

The Keld

III

Greetings,

As Guildmaster of Literature during the reign of Aramithris Rex III, it is my duty and pleasure to present "The Keep", the official Burning Lands literary magazine.

The content was compiled from written work submitted in crown qualifications previous to the election of Aramithris. Also included is art work which I felt complemented the poems and stories.

Thanks to everyone who made this possible. Special thanks to Raxx, Guildmaster of Art, and to the Crown for their patience.

I hope you enjoy this magazine as much as I have.

In Service to Amtgard

Delphos



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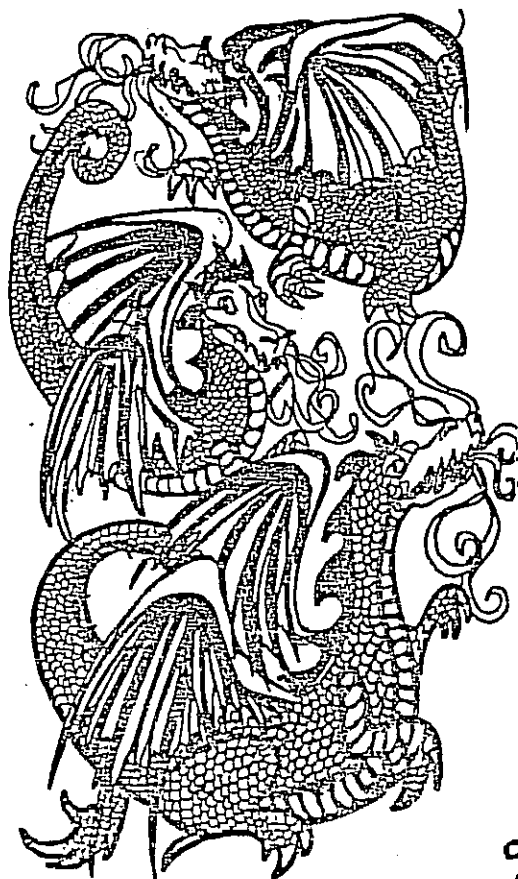
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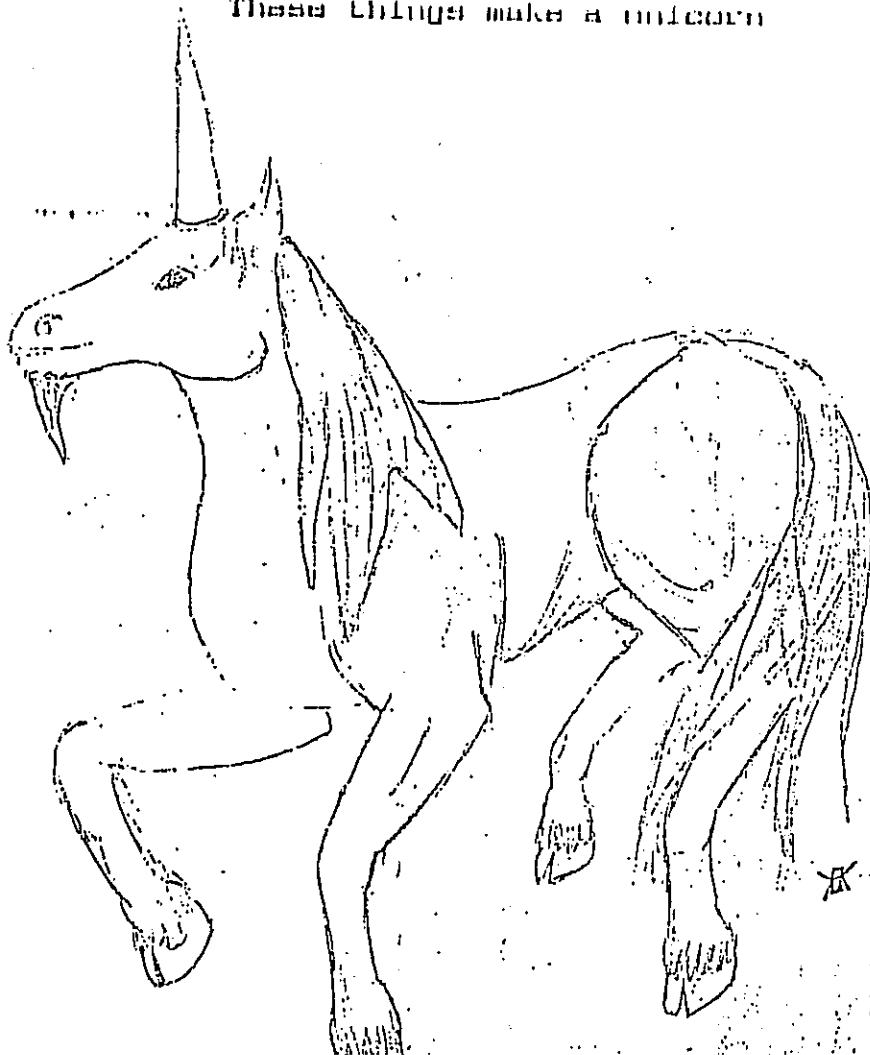
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Special
Thanks to
D. ...

VISIONS OF A UNICORN

Ivory horn and ebon hoof,
Noble beauty all aloof
Dressed in a coat of pure white hair
Unbridled love within its stare
Eyes of sapphire, dark, deep blue,
Noble, honor, ever true
Ebon hoof and ivory horn,
These things make a unicorn

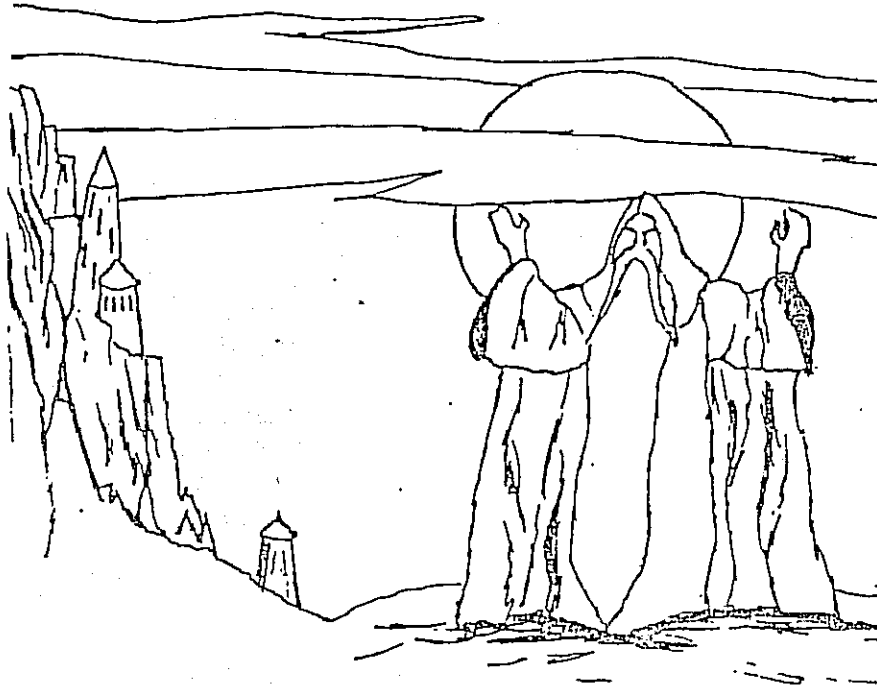


Forlan's Creature

Shadows dwelled in the corners. The only words heard in the dungeon was a chanting of an ancient language. Drops of water fell from the ceiling above...drip...drip...drip. It was all quite monotonous. Then suddenly a new voice was introduced to the darkness. It sounded quite angry, as though just awakened from a deep sleep. A scream pierced through the dank, musty air. A shadow could now be seen, cast upon the wall by the flickering torches. But this shadow was not human. No...it was much too large and had an otherworldly shape. Now it turned the corner, laughing and hissing all at once. Drool fell from long teeth, just as the drip of water, but a new sound was added...drip..hiss..drip..hiss. Wherever the monstrous liquid hit the floor the stone actually burned. It stormed up the stairway and through a door, bursting outdoors. It raised its hand to shield its eyes from the blazing sun. Leather creaked as it expanded its wings and lifted into the air. It flew in the direction of the mountains.

Back in the dungeon a wizard lay on the hard floor, seemingly dead. But wait...a finger moved...then a hand. The conjurer pushed himself off the floor. A loud hiss floated through the darkness, followed by a yelp of pain. The wizard had planted his hand in a pool of the corrosive saliva left by the monster.

The wizard is Forlan, a mere initiate to the dark arts. One must be brilliant, or quite mad, to learn the art of magic. But Forlan seemed to be the latter, for he had called a demon forth from the abyss. This was quite foolish, even learned wizards hesitate to do so.



He crept up the stairs and through the broken door. He gazed into the horizon, but the monster was gone from sight. Forlan bent over and picked up rock. He held it in his hand and chanted a short spell. The rock floated upwards, then it flew to the east for about three feet.

"So...my friend has taken refuge in the mountains. No matter, I will find him eventually." His forehead creased as in worry. Then he said, almost beneath his breath "Unless he finds me first!"

It was dark before Forlan was ready. He exited the keep which was his home. No sooner had he set foot out the door than he was transformed into an owl, with a silver pendant dangling from its neck. The owl flew to the east, towards the mountains.

The owl came to a thatched hut, the home of a pleasant farming family. Forlan flew around the building until he found an opening in the roof. He wiggled his way through and found himself perched among the rafters. Forlan had an excellent view of the home. The man who lived here obviously heard Forlan's entrance, for he looked up.

"Come here dear," he called to his wife, "we have a visitor!"

"And a beautiful one at that!" came the woman's reply. "I've never seen an owl that looked so wonderful before." Her eyes narrowed and Forlan realized she had spotted the pendant he wore. He feared that they might try to steal it and moved towards the hole in the roof through which he entered. The woman seemed to have notice this for she called out to him. "Do not fear, you must be no ordinary owl to have such a brilliant pendant. We would not dream of taking it from you."

A child now appeared at their side. "I'll bet he's a good omen!" The boy exclaimed.

The hours passed and the family went to sleep. Forlan, too, began to grow weary. Then, ever so faintly, a flapping of wing could be heard. The sound grew louder until Forlan realized that these were no ordinary wings, they were wings of leather! He poked his head through the opening in the roof and saw the demon he brought forth from the abyss coming his way. He re-entered the hut and screeched and hooted as loud as possible, but the family did not awaken. At the last possible moment he flew from the hut and lightly perched on a tree not far away. From his vantage point Forlan saw the demon crash through the roof of the house. Horrid screams echoed through the darkness as the family perished inside their own home. Forlan turned his head. Was this the horror which he had brought into the world? Was it indeed his fault for what was happening to the family, or was it a cruel twist of fate?

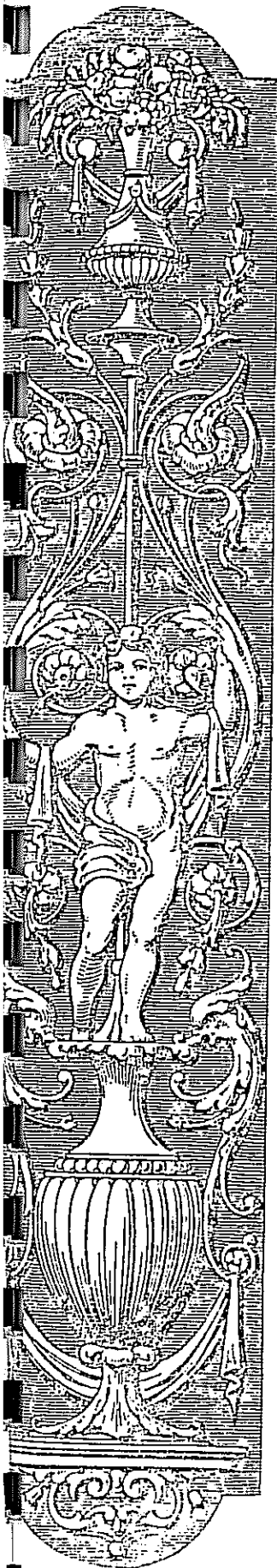
Forlan decided he could take this no longer. He flew to the ground and immediately transformed to his human shape. However, in place of his robes he wore armor and in place of his wand was a sword. He rushed with all his speed and burst through the hut's door. What he beheld as he entered made him wince. The creature was feasting on the remains of the family, bloodied limbs hung from its mouth as it turned toward Forlan.



Forlan uttered words beneath his breath. "May your blood boil within your veins!" And indeed, the monster's blood did just that! It turned its horrid head skyward and screamed. Its leathery skin burned all about it, yet it lived. The demon turned toward Forlan and struck out with a clawed hand. The steel sharp claws ripped through the armor and into Forlan's skin. Forlan drew up his hand and hurled the sword with all his might. The mighty blade plunged into the creatures skin, and lightning spread from the wound to engulf the monster. The deadly streaks of lightning brushed across Forlan, too, and caused great pain and injury. The monster lived, but was greatly weakened.

"There is one last chance!" Said Forlan. With this he grasped his pendant and stood erect. A light, pure as winter's first snow, engulfed him. The remains of Forlan's armor fell from his body. The light totally obscured Forlan from view. The monster shielded its eyes from the light. When the light finally subsided a great unicorn stood in Forlan's stead. Across the side of this wondrous being was a gaping wound, seemingly caused from the claws of the demon. The white skin around this area was slowly being stained red. The unicorn charged, and its horn plunged into the monster's side, killing it instantly. The unicorn, which was Forlan, was exhausted. It, too, died that night. In the morning villagers came from all over to see the sight of the battle. There were no dead bodies among the ruins of the humble home. Where the monster had been was a blackened hole in the ground. Where the remains of the bodies of the three family members and the body of the unicorn had been were four straight, tall, and proud oak trees. One of these trees, when seen in the darkest of nights, glows with a glorious white light. And on these nights the ghost of a unicorn can be seen running in the pasture nearby.





MY LOVE

I am devout to her beauty, as Eros
Slays my heart and blinds my eyes
with his cupidic bow and arrows,
from aloft her in the shinning skies.

Hers are the pooled eyes and the coppertone
Of the goddess, Venus from fallen Rome.
Desired is she, more than Jason's Golden Fleece.
She is my Aphrodite of ancient Greece.

She shines a Eos, the coming dawn.
Her beauty gleams, it shines so bright,
Lighting the path for Apollo, the rising sun,
She magnifies the early morning light.

She filters into my dreams,
Haunting my land of slumber.
As a phantom in the future,
Her visage strolls through a resevoir
Of times in my mind spent together.

My heart unlocks the door, her eyes melt the key,
As she stalks through my pools of memory.
She is a celluloid dream come to life,
Never to fade away and die, never to feel strife.

I pledge my heart in hands of praying faith to her
As she journies over
The horizon yet further
Across the vast blue water.

I am fighting many wars for her love
For even though she is but one,
She is the one and only one,
That I could ever love.

It would crush my heart
And tear my soul apart,
If someone else were to win her love,
The love for me, of my pretty little, white dove.

Thou art the hunter of hearts.

Thou hath no soul.

Thy arrows but wound, they do not kill.

Thou leavest thy prey in agony, to only hope in vain for merciful death.

Thou hast brought down the mighty and the meek with equal cruelty.

In life, Thou art the bringer of folly and pain.

My heart hath felt the pierce of thy cruel dart.

I feel my life flow from my wounds and yet, no death will come.

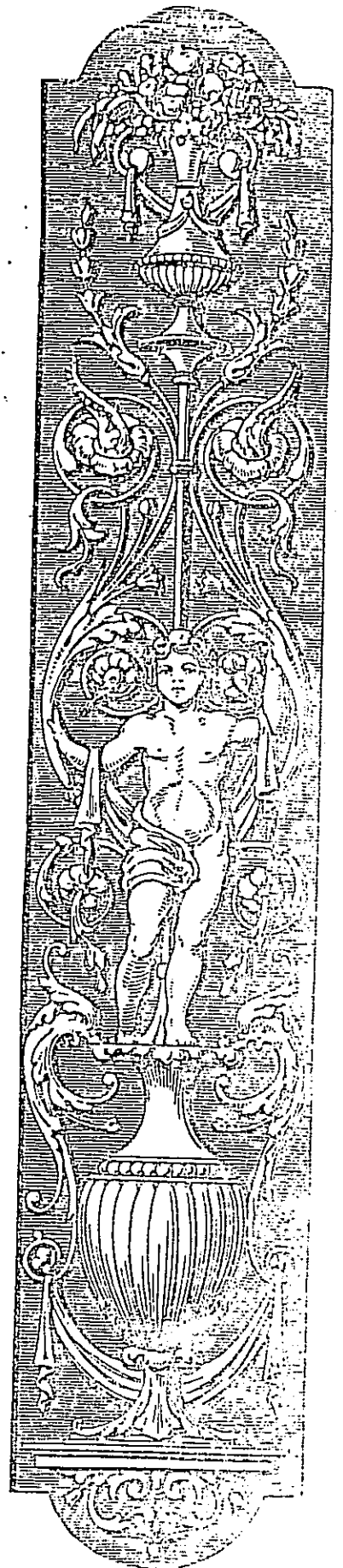
I gasp for breath that will not come, I am drowning but yet I breath on.

There is no salve nor balm to ease my pain.

Not even in the empty embrace of sleep can I forget.

The pain awakens me again and I bleed anew.

Cupid I curseth thy name.





THE HUNT

The nobles in their steel and their damask ride by
 The high lord in his splendor above them.
 Their fine blooded mounts
 More worthy than we.
 All bow as the hunt rides by.

The sheen of their steeds who curvette in their pride
 Does but glint off the jewels of their riders.
 We stand in their dust
 And pray to the gods
 "Let our maids find no favor amongst them".

But the lord's restless eye quickens to treasure
 Spys the gold in the dross of our days.
 And she who is waiting
 For youth's sweet reward
 Bows low as the hunt rides by.

The great blooded stallion does plunge and then cease.
 The lord becons for her to come closer.
 With her eager eyes lowered
 She obeys in the dust
 And is taken up on the saddle before him.

She was gone just that day and all of the night.
 We found her at dawn on the green.
 And of that brief time
 She never has spoken.
 But she bows in tears when the hunt rides by.

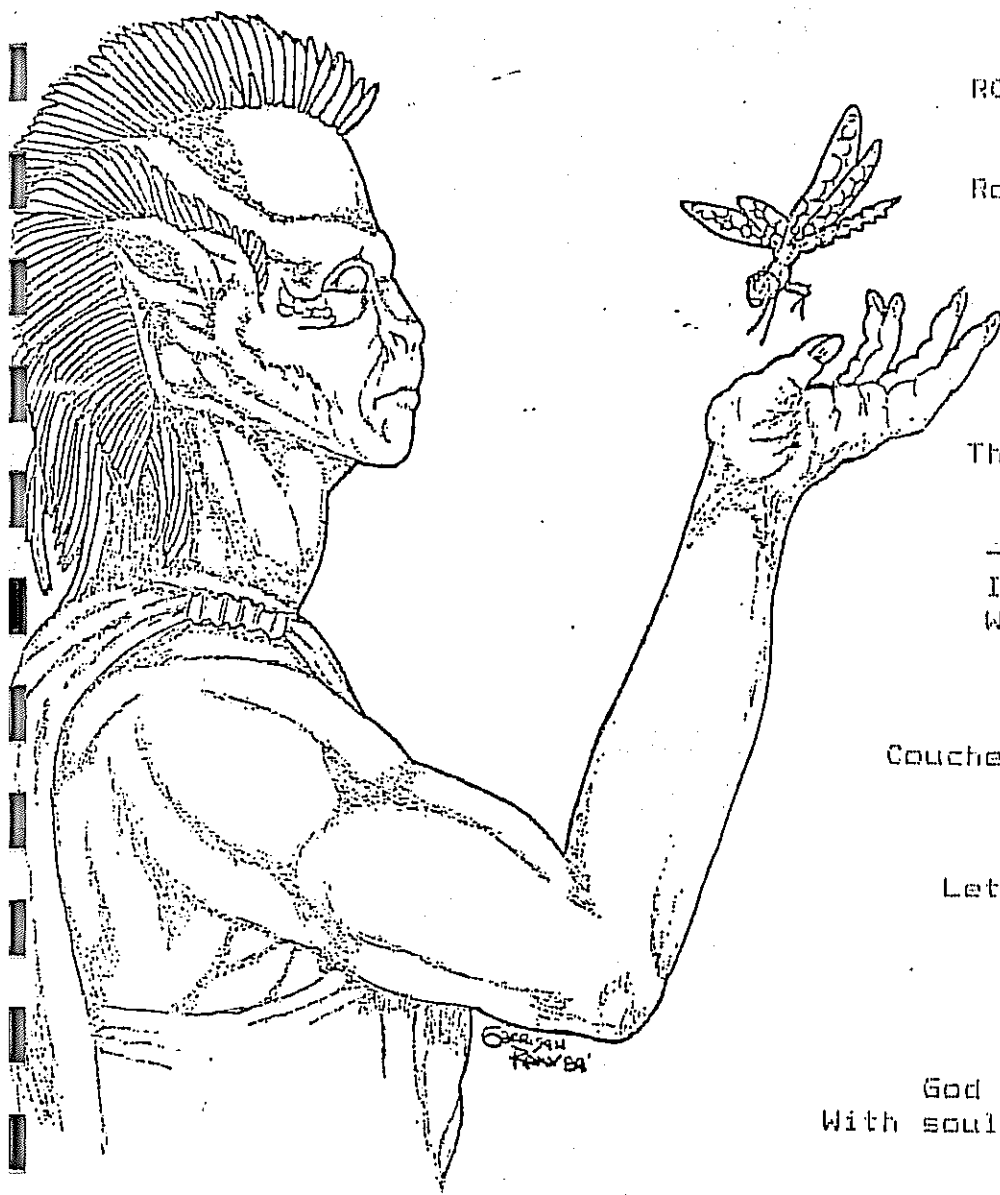
Unicorn's Glen

As I lie resting
On a soft bed of grass
Underneath a giant, aged oak tree,
A bubbling brook
Dances by,
Singing its water songs
For faeries, fauns, and elves.

A graceful unicorn
In blinding White Splendour
Prances By.
Brownies and Pixies
Play games in the clearing
Full of merriment and laughter.

I treasure
This peaceful time
To dream as I wish,
Unhindered.





ROUND US THE WILD CREATURES

Round us the wild creatures,
Overhead the trees,
Underfoot the moss-tracks,
-Life and love with these!

I to wear a fawn-skin,
Thou to dress in flower;
All the long summer-day,
That greenwood life of ours!

Rich--pavilioned, rather,
--Still the world without--
Inside--gold--roofed silk--
Walled silence round about!

Queen it--Thou on purple,
I at watch and ward--
Couched beneath the columns gaze
Thy slave--Loves' guard!

So, for us no world,
Let throngs press thee to me!
Up and down amid men,
Heart by heart fare we!

Welcome squalid vesture,
Hash voice, hateful face!
God is soul, souls I and Thou:
With souls should souls have place.

Silent Sojourn

Whispering along in the dark
of space.
Threaded in suspension
between here and there.
Only the silence of vacuum
to greet a Voyager
that never
grows
weary.



THE JUGGLER

A group of players finds itself benighted in a small village. The villagers offer to share their evening meal in return for entertainment. All the players agree to the bargain save the juggler who bids they others to enjoy their meal but he has other appetites to satisfy.

CHORUS

Oh fine jiggery pokery
I've a rare set of balls with
me
Come watch and I'll give you a
show.

And coming at last to her col-
lage
She bade him to come in
For in further entertainment
There could surely be no sin.

HE SPYS A FAIR YOUNG FLOWER

Ah, hey, my lovely maiden
I espied you 'mongst the
others.
And where's your Ma and Da my
love?
Have you any strapping
brothers?

Sit your dear self down Sir
And we'll have a glass of wine.
You've showed to me some dar-
ling tricks.
Have you others just as fine?

Why, so I do, you clever miss.
Perhaps just a one or a two.
But I needs beg for your assis-
tance.
For these tricks just one can't
do.

I note your kind concern Sir,
But, alas I'm quite alone.
My family's gone a'visiting
And I'm t'king my flowers home.

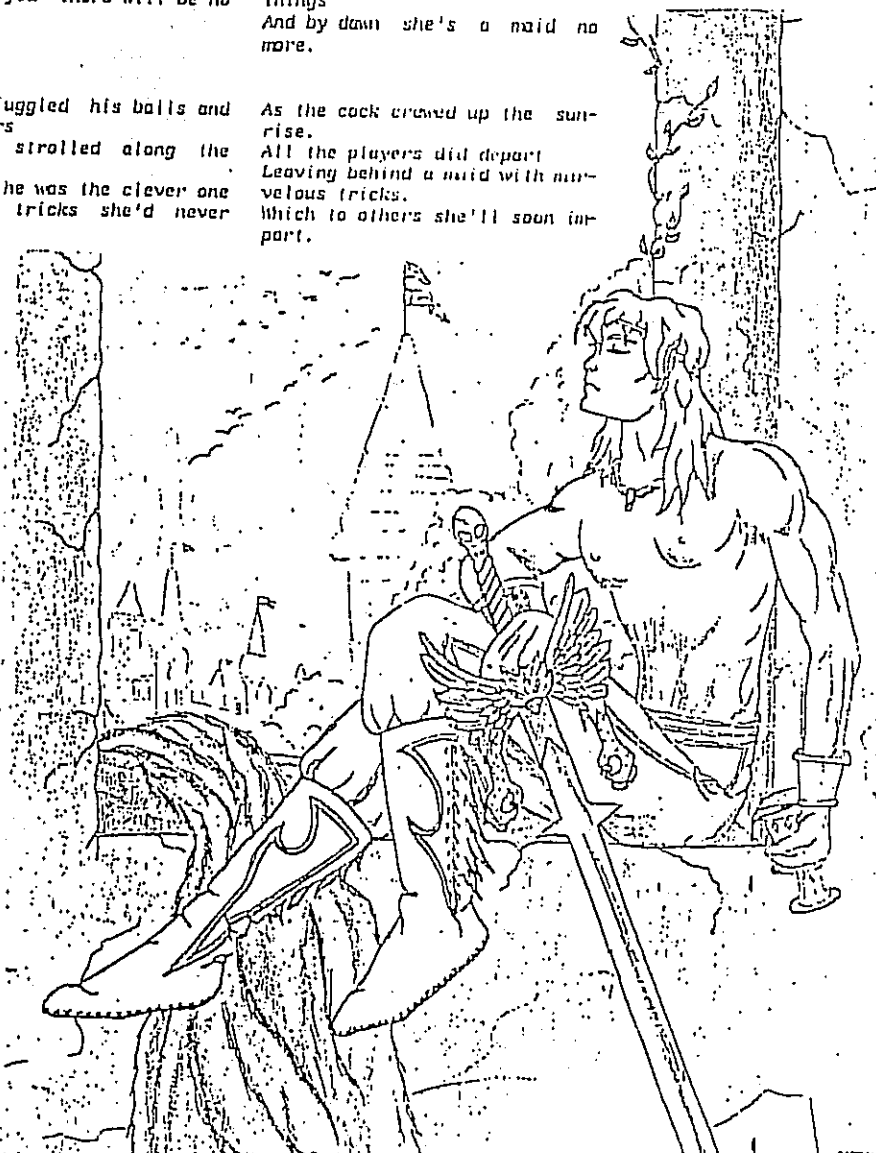
Come sit upon my lap a while
Let us see your dainty leg
And I'll show you how to juggle
But by norm you'll be no maid.

Ah, my darling I'll escort you
And entertain you on the way
I've tricks I vow you've never
seen
And for you there will be no
pay.

Ah, Sir, I can assure you
It's a little I abhor.
So he juggled balls and other
things
And by dawn she's a maid no
more.

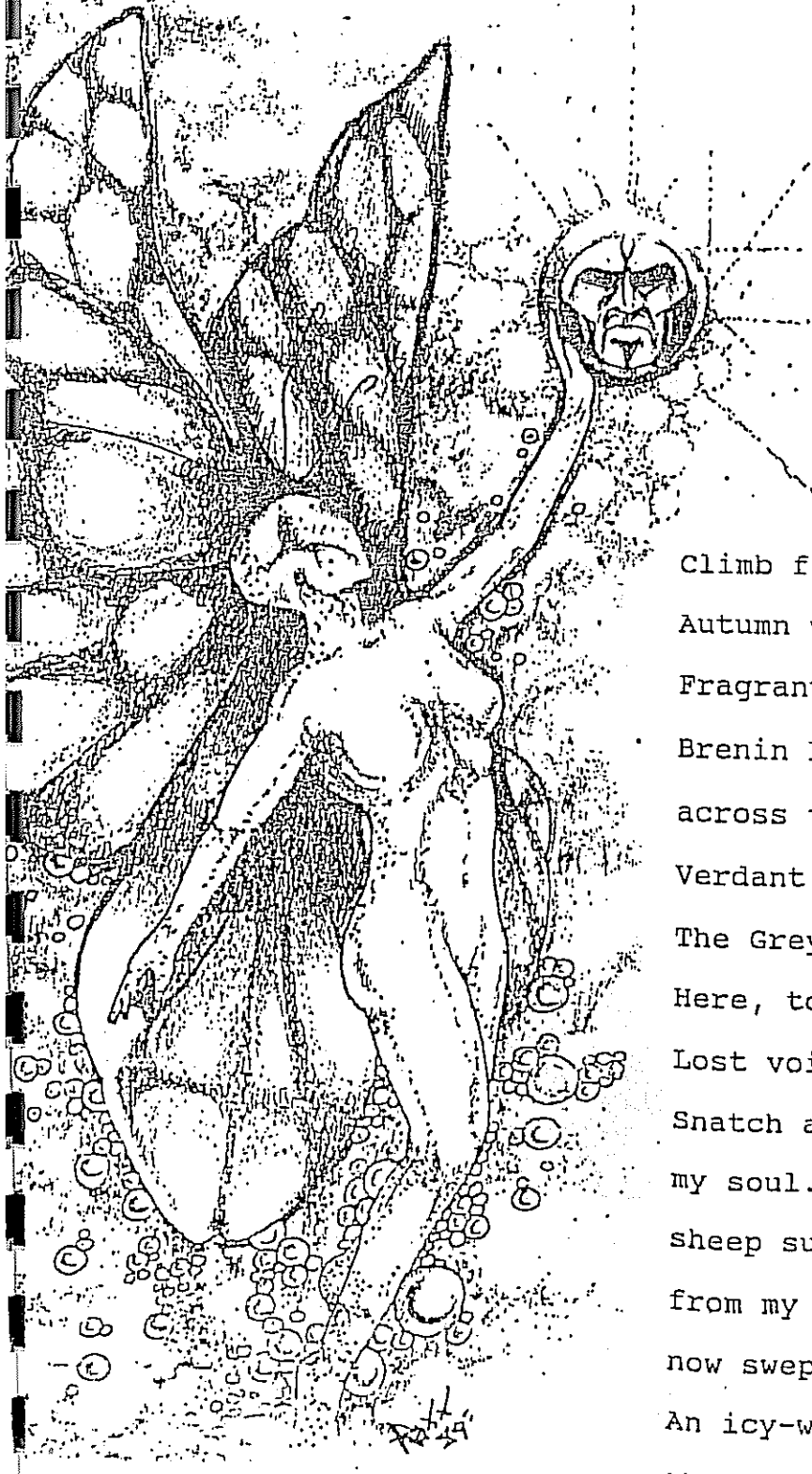
And he juggled his balls and
her flowers
As they strolled along the
green.
She swore he was the clever one
For such tricks she'd never
seen.

As the cock crowed up the sun-
rise.
All the players did depart
Leaving behind a maid with num-
berous tricks.
Which to others she'll soon im-
part.



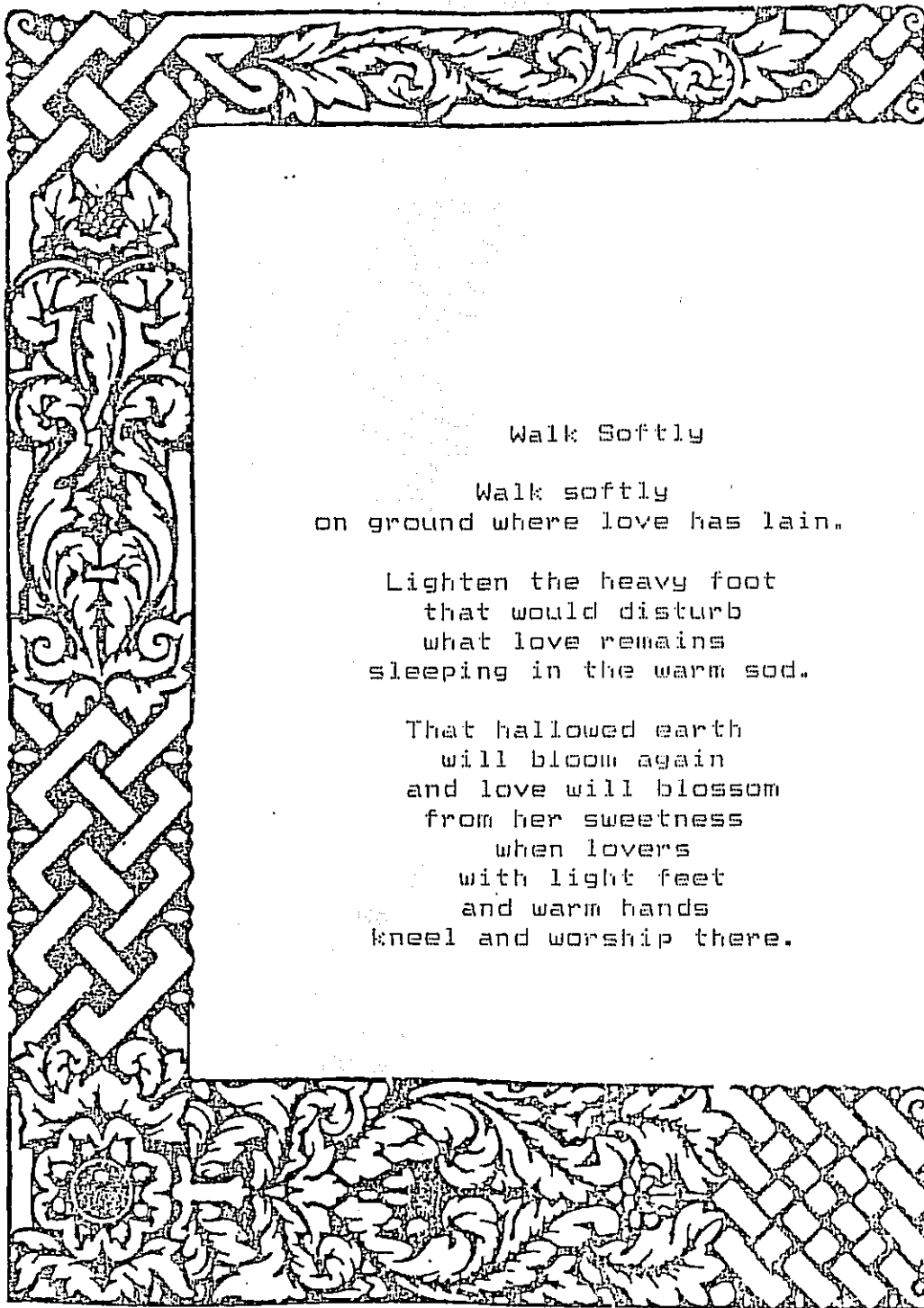
Illusion

*among the shattered masks
the only song in the mirror
is my name*



Echoes of a Distant Past

Climb forever through
Autumn wind, biting, wintry
Fragrant with heather's heady tang.
Brenin Llwyd's vaporous breath swirls
across the valley,
Verdant hills conceal the sea.
The Grey King summons me home,
Here, to Carn March Arthur.
Lost voices echo in the breeze
Snatch at my hair and cloak, invade
my soul. Bleating
sheep summon me
from my distant self,
now swept away.
An icy-white blossom drifts from the sky

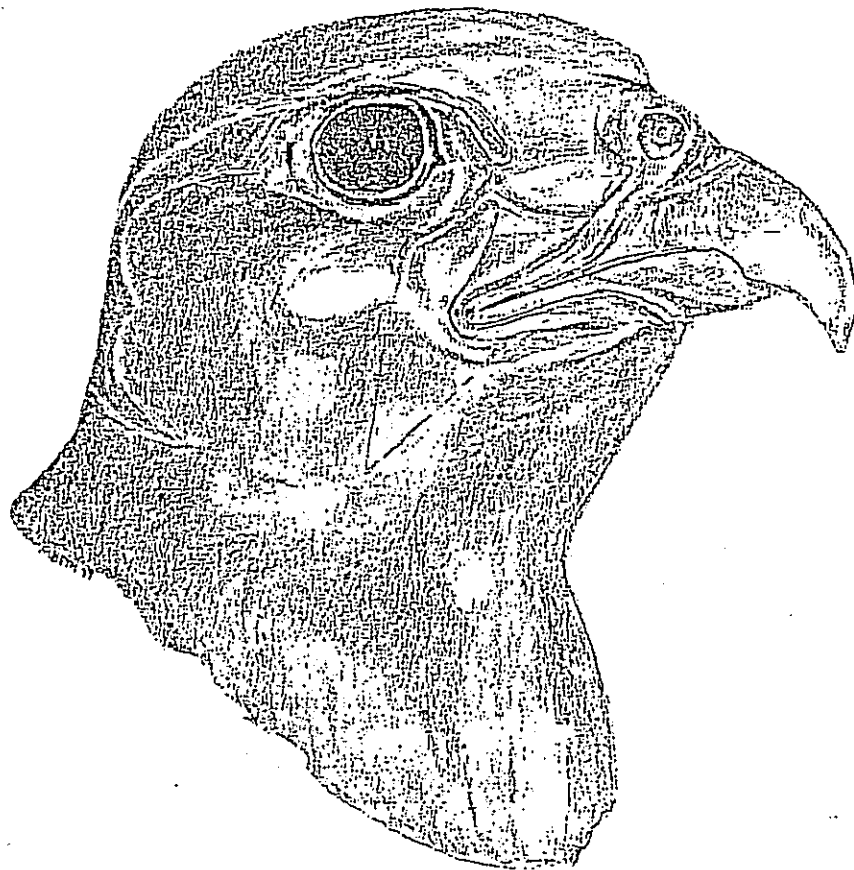


Walk Softly

Walk softly
on ground where love has lain.

Lighten the heavy foot
that would disturb
what love remains
sleeping in the warm sod.

That hallowed earth
will bloom again
and love will blossom
from her sweetness
when lovers
with light feet
and warm hands
kneel and worship there.



SKY WARRIOR

The eagle flies
up in the sky.
Watching everthing
through his shining eyes.

He is a strong creature
always ready to die.
He always enters battle
with a warrior's fighting cry.

Yet when the battle
is at an end,
he emerges the king
once again.

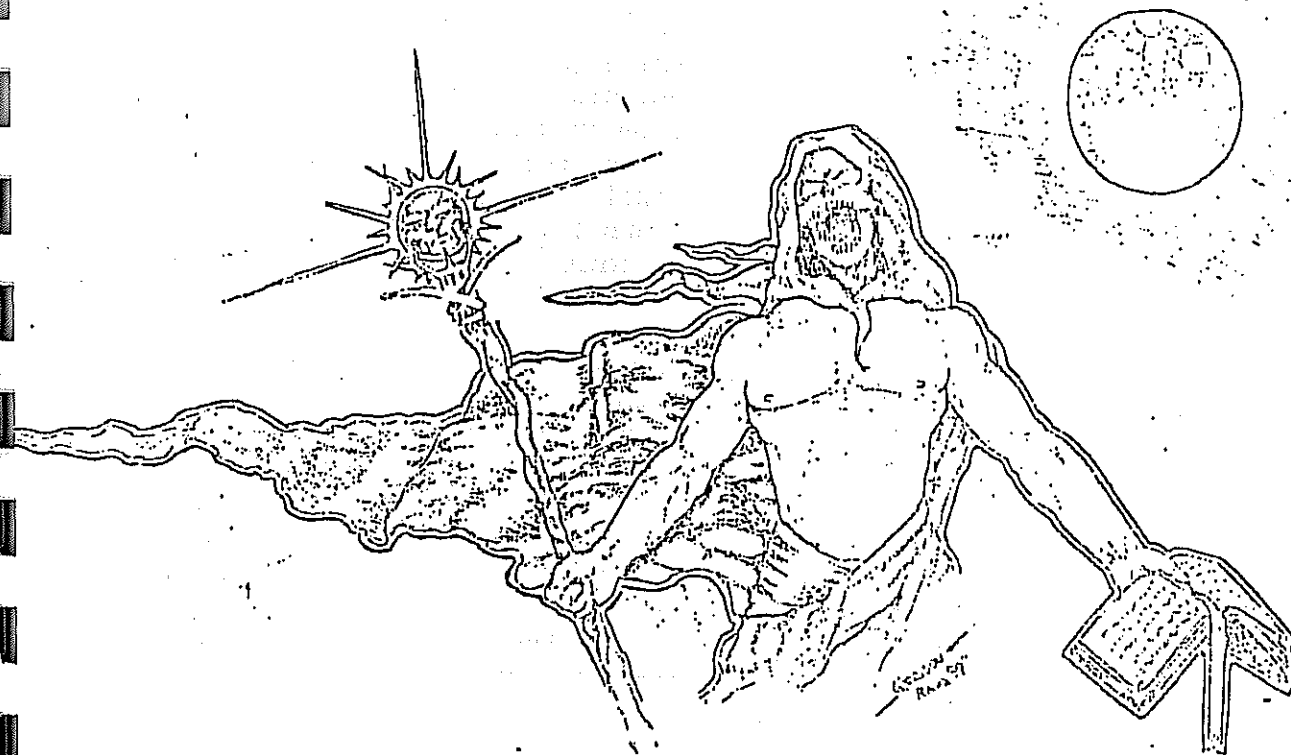
UNWANTON SOULS

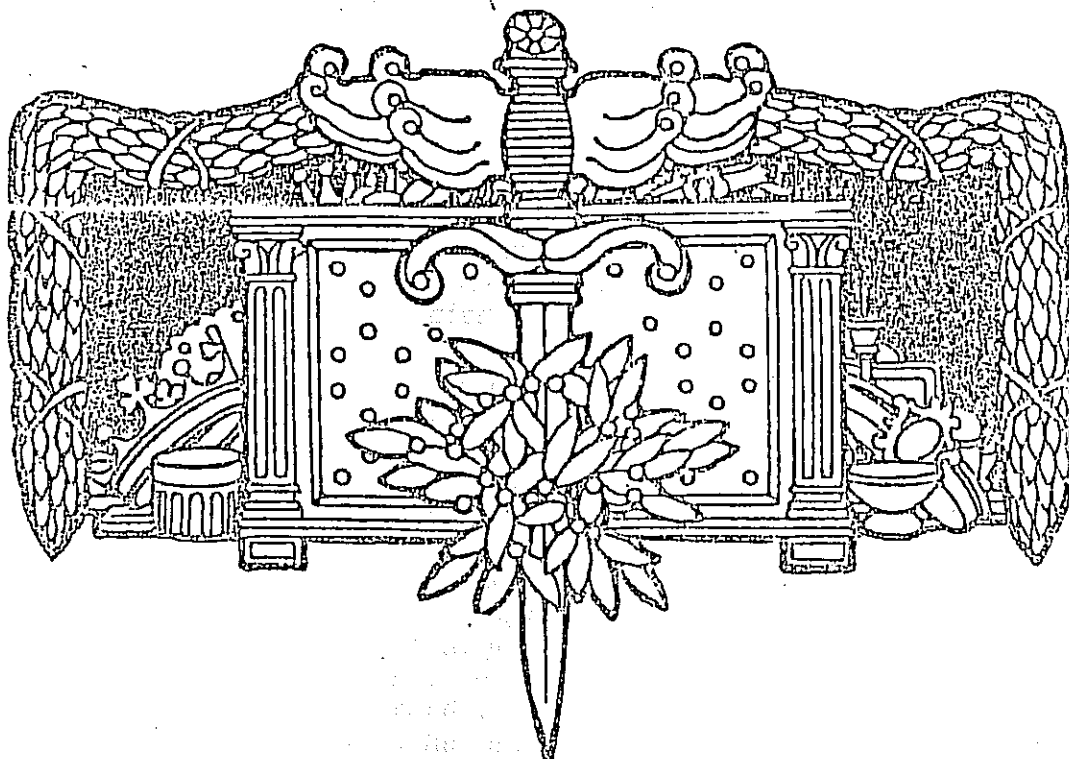
With a swing of the scythe
comes Death's dread plague
Taking his toll on precious life
he plys his dour trade

His victims doth quaver
with fear of the unknown
They pray for a savior
Too late, Death's seeds have been sown

On life does the blade descend,
ripping souls from their bodily home
For in a leather bound tome it is penned
that in purgatory they are doomed to roam

Death's tapestry is woven
with fear like blazing coals
Life is to be plucked from the chosen,
leaving behind unwanton souls





It was by the hand of Wyland I came into existence. To most I represented little more than a fine piece of art, a tool for binding nations or slaying my custodian's enemies. Most who viewed me had no idea of my full potential; my role as the master smith's prodigal son had long since faded into obscurity. Throughout the ages I, like a whore, have been passed from hand to hand. I have built and destroyed nations. I have freed and enslaved countless numbers. My creator would have wept had he still lived.

You must understand; mankind is blessed. Not a blessing in his eyes perhaps, but nonetheless a trait which insures his survival as a species ... mortality. For were the human mind unable to metamorphose onto a higher plane through death, evil would rule and the good stagnate.

Today man has forgotten the fate of the past. Elves, dragons, trolls and other denizens of the elder ages are now but fantasies of children. I do but hope that magic yet unfaded remains well hidden or misunderstood; perhaps like myself.

It was in Hern's hands my song first was heard, but like for the rest of his kind the mortal world overcame him and he became a figment, visible to only those of mixed spirit. I was hidden in obscurity - occasionally hefted by would-be kings. By one such man I was driven into stone and forgotten.

Arthur, having discovered my nature and thus freeing me in an age when elves were but fantasies and superstition to men, showed me the ancients were not all gone. Arthur unknowingly called to me and I gave him his heritage, but his blood began to burn with the inner magic his human side could not accept. I was cast into the sea and a man died.

In time I would share my song with many kindred souls - Charlemagne, Napoleon and Samuel Adams to name a few. But times are rapidly changing; the world of faerie has become more obscure and I find myself laying under glass to be viewed as an antiquity (if they only knew).

I now sit quietly, days of glory echo in my memory as thousands of dull eyes view my imprisonment as little more than times past. A child stopped at my resting place today, and something happened, a feeling, a touch I have not felt for a long time. This one's eyes opened in wonder as I sang my eternal song. And I then knew as her mother pulled her away, I am not alone.

