

THE ASH TREE

I am what ye think me to be
I am what ye consider of thyself.
I am myself and thou as thou art
And will be.....time come.
I am Robin, and more of that, with less.
I am that without form
And that without force, Yet form and force I be.

I am the loved and beloved
I am the lover and his mate
I am the whole and the part.
I am compassion healing pain
I am diamond cutting stone hearts.
I am a mirror without reflection.
I am the well without water,
From which all must drink.
I am words, love and words
Yea! but never speak.

I am pain, grief, sorrow and tears,
The rack, the noose, the stake.
The flayer and the flayed.
The hunter and the hunted
I am the head without a body
I am the body without a head
Yea! All this and still I am whole.

I am night and sleepless fear
I am fear.
Thou must conquer me to release thy soul.
I am peace, compassion now if ye understand
I am turned about, then turned again
Three times three, times 13 I turn
Then still more, and more
For the hare escape me not.
I am the dead, the living dead, the dead that talk
I am the born, the unborn, the completed cycle.
I am a root, a leaf, a tree

I grow upon memory of past, present and future.
All things are mould for me.
My top rests in eternity, I am the breast of infant suckling [Fate?]
My loves kind embrace
Constant, ever demanding
Yet I be fickle withal
For all knows me and have laid upon my breasts
Yet few have had me and they are dead.
Secret I be, secret am, secret for evermore.

Yea, but a plated host marcheth at my skirt
For I am mighty as the berserkers knew me
My nostrils are full of the scent of blood.
For the dead are heaped to honour my rage.
I am weak as woman knows me.
In that is the fullness of my strength
I am desire,
I am love.
I am the first created the first of all Sin.
Behold I am She!

--- written after a meeting in 1963 by Roy Bowers)

THE FAITH OF THE WISE

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It is said by various "authorities" that the Faith of the Wise, when they do believe in its existence, is a simple matter: a pre-Christian religion based upon whatever Gods and Goddesses are the current vogue--full of simple, hearty peasants doing simple, hearty peasant-like things ... things that in some cases complex, nervous sophisticates also enjoy doing in urban parlours. Consequently we have an interesting phenomenon: civilised sophisticates running round behaving like simple peasants--and simple peasants who have never heard of such things! It is also maintained by the same "authorities" that we follow a belief which, as one dear old fellow put it, is headed by a deity "Who is the sweetest woman, everyone loves her." To quote someone else who is just a student of the Craft, "Witchcraft is about rituals," which I suppose to be true, if one cares to accept the definition as witchcraft.

All this worries me somewhat--since I am not a peasant and neither am I particularly interested in being led by a sweet woman, and ritual to me is merely a means to an end. So what is the Faith all about? Admittedly I can only speak for myself, and what I write here are my own opinions, but here goes.

Unfortunately for authorities, students and "mere seekers after truth," the Faith is not about anything that has been written above. The Faith is finally concerned with Truth, total Truth. It is one of the oldest of religions, and also one of the most potent, bringing as it does, Man into contact with Gods, and Man into contact with Self. As such the Faith is a way of life different and distinct from any theory promulgated by the authorities or historians. Within the disciplines of the Faith, man may offer devotion to the Gods, and receive certain knowledge of Their existence by participation in something of the perfected Nature of Godhead, recalling that both within and without which is most true. The Faith is a belief concerned with the inner nature of devotion, and finally with the nature of mysticism and mystical experience. It has, in common with all great religions, an inner experience that is greater than the exterior world. It is a discipline that creates from the world an enriched inward vision. It can and does embrace the totality of human experience from birth to death, then beyond. It creates within the human spirit a light that brightens all darkness, and which can never again be extinguished. It is never fully forgotten and never fully remembered. The True Faith is the life of the follower, without it he is nothing, with it he has contained something of all creation.

All mystical thought is based upon one major premise: the realisation of truth as opposed to illusion. The student of the 'mysteries' is essentially a searcher after truth, or as the ancient traditions described it, "Wisdom". Magic is only a by-product of the search for truth, and holds an inferior position to truth. Magic, that is the development of total will, is a product of the Soul in its search for ultimate knowledge. It is an afterthought upon a much larger issue, the ability to use a force that has been perceived while searching for a more important aim within the self. No genuine esoteric truth can be written down or put within an intellectual framework of thought. The truths involved are to be participated in during comprehension of the soul. Truth of this degree is not subject to empirical thought and is

only apparent to the eye of the beholder, and to those who have followed a similar path of perception. Throughout the history of humanity there have been myths, schools of wisdom and teachers who have shown a way to attain a working knowledge of esoteric thought and philosophy by using inference rather than direct method to teach the approaches to cosmic truth. The secrecy of these Masters has nothing to do with protecting the Mysteries, since all that can be said about the Mysteries has already been written into folklore, myth and legend. What is not forthcoming is the explanation. It was recognised that these legends, rituals and myths were the roads through many layers of consciousness to the area of the mind where the soul can exist in its totality. These and their surrounding disciplines and teachings became what the West describes as the Mysteries. The Mysteries are, in essence, means by which man may perceive his own inherent divinity.

Force requires form at this level of being, therefore ritual exists to contain that force. Godhead demands worship, therefore ritual exists to give and formulate that worship. Man needs help, therefore ritual is designed to give that help. It is possible to comprehend Godhead or Force without ritual, since the First Principle of Godhead is present at all levels and in all things at all times--but total perception is not present in humanity all the time. Therefore ritual basically becomes a matter of increasing perception until something of Godhead 's finally revealed, and that which is within and without is partially understood: comprehended in the physical person of the participant until it-becomes one with his total being. The forces comprehended are part of the living person, incorporated into everyday life as part of a spiritual, mental and physical discipline that returns the devotee again and again to the original Source.

Devotion requires proof. Therefore that proof exists within the disciplines of the Faith. The nature of proof cannot be explained, since force can only be shown by inference and by participation, not by intellectual reasoning. The nature of the proof falls into many forms, but amongst the most common are these:

- (a) POETIC VISION, in which the participant has inward access to dream images and symbols. This is the result of the unconscious being stimulated by various means. Images are taught as part of a tradition, and also exist.(as Jung speculated) upon their own levels. They are, when interpreted properly, means by which a lesser part of truth may be understood.
- (b) THE VISION OF MEMORY, in which the devotee not only remembers past existence but also, at times, a past perfection.
- (c) MAGICAL VISION, in which the participant undertakes by inference part of a Triad of service, and therefore contacts certain levels.*
- (d) RELIGIOUS VISION, in which the worshipper is allowed admission to the True Godhead for a short time. This is a part of true initiation, and the results of devotion towards a mystical aim.
- (e) MYSTICAL VISION, in which the servant enters into divine union with the Godhead. This state has no form, being a point where force alone is present.

These are proofs, since having enjoined with such forces, there cannot afterwards be any doubts as to the nature of the experience. Man suffers from doubt at all times, but to the participant in such experience, the doubt centres around the reality of the external world, not the inner. The reality of such experience illuminates the whole life.

Therefore it can be shown that the Faith is a complex philosophy, dealing finally with the nature of Truth, Experience and Devotion. It requires discipline and work; plus utter and complete devotion to the common aim.

It can only be fulfilled by service, some labours taking many years to complete. The Faith tolerates no nonsense, and those who would come to it, must come empty-handed saying "I know nothing, I seek everything," since within the structure of the Faith, all things may be contained and are contained. It has survived, in secrecy and silence, the attacks of persecution, indifference and misrepresentation. It is secret because those only who are best suited may enter the awful silences of the Places of the Gods. It is silent because in silence there is strength, protection and a future. It is also silent today, because as the Greeks said "Those whom the Gods would destroy, they first make mad." It is nearly impossible to enter unless the supplicant shows unmistakable signs of past memory and a genuine mystical drive, and is willing to undertake tests that will force him finally to disclose that matter which is most secret to himself. The Faith has no secrets in the sense that there are formulas which can be readily understood and taught. It is finally and utterly the True Faith., standing immovable beyond space, time and all human matters. Therefore it can be shown that the Faith is a complex philosophy, dealing finally with the nature of Truth, Experience and Devotion. It requires discipline and work; plus utter and complete devotion to the common aim.

*Being requested by the Editor to clarify this statement I ask the interested reader to examine the Hebrew letters IHV as they would be in their original and matriarchal form, which will explain something of the basic nature of magical rite and ritual. It should be as clear as the Roebuck in the Thicket now

On cords

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Mrs. Basford has raised an interesting point about the real purpose of cords, harvest twine, string dolls, etc. They appear to have originated from the woven strands of Old Fate, the major deity of all true witches. They are, of course, the origin of such descriptive terms as "spellbinders." When worked up properly they should contain many different parts--herbs, feathers and impedimenta of the particular charm. They are generally referred to in the trade as "ladders," or in some cases as "garlands," and have much the same meaning as the three crosses. That is they can contain three blessings, three curses, or three wishes. A witch also possesses a devotional ladder, by which she may climb to meditational heights, knotted to similar pattern as the Catholic rosary.

The Celtic practice of binding the dead, used now as a devotional aid by some modern groups, was originally an indication that the dead person had undergone the necessary stages and purification towards the final judgement and redemption. The actual pattern of the knot was considered to be the important thing; the pattern formed by the lines of the binding being a symbol of secondary importance.

Alexander the Great, by cutting the Gordian knot, announced to all and sundry that he was going to cut his own fate with the edge of a sword. It was the action of a truly brave man, since the knot was bound upon the yoke of the Twin Bulls, the Masters over Life and Death. It may be that when he later built a temple to Nemesis he was attempting to buy off the terrible fate of his former action.

The art of binding is to be seen in one of its best forms in the old craft of thatching. The pegs and binders are traditionally put into a crossed shape, held by a final structure over the roof trees that also has a very close connection with Witchcraft.

The so-called "sacred object" held in such reverence by some witches was in fact a weaver's distaff--and could easily be mistaken for a phallic symbol. The weaver's distaff, bound with reeds or straw, appears frequently in rural carvings and elsewhere. It again has reference to the Craft and supreme Deity. It would appear that the witches were not in the least influenced by Freudian concepts.

There is good reason to assume that the nursery game of snakes and ladders originated in a much older pastime connected with binding. One aspect of the snake is that of the Tempter or Destroyer, and the game remains as a lesson upon life: one either ascends by the aid of the ladder, or descends via the snake. The action of the game is still dependent upon the throw of a black and white cube (dice)--a symbol of Fate from ancient times.

Basically the cords of binding, as used today, are worked upon with mistaken enthusiasm. Originally they were cords of Fate, woven and bound into a charm for a defined purpose. Sometimes shaped into a semblance of the object or person to be influenced, they were also hung on a gatepost or nailed near to the object or person, preferably in a public place, as an indication of intent. In an Italian spell, the ladder is

actually placed in the bed of the person to be enchanted. A beautiful witch ladder, incidentally, was once found in a church belfry: presumably one of the Old Craft could not sleep late on Sunday mornings because of the racket of the bells!

"Cat's cradle" as a game is interesting enough but as a form of witchery it becomes an interesting indication of the complex nature of the Craft. Each of the fingers on the hands of a witch has a defined meaning and purpose. It would be reasonable to assume that, to the knowing eye, the crosses and planes formed by the strings would tell much of a particular ritual.

The craft today

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Witchcraft, according to those who are modern witches, is the Craft of the Wise. A simple pagan belief, full of old traditions which are appealing, simple virtues, and--if we are to believe their detractors--some ancient vices. According to further information it is a traditional religion based upon an exceedingly simplified concept of the works of Nature. It is by inference from their rituals as reported, an attempt to bribe Nature by various actions and beliefs into a malleable state, so that Nature will function according to the needs of the coven, and what the coven believes to be good for society in general, rather than Nature carrying on in her own sweet way. If we are to believe various interviews carried out by television and newspapers, this has an effect not upon Nature but upon the witch, since there is a report of a witch who claimed that she believed the sun would not rise again if she did not undertake her rituals.

The interesting facet to be gained from such blazes of publicity is that it would appear the Craft has rapidly become an escape hatch for all those who wish to return to a more simple form of life and escape from the ever-increasing burden of contemporary society. In many cases the Craft has become a funkhole, in which those who have not been successful in solving various personal problems hide, while the storm of technology, H- bombs, and all the other goodies of civilization pass by harmlessly overhead.

Modern Witchcraft could be described as an attempt by twentieth-century man to deny the responsibilities of the twentieth century. It is a secure and naive belief that Nature is always good and kind. It is also a belief, or so it would appear, that if you personally can go backwards in the evolution of thought, then perhaps the rest of the world might follow suit. Good enough, the Craft is all things to all men, if it is a simple pantheistic belief to those who think it so, so it has become, since the Mysteries were evolved for all men, and Man was evolved for the Mysteries. Which of necessity leads one to ask what the Mysteries are.

All mystical thought is based upon one major premise: the realisation of truth as opposed to illusion. The student of the 'mysteries' is essentially a searcher after truth, or as the ancient traditions described it, "Wisdom". Magic is only a by- product of the search for truth, and holds an inferior position to truth. Magic, that is the development of total will, is a product of the Soul in its search for ultimate knowledge. It is an afterthought upon a much larger issue, the ability to use a force that has been perceived while searching for a more important aim within the self. No genuine esoteric truth can be written down or put within an intellectual framework of thought. The truths involved are to be participated in during comprehension of the soul. Truth of this degree is not subject to empirical thought and is only apparent to the eye of the beholder, and to those who have followed a similar path of perception. Throughout the history of humanity there have been myths, schools of wisdom and teachers who have shown a way to attain a working knowledge of esoteric thought and philosophy by using inference rather than direct method to teach the approaches to cosmic truth. The secrecy of these Masters has nothing to do with protecting the Mysteries, since all that can be said about the Mysteries has already been written into folklore, myth and legend. What is not forthcoming is the explanation. It was recognised that these legends, rituals and myths were the roads through many layers of consciousness to the area of the

mind where the soul can exist in its totality. These and their surrounding disciplines and teachings became what the West describes as the Mysteries. The Mysteries are, in essence, means by which man may perceive his own inherent divinity.

During the persecution the adherents of the Mystery system went underground and joined forces with the aboriginal beliefs of the mass, and so became part of traditional Witchcraft. Centuries passed and the meaning behind much ritual was forgotten, or relegated to a superstitious observance to elemental Nature. Much of the old ritual that has survived became ossified and repeated by rote, rather than by understanding. Consequently it has become static and remote from its original purpose, which was to enlighten the follower spiritually. In what generally passes as Witchcraft today there is as much illusion and unresolved desire as there is in the outside world. In the closed circles of some covens there is greater bigotry and dogma than there is in many sections of the moribund Christian church. Many witches appear to have turned their backs upon the reality of the outside world and have been content to follow, parrot-fashion, rituals and beliefs that they know have little or no relationship with the twentieth century and its needs. There has been no cause for a fertility religion in Europe since the advent of the coultershare plough in the thirteenth century, the discovery of haymaking, selective breeding of animals, etc. To claim, as some witches do, that there is a greater need in the world for fertility of mind than before is understating general facts, since Western Europe morally and socially has advanced more without the Old Craft and its attendant superstitions than it ever did with them.

The value of the Old Craft today is that in it lie the seeds of the Old Mystery tradition. Through this the witch may perceive the beginnings of that ultimate in wisdom, knowledge of themselves and of their motives. The genuine Mysteries are open to all, because anyone having experience enough can understand that basic Message. To close the human mind in order to protect it from outside circumstances that are hostile, is not a way to discover that within oneself which is most profound, but a return to a claustrophobic mother who will eventually smother the child. If, as is claimed, the Gods are kind and They are all things, then why does the twentieth century witch run so rapidly away from them in the practice of the "age old Craft"? In fossilised superstitious tradition there are profound secrets hidden, secrets folded within the most mediocre belief and action. These great secrets, secrets of the soul and of destiny, are only apparent in the open light, not in the illusionary world of Ye Olde English Wiccen. If the witches are to survive then the religion must undergo some violent and radical changes. Changes that will open the ritual for examination, so that the spiritual content may be clearly seen. Changes that must kick over many sacred cows to see whether these old cows still give milk.

The inherent philosophy of the Craft was always fluid, and fluid it must become again before it gasps its last breath under a heap of musty nonsense, half-baked theology and philosophy. Witches cannot retreat from the world any longer, there is no room for us in this society unless we have something valid to offer it, and participate in its social evolution.

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A Witch's esbat

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This article deals with an actual witch meeting and is a combination of fiction and fact since the full ritual cannot be described, but basically the forms used are correct for the witches of Warwickshire. Also there is no overstatement of phenomena, the writer has tried to describe accurately the actual feeling of working this type of ritual, which is not that type usually presented to the public as witchcraft yet is nonetheless of a pattern practiced by certain families for many centuries.

IT IS COLD, the damp grass steaming mist upwards to the moon as we walk across the fields to the caves. Across the hills, somewhere towards the west, a dog fox barks defiance at we intruders of the night world. In the silent world of Hecate, a billion insects spin their small webs of destiny. We feel like invaders from a more brilliant age, treading carefully, threading our way in silence past the still hedge rows. The cauldron in Peter's haversack rings faintly as one of the knives strike against it. He stops and shifts the weight slightly, then points upwards towards the looming hill. The wind clatters a few leaves upon the trees as we begin the ascent to the caves. Seven of us, six men, one woman, feet slipping upon grass that feels slimy with night dew and unmentionable insects, sinking in the sodden ground under our own weight. Down below in the valley, the representatives of the twentieth century shoot along dark roads, headlights slicing the night for a brief minute, then vanishing with a flutter of mechanical life. Standing bleakly against the moonlight we can see the tumbled rocks that hide the caves. Our lead man stops then turns round and comes to us. "Be careful here, the hillside falls away pretty rapidly". His face is anonymous in the moonlight. Joan reaches out and takes my hand, and we walk forward carefully in the gloom. Gusts of wind buffet us, a sensation of space to our left side grows more definite; then we are out of the wind and into the lee of the rocks. Arthur, the lead man, seems to vanish suddenly from sight in a flurry of white torch light, then his voice comes from beneath the ground muffled and faint. "It's all right, come on down". One by one my companions slide through the entrance of the cave, slipping on the wet chalk. Joan sits down prettily upon her heels and follows them, still holding my hand to give balance to her impetus. I slide down after her and into the cave. We straighten ourselves out and stand up, torches on for the first time in the hour long walk, the light gleams from the wet sides of the caves reflecting into the lime water pools on the floor. Out of the wind and underground the silence is suddenly oppressive, then everybody begins to talk at once, unloading themselves from the tension of the walk and the fear of discovery.

I shrug the haversack from my shoulders and note with some disgust that it has become covered with wet chalk. Opening it I search for my compass, looking at it carefully until I find true north. The rest begin to pull out the equipment from their haversacks, throwing firewood over to me as they find it. I begin to build a fire, soaking it with paraffin bought specially for this purpose. The caves suddenly become alive and friendly as the yellow flames soar to the roof, a million drops of water reflecting the light like a million individual diamonds. Piling more wood upon the fire I stand back and the flames descend to eat the fresh fuel. Smoke coils around the roof and the boys put out the torches. We stand around the fire warming ourselves and begin to undress. "Dig the circle out," Joan says to Blackie.

He is in the process of removing his trousers, and stands stork-like upon one leg as he considers what she has just said. "Right, as soon as I'm changed." He hurries to stretch and moves nearer to the fire as he puts on the garb of the witch, and wraps the cloak about him. He goes to the center of the cave and begins to cut the circle out with his knife. The others all go about their appointed tasks in silence. Joan and I search out the implements from the haversack, fitting them together and wiping them carefully, laying them upon the ledge that acts as a serving table. John and Peter fit the banner together, facing the mystical symbols inwards at the four quarters of the compass, throwing up the chalk as they thrust them into the wet earth. Blackie straightens up, his face dark with the effort of digging. "What do we say if we're caught?" he asks generally.

"That we're bloody archaeologists of course", John answers. Blackie laughs then bends down and continues digging. We work steadily creating *Caer Ochlen* in the cave until at last everything is ready. The graal and cup reflect with silver the red flame of the fire. I build up the tripod and hang the cauldron. It swings gently in the heat. Joan brings over the wine in a thermos flask and pours it into the cauldron. Fragrant steam rises as the cold wine meets the hot brass base of the pot. "Smells nice, mum, what's for dinner?" Peter asks, smiling at his own humour. Joan laughs as she ties the girdle around her waist and arranges her shift, placing the seven knots carefully. We are all dressed now in our black garb, adjusting our cloaks as we stand now in humility and poverty; the beginnings of all magical power. Some more work, then I take up the skull and thrust the sword through it, tying the skull carefully to the carved hilt. Holding it aloft I go to the centre of the compass and thrust the blade deep into the earth. It is time to begin. Joan casts grains of incense into the fire, then blesses herself, first her left ear, then her left eye, up to forehead, then down to right eye and ear. She turns, outlined by the flames, touches her mouth, then her right breast, then finally her left ankle. We have grouped ourselves into a crescent about her, following the blessing, each action accompanied by buttered prayer to God. The old words reach out into the shadows of the caves, and echo faintly to the basso profundo of six male voices, with Joan's voice threading in between. The fire leaps up, and Joan reaches forward taking the graal from me. Holding it aloft she presents it to heaven and the moon, the herbs and apples floating gently upon the water, the darkness of the cave seems to surround it. I begin the words of the great chant, and the silence of the night suddenly breaks into life. Joan lowers the graal and breathes across it, then empties its contents into the cauldron. We stand up and walk towards it, still in a crescent, our hoods thrown back, and follow her as she begins the weaving dance of a maze in front of the boiling pot. Then the pattern changes and we dance around the fire. We stop, and she dips into the pot with the ladle and passes it from one to another, as we eat of the fruits of life. Whirling the ladle furiously Joan alone paces round three times more then plunges it back into the pot. We draw our knives and thrust them into the earth, then dance furiously around the fire once more. I, leading, dance off until we all surround the circle. The summoner, who is last, takes the cauldron off the fire and pours its contents into the ditch which surrounds the circle. Steam rises around us and the red liquid floods through and forms a completed circuit, washing the ash aside, swirling round the willow and rowan twigs. I step forward over the ditch and stand in front of the sword and skull. Raising my left hand I run the signs through with my fingers, then quickly go through the traditional gestures that mean so much to a witch, hands slapping upon my legs and body miming the old legends. The rest follow suit. Joan casts the cake upon the ground just by the door of the circle and at last we all step over the barrier which divides the quick from the dead.

"UEIOA", five fingers held high. UEIOA", slap upon the left thigh then forward with the wild horses and through the silver ring. We began to pace the compass round holding the ring in the air, then finally lowering it upon the skull. Turning, we place our staffs upon the ground fashioning the pattern of the ritual and begin to tread the mill. Round and round in absolute silence, fingers following the pattern that the seven knots make in the cord. Willing, thinking, concentrating upon our work, the hoods of our cloaks down over our eyes, thinking, willing, visualizing the image of virtue shifting from one part of our bodies to the other, the sensations of changing like colours upon our minds eye. In the brief glimpses we get when our concentration lowers in its intensity the cave seems to be spinning around us, then back to the darkness of our hoods and our compressed wills. The smoke thickens as the fire lowers...and we all seem to have some difficulty in breathing, almost choking in the turgid atmosphere. Then suddenly it is like breathing pure ice, cold clear. The virtue has been transmuted. Immediately following this sensation a cold wind seems to whip around our ankles tearing off the physical power of the flesh. Fear suddenly descends like a clammy blanket and everyone receives the impression that we are being watched; it is the gathering of the force we are invoking. The sensation of fear deepens until we need every bit of our will to stop ourselves from running away. Knocks and taps seem to come from everywhere in the cave, and I give a start, coming back to complete consciousness for a brief second, then catching myself return back to the dark path of the will. I am no longer walking the floor of the cave, but treading on air. My body is in many different places at once, an incredible sense of disorientation fills me and I am no longer conscious of my body. Darkness rolls in upon my consciousness and I float in a void around the circle, my body stumbling mechanically on and on.

I become aware of everyone else in the clan as if they were in me. I can feel them all. A strong feeling that someone is standing where the skull is impinges my mind. Immediately we begin to thrust our will towards it probing, questioning, a sensation of the stranger increases immensely. We know who he is. My heart gives a bound of fear and joy together. We intensify our will until it is like a bridge of iron, our total concentration is upon him. We can actually see green lights flashing on and off around the skull. "Master, Master" I can feel the group calling him. Blue slight twists and spirals in the centre. We work harder and harder still, our minds hurting with the intense effort. The light coalesces into the shape of a man, cloaked like ourselves. Wave after throbbing wave of power pulsates us. A feeling of exhilaration erases our tiredness, he exudes strength and wisdom. We greet him.

We come to ourselves again back in the dank cave, the fire almost out. Pins and needles stab at our limbs, we feel very tired, we stop pacing, the air of the cave flat in our mouths. Joan offers a prayer of thanks, and we break up the compass, returning everything to where it was. It is all over now, we sit listlessly for a short while getting warmth from the dying fire, for we are both cold and tired, our minds numbed. Blackie throws more wood upon the fire, tending it, blowing upon it until the fresh fuel catches and throws a cheerful warmth upon everything. We look for food and drink in the haversacks and begin the feast. Gradually we feel refreshed, then full of energy. Talk rises with the smoke, there is a lot of laughter, and we stretch our limbs luxuriously in front of the glowing coals. Six men, one woman, all devoted to each other, and above everything else, to our Gods. The conversation increases, various things are discussed. How to do this...how to do that...women, how to get them in, but they have no interest in witchcraft today...the group remains unbalanced, no women, no balance. We talk and eat, then finally clearing up, begin our journey home. Tired yet refreshed, dirty from the caves, but pure in heart. We walk across the fields

shivering in the dawn air, back to the cars. A policeman steps forward out of the shadows. Excuse me...parking...dangerous place...what have you in the haversacks? We empty them and explain. You can see by the expression of disgust and horror what he thinks. Questions and still more questions, misunderstandings, always misunderstandings. Gods, the things we poor witches suffer