



Golden Fruit from the Celestial Branch

Adapted from Viridarium Umbris: The Pleasure Garden of Shadow

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The Sages of Old instruct that the occult knowledge of Trees and Herbs, as well as the sacred arts of healing, divination, and enchantments, was given mankind in remote times by the gods. According to the teachings of some religious traditions, these were the so-called Fallen Angels, exiled from the celestial mansions by a jealous demiurge; or descending by will to share their divine power with the races of men. The ancient *Books of Enoch* reveal how those heavenly luminaries known as the Watchers took the daughters of men as wives and taught them the arts of astrology, writing, metalworking, perfumery and herbalism.

By other accounts these tutelary divinities were the beloved nymphs, tree-spirits, fairy-folk, sylvan genii, or rustic entities allied unto the dominions of the wilderness, such as good Chiron, that venerable centaur who taught the great god Asklepios the disciplines of medicine, or the fairy maiden Nelferch, who emerged from the depths of Llynnyfan to found an herb-wise race of Carmarthenshire fairy-doctors. Still other traditions associated the dispensation of the Green Art with the Lady of the Nocturnal Host, as with Madonna Oriente, who taught, among other arts, the Magic of Herbs, to those who had gone forth in spirit by night. In many traditions, it was the Trees and Herbs themselves, or the land wherein they were rooted, who taught the herbalists their art, often revealing themselves by way of a unique 'Language of the Trees' whereby vegetal powers were accessed by song and incantation.

With the ascendance of monotheistic cults, a great many of these plant luminaries were assimilated to a false lexicon of demons, and the Art Magical, once the pursuit of sages, was made heresy. Eventually Nature herself came to be viewed as an evil spirit, representative of powers to be bound, exploited, and civilised. The magical arts of the folk-healer, once the birthright of the children of angels, in the context of witchcraft persecutions became *Indicium*: evidence of malefic intent and collaboration with Satan. In some cases, a person seen gathering herbs in the forest was considered evidence sufficient for suspicion of witchcraft.

Despite profanation and slander by those who sought their demise, the teachings of the old gods endured through generations of mankind, and were passed unto a few who would wield them. Some were born, spirit-touched, into Power, called 'Second Sight'; others came to re-kindle it by faith, devotion, or cunning; and yet in others it dwelt as a seed, dormant until its warden luminaries roused it from sleep to acuity. Among those bearing the gift of this Light, there have always been certain ones among them summoned unto the sacred groves and gardens, to the isolate wilderness, wherein dwell the spirits of the Pleasure-Garden of Shadow.

Though ages have passed and the luminaries of plant-wisdom have come to be viewed by some religions as fallen, their presence as beneficial spirits of guidance continues among herbalists who hold convocation with them. The Greenwood, as primeval dominion of these angels, is an atemporal Eden whose bounds are at once fixed, yet permeable to those so called unto its fragrant groves. *Wortcunning*, the Old Anglo-Saxon term for applied plant-wisdom, best describes the elect congress, and its actuation by way of the

sorcerous Art, between these spirits and the folk magician; a trifold form of natural knowlege, magical power, and botanical mysticism.

The Green Art of the Herbarius takes many forms, but there is a special place it occupies in the Old Craft, typified by a mystical understanding of the land, of trees and herbs, their spirits, and the host of powers they command. Thus while not describing the Nameless Faith in its entirety, the Art of Wortcunning is a unitive thread woven through many recensions, each taking on the power and historical wisdom of its place of dwelling. Preserved within the spirit-dominion of each strand of the Old Craft are practical knowledge, charms, lore, healing formulae, and other magical practices constellated around plants and their powers.

The unifying bonds between these streams of magic are a spiritist view of plants and Nature, contextualised through living mystery tradition; a dynamic retinue of holy genii which surround and indwell plants; use of herbs as a vital component of the Art Magical; and direct apprehension of knowledge, or *Gnosis*, through ritual covocation with these spirits. Such is the legacy of the Woodwose, the ancient Green Man in the Hedge, unto those called to the Verdant Avocation of old Cain, first tiller of fields, first wanderer of the wilderness, and father of sorcery.

Within this compass eternally bound by the footsteps of exile, the occult powers of Trees and Herbs are mystically cognised as an Immortal Garden of Spirit, where each plant-shade commands a specific dominion of power, a Fruit of Virtue hung from the branches of the Forbidden Tree. Such potencies may be accessed by the folk magician for diverse means, from simple concerns of daily life to exalted Rites of Angelic Congress. These powers, in their concealed form, or *mysteria*, are bound up in the folklore of past generations, the manifold teachings of traditional rural magic, the veiled spirit-procession of the Mighty Dead, and in the very earth of the localities where plants dwell. In their revealed form, they are made manifest through the dreams, visions, and spirit-congress with the men and women of the Circle of Art.

For those skilled and wise in the use of green wisdom, all sorcerous art may be accomplished by means of plants. An exemplar may be found in the Round Entire of the Life-of-Man, which may be wholly circumscribed by herbal cunning. From Fertility Charms to aid in conception; to the good midwife's medicine to aid in childbirth and protect mother and newborn; to the various needs of Body and Spirit in life; to the palliative care of the Dying, and the divers funerary rites and preparations to ease passage of spirit and provide for the dignified preparation of the corpse, each station of body and soul may be attended by Green Wisdom, and made better thereby. For the Wortcunner, all powers of Blessing and Bane, Healing and Harm, proceed from a source singular and eternal, showing themselves in the face of a leaf or flower, and speaking with the Voice of Faerie.

Among the foci of modern practitioners of the Green Art are the learning, practice, teaching, and anamnesis of plant mysteries. As well as the charms and spell-craft usually associated with herbal magic, such also includes divination, spirit-devotion, occult

pharmacy, and practical botany. In addition to these, the perennial magical alignment of the practitioner with genii of the Wilderness is of great import to this work, and is regularly attained through the twin sacred acts of Pilgrimage and Hermitage. By way of this ongoing magical alliance between sorcerer and land, a continuum of gnosis is achieved which nurtures the present stream of lore, revealing it anew, whilst remaining true unto the blessed traditions of the past. This is, as we of the Old Faith say, “The Faith beneath the Wanderer’s Heels”.

Tending this garden requires careful stewardship, lifelong practice, and devotion. The teachings and rites of the Greenwood, pursued with good care, forge a compact of High Magic between Herbalist and the Antient Gods of the Grove. When enjoined according to the direction of sign and omen, as well as the Counsel of the Heart, the great Vaults of Elphame shall open and from them proceed the Forbidden Feast of the Spirit-Tree. The respectful harvest of these gifts of nature shall shape the ethos of the wise Herbarius, for in these times it may be stated with certainty that the error of mankind waxes strong in offense against the Good Earth, and those who walk in love upon the land must as Holy Bridegrooms embrace Her. Though this stance of devotion is but one portion of the Holy Work of the green magician, it is the very soil from which the Garden of All Powers proceeds.

It should be remembered that the legacy of the magical herbalist is also that of the possessor of banned knowledge. The status of plant magic as a forbidden art directly relates to the spirituous resonance of plants as angelic avatars, fallen into the realm of matter, for by their power we may fight disease, aid in childbirth, protect the home, behold visions, deaden pain, strengthen the body, curse an enemy, call up the dead, and animate a fetish... powers once the preserve of the gods. By wielding these potencies in good measure, the temporal laws of the Mortal Veil are transgressed and the abodes of the divine embraced: the heavenly arts of Trees and Herbs, when mastered, bind the corrupting spirits that would blind mankind to its divine inheritance of illumination, power and the good counsel of the spirit-world.

Yet in knowing this, let both the Wise One and the Fool take heed. The Angels of Midnight's Eden, when approached in vain, or with a profane heart, shall ever manifest as enemies: the Garden is their sacred preserve, they are charged to stand guard over it lest it be abused. In so doing they will employ all powers at their command, including deception, delusion, confusion, torment, madness, disease, and death. The Formulae of the Verderer's Grove may be glimpsed as a fleeting shadow by the vulgar; yet even this is a shade sufficient for ruination. In this are the unworthy admonished, and likewise the Kin of the Tree reminded:

*Ever is the Blood of Eve and the Serpent drawn back toward Eden,
And ever the blood of Adam rejected from its hallowed ground.*

As in the Round of the Seasons, this sacred knowledge is both eternal and transitory: the times and tides pass, but also remain a part of the Wheel. This being true, points of individual access to the Pleasure-Garden may differ, and thereby the gnosis attained, but

the unitive powers of Plot and Thicket which encompass them remain bound to the cycles of birth, growth, death, and return unto Spirit. Such is the law of Nature, and the Compass Round of the Pleasure Garden. To stand within that compass is to become the Flesh of the Eternal Garden itself, a holy tree raised in power to encompass three realms of sorcerous heredity: the Host of Heaven, the Dominion of Man, and the Hidden Companie of the Good.

