

Hymn To The Wild Man Of The Woods

BY KATIE HART

Come to me, O Wild Man of the Woods, and tell me great and unsearchable things I do not know. Visit me in my dreams and visions. Show me how the stones can speak and the rivers and forests listen.

Your thick brow is a mountain ridge that crowns the deep valley of your eyes. Behind those eyes, you know the medicine of plants and the language of clouds and how the animals will behave as the wheel of the seasons turn. More importantly, Wild Man of the Woods, behind them is a whole lotta soul.

Some say you built the megaliths and stone circles of the ancient world. Some say you were raised by she-bears and wolves, and are half-animal yourself. I say what makes you wild and mystical is your tender, devotional heart. When you close the flaps of your tent against a snow-swept night and lay down on furs to sleep with your woman, the fire in your chest needs no tending. It is always stoked, and it is always a blazing hearth for your beloved to lay beside.

O, to be your woman, your beloved! Wild Man, I stand here before you on the outskirts of your forest lair, hungry, filled with longing, and soul-torn from my journey. It has cost me much to leave my old world of familiar comforts behind. Take me in – for wasn't it you who called me here?

I am your disciple. Teach my heart to beat slowly and steadily like yours. Teach my ears to listen beneath the rhythmic waves of my heart's pounding for the Oran Mor, the Great Song, the Song of Songs, the sweet aria of Goddess Earth.

But first, if you please, Wild Man of the Woods, embrace me

with your oak-strong arms in your gentle way, as if gathering one of your flower bouquets. Drape me in necklaces of eagle talons and seashells. I want to feel the allure of the hunt and the sea. Adorn me in feathers of your favorite sky friends so my spirit can soar alongside them.

Let us be free to choose the wisdom we need from one day to the next, borrowing from roaming beasts and rooted beasts and star beasts and earth element beasts.

After a turn of the moon, or maybe several, I shall be ready. Lead me to your temple in the heart of the forest – down, down, down the mountain and into the glittering cave where the air just feels heavier beneath so much earth, so much dirt striped with rock.

We go deep into the belly of Goddess Earth. The floors are slick with mud and cave walls press tightly against us, yet I am not afraid. I have been initiated before into the abyss of silence. I have confronted shadow, and become mistress of its ways.

You carry the torch as we descend down the damp, cool tunnel. I pause to press my hand against the rough, rugged canvas of stone, for it is so damn immovable, and you pull something out of your pouch. In a moment, you are blowing red pigment through a wing bone straw around the shape of my hand, so that the branches of my fingers are outlined for ages to come. “Your hand is the one I’ve been waiting for,” you say, as you take it and squeeze it tightly in your own, and we continue into darkness.

We are pilgrims on our way to the bottom of the mountain, and

by the time we get there, Goddess Earth has swallowed us whole. The passage opens into a cathedral-like cavern glistening with sharp stalactites dripping from the ceiling. Huge stalagmites swirl up out of the cave floor like statues of gods and goddesses. In the center of it all, where you lead me, wait the stone circles.

They are twin rings formed side by side, not made of giant boulders but of broken stalagmite pieces. I bend down to examine them. The stalagmites are burnt red in places, and hacked to roughly the same size and shape. They've been piled into low circular walls about two hands high. "How long did it take you to build these?" I ask, looking up into your warm, fern-colored eyes.

You merely grunt, and smile knowingly.

We each step inside a ring. Thunder begins to rumble close by, as if directly beneath us and not in the ground layer above. You open your pouch to scoop flower petals, which you scatter inside the circle around you – heather and yarrow weave their perfumes with the air. Petals and petals cover the ground. The sacred marriage bed is now prepared.

Your eyes hold my eyes as if they could cup my entire being. Thunder stirs with greater passion now, as if we are conjuring the storm ourselves from the depths of this chamber and sending life-giving rains across the land.

I have only to breach the circle that encloses me. Only to cross the threshold of all my self-protections and shed every weapon, every covering, and every hardened belief that holds my heart hostage in its cage.

A flash of light crashes through the high ceiling. Electric courage courses through my veins. The grace of the Goddess is with me, and I open my heart to receive her. To receive you, Wild Man of the Woods, in all your glory. I answer the call to confront another terrifying abyss, and step forward into your arms.

Now I understand the origin of water, now I hear the hymn it sings. Now I understand how two separate beings can merge like the river merges with the sea, and become one. Wild Man, through our union, we thrive and awaken and discover a garden of delight that can only be entered side by side.

On our bed of flowers, I am reborn as Wild Woman of the Woods. Your passions are my passions. Your prayers, my prayers. Follow me back to the sun-drenched world above, and let us rejoice. My heart is free to be uninhibited love. My heart is free to be infinite, like yours. *So. Blissfully. Alive.*

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