***the reaping.***

*it is autumn,*

*& a village is planning for*

*the Reaping:*

*[the rustling of the wind as it whips through the leaves*

*on a foggy, weaving, narrow street*

*the faint hum of a chorus singing tunes of change,*

*& a whisper of mischief amidst the trees & the rain.]*

*in a nearby village, women stand out on their porches,*

*waiting for news of the weather & harvest*

*while beasts curl & snap from the fire that warms*

*men with hands bloodied from the day’s hunted.*

*but when supper tables are barren & apron strings lengthen*

*on the women who pour over & onto their families,*

*men will tell fables & children sing carols*

*so the hunger pains & hopeless tears will cease.*

*so while some offer prayers to the God who giveth*

*& others grow cold in their anguish,*

*some witches gather in secret among cedars & birches*

*in attempt to tempt fate with their voices.*

*they sing:*

*seven handfuls of crunched leaves &*

*seven nights of lucid dreams—*

*five pumpkin faces to carve grins into &*

*five conversations to break hearts in two—*

*three dances around the fireside &*

*three a.m. cold sweats in which to writhe—*

*one harvest moon to stand beneath &*

*one soul for whom I ever weep.*

*& while the weak are consumed with the thoughts in their heads,*

*we clamor for life, chanting spells of the dead.*

*so when the blacksmith’s daughter hears a song from the woods,*

*raven hair aloft in the breeze,*

*she asks but one question: to whom shall I go?*

*& her boots beat a path toward the trees. - D.*

**Circle Nine: Reaping**

‘Tis the season of reaping. I know it all too well.

I have never taken the scythe to a field, yet I know it metaphorically - have swung it at my mind, my heart, my body, and my soul many, many times before.

This is a time of Divine Pause. As one season gives way to the next, we continue to celebrate the bounty and abundance of all that has come to fruition in this year, even as we grieve those things which did not.

I used to feel uncomfortable in the Pause. It is not natural for me to dwell or linger in states of inertia for too long. I get antsy and want to hurry the pace, moving on to what comes next. But as I age, as I grow, and mature, I have come to honor and appreciate these moments of repose. They are as necessary as the seeds we plant in the Dreamtime of Winter, and the birthings in Spring, which lead to our great labors in Summer, manifesting the great visions we have for our lives.

In our modern cultures, we have forsaken the Sacrament of Rest. The gods knew this wisdom. After each had created the world as we know it, they allowed space and time to rest, recover, and reflect. I have found it wise to remember these teachings, holding them and these moments of stillness as deeply in my heart as I do the times of swirling activity and outward expression.

Not that the work is done. Not by any means. It never is. There is still much to do in this Harvest season, utilizing every bit of Sunlight and energy afforded me. I may be through the thick of the Summer hustle and bustle, but soon enough, we will be preparing for the Long Nights of Winter. Even before the last sheaves of grain are brought in, I am already mapping out plans for the Fall, ambitious as ever.

Now, however, I allow myself the Pause. I carve out spaces each day to reflect upon my path, and to refine my visions. I also allow myself meaningful rest - sometimes by turning off the morning alarm, and other times by continuing my father’s cherished tradition of a good old afternoon nap.

As I consider my journey throughout this year, I am proud of my energies and efforts, many having reached their fullest potential (or at least, what was possible in this time). I honor the challenges I overcame, and the lessons they provided for me to grow in consciousness, in action, and in heart. By looking deep within, honestly and humbly, I can move forward in a good way, approaching the seasons of Ancestors and Shadows reverently, and more quietly. Ready to listen, and to learn. Ready to shed some more skin, revealing the brilliant new scales shimmering underneath.

**An Introduction…**

Harvesting is the process of gathering a ripe crop from the fields, marking the period between Summer and Autumn. Reaping is the cutting of the grain, or the pulse, for harvest.

This action is embedded in the phrase “you reap what you sow.” From an agricultural perspective, it is more literal than symbolic - for if the proper work isn’t accomplished in the preceding seasons to plant seeds and tend the crops, the harvest will suffer, and not produce what is needed to survive the long Winter.

The symbolic meaning speaks to that point each of us eventually reaches in any given cycle in our lives when we’re ready to harvest our own abilities, gifts, and resources to provide for the next phase we will be stepping into. If we haven’t laid the groundwork, if we haven’t tended to our own personal growth (in whichever way was most needed at the time), we may not have cultivated what will be required to move forward and manifest our greatest dreams and aspirations.

This touches upon some of the core teachings in our 13 Moons journeys: about dedication, discipline and devotion to our paths. We have well learned by now that we get what we give, and the end result is almost always a direct reflection of the energy offered during our actual process and practice.

The reaping time may also be seen as an opportune moment for repose, and reflection. We have been here before, specifically in Cycle 2 as we completed the first half of the journey and snuggled up by the Embers to consider how well our energies had been spent - or not - thus far.

In the Wheel of the Year, this pause between the end of Summer and the beginning of Autumn invites us to do the same. Although Autumn feels like the time when the year is ending , there are many new beginnings that come with it: children go back to school; the season for communing with the Ancestors commences; and we begin to turn inwards anyway, taking stock of what our plans were, and what seeds we planted at Yule, to see if they have grown… and how well, and into what.

It is a time for clarity and honesty. To be real with others, we must first be real with ourselves. It is all too common and easy in our modern cultures to deflect from what we’d rather not acknowledge about our own shortcomings, and instead project our errors onto others, or find someone else to blame.

But we are medicine women. Awakened women. Conscious women. Let us embrace this time, whatever our reflections might reveal. For each phase is but a stepping stone to the next.

**The Symbolism of the Scythe**

Medieval and Renaissance art made use of a number of emblems to symbolize death and mortality. Although a central theme of Christianity for hundreds of years was triumph *over* death, the onset of the Black Plague altered public perception. The emphasis changed, and was placed on the triumph of death over *life,* and the necessity of repentance. Symbols of resurrection common in Christian art became less popular as reminders of the impermanence of life and the punishments of hell became ubiquitous.

In ancient times, the emblem of the God Saturn (Chronos to the Greeks) was the scythe, which represented the nature of the cycles of time. The scythe symbolized not only impermanence (all things living will be cut down), but the nature of the life cycle - plants must die to feed animals, and the tool of the harvest depicts the necessity of death for the renewal of life. Thus, death was depicted as a natural part of the passage of time. The image of Chronos devouring his children seems macabre, but illustrates that the Greeks believed the passage of time is so inevitable that even the gods were consumed by it.

The most common symbols of mortality were the grim reaper and his scythe, the death’s head, and the hourglass, all appropriated from icons of Greek and Roman paganism. Slogans such as “remember death” and “all is vanity” were omnipresent - death was around the corner, and one had better repent if one was to avoid an eternity of damnation. The source of these macabre symbols was, ironically, the paganism that Christianity had supposedly replaced.

However, upon deeper reflection, the scythe cuts the old to make way for the new - and thus the cycle of life repeats itself. For example, in order to gather the harvest (grain, which feeds life) the giver (in this case the plant) must be killed. Until the fifteenth century, it was not the scythe, but the sickle that was portrayed in similar ways the scythe is today. This probably reflects the changing implements used in farming.

The scythe is also a symbol that represents the [Crescent Moon](https://allaboutheaven.org/symbols/scythe/symbols/679/123/new-moon-or-quarter-moon). There are two paths on death – one symbolically leads to the [Moon](https://allaboutheaven.org/symbols/scythe/symbols/669/123/moon) and is the path of [reincarnation](https://allaboutheaven.org/symbols/scythe/concepts/299/122/reincarnation), the other leads symbolically to the [Sun](https://allaboutheaven.org/symbols/scythe/science/5/121/sun) and is the path of liberation from reincarnation.

The scythe is thus associated with [death](https://allaboutheaven.org/symbols/scythe/concepts/91/122/death) and reincarnation, which is why you see the figure of Death holding a scythe. The symbolism is extended in some Tarot cards and symbolic images by showing Death cutting the ‘[cord’](https://allaboutheaven.org/symbols/scythe/symbols/180/123/cord). Many people in out of body experiences feel as though they are ‘tied’ to the Earthly plane by a [cord, or thread](https://allaboutheaven.org/symbols/scythe/symbols/178/123/thread-and-cord) (much like Ariadne’s thread). This is actually an energetic construct created to give a sense of security. Thus to ‘cut the cord’ symbolically means to die, because one has cut one’s connection with the body on a fairly permanent basis.

**The Hanged Man**

Another Tarot reference which well suits this moment in the Wheel of the Year is that of The Hanged Man.

The Hanged Man card shows a man suspended from a T-shaped cross made of living wood. He is hanging upside-down, viewing the world from a completely different perspective, and his facial expression is calm and serene, suggesting that he is in this hanging position by his own choice. He has a halo around his head, symbolising new insight, awareness and enlightenment. The Hanged Man is the card of ultimate surrender, of being suspended in time, and of martyrdom and sacrifice to the greater good.

​​The Hanged Man reminds you that sometimes you have to put everything on hold before you can take the next step, or the Universe will do it on your behalf. You may have heard the saying, ‘What got you here won’t get you there’, and that indeed is at play in this card. The Hanged Man calls you to release the old mental models and behavioural patterns that no longer serve you so you can see your world from a new perspective and embrace new opportunities that would have otherwise been hidden from you if you didn’t hit the brakes.

Here’s the thing: these ‘pauses’ can be voluntary or involuntary. If you’re in tune with your intuition, you’ll start to have a sense for when it’s time to hit the brakes and put things on hold – before things get out of hand. But if you’re out of alignment and oblivious to those intuitive signs, the Universe will probably put things on hold for you, in the form of continued obstacles, ill-health, and breakdowns. This is why it’s important we listen and pay attention to when these pauses show up in our lives, and create space for them - which is exactly what this time of year is all about: creating space for deeper reflection, to gain new perspectives, and raise our consciousness.

When the Hanged Man appears in a Tarot reading, often your projects and activities may be coming to an unexpected and abrupt halt. The advice is to not keep pushing forward, hoping that more force will drive you to where you want to go. Instead, surrender to the opportunity to pause and view it as your chance to reassess and re-evaluate where you are on your path. Something new will be emerging, and you won’t be able to see it unless you allow the time and space for it to come through.

The Hanged Man is your invitation to welcome these ‘pauses’ with open arms and surrender to the ‘what is’ – even if it is different from what you expected. This is the Universe’s way of helping you see new perspectives and preparing you for the next uplevelling that is happening in your life. If you push or resist, you will meet more obstacles along the way; instead, ‘allow’ the opportunities to flow smoothly and effortlessly to you.

The Hanged Man can sometimes reflect that you are feeling stuck or restricted in your life. What is holding you in this ‘stuck’ position? What is preventing you from moving forward? On one level, the Hanged Man is asking you to surrender and let go. Instead of investing in specific outcomes or resisting your current circumstances, accept them and allow yourself to flow with life. On another level, you are being called to change your perspective and shift your energy and may find that separating yourself from your everyday life is helpful, whether it’s going for a walk in nature, going on a retreat or moving to a new country. It’s a call to change up your routine so you can start to shift your energy and flow more freely again.

The upright Hanged Man encourages you to pause for a moment and see things from a different perspective. Reversed, this card can show that you know you need to hit the pause button, but you are resisting it. Instead, you fill your days with tasks and projects, keeping busy and distracting yourself from the actual issue that needs your attention. Your spirit and body are asking you to slow down, but your mind keeps racing. Heed the warning to stop and rest before it’s too late. The Universe will only dial up the volume if you ignore it, and you may end up crashing.

The reversal of the Hanged Man can indicate a time when you’re getting blocked, stuck or restricted because other people or other circumstances have left you on hold. While you feel resistant, it’s important that you surrender to ‘what is’ and let go of your attachment to how things should be. Be in flow with life, even if it’s not as you expected it and loosen your grip.

If your life has already been on pause for a period, the reversed Hanged Man may come as a positive sign that you can now move forward with a new perspective and a renewed sense of energy. You may find that events line up with more ease and flow, and you’re ready to go again. There may have been a break-through or stark realisation about how you need to do things differently. You’re prepared to make those changes and move ahead with a new mindset.

In a reading where a relationship is on hold, the Hanged Man reversed suggests that you are content to wait around… to a point. You realise that this relationship will evolve and, due to its complexities, you cannot rush it. However, you also do not want to wait forever, and you acknowledge that there will come a time when you must decide.

The reversed Hanged Man can also signal that you are stalling a decision or action. You may think you’re waiting until you feel 100% ready – but guess what? You’re probably never going to be 100% ready. So, what are you waiting for? The Hanged Man counsels us to take the leap, make that decision, and do it before the Universe decides it can’t wait for you.[[1]](#footnote-0)

**The Time for Reflections**

We have consistently discussed in all 13 Moons programs the importance of introspection and reflection. They are integral to the lives of anyone who strives to raise their own consciousness, gain clarity around themselves and the world they live in, and heal genetic patterning which causes harm. They are essential to the life path of a medicine woman, a priestess, a shaman and a healer.

The goal of self awareness is gaining actionable insight you can use to change your life for the better. But how do you access those insights? Self awareness involves three elements to get you where you want to go:

* **Introspection** is the process of attempting to directly access one’s own internal psychological processes, judgments, perceptions, or states.
* **Self reflection** involves the “examination, contemplation, and analysis of one’s thoughts, feelings, and actions.”
* **Insight** is “the clear and often sudden discernment of a solution to a problem.” It’s the result of self reflection and introspection.

Introspection gives you access to understanding yourself, self reflection lets you process what you learn, and insights are the answers you come up with and that you can act upon.

In addition to leading to insights for what to do, self awareness also makes it more likely you’ll do as you say. Self awareness increases your ability to exercise control over your emotions by reducing stress and anxiety and providing a greater sense of well being.

When we engage in introspection, we too often start by asking “why” questions. It might be as simple as, “Why do I feel this way?” We search for the reasons underlying our discontent, our challenges, and the interpersonal exchanges which we find vexing.

On the surface, it makes sense, but it can lead us to a sort of cognitive bias called illusory correlation: seeing a relationship between two things that do not exist, or over estimating the degree in which two things are related to each other.

Often when we ask “why,” our brain points toward the most obvious answer - usually landing on the one that confirms our pre-existing beliefs. That’s because most of our motives are beyond our conscious awareness. They are formed from our earliest years and are made concrete through repeated experiences.

It takes more than ruminating to bring root causes to the surface. We tend to turn to answers that feel true in the moment. Unfortunately, these easy answers are frequently wrong.

For this reason, it is essential that we consistently work to develop our own consciousness. This means learning the ability to view our own minds, as an observer.

Our unconscious patterning works like this: we have an experience which we associate with other similar experiences, and unconsciously respond with an emotional reaction relative to what we experienced in the past. After this happens only a very few times, we have created an unconscious pattern, which in turn creates an expectation for how similar experiences will occur and feel in the future. We develop a bias for what we believe to be *true*, although it is not, in fact, truth. It is simply “reality” as we have filtered it through our personal lens. Every moment, each experience has the potential to be entirely unique, and should be. It is our minds which condition us to believe that particular scenarios are destined to play out in the same way every time.

The way we develop this kind of awareness of our thoughts is by noticing them in real time - like catching a thief. Let’s say we’re having an argument with our partner, which triggers unconscious patterns we developed in other past relationships. While engaged in the argument, the observer mind will notice how we are thinking about the situation, and the emotional responses our thoughts are producing. In essence, what we want is to be able to check in on our minds, and notice “hey - when they said “a”, I immediately assumed they meant “b”, because that’s what happened when I dated my ex. I’m noticing my adrenaline racing, and feel the impulse to respond as I had wanted to in that argument with my ex. But this is not my ex. Am I really listening to what my partner is saying in *this* situation? More importantly, am I understanding what they are really *feeling*?” This is the precise moment to raise consciousness, and change the pattern.

Developing the observer mind in our daily activities and exchanges can help us to develop a proper and healthy reflective mind as well. We learn to catch ourselves in our own delusions, in our own lies. We learn to seek out truth at all costs, as the truth is the only path for genuine healing and consciousness. We begin to track our mental patterns and understand how they were formed, how they are activated, and what we must do to eradicate them. In this process, we cultivate greater humility, compassion and forgiveness - for ourselves and others. We also gain more insight around humanity and the human condition, from which none of us ever truly transcends.

Like all of the natural world, like the Wheel of the Year itself, these processes are cyclical, even spiral-like in nature. We have breakthrough moments of clarity and higher understanding, we have moments of neutrality, and we have moments where our patterns resurface and we must humble ourselves again to our own fallibility. This explains why these moments of repose and reflection are crucial to accessing greater wisdom, and bringing our lives into greater sync and overall harmony. They are our prime opportunities to grow, to refine, to expand, and to heal.

**Scrying**

Scrying, also known by the names of *hydromancy, crystal gazing,* and *oculomancy*, is the ancient art of revelation. It is another form of introspection, using our deeper intuitive abilities.

Traditionally, scrying has been portrayed through the popular image of the psychic gazing over her crystal ball. But scrying, like all esoteric practices, is not about “seeing the future.” The future can’t be seen, it can only be speculated based on present moment information.

Many of those who practice divinatory arts use scrying to uncover truths about themselves and the world around them. To be a scryer, you are crossing over to another consciousness, a mystical plain, and leaving behind your conscious mind. The formal definition being: “Scrying is the art of gazing into a dark mirror, water or crystal, going beyond the physical eyes and letting the inner psychic eye open allowing us to receive visions and information.”

The word “scrying” has English roots, more exactly in the word “descry,” which means “to reveal.” Therefore, scrying is about revealing the unseen through the use of our in-born second sight. Second sight is our capacity to see things that can’t usually be perceived through our five senses.

The earliest known use of scrying was in 3000 BC China [where eggs would be cracked open and their contents](https://associationofparanormalstudy.wordpress.com/2013/11/14/mirror-mirror-on-the-wall-the-art-and-history-of-scrying/) interpreted.

One of the most famous, or infamous, scryers was the French soothsayer Nostradamus. He would often, late at night and by the light of a single candle, sit poised in front of a mirror, seeking truth from beyond. He became most well known for his apocalyptic quatrains.

The Roman Emperor, Julianus, who reigned from 355-363 A.D., employed young mirror scryers in his court to keep him informed at all times, of all potentialities. The use of water scrying is purported to have been used by the ancient Roman military to predict the happenings in the Mithridatic Wars, which ran near continually from 88-63 B.C..

In the ancient epic, *The Shahnameh*, written somewhere in the 10th century, it mentions the Cup of Jamshid. This cup, filled with an immortality elixir, was used by wizards and esoteric practitioners to see the seven layers of the universe—arguably an exercise in scrying.

Even the great Joseph Smith was a scryer. In *The Pearl of Great Price*, Joseph Smith—History 1:34, it describes how Smith was able to translate, interpret, or otherwise divine meaning from the sacred Gold Plates. By using two scrying stones named Urim and Thummim, seemingly set into glasses frames, Smith was able to gaze upon the plates and receive information that would come to comprise, in part, the contents of *The Book of Mormon*.

While the execution of the practice varies, it crosses religious and cultural boundaries, appearing in ancient Egypt as young boys would peer into vases filled with oil, or the Oracles of Delphi gazing into a special spring to predict battle outcomes for their emperor.

Scrying helps us to get in touch with our unconscious minds: the realm of the soul. As such, it can be used as a powerful form of self-understanding and psychoanalysis. If you’re struggling to find direction, meaning or purpose in life, scrying could be a wonderful way to get in touch with your core needs, dreams and goals.

Usually, scrying is performed with the use of a reflective surface, such as a mirror, water or crystal globe. However, there are many other forms. Here are nine common types:

* **Wax** – This is done by dripping wax onto a water surface. The scryer then interprets the images or words formed from the dried wax.
* **Cloud** – Also called cloud gazing, this form of scrying involves observing clouds and the shapes they form, used to gather intuitive information or knowledge.
* **Mirror** – This is perhaps the most popular form of scrying. Also called *catoptromancy*, this involves relaxing your vision and staring into a mirror. After a while, images and scenes will begin to emerge.
* **Water** – Staring into water, images can be perceived after a time. Objects such as pebbles can also be dropped into the water to create ripples. These ripples are then interpreted.
* **Oil** – This form of scrying can involve pouring oil into a dish, rubbing it on the body, or coating a cup/plate. The scryer then observes the light reflected off the oil for information.
* **Fire** – Possibly the most ancient form of scrying, this type of scrying involves gazing into fiery flames for visions. This can be done through the use of a simple candle or oil lamp. Some scryers also peer into glowing embers to receive symbolic information.
* **Smoke** – As smoke rises from fire, its ethereal shapes present spiritual messages.
* **Crystal** – This is the stereotypical form of scrying, but nonetheless very effective. It involves the use of a crystal object (usually a ball or globe) to detect images for interpretation..
* **Eye** – Also called soul gazing, this form of scrying involves looking deep within a person’s eyes and observing the reflections.

**How to Scry**

The initial set-up is easy:

Candles are a good tool to make the room appropriately dim, though they should be placed away from your scrying medium so as to not reflect off it. If you have another way to make the room dim, then that works just as well. The room should be dim enough that reflections off the surface are at a minimum while still being able to see the object’s surface.

Next, you should relax. Meditating or taking a warm bath beforehand is a good way to get you into the right state of mind before scrying. Burning some incense or putting some [essential oils](https://www.kelleemaize.com/post/best-ways-to-access-and-use-essential-oils) in a diffuser can help give the room a more cozy atmosphere.

You should be relaxed and comfortable, staring into the medium without concentrating too hard. Rather, you should wait for images to present themselves to you. Practice for as long as you’d like, although images do not usually start showing up for 10-15 minutes the first few times.

For beginners, you shouldn’t be looking for any exact answers or interpretations. Do not try to glean meaning out of images that have none. For your first few sessions, you are only trying to develop your ability to visualize. You have to learn to walk before you can run.

Record your results after each session until you can visualize with ease. Once you’re confident in your abilities you can start to interpret them.

Start writing down what you saw along with your suspected meaning, then give it a few days to fully interpret it and come back to your journal. Check if the meaning you originally interpreted matches what you now think it meant.

Getting an accurate interpretation takes practice and patience, the movement you might first have interpreted as sea waves might turn out to be mountains, the image of the sun could be the moon, etc. Your interpretation of what these images mean could also be mistaken, perhaps you think an image of a flipping coin means incoming wealth, while instead it means a gamble with chance.

After some time you should become more accurate with your interpretations and eventually you may even become adept enough to begin asking specific questions before your scrying sessions.

In conjunction with regular introspection and self-reflection, scrying can be an additional tool to help us raise our consciousness, eliminate mental patterns, confront our shadow side, and gain insight - particularly pertaining to observations which may, in truth, be self-deceptive. For those who have strong intuitive abilities, our inner knowing is sometimes wiser than our mental capacity.

**Sharing the Wisdom: Preparing Your Ritual**

Use this space to consider how you would honor this sabbat in a ritual way, whether for yourself or for others. This is meant to be a loose guide to inspire you, and to build confidence in your own intuition, vision, and abilities to incorporate more ritual in your life.

1. **What would your ritual space look like/what environment do you envision?**
2. **What items would you include on your altar? What do they represent to you?**
3. **What Elements would you include? How will you include them? And why?**
4. **What words do you feel should be spoken or sung? You might jot down your ideas, and create a loose outline to follow.**
5. **What is the best way for you, personally, to connect with this sabbat? How will you demonstrate that through ritual action?**

**Reflections and Integration**

Going back through your life in increments of 5 years, reflect upon this season/sabbat in the Wheel of the Year and what it has meant to you in those various stages of life. Use these questions as a guide:

* **What memories stand out to me the most about this season in each stage of life?**
* **How did this season/sabbat make me feel emotionally? Physically?**
* **How do my past experiences of the season/sabbat correlate to the present?**
* **In my highest vision, how would I best connect with this season/sabbat?**
* **From this year forward, what changes might I make to align myself more with the energies of this season/sabbat?**

1. From Biddy Tarot [↑](#footnote-ref-0)