

Athena, Arcadian Awakening
By: Olivia Robertson

CHAPTER 7: EIRE

ALCHEMICAL RITE

PART ONE: THE NARRATION

"MAGIC FINDS YOU UNEXPECTEDLY."

HOSTESS IN EIRE IS KAREN ETAIN. SCENE IS IN A FLAT IN A HOUSING ESTATE OUTSIDE DUBLIN. VISITANTS: PATH GUIDE: AIDEN, PRIEST OF ALCHEMY. HELPER: ELAINE, PRIESTESS OF ALCHEMY. DEIRDRE OF THE VISIONS, ORACLE.

KAREN: I call upon you, as like so many of my generation in this country I have reached the crossroads. I am caught by a longing for the unseen world of Faery, and my unbelief in all superstitions, whether religious or occult. Help me to find my way. We are of Eire, Land of Destiny – Inis Faile. We have lost our ancient past, and are shipwrecked in the present; with no more faith we have no future.

ELAINE: You are not alone in this mad world! Many people seeing the earth crumbling under them; doubt the reality of any heaven. Some young people in many countries are taking their own lives – even school-children. Parents move heaven and earth to protect them from abuse, yet do not believe in heaven or hell. Only the Goddess can help us, if we believe She exists! In this extremity let us invoke the Oracle. To us who love Her, She holds the Stone of Destiny.

AIDEN (*LIFTS UP HIS DRUIDIC STAFF*): I invoke the Great Queen of Eire, The Morrigan, who with Her Divine Consort the Dagda Mor presides over Time.

DEIRDRE IS IN TRANCE AND SPEAKS:

ORACLE OF THE MORRIGAN

You who call upon me are for the most part prisoners in passing time. I watch you with the love of a mother as you start your lives with the sacred Light shining within you. This may be seen by visionaries as a flame over a child's head. A baby is still in touch with the Eternal Land from which all come. Time is a beautiful pattern of rivers reaching the boundless ocean of space with its myriads of stars. But as a child grows older, those around it try to bring it to their own limited way of being, which is a timeline between life and death. So the child, in order to conform and please others, loses essential being, a link with the world beyond.

Radiation from brighter realms can bring fear and hostility from those who have lost this golden key. This was the way of Neanderthal man and many other primitive races. They still exist and have their honoured place as do all, as children of the Mothers, species who have the courage to have physical experiences.

For Homo Sapiens, the time is now when a new race is coming into being. This new humanity will be more heart-centred and have spiritual vision. It is for women to calm men's fear, for women usually long for this coming. No people can endure alien or foreign occupation, however well-meaning! But children are accepted. No man can resist the smile of his own baby!

ELAINE: We give thanks for this inspiring Oracle. Karen, does this help you? Tell us what you feel.

THE NARRATION

KAREN: It doesn't help me one bit. Alternative book shops are full of this sort of stuff. And I adore it but don't believe a word. I suppose it's part of my background. My father is a Protestant and a very clever surgeon. My mother is a very efficient nurse – they met in a hospital in Dublin, and she is also a very strict Catholic. I was baptised a Catholic. But my father said it was brain-washing! My mother had a Lourdes grotto in the garden, while my father had a large photograph of Charles Darwin in his study. The only sacraments they shared were Easter Day dinner with chocolate eggs for my sake, and a Christmas Dinner with turkey. I was an only child so they both wanted me to take after them. My father thought "Karen" as my first name was sufficiently secular – my mother liked the Romantic "Etain" from "The Immortal Hour", though she wished there was a Saint Etain. That I might fulfil the role was her secret dream.

No-one can say I didn't try to please. At first I liked the way of my mother. I read an anthology of Yeats' poetry. I avidly read about the doings of Women of the Golden Dawn, and for a while in my early teens grew my hair long, and assumed a languorous dreamy expression – though really I was as psychic as an old boot! I did various courses on spiritual development from Arizona – nothing happened. It got rather expensive.

The crisis came when I had to have an operation to remove a melanoma, because I had been lying for hours in the sun, pretending I was in California, and one of my courses recommended the life-giving rays of the sun that healed all ills. Luckily I had avoided hallucinogenic substances of Akhenaton's Sun, the Aten. I have a Celtic skin and just got freckles.

So I decided to follow the Path of Practical Science. I took my father's advice and studied medicine. With his help I am now a qualified, first year Doctor. At first it was wonderful. I was Daddy's girl. He preferred my company to that of my mother's. He brought me all round Dublin, introducing me as "My only daughter – a medical student." I got a whole new lot of boyfriends. Before I had been taken out by idealists, pacifists like myself, and avid fans of various groups. But I never got deeply involved because I was not attracted by the physical world – in any aspect. Anyway, drugs just made me sick and I prefer classical music.

Both worlds offered to me by my parents were lacking in substance. We had no apparitions of the Blessed Virgin in housing estates; there was not a miracle in sight. My mother was not happy. She did her duty and obeyed the rules, her marriage and our home were extremely clean and proper, but there was no joy nor laughter. My father would hide in his study, reading abstruse scientific works. And neither could fight the most terrible enemy of all: death.

They tried. But I saw through my mother's faith in the next world, because of her excessive fear of illness and horror when her friends died. My father had no belief in an afterlife. Or so he said. But I felt his insistence on the unreality of a soul separate from a body came from some sort of hidden fear, kept at bay by denial.

They say I have a good career ahead of me. The future of Ireland, once land of saints and scholars, is now to cater for useful doctors and nurses. But I feel I did have a soul once, but now it is starved. Can your Fellowship, your imaginary Goddesses help me? Have I a soul?

DEIRDRE: I am receiving a message from the Morrigan Herself: "We can only help you if you help yourself."

PART TWO: ALCHEMICAL RITE

TIR NA NOG, LAND OF YOUTH.

"ECSTASY COMES WITH SURRENDER OF FALSE SELF."

IN THE HIDDEN SHRINE OF THE TUATHA DE DANANN

ELAINE: In this apartment in the Land of Destiny let us create a hidden shrine of the Tuatha De Danann who dwell in eternal realms, invisible to our mortal eyes.

SACRED PAINTED TAPESTRIES ARE PLACED IN THE FOUR QUARTERS, AND INCENSE AND CANDLES ARE LIGHTED. ALL ARE ANOINTED BY ELAINE ON THE BROW WITH WATER FROM THE SACRED WELL OF THE GODDESS BRIGID. DANA AND THE MORRIGAN ARE ALSO INVOKED, WITH THEIR SACRED GODS, MANANNAN MAC LIR, LUGH OF THE LONG WHITE ARM OF LIGHT AND THE DAGDA MOR, DIVINE KING OF EIRE.

KAREN IS TOLD TO LIE ON A COUCH BEFORE THE ALTAR, EYES CLOSED THAT SHE MAY SEE BETTER. UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DEIRDRE, SHE ENTERS LIGHT TRANCE, WHICH DEEPENS AS THE SESSION PROCEEDS. CELTIC HARP MUSIC IS PLAYED BY ELAINE.

TRANCE JOURNEY

AIDEN: Karen Etain, you are now in the twilight zone between sleeping and waking. Only what you yourself hold to be true and good will be accepted by your soul. You feel the golden flow of Danann light through every part of your body.

AIDEN PASSES HIS HANDS OVER KAREN'S BODY, UNTIL THE ALCHEMISTS SEE A GOLDEN HAZE. DEIRDRE OBSERVES THAT KAREN'S SOUL IS A FEW INCHES ABOVE HER BODY. SHE IS TOLD TO RETURN TO HER BODY, SO THAT SHE MAY SPEAK, IN HALF-TRANCE.

AIDEN: Karen Etain, where do you find yourself?

KAREN: I find I am lying on the cold granite capstone of a great dolmen. It gives cold power through my body. It is increasingly cold and I find I am sinking into darkness. It is not a friendly darkness. It is as unfeeling as stone. I hear a woman's voice: "Karen Etain, I am your true mother. I have lent you for a while to mortals, that you may bring many to know their own lost Divinity. You will not bring pleasing astral visions which have been the joy and sorrow of this land. You will bestow the Shield of Brigid, which reflects the Truth and Her spear, which brings Justice and Compassion. In your land there are many who half dwell in our lovely Land of Tir Na nOg, Land of Youth, and gain little from their earthly experience. You will bring the spiritual sphere, which unites mind and heart, dreams and activity. But to do this you must choose to do this! For too long have you crushed your true self in the delusion that your being is true to yourself. You live a lie."

I find myself saying: "What lie?"

She replies, and I know Her for the Morrigan: "You pretend that your aim in life is honesty. It is not. You are starved for love which you are ashamed to acknowledge."

I answer: "Great Goddess, I feel the power of your mind that far exceeds any human mind that I have encountered. How can I find this aim, which is so deeply hidden that I cannot recognise it?" She replies: "Bright girl who loves clarity, you need to go to the Well at the World's End, and within you will find your answer."

"Ah," I reply. I need to drink from its waters. "Not exactly," replies the Goddess, and her voice becomes fainter. There is a whirling like countless snowflakes and I am caught in a gust of wind. I am rising from the dolmen and enter the rainbow beauty of a lovely landscape fairer than anything I have ever seen on earth. The colours from octaves of ascent intermingle with each other in ever-changing rainbows. The trees are singing with joy as they bear fruit and flowers at the same time, as here Time is everywhere, in a Celtic design on the woven cloth of space. The music comes from the colours and the colours from the music. Here are birds that are unafraid and perch upon my fingers and I feel the soft skin of a wolf who leans against me, to look with golden eyes into my own. There are people here, but no humans. They are either what some call extremely ugly or delightfully beautiful. They read my thoughts and I read theirs. And all say: "She is for the Well."

Suddenly I am there, at the Well at the centre of the world, a hub around which all rotates. I find long grasses at the edge of the Well twine around my ankles – suddenly they trip me up and I fall into black depths . . .

I find I am falling through the centuries. I have glimpses of humans, and the human lives are as transient flitting shadows – here and then gone – but their buildings remain far longer, and some are noble and others pretentious. And I can choose to project into any scene I choose. But I remember my aim, to find my destiny.

I land with a vulgar human bump. I am at the bottom of the Well, which is muddy with sharp stones. I hear a hearty laugh! And then I see my first Faery! I am surprised that he is so tall. He answers my thoughts.

"Surely you remember? We ascend through the four elements. You chose air and fire and water – I have earth and water and fire – once we have our fifth element, ether, we are on a similar level as humans – but with more Spirit as we seldom descend into matter, except for earth Initiation, as you are doing now. It's rough, isn't it Etain? Ready to come home?"

I have fallen down a well. And now I have fallen in love. He is the most gorgeous being I have ever seen. His long hair is like a raven's wing. His eyes are deep and penetrating. But what makes him Divine is his body. It is not composed of organic matter, but created of some form of metallic, bronze coloured energy. Every muscle shows. Also, what completes his splendour for me, he has long iridescent wings that reach from his head to his feet, as colourful as medieval stained glass. So that is where artists get their inspiration from! In the dark ages they could see into another world.

He answers my thoughts. "True. But the present race of man cannot develop without mind. You tread on one foot, feelings, and the other, cleverness. But to fly you need wings – two of them for balance."

"I feel that I have been summoned here for some purpose," I say.

"True. Not one of us can incarnate upon earth without a task. One is to give, the other to receive. You told your earthly friends you are at the cross-roads. You need to make a choice. Will you stay here with me, Midir, leaving your earthly body, or will you return to earth and be a Doctor? There is a Doctor who would marry you if you are not adverse to the idea."

I say: "A medical partnership? I feel I would not be happy here with you if I neglected my work. The colours would lose their lustre and the music cease. So with heavy heart I say farewell to you for this earthly life-time."

As I begin to move away from the lovely Land of Youth, I hear the voice of Midir: "Don't be so sure of your farewell. We always have some of our children on earth . . ."

END OF TRANCE.

KAREN VERY SLOWLY RETURNS FROM TRANCE, SLIGHTLY SMILING. SHE JUST SAYS "THANK YOU" TO THE ALCHEMISTS, AND LETS DOWN HER HAIR, WHICH FALLS ABOUT HER SHOULDERS IN TWO RAVEN CASCADES. ALL GIVE THANKS ON THE BANKS OF A STREAM AND HAVE A FEAST. THEY SAY IN MAKING THEIR REPORTS THAT THEY HAVE FELT A WONDERFUL FLOW OF RAINBOW LIGHT AND HEARD THE SOUND OF A DISTANT IRISH HARP.

End of Rite.

Sources: "Verse Plays," W.B. Yeats, Clarendon Press, Oxford. "The Crock of Gold," and "The Demi-gods," James Stephens. "Songs from Leinster," Winifred Letts, "The Real Charlotte," Somerville and Ross. "Finnegan's Wake," James Joyce. "The Candle of Vision." AE (George Russell), Macmillan, London. "The Immortal Hour: A Drama," "The Divine Adventure" " Ioana," "Studies in Spiritual History," Fiona MacLeod. "Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race," T.W. Rolleston. "A Celtic Miscellany: Translations from the Celtic Literatures," Hurlston Jackson. "Celtic Wonder Tales," illustrated by Maud Gonne. Ella Young.

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