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The Real Bridewell

Alys Goldenthorpe

You are walking purposely through a light wood. The ground under foot is less smooth than it looks. Largish stones, moss-covered, tumble on the ground and the air is far too still for the odd flicker of birds, grey among empty branches, to be more than a corner-of-the-eye sighting.

Such leaves as there are, are under foot; and they are slithery; you go carefully, slowing so as not to twist an ankle.

Though there are more trees as you enter more deeply into the wood, only the air is thicker, and that, more silent.

The quiet has weight, and your blood sings with the cold in your chest.

You come at last to a small, shallow pool, beige and opaque, surrounded by mossy rocks and the occasional rotting log.

You sit, silently looking at the reflection of the trees on the surface, and hear a tiny whispering entering your bones.

How cold your feet have become, how still your thoughts!

Now, as you gaze, you become absorbed in the patterns on the water until, as in a slow dream, you realise that the beige of the surface is the reflection of the bottom of the pool, which is, after all, very clear.

Your eye is drawn to the gravel, every wee stone, as if outlined in your consciousness; and there, in the centre, a tiny column of moving pebbles and sand, pouring upwards into the water, a roil and tumble of silent shifting eddies.

You search the spring, as if sensing a pattern, never quite complete, always enticing, as if there were a meaning.

Only the promise, however, sibilant in the winter air, has presence.

You have become so unaware of your body that it comes as a surprise to you to discover that you are leaning back into the body of a woman. She embraces you, seemingly speaking into your right ear, direct into your deepest brain.

You listen and share, pre-verbal, immersed.

You are all the while watching the spring, endlessly pouring, endlessly whispering, and all the while you and she share; and sharing, thoughts, emotions, feelings, tumble and roil

and twist together, borne by the spring, into the waters of the lake, but never quite to the surface.

This is the spring between the worlds, this the source, the cauldron.

Here, all riches and all hungers lie, stirred by the twist of water and of air.

Here, the wealth of nations and of minds, runes and fleets of stars; poverty and plague, gossamer and faerie, blood and war, stir and move into their souls' being.

Here all poets, prophets, seers and mages draw their souls in source.

Here all the dreams, all words, take form. Feelings and numbers, alphabets and storms, stags and spells, share here in their conceiving.

For this is Bridewell, the spring beyond the world's bourne.

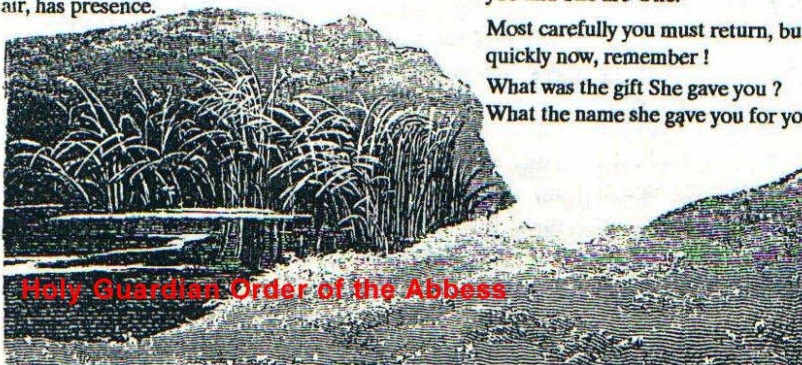
Here all dreaming, here all poems, all creating forms, all feelings, numbers, spells and calendars, twist and move before they find their dance.

Here, lives and creatures shift and twirl. Here, you and She are One.

Most carefully you must return, but quickly, quickly now, remember!

What was the gift She gave you?

What the name she gave you for your quest?



Holy Guardian Order of the Abbess

