

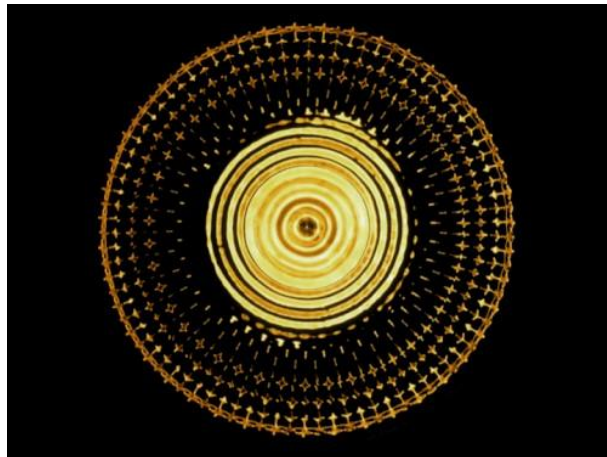
A Thank You Letter

By Cindy Hurn

In 1642 the person who spoke truth borne from wisdom, whether they be a he or a she, was called Soothsayer. Genuine voraciousness fuelled their phrases, no matter if those were statement or prediction. Their faith in, and loyalty to, that which is just and equitable made their words ring like a bell, clear and resonant, reverberating far beyond the conscious mind. Their stories attracted, mesmerized, and planted seeds in the hearts of those who listened.

Soothsayer's seeds were even known to sprout in people's bodies. A finger that used to point with such terrible judgement suddenly wilted like a willow stick changed into a reed which stroked the wind and comforted the river. Eyes that had flashed hatred and rejected human and animal beings now softened like a forest fire subdued into glowing embers on a hearth, while comforting all who settled nearby.

The soothsayer planted images, and these held immeasurable power; no container could harness the images' desire or ability to enlighten and upraise. And everywhere that he or she the soothsayer went, a trail of sparkling energy was left in their wake.



And so it was on the tenth of December in a castle village behind a great oaken door where strangers and friends approached a Dunster soothsayer. Their entry was welcomed by Bezel whose shiny black, raven's wing coat had grown extraordinarily soft just for that night. His kind master, Richard, and enchanting mistress, Alex opened their arms wide as the great doorway and gathered everyone in.

Good food, candles, wine, and water soothed nervous visitors as they went through the social mores of how to greet and meet and converse with pleasant manners, attentive listening, and cheerful interchanges.

An eclectic assortment of folks attended: those who were shy but willing, those who were strange, but there anyway, those whose desire was only to serve and observe, and those who wanted all the observation focused on themselves, plus those, whose charming and disarming features and personalities would take a whole tome to describe. But they all came because of Alex, she who becomes the soothsayer and tells stories; it was she who set this night as her first of - hopefully many - mystical, evocative, soul-opening, shape-shifting 'Story-Welling' adventures.

When the moment came for everyone to be seated, the living room door was opened. There among the readied couch, cushions, rugs, and chairs galore, and the fire glowing, each person found their place and settled, while giggles and expectancy filled the spaces between them. In the bay of the picture window, with curtains closed and fairy lights framing the stage, Alex stood with gracious calm by the story-telling stool.



I waited for her bewitching bell as she spoke her welcome and introductory words. I heard few of these, wishing only for that bell to cast its spell upon the room and release us – all of us, Bezel included - into that place where dreams are made and where creation happens in the most wonder-full ways.

And then... I saw it! There it was, that leather thong she'd woven through her fingers; and on either end, the two Tibetan brass gongs that had been hiding in her palm. Now, out they came.

"Wait," I whispered to my pounding heart, "Here it comes... wait..."

Dinnnnnnng!

Oh how sweet that moment when everyone stopped. Every person, every animal, every mote of dust stilled for just one perfect millisecond. Even the earth and the moon contained their flowing waves of energy for that time between inhale and exhale - that absolutely magical pre-birth instant.

And then... the story began!

It started with Odin and his wife and their perfect, beautiful son whose twin was blind. And the father's journey crossed the over-world and went into the netherworld where he heard of his son's imminent death. The mother, learning of this horror and refusing to let nature be, did the impossible by seeking agreement from All-Beings-But-One, that none would cause her son's fatality. And they all agreed and celebrated by playing death-defying games every day. The All-But-One-Being turned out to be the mistletoe, a plant named after the mizzle – the thrush - a bird who eats the poisonous berries and, digesting their sturdy white coats, replants the sticky seeds by defecating on a "toe" the medieval term for a twig.

In those days of Odin and his sons the humble mistletoe grovelled, prostrate on the ground, where no one gave it a thought; that was how the boy's mother overlooked the powerful plant and forgot to seek its help.

A trickster came along, and seeing the games that people played around this perfect, beautiful son, it changed into an old woman who was feasted, nurtured, and honoured by Odin and his wife. The trickster learned of the one weak point in the mother's plan, and it had to challenge the plot, because that is what tricksters do.

The story grew and swelled with tension and horror upon the sudden realization of human frailties. At last the listeners were carried right to the end where resolution was up to each individual.

What choice would they make? Would they play games that taunted death or would they seek peace through forgiveness and honouring each other? The mother chose to forgive the mistletoe; in doing so, she raised it high above the ground where it lives today under the bark and amidst the branches of the noblest trees: the oak, the apple, the rowan, and linden. The plant's berries, be they poison or cure, all depend upon the user and the knowledge of such things.

After the story a break was offered and previously shy or nervous folks now seemed comfortable and relaxed, enchanted even. The room filled with chatter and laughter. In corners rose deeply intense or heart-to-heart conversations, and one had the sensation that here something had happened. Strangers became friends. Social barriers melted into oblivion. The sound of drenching rain no longer beat against the windows. Bezel returned to those who still needed to touch his fur and feel the merge between raven and dog, a truly mystical and compassionate beast.

The room filled again, and people settled into their places while the leather thong with the Tibetan brass bells waited in Alex's hand. Soon, all was quiet. Then ...

Dinnnnng!... cleared the air.

Once more we were transported to another time, another land where Duck Egg, an old Indian healer entered the tepee and the child lay ill. She lowered her head and listened to the girl's breath and heart. Was it the act of listening, or was it the fox that healed the girl, and was it the girl that healed the fox? Was it the father that trusted the instructions, or the mother who kept the fire burning?

After the story came to a sweet conclusion we learned that the storyteller's magic was not in her voice, her hands, nor even the ding of her sacred bells; the magic was in the listeners. For no story can be told to the void. It takes all of us, every single one of us and all our interpretations, whether they be this or that, to make stories come alive; to make them and us grow, to make us better than we were before. To make us all creators it takes Us – you and me and we.

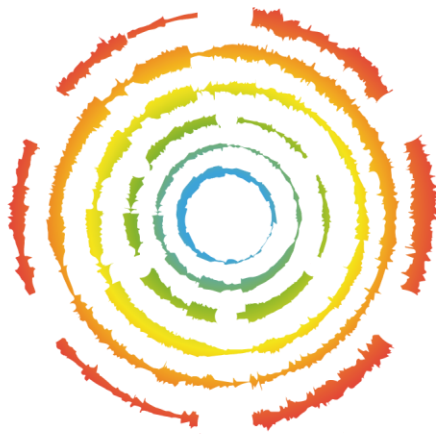
With Story-Well medicine swirling like incense through our minds and hearts we gathered purses and scarves, donned our coats and entered the night air. All the clouds had disappeared. Stars sparkled and shooting particles of flaming dust orbited the earth as the moon throbbed with life and promise. This night had been perfect for stories, and the stories were perfect for this night.

Charged with the battery of creative juices and filled with the fuel of friendship and fire, we all went home a little lighter, a great deal brighter, and blessed for the welcome of Bezel, Alex, and Richard. As the great oaken door closed one last time, and the sleepy hosts climbed into their beds, Home Farm walls breathed a sigh of gratitude, for now it was full with blessings that were born of Us.

Dearest Alex, Richard, and Bezel, thank you all so much for such a precious night. Sending you warmest wishes for your lasting health and prosperity and appreciation for each one of you just being you,

Your delighted friend and co-creator,

Cindy



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