



Contracts and Promises

Dear Mysterics,

“Just remember Parizival blew the job when he did what people expected him to do”

Joseph Campbell

Parizival was a knight who sought the Holy Grail. One day it was literally offered to him on a platter, or so the story goes. He must have prayed for that to happen. He had been looking for the Grail for years. Yet, when it was paraded in front of him he let it get away. He let a prior agreement, a contract he had made with his mother and his teachers stop him from reaching for what he had been praying for. Luckily for Parizival he was offered a second chance seven years later. By then he had learned to throw himself into his prayers. He had learned to make his own contracts with Life.

Minos prayed for a symbol from Poseidon to show his favor. If the Gods favored a mortal king he and his kingdom would prosper. Minos asked for the perfect gift to give back to Poseidon. He made a contract with Poseidon and the God delivered that perfect gift right onto Minos' doorstep. The gift itself, the bull, was so perfect that Minos made another agreement. A contract with himself. A contract that had actually been drawn up when Minos was born. A contract with Life.

This month is about contracts, agreements and commitments. It's about words, and thoughts and airy deeds. It's also about prayers and promises. It's about deeply felt emotions and those desires that make us human. It is about the churning of mind and heart that create the stories we live. Ultimately, it is about being human. It is about being irrational and therefore being willing to step into a story greater than our own. It is about committing ourselves to something we love and in that commitment being willing to risk all that we are in order to gain all that we and our world can be.

It is about making contracts in hopes that we can stop the world from changing. It is about making contracts that will let our world change and thereby live. We make contracts all the time with our friends, our families, our teachers... most often with ourselves. We make contracts with the Unseen Forces of Life, the Elementals and Deities, and with traffic signals. This month's packet offers you a chance to think about the contracts you've made and are going to make, if you will just agree to read it.



Life as a Sacred Path...Musings from The Book of Shadows

A Tangled Web of Contracts

By Jane Holt

One of my earliest memories is staring down into a fish pond in our backyard. I don't know if I was seeking answers or questions. I only remember being fascinated by the dark depths of the pond and the not-knowing that I was experiencing.

It probably wasn't long after that time that I began collecting answers. I wanted to know the answers to everything. I remember thinking that if I got enough answers or the right answer I would be able to control my world. With two alcoholic parents, my world as a child was an emotional mine-field, the wrong step could be disastrous. I desperately wanted some control. I believed that answers would tell me how to live in a way that would give my world stability.

I began making agreements and commitments. I began collecting contracts. I would agree to almost anything if it looked like it might lead to some peace and stability in my life. One of the first contracts I made was that all contracts were binding; I had to believe them and live them forever. In that early contract I agreed to never declare a contract null and void. Each would be inviolate. I also agreed that if I didn't live up to each contract 100% I would be doing it wrong and I would, therefore, be wrong. Those early contract lawyers must have loved to see me coming. I agreed to everything my Kindergarten teacher taught me and I also agreed to everything my First, Second and Third Grade teachers taught me. You see the pattern. I, of course, didn't. Those agreements weren't about learning, they were about living. I wanted someone to tell me how to do it right.

I bought a lot of nonsense over the years. I made most of those agreements in order to keep someone else happy.... Or because I believed that I couldn't make the decisions myself.... Or because it allowed me to step out of responsibility for myself.... Or because I didn't know and it was easier to let someone else decide.... Or because it was just easier than living my life myself. I was pretty certain that other people knew more about living than I did.

Over the years I have made so many contracts with so many different people that it's no wonder I get confused. I certainly have trouble finding myself among all those contracts.

What does one do with literally hundreds of contracts that at the very least are hopelessly out of date and at the worst are slowly strangling me, pulling me down with their sheer weight. I feel like I am lugging around a legal library: A Constitution of the United Jane. There are so many it would be difficult to go through them contract by contract. I feel like I need a lawyer and a congress to get me out of this mess. Do you suppose there is such a thing?

Maybe I don't need a lawyer at all. Maybe I need one more contract. A contract about seeking questions instead of answers. A contract about opening up my world instead of trying to sew it up neat and tidy. A contract with myself instead of about myself. An open ended contract that simply asks me to go back to that small backyard fish pond and start over. Make another choice. A contract with Life instead of about life.



The Priestess Path

The Labyrinth of the Priestess - Professional Spiritual Service
March - Intention - Why do you serve as a Priestess? What is your intention?
Is your intention supported by your form, style, language, and actions?
Contracts with the Gods - Agreements and commitments.
The Magician - the agreements we make - our dedication to a deity.

Here's What Each Priestess Path will Explore:

Small Group Facilitation: In March, the Small Group Facilitation Path will focus on agreements and ground rules, the contracts we hold with our fellow group members. These constants, built on the cornerstones, help define the group's norms and help establish and maintain safety in the group.
Arden (ardenjg@netscape.net)

Trance: Acknowledging resistance. We will continue our explorations in the powers of resistance and how to use them. We will also look at the language of Intention. Explorations in motivation. Why serve as a Priestess? Why step into the challenge of offering a trance journey to others? What is your intention? Is that intention supported by your form, style, language, and actions? How do we become aware of these factors when stepping into the role of trance facilitator? Patricia (patricia@dianasgrove.com)

Creating and Sustaining Healthy Community: Creating and Sustaining healthy community requires the desire and willingness to be self-aware. This month we will continue the unraveling of self in community. We will shape shift from we to I - from them to me. Are you willing to really know what you want from community? What sacrifice does community want from you? Gwenyth (Gwenyth@dianasgrove.com)

Ritual Arts: This month is about the professionalism of creating an experience for others. It is about participant center ritual designs. Designs that enable participants to experience the intention by invoking safety, inclusion and participation. As priestesses we dedicate ourselves to our group's success. We will learn how the Art of our physical bodies and minds, mingles with The Order, the ritual design, to create magic. Jane (Jane@dianasgrove.com)

The Gathering: The March Gathering work is understanding and using the skills of Intention and Inclusion. The second circuit of the Labyrinth is relationship. How do we, in the short time of the Gathering, create the atmosphere that sparks each individual to add their energy to a group? How do we communicate the message that each person matters in this process? Intention and Inclusion, where are you going, and who will be with you when you get there? Katie or Rena (JourneysKR@aol.com)

The work of the various Priestess Paths will be discussed on line. Each path has it's own line. There will be information posted to each list about the upcoming plan for the weekend and a follow-up post that summarizes the work that was actually done. The list is also available to discuss topics specific to each Priestess Path. If you are coming to the Grove, even just once, and plan to attend one of these groups, contact the group facilitator about joining the email discussion.



MEN'S MYTHIC QUEST WEEKEND

by Sunray

Oh my gosh, I've been asked to write about the men's mysteries and what goes on at the Men's Mythic Quest Weekend. And I know that most of the people reading this are women! If I reveal the men's mysteries they will no longer be mysteries and then what might happen? One possibility is I could be banished from the community of men! Or, another possibility is that if I reveal just enough, women and men might come a little closer to understanding one another instead of thinking we're from different planets. OK, so here I go.....shhh....this is a secret.

Imagine Diana's Grove, dedicated to the Goddess and to all that powerful feminine energy, and imagine what could happen if there are no women there at all! I know, I know, the men might beat their chests and beat their drums, watch sports on TV and leave the toilet seat up all the time. But that's not what really happens. Imagine vulnerability. Imagine a group of men, many meeting one another for the first time, and allowing themselves to be vulnerable to each other. Yes, we're all genetically programmed to compete with each other, and we're culturally programmed to be strong, i.e. impregnable fortresses where nothing gets in and nothing gets out. But something wonderful can happen in men only space....we sometimes forget about impressing each other....we sometimes let down our walls.....we sometimes remember that, deep down, we really can trust one another.....and we share our deepest selves....we give of ourselves and we witness each other, without judgment, because we realize we're traveling similar pathswe realize our bonds are stronger than our differences.....and we return to our loved ones a little different from when we left three short days ago.

Should I say it's not always serious? Sometimes it's just plain funny. Imagine twenty-two men walking, single file, from the barn to Faery Rock, with paper grocery bags over their heads and carrying large logs! Well, it probably looked like a bunch of guys on a fraternity initiation and it really happened at a Diana's Grove Men's Weekend a couple of years ago. What were the bags and the logs all about? Why did they go to Faery Rock and whom did they meet? Well, that will remain a mystery for those who were not there, and for those of us who were, we remember.....

This year will be the fifth annual Men's Mythic Quest, April 19-21. The dogwood or the redbuds may be in bloom and the forest will have that pale green cast that comes when the land is bursting with life and every step is filled with unstoppable growth. Our participants must like the experience, because they keep coming back, along with lots of first-timers, every year. This year's theme is the same as our year long work of Mystery School, filled with rich archetypes for men: Poseidon, Minos, Daedalus, Minotaur and more. I'll keep the details of the weekend a mystery except to say that we'll slay self limiting beliefs and find gods.....we'll travel the labyrinth and discover ourselves.....we'll re-story our lives and return home just a little different from when we left.

So, if you're a man reading this, consider joining us; it's a public weekend open to all men whether you're in Mystery School or not. If you're a woman who loves a man and you think he might like this experience, pass this along to him. This event is organized, supported, and facilitated by the men of Diana's Grove and we maintain all of the principles and standards of the Grove, including the food (yes, there will be a male cook!), the hot tub, the land, the incredible night sky, and, of course, community!



New and Hot off Diana's Grove Press

The Frame Drum as a Tool for Transformation

with Patricia Storm - Video Tape - \$20

An introduction to the frame drum, basic strokes, practice pieces and combinations of strokes and rhythms. Awaken the Dreamer within. Open the door between the Worlds of Imagination and Knowing. Learn to use the frame drum, the Tar, as a tool to facilitate Trance-formation for yourself and others. Practice the skills needed to begin to utilizing this tool in your ritual work and in work with small groups. Use your drum as a voice that enables you to lead the listener on a meditative journey. Pick one up at the Grove for \$16!

Comes with an insert of instructions for practice patterns and rhythms.

Audio Cassettes of the Mystery School Packets

written by Cynthia Jones - read by Jane Holt

You can now purchase the Mystery School story as told in the monthly packets on cassette tapes to listen to at your convenience. January and February are available now. March will be out soon.

If you are an auditory learner or if listening to the story enhances your experience, these tapes will be a must for you. Each tape is \$7 or buy a set of 3 for \$18.

The Tar Practice Tape

audio cassette tape - by Cybeles and Diana's Grove

This tape was made for those of you new or beginning drummers working with the frame drum (the tar) and wanting to hone your skills. Patricia Storm, Barb Pitcher, and Amy Oak spent a day playing the frame drum resulting in a cassette tape with instructions to facilitate your ability to play along and improve your own skills.

\$10

Comes with written instructions.

Interviews with the Archetypes

audio tape by Cynthia Jones introducing some of the major archetypes of the tarot. \$10

COMING VERY SOON!

Introduction to the Tarot - Video Tape with Cynthia Jones

Contracts with Mystery



- by Teri Parsley Starnes

"Everything existing in the universe is the fruit of chance and necessity."

Democritus

"Just as your life is shaped by choice and fate, action is the tool of fate and not its antidote."

Cynthia Jones in the February packet

Some people say we choose our charts before we are born. Others say Lachesis gives them to us as she assigns our lots. I'm not sure myself; perhaps our birth charts are just the fruit of chance and necessity. I'm also not sure of the answer to the question of free-will vs. fate. That's OK with me because I think living with these questions gives me more information than deciding on the answers. The Yoruba of West Africa believe that fate is preordained and that it also may be altered. One of my core beliefs is that I am my own authority—my own author. So, what do I make of this chart that is given to me by the stars at the moment of my birth? Does astrology allow me to author myself at the same time realizing that something outside myself has called me into being?

It is interesting to think about our birthcharts as a contract with Mystery. In it we have the terms of this life time, the resources that the gods have given us, and the promise of evolution and authenticity, if we agree to the challenges mapped out there. Perhaps the planets are like the fairies in Sleeping Beauty—each giving us special gifts at birth. It would not be a very compelling story if at least one fairy didn't give us the frightening gift of true awakening after a long spell of sleep. Perhaps we did not choose our charts but we can choose how we will live our lives. We can choose how we will dance with our fates. To author my life does not mean I want to step outside the rhythm of the moon or forget about my connection to the seasons, rather, it is how I choose to live within those things.

What does my contract with Mystery say about my choices? When I think of choice, I think of Hermes (the planet Mercury) standing at the crossroads, whispering in our ears about options. I also think of Venus, the ruler of the sign Libra with her scales of balance and her attention to choice and harmony. Of course, we can't forget Mars as the ruler of our "get up and go" —a quality we need to pursue our choices. Jupiter will add his focus on meaning and opportunity. Saturn will tell us the choice we "ought" to make. Uranus will remind us that the choice that brings freedom and innovation is the most important one for him. Neptune can cloud our choices, keeping the outcomes in mystery. Pluto says choose the path of authenticity even if it leads you into the Underworld. All of these gods can be consulted when we want to know about our choices, how we habitually choose, and how we can evolve in our choices.

What does this contract with Mystery say about my fate? Caroline Casey, in "Making the Gods Work for You," says, "Better to create prophecy than to live prediction. What makes us passive is toxic. What makes us active is tonic." In my chart I have a so-called difficult aspect between the Sun and Neptune. My fate is to live with Neptune's illusion and transcendence casting a fog on my shining Aries self. There have been times in my life when I have hated this contract with Mystery. I have blamed it for my lack of initiative, for how I don't fit in and for how I am attracted to addictive situations and people. When I blame, I am in the passive mode and it is toxic. When I choose to surrender to the beauty and the pain that Neptune has brought to me, I believe I have created prophecy. It is my own niche, my gift, and even my purpose.

When have you made the choice to create prophecy over prediction? Can you find it in your contract? If this thread calls you, join us on astrology02 for the discussion. "That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below, to bring about the miracle of Unity." Hermes Trismegistus

Above and below, within and without, astrology begins to weave a story about our spirits by taking meaning from the activity of nature. Another tool of astrology, the signs of the zodiac, is found in observing the qualities of the seasons and the elements. There are 12 signs which traditionally begin in Spring with the



sign of Aries, a fire sign. There are two more fire signs, Leo and Sagittarius. Each season has a beginning (Cardinal), middle (Fixed) and transitional period (Mutable) which correspond to what we call the modalities. There is only one Cardinal fire sign—Aries, one Fixed fire sign—Leo and one Mutable fire sign—Sagittarius. The differentiating energy of all these fire signs is the unique modality of each. Aries which begins the season of Spring, has a drive to begin projects, Leo which holds the energy of Summer has a drive to shine for all to see, as dependable as the Sun itself, and Sagittarius, which moves between the Fall and Winter, has a drive to explore, to see what is around the corner as the season changes. This pattern holds true for the other 3 elements as well. One way to connect to the energy of the zodiac is to create a mandala of elements and modalities. Begin to see the similarities between signs of the same element and the differences that the modalities make.

A birthchart is a circle divided into 12 houses which correspond to 12 areas of life. The houses represent the arch of the sky above us and the equal arch hidden below us. A line runs horizontally through the chart, all the houses below that line are below the horizon, all the houses above it are above the horizon. Your chart places you in the center of the circle that is the sky around. The room that a planet lives in will also change the flavor of that planet, much as the sign changes the qualities of that planet. Where was the Sun when you were born? The Sun at the zenith of the sky has an entirely different focus than the Sun at midnight. The houses tell us about the relationship between the self and the sky. They also will tell which planetary God to consult when you want to know about relationships, career or any other important part of life. The key to a house is the planetary ruler of the sign that begins the boundary of that house, which we call the cusp. If the sign Gemini is at the beginning of your relationship house, the planet Mercury, since it rules Gemini, will have a lot to say about your relationships.

We are all familiar with the Greek myths that have the Gods conferring and sometimes arguing with each other on Mt. Olympus. The aspects between planets are a lot like that. Aspects are particular geometric distances between planets that create a dialog between the planets. Sometimes the dialog is harmonious, sometimes it is challenging, and sometimes argumentative. It all depends on which aspect. It is through the aspects that we receive our blueprint for growth from the Gods. These aspects can identify areas of life where we have extra resources and other areas of life where we can encounter patterns of growth-producing frustration! With the aspects between planets we begin to locate ourselves in the stately dance of planetary cycles. Over the course of a few days in the case of the fast-moving Moon, or in the course of decades or centuries, in the case of the slow-moving outer planets, the planets come together and separate and come together again, creating evolutionary growth.

Planets, signs, houses and aspects are the primary tools of Mystery that astrologers use to place ourselves within the wisdom of nature. By looking around us we are able to look within. After years of astrological study, I still find new meaning when I meditate on these tools and on the wonder of the stars around me.

**We have begun some great astrological discussions on Astrology02@Topica.Com.
Please join us if you are also inspired by the sky.**

If you would like a copy of your **astrological chart** or a report, contact us at astrology@dianasgrove.com or call us at 573 - 689-2400. All we need is:

Name - birth date - birth time - birthplace

Color charts are \$5 - Full report of your birthchart - \$20

other reports and services are available - contact us for more information



Skippy Speaks - A Tale of Truth

A thousand years ago, give or take a few, I stood upon this stage as Skippocles, Great Single Dog Greek Chorus and I made a promise to you. I promised to tell all. Well, I'm not gonna...not yet at any rate. I'm not gonna tell you what happened to the bull, nor am I gonna tell you some of the other things you've been yammering about. It's not time. It's not time yet for you to know. And as any good Greek Chorus knows—timing is everything. I'm not going to blow the story for the storyteller. So, instead I'm going to tell you a true story, a real story about real beings. This story is about Skippy the Brave and Skippy the Bad. And everything single piece of it is true! This tale begins thusly.....

Forces play upon the shoreline of my domain. They touch kingdoms and kings and dogs, of course. Those forces, they are the skunks and the coyotes, they are Mysteries, neighbors, puppies and weather not forecast by the weather channel. They are forces beyond control and prayer....No, no, scratch that part. Nothing is beyond my control. I don't need prayer, I just need a good bark and a good lieutenant—that would be my faithful beagle pal, Honey.

For years I have taken on the forces that play upon my shoreline. No skunk is allowed to wander free upon my land, no coyote crosses my boundaries unchallenged. And the Gods in the box that call the down the weather, I fear none of them, not even the one they call Storm Expert! Nor do I dream of a kingdom where each day is the same. What would I do? Die from boredom no doubt. No, no life is to be lived with passion and no regrets. Every minute that we dogs are awake, which isn't a lot I admit, we are alert and present. That is as it should be. And most certainly I do not dream of a kingdom of no famine and no feast. What is life without Feasts? Appalling thought! Yuk, almost enough call up my evil twin Skippawaywithdinnergrinning, she who bounds upon you when you are least able to defend yourself and she who chases the Big Brown Truck (yes, it's true they promised me big bucks for tossing them a bone. Kickbacks right here in the middle of Mystery School. Shameless I know, but we thespians have to find our patrons wherever we can. There are not many calls for One-Dog-Greek-Chorus'. There are so few people of real culture left.)

To continue.....Yes, I have heard those tales that there are two Skippys. How truly absurd. How could there be two of me? I am unique. I am all that I am... and not all of it is pretty. But...don't *you* strive to be all that you are? Is all of it pretty? It's all you, however, isn't it? We heros are not made of pale plaster, nor are we flat, lifeless frescoes perfectly painted upon some ancient wall. Our footprints leave marks on this earth, our tails leave marks upon history. If you break us in two you break us into mere images of ourselves. If you break yourselves into pieces you become just pieces of who you are. To stand with the forces that play upon the shoreline of our domains we must be whole. For it is in our wholeness that we play our greatest roles. It is in our wholeness that we see our true selves. I, Skippocles, have spoken. The Chorus always gets the last word. That's the best part.

