



WELCOME TO THE 16TH ANNUAL WITCHLETS IN THE WOODS!

Saturday, August 5 – Wednesday, August 9, 2017

Mendocino Woodlands, Camp II, 39350 Little Lake Road, Mendocino CA 95460

We look forward to coming together as a community again this year with new friends as well as old. Witchlets was birthed by the desire to create a sacred space for pagan families to come together and honor the gifts that witches of all ages bring to the world. Together, we create a place where our families are surrounded by magic and where children and adults feel safe and free to step into their magical power. It is an opportunity for pagan families of all kinds to build community resources and expand extended family.

In that spirit, all adult campers and teachers agree to act with integrity and mindfulness in our interactions with all of the children in camp, recognizing that while we are each responsible for our own children, at camp we create community and share the sacred trust of creating a safe and nurturing container for all of our children.

Witchlets in the Woods is drug and alcohol free during the length of camp except for prescription drugs, medicinal herbs, nicotine, and caffeine. Reclaiming is a tradition that chooses to move between the worlds at will without the aid of mood-, mind-, or spirit-altering substances.

We are organized by volunteer Weavers and Spinners, who meet monthly and make decisions by consensus. All who are interested are welcome to attend our meetings. If you'd like to become a member of the Weavers or a Spinner, you must have attended one camp and be able to commit to missing a maximum of two

meetings throughout the year. At camp, there are many ways to step into leadership and help make the magic happen. We are committed to the Reclaiming Principles of Unity which can be found on our website at www.Witchlets.org.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Before camp, the main contacts for Camp 2017 are Stas and Jax, who can be reached at 510-589-0897 or by sending an email to info@witchlets.org. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 14404, San Francisco CA 94114.

To get the most up-to-date information about Witchlets and to participate in discussions, please subscribe to our email-based group by sending an email to: witwoods-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. If you're on facebook, you can also join our facebook group at www.facebook.com/WITWoods. We also provide important information about camp on our website's blog at www.Witchlets.org.

During camp, the only phone at camp is a pay phone. If someone needs to reach you while you're at camp, they will need to call 707-937-9958 and let it ring and ring. The pay phone is located outside and it may take a while for someone to hear that it's ringing. Cell phones generally do not work in the Mendocino Woodlands.



CAMP SIGN-IN

On-site registration is from 2:00 – 4:00 pm, Saturday, August 5, at the Woodlands Camp II. When you register, please make sure to sign the Photo Release form and the Liability form for all members of your family before heading to your cabin or camping spot. We ask that you sign up for camp tasks at that time, as well.

Please give yourselves plenty of time to get settled before the opening ritual, all-camp meeting, and snacks (yay!) which begin at 5:00 pm. Dinner will be served at approximately 6:00 pm.

GENERAL SCHEDULE

Our days follow this general routine with changes here and there for meetings and special offerings:

Mornings

- 7:00 Breakfast
- 9:00 Clean up
- 9:30 Entering story
- 10:00 Paths

Afternoons

- 12:30 Lunch — Ritual planning (look for the table outside dining hall)
- 1:30 Clean up
- 2:00 Family free time (nap, journal, swim, play, hike, listen to the forest...)
- 3:00 Workshops

Evenings

- 6:00 Dinner
- 7:00 All-camp ritual (except Tuesday's ritual will be at 4:00 before dinner)
- 9:00 Fire circle with story and song

PATHS

A path meets each morning for the duration of camp, and is traditionally organized by age.

Faery Path, Ages 0–4: Jason, Hilary, and friends will hold our faeries with play and song — for faeries accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Newt Path, Ages 4–8: Join Jaden, Mykel, Allison, and George in “Elements for Newts” — an Elements of Magic path designed especially for young folks. We'll do lots of singing, crafts, nature magic, and elemental games to encourage exploration and play in the woods. And we'll be close enough to Bear Path to find parents if needed.

Raccoon Path, Ages 8–13: Paul, KaeliMo, and LizAnn — we will dive into an amazing journey of our own. Working with games, trances, shapeshifting, spellworking, and crafts, we will transform and find our very own gifts that we endow to ourselves, our families, and the world.

Raven Path, Ages 13–19: Join our teen team — Stas, Ari, and Meg — to explore magic and mystery from a teen's point of view, and build connections with the Earth and one another.

Bear Paths: This year we will have two magical paths for adults, one with Rose and Moss, and another with Yule.



WHAT TO BRING

Oh so many things to bring. Do your best, but... if you get to camp only to find that you forgot your fanciest tutu, or left your unscented bug repellent on the bathroom sink back home — no worries. Chances are, someone brought extra and will be happy to share. Just ask.

Highly recommended stuff

- Clothes for warm days, very cold evenings
- Flip flops for the shower
- Comfy walking shoes/shoes for the river
- Sleepwear/Bathrobe
- Two towels and personal toiletries — scent free please
- Water bottle
- Cushion, mat/ground cloth, or portable chair
- Bedding and pillow (The camp only supplies beds. Some years people are COLD. Please bring warm bedding and warm clothing.)
- Tent and necessary items, if you are tenting
- Medicines and supplies for first aid. Herbal remedies to share are wonderful
- Ritual wear and jewelry, bring lots of fun outfits or you will wish you did
- Sunhat and sunglasses
- Coat hangers (there are closets)
- Flashlight and batteries (There is no electricity in the cabins. It gets REALLY dark at night)
- Extra batteries
- Extra snacks, if needed, in a rodent-proof container (snacks will be available during the day)

- Alarm clock or watch
- Cash for the Goblin Market, scholarship fundraising raffle and silent solidarity auction, and tips for teachers and cooks.
- Unscented sunscreen and bug repellent (to support folks with sensitivity) and/or loose fitting, long-sleeved clothes with cuffs. Mosquitoes at sunset!

Optional stuff

- Items for Ancestor and Faery altars
- A small container of water from a lake, river, stream, or ocean near your home to add to the waters of the world, an ongoing collection used in our rituals
- Dirt from your home for ancestor altar
- Decorations for camp, including the dining room, altars, and your cabin
- Favorite books, music
- Journals if desired
- Jump ropes, balls, games, etc
- Drums and other musical instruments
- Craft supplies to share
- Spellcraft items: scissors, glue, pictures, crayons and pens and paper etc
- Personal comfort items — stuffed animals, blankets, etc.
- A blank t-shirt or item of clothing/cloth that you would like to decorate or tie-dye
- A special, magical item to contribute to scholarship fundraising raffle





COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS

This is an outline of our camp agreements, which, as all relationships do, evolve and change over time. ***Please take the time to read to your family members prior to camp.*** Some agreements are mandated by the Mendocino Woodlands whose goodwill we value.

Cabins If you specified on your registration form that you'd like a cabin, your family will be assigned one or more cabins (depending on the number of people in your family). You will get a private cabin(s) unless you specified that you'd be willing to share with another family. You're welcome to trade around with other families as you desire. You can also bring a tent and camp out if you like, or put it up next to your cabin for extra room. The cabins are rustic and dark, they have no electricity, the lower half and the roof are wood, with bug screens instead of windows, so it can get quite cold at night. Some people bring coverings to put over the windows with push pins, if you require more privacy. We cannot use candles nor gas lanterns in the cabins nor anywhere in camp, as requested by the Woodland staff. The dining hall and shower block have electricity.

Food We serve omnivore and vegetarian meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. There are also always snacks out in the dining hall for hungry little stomachs. If you indicated food sensitivities on your registration, our amazing cooks make every effort to serve something yummy you can eat at every meal.

Campers are encouraged to be thoughtful about how much food they put on their plates. There is usually enough for seconds, so take what you know you'll eat, and come back for more if your body needs it.

The kitchen closes at 7:00 pm nightly. There will be no access to the kitchen after this time, unless specifically authorized. A late evening snack will be provided in the dining hall. Please be aware that the evening snack will not include hot beverages. If you would like a hot beverage after kitchen closing time, hot water will be available for use in the dining hall, and you may bring your own supplies to make your hot beverages.

Our special-food needs liaison (tbd) will contact people with special-dietary needs before camp and will be available during camp. At camp, please see our special-food needs liaison to communicate with the kitchen.

There is also a refrigerator available in the dining hall for your use at all times. Please be mindful about the amount of items you bring, as all campers share this one refrigerator.

Required Tasks When you arrive at Camp II for on-site registration, we ask that all adults, age 19 and over, assign yourself to a minimum of three task shifts — at least one in the kitchen — over the week. We ask campers between the ages of 13 and 18 sign up and perform two tasks. Adults with witchlets under the age of 5, two tasks each adult. Single adults with witchlets aged 12 and under are excused for all camp clean up. Teachers are to sign up for at least one task. Task shifts include helping with meal prep or clean up in the kitchen, cleaning bathrooms, or helping with childcare for others who are working. ***We co-create and maintain the space as a community during camp, and ask that you commit to the chores you sign up for and arrive on-time to perform them.*** If you have questions about your shift, please ask Seonaid at camp.

Transportation Due to a limited amount of parking space, cars will get to unload in the closest lot, and then will be required to park farther along the road. See the map and directions at the end of this packet.

Electronics Witchlets in the Woods is a place where families connect with each other, the natural world, and Spirit. With this as a goal, we ask that common areas, including: the woods, fire circle, and lodge be free of individual electronics (such as phones, laptops, radios, and hand-held devices). As we come here to create sacred relationships with nature and each other, we encourage each family to talk about and decide together how electronic devices and games influence the valuable ways we connect. Please consider the whole community when making your decisions.

Workshops Anyone can offer a workshop! Please let us know by July 10 if you want to offer one. Workshops should avoid using highly scented or volatile materials (like potpourri, nail polish, etc.) We have paths offered in the morning for those who wish to participate. Workshops are offered in the afternoon. More details will be available at camp.

Glitter Please leave glitter at home. It is generally not biodegradable and eventually ends up in the stomachs of animals.

Showers There is only one shower block, to be shared by people of all bodies and ages. There are also a few private showers for those wishing privacy.

Substances Witchlets in the Woods is drug and alcohol free during the length of camp, except for prescription drugs, medicinal herbs, nicotine, and caffeine.

Smoking There is one designated smoking area. Do not smoke nor vape anything anywhere else, this is a Mendocino Woodlands rule due to high fire danger. Absolutely NO smoking in cabins. Please note that smoking substances and prescriptions are for your personal use. We ask that you don't share them.

Candles/Fires There are no candles nor gas lanterns allowed in the cabins nor anywhere in the Woodlands. There are only two designated fire pit areas. This is a high fire-danger area.



Environmental Sensitivity To support folks who are allergic to scents and other environmental factors, please do not wear fragrances, including essential oils and citronella, and avoid using heavily scented soaps, shampoos, and other personal-care products.

There ain't no bugs on me! Because we have people at camp who are allergic to chemical fragrances and essential oils like citronella, please do not use citronella at camp. There will be odorless insect repellent available to share at camp. If you have concerns about DEET, have everyone in your family eat garlic, brewers yeast, and vitamin B for at least one week before camp and bring long sleeved, loose fitting clothes, bug nets for head (especially for baby) and stay in during sunrise and sundown. Check your family carefully for ticks daily. Vitamin B patches are a popular, newer form of skeeter protection. Google it and order some, if so inclined, please be aware that some people do experience allergic reactions to the patches.

Physical Accessibility All of the camp is rustic dirt paths and wooden bridges, not wheelchair accessible. Most of the bathroom blocks are up 15 foot slopes, which can be difficult if you have



mobility problems. We do have one bathroom available near the dining hall especially for adaptive use. People have gotten around with walking sticks and crutches at previous camps. We will do our best to support your needs.

Raffle This year we will be holding a raffle to raise money for the scholarship and work study fund. We are trying something new this year, so please choose only special, magickal items, for a variety of ages, from your home to donate. We also suggest talking to your family about why we have a raffle (to raise funds to help families come to camp) and the beauty of donating precious gifts to that effort.

Goblin Market We invite all crafts people and anyone who has a service to share to participate in our flea market. You need to provide your own table and everything you might need to sell your wares. We ask that you donate 10% of the final sales to go towards next year's scholarship fund.

Skyclad As witches, we hold our bodies as sacred and a gift from the Goddess. Some children and adults celebrate this by being naked especially while swimming. If you or your children are unfamiliar with being around people without clothes, you might want to discuss this before camp to get used to the idea! We do not ask that everyone take off their clothes, just to be open to others who do.

Swimming There is a swimming hole within driving distance and there are regular, non-WITW-sponsored excursions to it! We expect all drivers to and from the swimming hole to obey all relevant traffic laws.

Families We hold that anyone who calls themselves family, is family. We welcome and expect extended and diverse families and tribal

members including queer families, two-parent heterosexual families, single-parent families, no-child families, and polyamorous families as well as many other forms that we have neglected to mention here.

A Container for Working Through Conflict

Occasionally, campers may experience disconnect or conflict with another camper or campers. That's okay. Conflict happens, even in the most magical of groups. At Witchlets, we agree to take the following steps, should conflict arise.

1. First step, take a deep breath and try to resolve it yourself. Reach out to your fellow camper, even if it's scary, share your feelings, and see if you can move through it together.
2. If that doesn't help, reach out to an Ally (they'll be introduced during the first camp meeting) and tell them you need to "Clear a Held Feeling".
3. The Ally will schedule a session between conflicted campers approximately 24 hours later, give each camper a "Clearing Held Feelings" packet, and ask them to complete it before the scheduled session.
4. During the session, facilitated by one or more Allies, all involved will be given a chance to speak, listen, and respond.
5. If the conflict remains, you can request a community meeting.
6. If the conflict still remains, the Weavers will make a final decision in an open meeting.



DRIVING DIRECTIONS TO THE MENDOCINO WOODLANDS

For more information on the camp site, visit www.MendocinoWoodlands.org.

Drive time from Sacramento, Oakland, and San Francisco airports is approximately four hours.

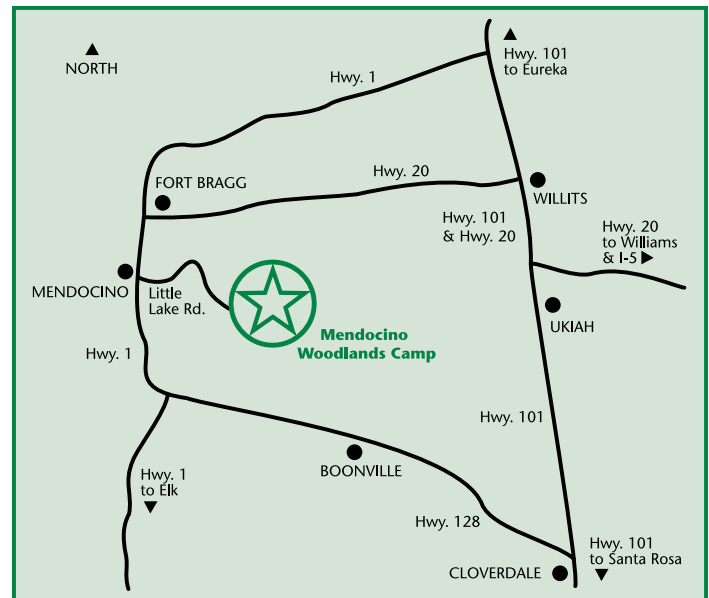
From Santa Rosa and the Bay Area

Take Highway 101 North to Cloverdale. Turn left onto Highway 128 and stay on it until it merges with Highway 1 at the coast. Follow Highway 1 north to Mendocino. At the traffic light, turn right onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about five and one-half miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass group Camps I and III, keep driving all the way to Camp II, which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.

Or... take Highway 101 North to Highway 20 in Willits. Turn left (west) and follow 20 until it dead ends at Highway 1. Turn left on Highway 1 south until you get to Mendocino. At the traffic light, turn left onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about five and one-half miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass group Camps I and III, keep driving all the way to Camp II, which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.

From Eureka Area

Take Highway 101 south to either Highway 1 or Highway 20. When you get to Fort Bragg, follow Highway 1 south to Mendocino. At the traffic light, turn left onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about 5-1/2 miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass other group camp areas all the way to Camp II which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.



From Sacramento Area

Take I-5 north to Williams, then go west on Highway 20 to Highway 101. Go north on 101 to Willits, then left (west) on Highway 20 until it dead ends at Highway 1. Turn left on Highway 1 south until you get to Mendocino. At the traffic light, turn left onto Little Lake Road and follow it out about 5-1/2 miles to the end of the pavement. Bear right (you'll see a sign for the Woodlands) and follow this gravel road out approximately another three miles to arrive at the Woodlands. Drive into the Woodlands. You will pass group Camps I and III, keep driving all the way to Camp II, which is at the very end of the road. Look for "Witchlets" signs along the way.





CAMP 2017 STORY »»»» Brigid and the Cailleach of the Snows

Once upon a far time, when there was water where there is now land and land where there is now water, there lived the Cailleach, old and ancient beyond reckoning. She had seen more years than any other being upon earth. For her, the winters were her nights and the summers were her days. It was the Cailleach who had formed the mountains when she and her sisters first came to the land of Scotland, long before people lived there. They flew over the land, throwing stones from their aprons and where these stones fell to earth, great mountain ranges sprang up.

Many centuries passed and the Cailleach and her sisters grew tired and weary. A new people came and lived on their land, and the Old Ones withdrew to the high mountains where they could not be disturbed by the doings of human beings. Now, the reason why the Cailleach and her sisters had survived for so many years was the secret Well of Renewal, high up in the mountains. Whenever the pains of age came upon them, they would bathe in those clear, cold waters and emerge fresh and young again. But since the coming of people, the waters of the Well of Renewal would only rise at certain times. Soon it became clear that there would only be enough water for one of the sisters to bathe in.

The sisters said, "Let us draw lots between us and see which of us will bathe when the waters rise again." The lucky sister would go into the well and emerge youthful again, while the remaining sisters would grow ever weaker. They did not die as humans die, but would sit still, looking out over the lochs and pastures of the lowlands until each one turned to stone. One by one, each of the sisters became a part of the mountain ranges that they had helped to form, returning to stone, until only the Cailleach was left.

The Cailleach mourned her sisters, crying, "Hoo-a-hoo! Where are my sisters now?" Her tears became snow and her sighing became the winter gales, and the land fell under snow and ice.

After that sad time, the years hung heavy upon her. Hers was a lonely life. While her sisters were alive, they would hunt for and prepare food; they would do the washing, make clothes

and sing strange and haunting songs together when darkness fell. Now they were gone, and the Cailleach became as grim as an icy morning when the sun never rises out of the clouds.

She managed her life as best as she could. She clothed herself with the veils of the weather: cloaks of starry nights and of clear blue days, robes of gray, knitted clouds, and a white mantle of fresh snow.

When her bones ached and her strength began to fail, she would bathe in the magical well, which renewed her, but the waters did not have the power that they once had, and they rose too seldom to restore her to full energy. At the rare times of their rising, she would have to ensure that she was the first to reach the waters, before a bird drank there, or before a dog barked.

Her life became perpetual winter. As the years turned, she would shun the warmer months of summer and hide within the sunless valleys of the high mountains. But when it was time for winter to return, she would call in the winter with three strokes of her blackthorn staff. With her stone hammer, she would strike the ground until it grew hard with frost. And she would blanket the earth with her white mantle of snow. At the approach of spring time the Cailleach would retreat to her mountain home until it was time again for winter.

Years passed like days, days like seconds. When she went to the Well of Renewal, there was always less water in it than there had been before. When she bathed in the waters, she emerged less youthful, less agile. The tasks she had once performed easily now grew harder. She needed a servant to tend to her needs: a maiden to fish the lochs, to weave her clothes, to prepare her food and comb her hair. From all over Scotland, she took young maidens to be her servants. But the Cailleach lived so long that, one by one, the maidens she chose grew old and died.

Winter was the time of the Cailleach's strength and she was still able to go about in the form of different animals, as a monstrous sow, as a narrow gray wolf, as a slippery eel, or as a querulous crane.



Now, a girl by the name of Brighid lived in the house of a druid with her mother. Brighid would look after the sheep, following them over the hills. One day Brighid went up into the hills with the flock, and a thick, icy mist came down so that she lost her way. She called out to the old bellwether sheep that led the flock. Hearing the sound of hoofs on the rocks, she stretched out her hand and touched – not the thick woolly coat of a sheep – but the greasy, leathery skin of a pig. She was snatched up and carried off by the Cailleach.

The Cailleach bore Brighid back to her drafty cave and set her to milking the herd of deer that were penned in the glen.

The seasons passed, yet it remained winter. The people and the animals and plants of the earth suffered. Brighid knew that something had to be done to restore balance. Though the Cailleach is a mighty force, beyond what most could ever hope to overcome, Brighid knew a magical secret: Love. She called Love to her with a song. Every night in the depths of winter, with deep love, she called. And always she dreamed of home.



One day, the Cailleach took the form of a crane and took Brighid down to the seashore to fish with a baited line. “Fill this creel with fish before nightfall,” commanded the Cailleach. “I shall feed along the loch side and fetch you back before dusk.”

With shivering fingers, Brighid baited the line with worms and wept, longing for her mother. As she cried, she called her mother’s love to her with her song. And as she did, a black and white bird with a long red beak drew steadily nearer, calling “Klee-ee, klee-ee!” It was the druid who came to her in the shape of an oystercatcher. “Keep fishing, Brighid, and listen to me! I have been searching for you for the better part of a year. The time of the Cailleach is passing, and the time of Brighid is coming. Take my advice and not only will you be free from the Cailleach’s service but you will also inherit her wisdom and power. She cannot survive many more winters without renewal.”

“What must I do?” whispered Brighid, taking the fish off the line into the creel.

“Three things will bring you freedom. First of all, you must discover her secret name, then you must discover the Well of Renewal, lastly you must overcome her iron grip upon winter so that the spring may speedily return. To find out her name, you must ask her how long she has lived. Listen carefully to all that she tells you and report it to me, for I will come to you again.”

Later that evening, Brighid made up the fire and gave the Cailleach a beaker of deer’s milk, saying shyly, “You must have lived a very long time, great Cailleach.”

“Ah, child! I have lived from before the time when the seas were once land and the land was once water. Before the mountains raised their peaks, and the glens filled with lochs, the Daughter of the Bones was born,” said the Cailleach sadly and would say no more.

The oystercatcher came to Brighid again and listened to what the Cailleach had said. “The Cailleach’s secret name is ‘Nic Neven,’ the Daughter of the Bones,” said the transformed druid. “Armed with this knowledge, you will be able to find the place of her secret renewal and ensure that she cannot use it. The time is near when she must renew herself. Watch and follow her closely. But now you must gather rushes from the loch and weave them into a threefold starry wheel, You will need this starry wheel to seal the well until the Cailleach goes to her long sleep,” and the bird taught her what to do.

When the Cailleach dozed in her cave, Brighid’s busy fingers wove the starry wheel from the rushes she had hidden. The very next day, long before dawn, the Cailleach went in the shape of a narrow gray wolf to inspect the well, and Brighid followed her at a distance. But the time for the waters to rise had not yet come and the Cailleach-wolf slunk away down the mountain. Brighid went to the well and, just as the druid had taught her, she laid the starry wheel woven out of rushes upon the opening of the well and said,

“In the name of the ancient one, Nic Neven,
I seal this well with the star of heaven,
By spark of sun and ray of fire,
May the waters of youth rise up no higher,
Until I call with voice of power;
Then waters rise and mountain flower!”



The oystercatcher came to Brighid again the following day.

Brighid said to the oystercatcher, “I have done all that you told me, but how can her iron grip upon winter be loosened?”

The druid-bird said, “Cut a birch wand from the tree that grows at the head of the glen and teach the Cailleach the Dance of the Mill Dust. You must show her all the steps and movements and, putting the birch wand in her hand, tell her that she must first practice upon you. Make sure that you fall down first and let her strike your hands, feet, and mouth with the wand. When she does that, then you will be dead for a short time. But never fear, for I will be nearby to whistle the music. Be firm and brave, for she will want to dance in





turn, and she will breathe upon your hands, feet, and mouth so that you become alive again. When it is her time to fall down, you must strike her with the wand upon her hands, feet, and mouth, and then she will become like stone and all her power and wisdom will be yours. But you must be sure never to breathe upon her hands, feet, and mouth, for, if you do, she will awaken again.”

Brighid cut the birch wand and hid it under her cloak. Later that night, she went to the Cailleach, saying, “The nights are long without dancing and music. I wonder whether you would like to dance, great Cailleach?”

The Cailleach sighed, “Hoo-a hoo! It is long since I danced with my sisters upon the first grass of the glens. I am too old now and we have no music.”

Brighid smiled at her. “I’ve thought of that. I’ve taught this bird the tune of a dance – it’s the only one he can whistle.” The oystercatcher obediently whistled the Dance of the Mill Dust with its jaunty rhythm. The Cailleach’s foot began to tap and soon she was begging to be taught the dance.

Brighid brought out the wand from the woodpile and showed the Cailleach how the dance went. “First we come together, then we step away, then we weave and change places,” she explained, banging the birch wand upon the ground to the rhythm of the steps. Soon the Cailleach was breathless. “It’s a very vigorous dance!”

Brighid smiled. “Yes, but we take turns having a rest – like this. First one of us taps the other on the head with the wand and the other falls down. Then the one who is still standing will touch the other on the hands, and they do a little dance of their own; then the feet and lastly the mouth. And when the one on the floor is very still, the other one breathes onto their hands, feet, and mouth and they stand up again and change places. Have you got your breath back now? Well, why don’t you try holding the wand and I will lie down first while you’re learning the dance. Then, you can take your turn lying down and rest as long as you like.”

“Good!” said the Cailleach. And they began. First, she tapped Brighid on the head and down she fell to the floor. As Brighid lay on the ground, her heart pounded with fear. She

trusted the druid, but she didn’t know whether the Cailleach would remember to breathe upon her hands, feet, and mouth again. For if she didn’t, then Brighid would be dead forever. Then the Cailleach tapped her on the mouth with the wand, and Brighid felt the breath dry up within her. The oystercatcher whistled on, but Brighid heard no more until the Cailleach began to breathe upon her mouth, and the life came back into her and she leaped up gladly.

“Now it’s your turn to dance!” said the Cailleach, and they began again. This time, Brighid struck the Cailleach with the wand and she fell to the ground so that the earth itself shuddered. When Brighid touched her mouth with the birch wand, the Cailleach turned to cold, unmoving stone.

The oystercatcher bowed his head to Brighid, saying, “The power of the Cailleach is now yours. Use the wand wisely, for, as the light lengthens, so the cold strengthens.”



Brighid felt that great power within herself and promised then and there to be the helper of all beings who were in trouble. She called out in a loud voice,

“Nic Neven’s power is overthrown!
Rise up, waters, from deep-down stone!
By ray of fire and spark of sun,
May winter’s whiteness be undone!
Life be renewed by springtime’s power;
Now black ice crack and mountain flower!”

Brighid raised the wand, and the starry wheel of rushes that covered the Well of Renewal flew into the sky like a spinning sun. The waters of the well swept up upon the power of the song and fell as rain upon the land of Scotland, melting the ice and snow. Upon the mountainside, the first green shoots of spring flowers pierced the hard ground, and everywhere people gave thanks and welcomed Brighid back among them.

The winters are not so hard as they once were, and the Cailleach rarely moves from her confinement of stone. But, if the snows sweep down from the high mountains and cloak the land with white, people still say the Cailleach of the Snows walks the land once more.

