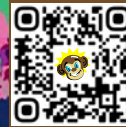


ISSN 2768-5055

Offering sevenfold returns on your invengements

Monkeyshines

Autumn 2022



MONKEYSHINES.MEDIA



Question:
Are you
creative?

Answer: Yes! You are!



Question:
Are you
talented?

Answer: Yes! You are!

Therefore, it is only
logical to share your
creative talents!

Send in your submissions to
editors@monkeyshines.media
and share your talent with
our readers and the world!



Autumn Animal Oracle



Crane: The symbol of Secret Knowledge, Patience, and Longevity

In the wild, the Crane stands alone for hours, but together with others it will dance. This card, reversed, asks for balance between socializing in group activities versus being alone. Spending too much time alone can bring about isolation and loneliness, but giving no time to one's self leaves no time to reflect on the self. Reflection can help you avoid the Crane's shadow. While in the Crane's shadow, you may turn spiteful and others may see a nagging, complaining disposition within you.

This fall, seek out the Secret Knowledge of Balance between being alone and joining with others. Stand alone gazing into the reflective water, but fly and dance with friends and family.

Until next season.

/// Painted Birch ///
beithe péinteáilte

Autumn Animal Oracle by Painted Birch
mailto: oracle@monkeyshines.media

Haiku in Three Seasons

Golden-amber leaves
fall softly upon the ground,
rustling at my feet.

Gleaming rays shine down,
through clouds far above my head,
Calling me to rise.

Crystalline flakes fall,
upon the leafless branches,
keep them safe and warm.

by Megan A O'Brien



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Cover Image: **Smudge**
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Autumn 2022

Monkeyshines

The Shrouded Lands

This is a forbidden place, shunned in thought and spoken only in whispers. This is a place menacing and mysterious, conjuring both intrigue and fear. This is the shadow of the world. The silence is both foreboding and comforting, as this is where things go to their final rest, for death is both frightening and serene. But for the living, it is a different experience entirely. The skies are a ceiling of grey miasma, the clouds undulating in a dreadful dance. The air is heavy on the lungs, every inhalation coating them with irritating particulate. Eyes are continually occluded by the layers of intermittent fog that roll over the barren waste. The land smells stale, and a palatable bitterness permeates the environment.

A chilly wind caresses the scarred soils, and a gentle rain begins to fall. There are sparse swatches of grass and foliage dotting the earth, thirsty for the sky's bounty of water. Amidst the petrified wood, nascent copses of living trees reach upward toward the aerial precipitation. There are no discernible sound structures for miles in every direction, just stone remnants being swallowed by the shifting soils, starving ivy, and creeping vines. A hulking humanoid and its smaller companion hike across the vast hinterlands — their journey seemingly aimless. The former walks with strained posture, relying on the assistance of a large crutch. Most of the creature's mass is cloaked in thick animal hides, his face mantled in a hood of mottled avian pinions. His pace slows when the rain picks up. He looks up to the skies and takes a breath, exposing a lupine snout from beneath his mask.

"For all its gloom, the shrouded lands still smell like the rest of the world when it rains." His voice is sharp and guttural relative to his animalistic physicality, but with a measure of graveled eloquence.

"*Petrichor*," the other says, a being of human build dwarfed by his compeer, dressed comparably in conglomerate layers of slops and capes. As far as hominids go, he was fit, lean, and fully equipped for the journey.

"He speaks," says the large one. "It's good to know you still have your wits. Most visitors here choose not to engage me, for obvious reasons. I suppose this form is too intimidating to warrant an exchange. Many, however, usually go mad after a certain distance. This is not a place for the sane, as it naturally seeks to remove all reasonable cognition from those that dare tread it."

The man fixes the goggles around his eyes and secures the scarf around his mouth. "They whom still draw breath do not belong here, I know."

"And what makes you think you do?"

The man stops, "I am not dead."

"No," the creature turns to face him. "What makes you think you belong here?"

"As you said, just a visit."

The beast flexes, his hobbled form now taller and more squarely postured. "I advise full disclosure, little god, or your visit will be cut short."

They stand in silent hesitation until the man speaks, "I seek death."

"Then you may have it, just give the word."

"Not in the conventional sense. I wish to kill a part of me."

The abominable thing brings his crutch before him, resting both palms atop it and leaning forward. "Go on."

"I want to erase myself, my past, and every personal memory of it."

"Mnemonic rebirth is it? Sorry, such a thing is not my specialty."

"Wrong. Time and death go hand in hand. I know it is possible to kill the past, *my* past, and I know *you* can do it."

"I will stop you before you lecture me on time, finality, and what I am more than capable of doing. The question is why you want this ritual performed?"

"May I opt not to answer?"

"Consider it part of the price of services rendered."

"So you will do it?"

"This desperate eagerness does not become you. Come, walk with me. Let conversation be your down payment."

They continue for a time in complete silence. The robed creature treks onward, this time with vigor and purpose. The man follows closely, focusing on the various sights of the shrouded lands before

The Shrouded Lands, cont'd

them. It suddenly becomes dark. The blackness is then illuminated with innumerable shades and formless spirits. They fly aimlessly through the air, prancing around the travelers and turning into mist as they make contact. Their erratic movement is not hostile, but there is a sense of aggravation in their ballet.

It is now light again, and the phantasms depart. The man looks down and sees faces in the ground. Expressionless mimes manifested from soil and rock, staring at him, following him with their hollow eyes. Above, the sky roars. A storm is here, the clouds churning into vortexes, forming holes in the atmosphere. A multitude of massive tendrils begin to stretch forth from these celestial portals, reaching toward the earth and gently caressing the ground. The man tightens the grip on his sheathed weapon, a curved blade with an unusually long hilt.

"Be not concerned with the local fauna," says the guide. "They do naught but mill about. Still, I suggest against any form of provocation. They are all indifferent toward aggression, but are keen on mirroring it. Such is the nature of this land, it is simply a reflection of the world from which you hail. A shadow cast by the rest of Coterminous."

In the distance the man notices what looks like stone obelisks densely covering the land. As they get closer, he sees they resemble grave markers. They are now surrounded by gigantic monoliths inscribed with runic carvings. All of them have some sort of statuesque likeness sculpted in them. Some are human in appearance, others chimeran, and others unidentifiable in their genetic provenance.

"This," exclaims the creature, "this is where gods go to die. I am their usher, the pall bearer to the eternal ones. If you satisfy my terms, this is where you will cease being you. Now, are you ready to answer my question or are you really just here for the endless tour?"

"I don't want to know who I am anymore. I wish to retain this body, this mind, this soul, and all the skills inherent. But as for who I am, what I was, what I have done... that all dies."

"Seeking the grey area in such a world of extremes. How bold. You have made it clear what you want but you still haven't given me my due. Now answer me: Why?"

"Because I fear this before me." The man places his hand upon one of the tombstones. "I will not become some monumental imitation that fades into memory. I do not wish to truly die because I am afraid. Afraid of what I will miss from my beautiful world. Afraid of who I will never meet. I was once the protector of all things, and I do not want to orphan it."

"I know very well who you are."

"And I, you."

"Aren't you the one that put many of these here in their current place?" The creature gestures theatrically, pacing around the forest of graves. "What gives you the right to request such a feat in the very place you sent all these bodies?"

"I do not request, I demand."

"Careful now, *guardian of the world*. That arrogance falls short here. I am a whole different game compared to what you have fought in the past that you are so eager to forget."

"You and I both know you truly don't have the power you once had. You are bound to this place, whereas I walk amongst both worlds."

"Fair point. I am in no mood for an endless battle, as I am already in an eternal stalemate with your world."

"Are you satisfied then?"

"Almost. My curiosity is sated by your fears, but you and I both know there is more to it, isn't there? If you wish for oblivion, it can be provided, but at a further cost, of course. I want to hear it. All you must do is say it and we enter into contract, such is the way of these things. This is my process. Now, transact."

The man pauses, watching the creature stand before him. His terrible form now larger and dwarfing the man in size and scope. The man takes a knee not for the sake of prostration or surrender, but that of honor. "Then let my honesty set me free. This world needs me, but not the me I used to be. I failed her once, and I want the chance to make it up to her. The truth is, I *am* already dead. I died a long time ago, and I have been walking this earth a revenant. What is a body when there is no spirit to drive it? What is a mind with no soul to guide it? I gave everything to her for so long, and in one

The Shrouded Lands, cont'd

moment of failure she received nothing but pain. If I wish to continue my mission, I must be free of my past and all the mistakes I have made. I have lived for generations. Within me is an eternity of memory, lifetimes of history. But that one moment scars it all. The one who failed deserves nothing less but death. I declare the aforementioned as my collateral, now let us begin. Name your price.”

It is dark again, and the iridescent phantoms return. The sky crackles with electric energy, thunder roars throughout, lightning striking the immediate area around them. The beast raises his arms, his staff equipped in his right, his left hand spread toward the violent firmament.

“Oh dear Champion of Coterminous, guardian and protector of all its denizens!” It bellows over the noise of the environment. “I will duly acquiesce your request. Upon the completion of my ritual, you will have no memory of any moment of your personal history, inclusive of our meeting here. You will retain your innate skill sets and immortality so you may continue to serve your world as its conservator.” The creature then points its crosier at the man. “Seirath, sentry of this star. I, Kahs Sahth, bind myself to your will. Such is my price: If you should fail again, I will be unleashed from this place, and this world will once again know me, the lost god, and all my fury and calm. Coterminous will bear witness to the old ways, and prosper under my love and despair. So shall it be done.” Kahs Sahth presses the staff gently on Seirath’s forehead. “Know this though: I am eternal, and I am patient. I will see you fail, Seirath. I look forward to our next conversation.”

Continued in our next issue, Winter 2023!

by Corey Gene Monaco





Monke 29 nindzv



The Beach

The beach is where I lose myself and find myself.

So beautiful it's indescribable.

All the shades of blue,

Water shimmering like it's topped with diamonds.

Birds and people and planes.

I'm alone yet not alone.

I add my footsteps to the sand,

Connecting my experience to others
that have come before me.

My old friend who made footprints with me.

You are gone but with me today.

We don't get to make footprints together at 50.

The waves are crashing into my thoughts,

Reminding me that life endures.

And one day I too will be like a broken shell.

Part of something bigger,

Inconsequential alone,

but together with all the other broken shells
making a masterpiece.

by Michele Wilson



Moonlit Redemption, part 3

Continued from our Summer 2022 issue...

Kyra awoke to the sounds of Leah screaming. She quickly jumped from her bed and woke her friend.

"Leah, Leah, it's all right, it's me. You're safe, shh, it's safe." Kyra held Leah close, trying to soothe her trembles.

"Here, child," Byron said as he opened the door and handed Kyra a cup of hot tea. Kyra blew away the steam and lifted the small wooden cup to Leah's lips. Kyra rocked Leah gently as the morning sun sent its first rays of light through the wooden shutters. Kyra could see the warm smile on Byron's face.

"Thank you," Leah managed as her tears subsided.

"Come, we will go to work early today," Byron said before leaving their room.

For the last four months, Byron had strengthened not only their bodies but also their minds. For Leah, the lessons in botany and alchemy were fascinating, and Kyra found comfort in continuing the routines of her childhood. This morning's exercises were particularly difficult for Kyra. Sparring left her breathless and dizzy. She walked to the shade of a tall oak tree and sat down.

"What's wrong?" Leah asked.

"I don't feel well," Kyra said dropping her head between her knees.

"The nausea again?"

"Yes," Kyra said through slow deep breaths.

"It's more often lately isn't it?" Leah asked solemnly.

"Yes," Kyra whispered.

"You should ask Byron about it. He might know what's causing it."

"I know what's causing it, Le," Kyra snapped. "I haven't had my moon blood since we've been here. I can't keep down food, and the laces on my pants no longer fit."

"You mean you're... but you can't be."

"Why not Leah?" Kyra lashed out.

"I didn't mean *you* can't. Didn't Byron give you moon tea? He gave it to me," Leah rambled quickly.

"Yes, but it doesn't always work. I wasn't keeping food down then either, thanks to my wounds."

"What about Byron? You need to tell him. Maybe he can help you."

"No!" Kyra said firmly.

"He's going to figure it out soon enough."

"I'll tell him when I am ready to give him the full explanation." Kyra sat up.

"Anything you want me to do I will," Leah consoled her. "You know that right?"

"Yes." Kyra closed her eyes as Leah slipped her arm around her.

"Please Le, not now," Kyra pushed her friend away.

"Sorry. Still feel ill?"

"Yes," Kyra said, hoping Leah could not tell she was lying. The truth was that Kyra felt a little too close to Leah lately. A little too dependent. She was lost for a moment until Leah spoke.

"Do you still want to come into town with me? You don't have to."

"No it's all right I'll go." Kyra steadied herself and stood up, slowly following Leah down the hill to the stable.

After all the times Kyra has entered the town of Port Sands, it still amazed her to gaze upon the brick stone streets and tall shops. Leah paused to watch a small fishing boat pull into dock. "Let's see what they've caught."

They walked over to the dock and bought a few whole fish before setting off to complete their list of supplies.

"What else do we need?" Leah asked upon exiting the general store.

"Found everything except Byron's inks. They will not have them until next week."

Moonlit Redemption, part 3, cont'd

"He will be a bit displeased," Leah frowned. "He's already waited for a long time."

"He will accept it fine enough. You want to get some supper?"

"Sure, you want to?" Leah said hopefully.

"Yes, I'm starved." Kyra led Leah to the inn and tethered the horse, but before they entered they were interrupted.

"You there! Are you Kyra of Verona?" They were being questioned by two guards holding a scroll stating a description of her and a reward for her capture.

"Who wants to know?" Kyra asked, reaching for the sword at her belt.

"Not a wise decision," one guard said, pointing a crossbow at Leah. "We are servants to Lord Corrin who have an order for your arrest. Lord Corrin has petitioned Queen Jocelyn and was granted permission to enforce it." Kyra slowly removed her weapon and handed it to Leah.

"Return to Byron. Tell him what is happening. He will know how to find me. Do not come with him," Kyra said before turning herself over to the men. Leah watched them chain Kyra in the back of a wagon before following her instructions.

Leah burst through the cottage door and into Byron's arms. She told him what had happened and about Kyra's condition.

"Come quickly. We must go now," was Byron's only reply.

Kyra stood in open court as her sentencing was announced.

"The jury council has come to the decision that you, Kyra of Verona, are guilty of murder. You are hereby sentenced to twenty years in a work prison." With time enough only for a glancing nod to her friends, Kyra was taken to the cells below.

Kyra sat in her cell trying to ignore the noise and stench when a guard approached.

"You there, you've got a visitor."

Kyra looked up to see Leah's sweet face.

"I told you not to come." Kyra turned her back to her friend.

"I'm sure you know it is much worse arguing with Byron than you, so, here I am. He says it will be all right. There is much opposition for Lord Corrin to handle. Can you please look at me?" Leah reached for Kyra's hand through the bars and slipped her a letter. Kyra quickly stuffed it up her sleeve and said good-bye to Leah. After gently kissing Kyra's hand, Leah turned and left. Kyra waited for nightfall to read the letter. The moonlight shone through a small window not far away and she could just make out the words.

Be patient, child. Soon the clan will be strong enough for a full attack. Leah told me you are with child and assured me it was not your lack of character that caused it. I have found her a place to stay in town, and she will be bringing you tea and nourishment. Our thoughts and love are with you.

*Keep well,
Byron*

Kyra clutched the letter to her chest as she cried herself to sleep.

Continued in our next issue, Winter 2023!

by Estelle Clark
facebook @estelle.clark.75



Public Domain Library Presents:

Patrolling Barnegat

Wild, wild the storm, and the sea high running,
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant
 undertone muttering,
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully
 piercing and pealing,
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,
On beachy slush and sand spirits of snow fierce slanting,
Where through the murk the easterly death-
 wind breasting,
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and
 firm advancing,
(That in the distance! is that a wreck? is the red
 signal flaring?)

Slush and sand of the beach tireless till
 daylight wending,
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white
 combs careering,
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling,
 the night confronting,
That savage trinity warily watching.

*by Walt Whitman, 1880
originally published in Leaves of Grass*



"Wudda Night" by Jonathan Russell
instagram @ macphoenix



"Moving Through the World" by Toby Ferrari
deviantart @ tobiashobbes

Next issue, coming in 2023, will help you
avoid Winter's chill! (If you light that issue
on fire.) (Do not light it on fire.)



"Hello, World" by Tobias Ferrari
deviantart @ tobiashobbes



"The Year of Copper" by Snafu77 (Evan Campanella)
instagram @ Snafu77