked over the presentation for the Yellow team and that seemed as fair as anything. Red team dropped the ball in round four when they proposed knocking out the main hall walls to open up the main floor into one giant flowing space for the living room, dining room and kitchen. The blueprints provided by Aunt Becky were very specific in stating that those were load bearing walls that supported the upper levels of the house. That left us with Blue and Purple for the final round. I'll tell you about that next time.

Meanwhile the house clean out kicked into high gear. The gang from *Auction Action* went through all the items we set aside for sale or donation to see if they could find things that were better suited for an on-line auction than a garage sale. They pulled out obvious things such as Gram's stamp collection and most of Phil's comic collection. They were shocked that I would consider getting rid of the vase that Grams's sister had given her one year. It was a hideous

thing that featured the see/hear/speak no evil monkeys where the tails of two of them formed the handles. The family story was that Great Aunt Gertrude found it at a church garage sale and insisted that her sister just had to have it. Grams got so tired of her sister asking where it was when she came to visit that she put it on the top of the china cabinet and left it there to collect dust. Maria, the ceramics expert on the show told us that the last piece they auctioned by this artist fetched a five figure price. When asked what Grams would have thought of that, without hesitation I said, “She would have said there's no accounting for some people's taste.” They hauled off the “good stuff” and planned to donate the money from the auction to the Cancer League that Grams used to support via bridge tournament fund-raisers.

We took the “keep” things to storage and braced ourselves for the massive garage sale. The morning of the sale, the BABs and faeries came over to help haul stuff out to the yard. We had set up ropes around the yard the night before, which was a good thing since people had already starting camping in order to be the first in line to buy from the television celebrities. Victorio didn't do too well in the selling department. He spent most of the day flirting with the ladies. At one point Cindy caught me watching her watching him. She nodded his way and in a conspiratory tone told me that was why he is never left alone with female homeowners. She had to accept some of his sexual activity but told him that if he got another girl pregnant, he was going to need a divorce lawyer. She said that she was thankful when he worked on with a male homeowner because she knew he would never try any funny stuff.

Spencer came out on top in the day's sales and laid claim to decorating the office. Noel from *Cramped Quarters* surprised me when she chose the Christmas room. She said she was born on Christmas day and was eager to see what treasures she would find in the collection.

At the end of the sale, I wandered back into the house and it struck me how empty it felt. Almost all the furniture was gone. The walls were bare. My steps echoed on the tiles. I looked back into the living room and I realized that Grams and Phil were really gone. I looked at the kitchen and knew that with the remodeled space it was going to be hard to call up that vision of Grams in her pink checkered apron standing at the avocado green stove. Grams was gone and soon that avocado green was going to be gone too. The more I thought about it, the more I got choked up. Peter came in and said “Let it out. I'm not going anywhere.” Just like the day we first met, his embrace unlocked the tears that I had been holding back. Jim and Aeric soon joined us as did Jack, Gil and Twinkle who were still there helping. Gregg struggled between wanting to join us and his duty as the cameraman responsible for capturing the human moments. Cindy took control and grabbed the camera and handed it to her husband and pulled Gregg into the group hug.

Once the tears stopped, Jim slithered out of the mass and pulled a couple of champagne bottles out of the fridge. He offered a toast to all the memories that had been lived in the house. I offered a toast to all the memories yet to come.

Stay tuned for next issue when Cubby hosts a stud party!

