



A CHORUS OF SILENCED WOMEN

*we are*  
**THE FALL**

Mythical Retellings in Verse

REBECCA BOLTON



The image is a decorative poster. In the center, a black rectangular frame contains the text "we are" in a cursive script and "THE FALL" in a large, bold, serif font. The background is white and is decorated with various black line-art illustrations. At the top, there are branches with leaves. On the left, a large, faint skull is visible. On the right, there are branches with leaves and a snake coiled around a branch. At the bottom, there are branches with leaves, a pomegranate with its seeds spilling out, and a large, faint illustration of a tree with many small flowers or leaves. The overall theme is autumn and Halloween.

*we are*  
**THE FALL**



Copyright © 2025 Rebecca Bolton

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission, except in the case of brief quotations used in reviews or scholarly analysis.

First edition, June 2025



Cover design by Rebecca Bolton



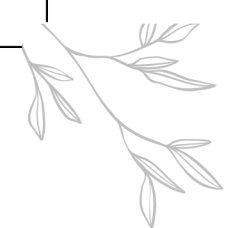
This is a work of creative expression. The myths discussed here have been altered to fit the narrative and style of the book and are not replicas.  
All quotes used belong to the public domain.



For the women who came before.  
And those who will follow after.











# Introduction

For centuries, women in myth have existed only as echoes  
—voiceless, passive, or punished. Cautionary tales.  
Warnings whispered from generation to generation.

Myth made them victims.  
Or villains. Or both.

They were blamed for the fall of men, the end of peace, the  
unraveling of order. They were seduced, stolen, silenced.  
Their stories were never truly theirs.

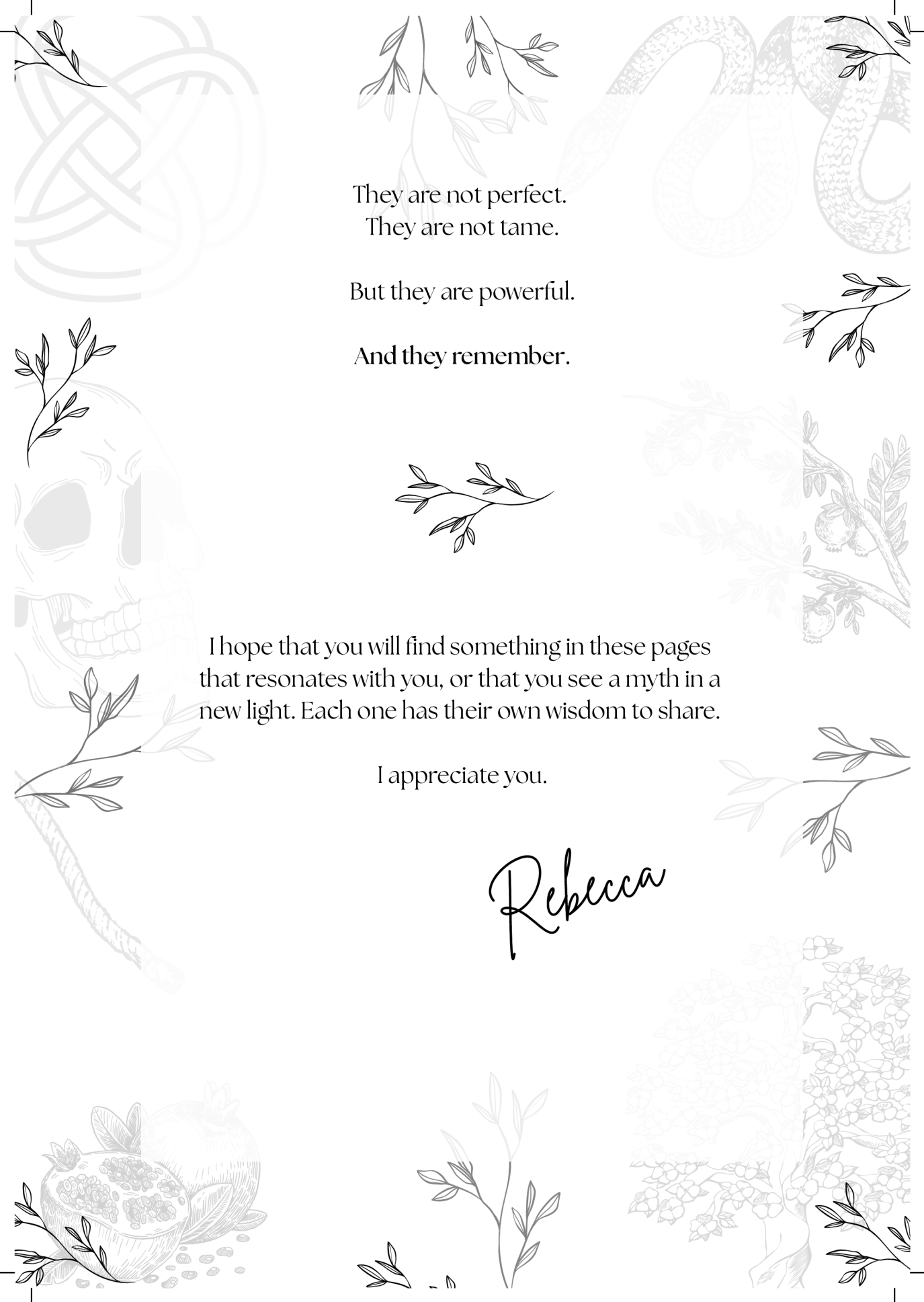
This book is a reclamation.

In these pages, these women—goddesses, queens,  
monsters, and maidens—are given what their myth never  
offered: a voice.

Here, they speak for themselves.

Some myths have been retold to lift the women from the  
role of victim and restore their agency. Others remain  
within their original tales, but speak with a renewed voice —  
a reclaimed legacy.





They are not perfect.  
They are not tame.

But they are powerful.

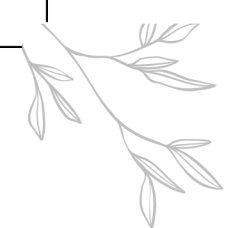
And they remember.

I hope that you will find something in these pages  
that resonates with you, or that you see a myth in a  
new light. Each one has their own wisdom to share.

I appreciate you.

Rebecca









## We Are The Fall

They say we broke the world —  
Brought pain. Fire. Fear.  
By apple eaten. Pithos uncorked.  
Betrayal of Guinevere.

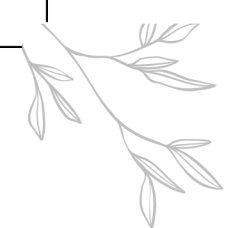
We are told as their warnings,  
A moral cast in myth:  
Fables dressed in honest men —  
A fruit. A jar. A kiss.

But they never ask the question:  
Who placed the fruit on the tree?  
Who forged the jar and filled it?  
Who bound her heart, then called it free?

We did not break — we opened.  
We did not fall — we flew.  
They called it sin. We called it choice.  
They feared what women knew.

So yes — we shattered Eden,  
We drowned the halls of kings.  
But from the ruin, roots grew wild —  
And we rise from ashes of sins.









# Contents

## *Greek*

Medusa  
Persephone  
Ariadne  
Pandora  
Eurydice  
Hecate  
Selene

## *Celtic*

Cerridwen  
Rhiannon  
Fuamnach  
Macha  
Medb  
The Morrigan  
Banshee





## *Written*

Guinevere  
Maid Marion  
Juliet  
Morgan Le Fay  
Eve

## *Norse*









Rán  
Freyja  
Brynhildr  
Skadi  
Sif  
Hel

## *Outro*

*Further Reading*

*References*





“Legends are not made of those who  
yield, but those who endure.”

Christina Rossetti



The background is a light gray collage of various Greek-themed illustrations. It includes a large knot (resembling a Gordian knot) in the top left, a snake (likely a Medusa or similar mythical creature) in the top right, a skull (possibly a Minotaur or similar) on the left side, a branch with pomegranates on the right, and a large pomegranate with seeds at the bottom left. There are also several smaller branches with leaves scattered throughout the page.

*we are*  
**THE GREEK**





# Greek Mythology

Greek mythology is the version most people think they know. Olympus on high. Heroes with shining swords. Gods who throw lightning and demand tribute.

But underneath all that marble and drama, there are women. Buried. Burning.

Turning into trees, birds, monsters, echoes — anything but free. The myths are beautiful. But they're also brutal.

They were written down by men, shaped by empire, and passed on as fable, warning, or poetry — rarely as truth. You'll meet women who were loved until they disobeyed.

Mothers punished for birthing the wrong child. Wives who were spoken of only once they were a fable. Daughters devoured by gods, reshaped into silence.

Greek mythology remembers them as tragedies.

This collection does not.





Medusa





## Rise of the Gorgon Queen

She lay broken upon the temple floor,  
A vessel of pity, a token of shame.  
“Grant me power,” she wept to the heavens,  
“Grant me vengeance; grant me flame.  
Let me sow a savage curse  
Upon the race of men.”

Let all who see me  
Shrink in fear.  
Let those who mean to harm  
Turn their hearts  
To putrid stone —  
And let the world fall calm.

Athena gazed down at the woman,  
Broken beneath his shame,  
And granted her the strength  
To never feel that way again.

“Rise, my child,”  
The goddess whispered.  
“You shall be my prize —  
My warrior, my Gorgon Queen,  
With the reaper in her eyes.”





## Author's Note

In the most famous and widespread telling of the myth, **Medusa** was a beautiful maiden who was assaulted in Athena's temple.

Enraged by the desecration of her sacred space, **Athena** transformed Medusa into a monster. It is a story heavy with injustice, where the victim is punished and the gods remain distant.

Here, Medusa does not become a monster out of spite but is **empowered** by Athena herself. No longer a victim cast aside, Medusa rises as a force of retribution — **fierce, divine, and unbroken**.

Athena, rather than condemning her, becomes her **ally**, granting her the power to ensure she is never harmed again.





# Persephone








## Before the Descent

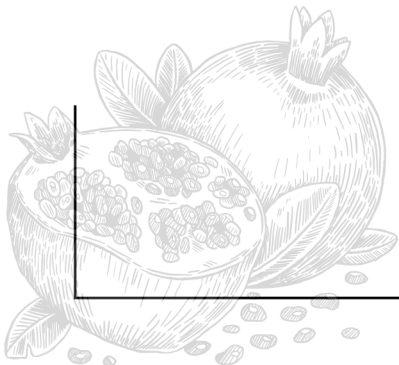

A perfect life was gifted  
hollow, and strangely bereft.  
She gasped for breath  
of the sweetest air,  
yet none could soothe her chest.



Then came he,  
with shadowed crown,  
and offered her a hand:  
“A grander life awaits thee, child —  
though thy mother won’t understand.”

“Let me bear it all,” he said,  
“for I am already stained.  
They fear my name, they curse my face,  
bound fast by tales unchained.”

So Persephone forsook the bloom,  
and let him take the blame;  
She crowned herself in ash and gold,  
and ruled amidst the flame.






A detailed line drawing of a pomegranate branch with several leaves and small, round fruits hanging from it, positioned in the top right corner of the page.

## Author's Note

In the myth of **Persephone**, she is often portrayed as an innocent maiden abducted by **Hades**, the god of the Underworld, and tricked into staying by eating pomegranate seeds.

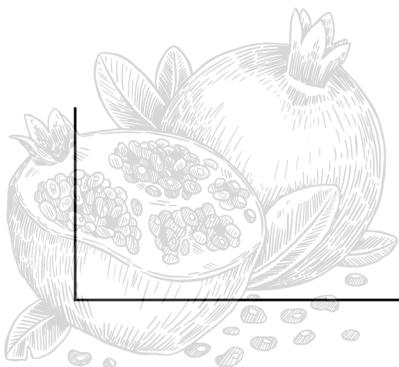
A detailed line drawing of a pomegranate branch with several leaves and small, round fruits hanging from it, positioned on the left side of the page.

Her story is usually told as one of victimhood — a tale of loss, captivity, and compromise.

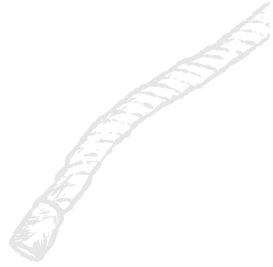
**In Before the Descent**, the narrative is reimagined.

Rather than a powerless girl stolen away, Persephone is depicted as a young woman who chooses to leave behind the life that no longer fulfills her.

She stands in her **power** and sovereignty.

A detailed line drawing of a pomegranate branch with several leaves and small, round fruits hanging from it, positioned on the right side of the page.





Ariadne







## Compassion

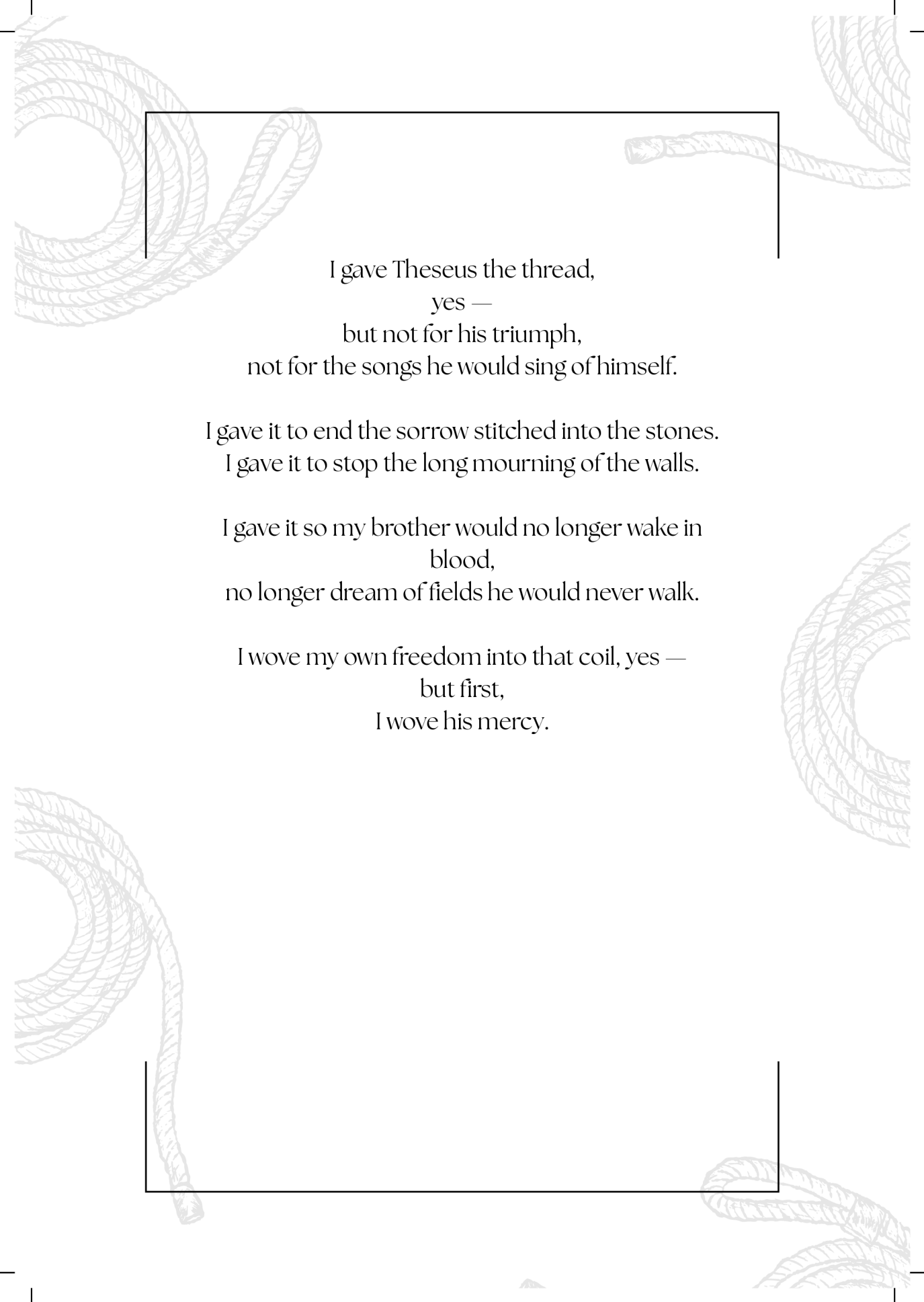
They tell it wrong.

They say  
I gave him the thread for love,  
for the thrill of escape,  
for a hand to carry me  
from my father's shadow.  
But they never asked me why.

I was born to walls within walls,  
to the sound of doors  
locking behind me,  
to the slow tread of hooves  
in the dark below.  
I knew my brother by  
the echo of his weeping.  
I knew him by the silence  
that followed.

The Labyrinth was not a prison for his victims.  
It was his cage.  
It was the hunger they fed him,  
the fear they stitched into his skin.





I gave Theseus the thread,  
yes —  
but not for his triumph,  
not for the songs he would sing of himself.

I gave it to end the sorrow stitched into the stones.  
I gave it to stop the long mourning of the walls.

I gave it so my brother would no longer wake in  
blood,  
no longer dream of fields he would never walk.

I wove my own freedom into that coil, yes —  
but first,  
I wove his mercy.





## Author's Note

In classical mythology, **Ariadne** is remembered as the daughter of **Minos** who helped **Theseus** escape the Labyrinth and the minotaur, only to be abandoned by him and later wed to **Dionysus**.

This reinterpretation reframes Ariadne's gift of the thread as an act of **compassion**.

It restores her agency: a woman choosing mercy over cruelty, seeking to end the suffering of her 'monstrous' half-brother, rather than simply aiding a hero or looking for an escape.

Here, Ariadne's story becomes one of sorrow, love, and deliberate liberation — not from betrayal, but from a world that asked her to accept suffering as fate.





Pandora








## The Reckoning

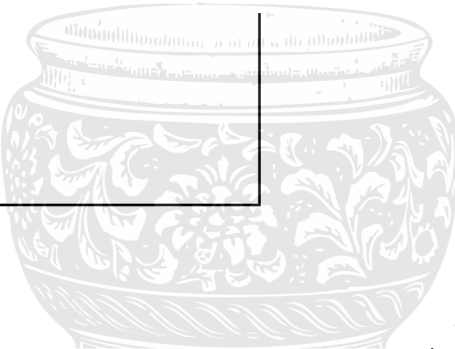
They made me of clay and curses,  
smeared beauty across my skin  
like blood on a blade,  
called me gift, called me grace,  
then fed me to their hunger.

They crowned me with gold chains.  
They kissed me with teeth.  
They called it love.




I knelt in the dust of their making,  
and the pitying goddess came —  
cloaked in ash, crowned in knowing.  
“Child,” she whispered,  
“the jar you guard  
holds not riches, but ruin.  
You were never meant  
to be anything but its key.”

So I rose — I bled into the earth.  
I kissed the jar with broken lips.  
I tore the seal free with my hands  
and laughed  
as the plagues poured out.








Sickness, sorrow, hunger, war.  
I gave them to the winds.

But when Hope tried to follow,  
small and shining,  
I caught her in my hands.

“No,” I said.  
“Not for those who used me as a vessel of their own.”  
I wove her into the ribs of the women,  
buried her deep,  
seeded her in the hollow behind their hearts.



There she lives still —  
a secret flame,  
a stubborn, singing light  
where no god dares to tread.







## Author's Note

The ancient myth cast **Pandora** as the bringer of suffering, a punishment wrapped in beauty, blamed for the world's evils.

In this retelling, given to the men of Earth who abuse her, Pandora willingly causes her fate and is no pawn.

She chooses to tear open the old world, to seed Hope where it will endure — not in the hearts of those who sought to break her, but in the women who would carry fire in their blood.

Pandora is not a warning.

She is a reckoning.







Eurydice







## Before Him

I was not always a story of loss.  
Before the songs,


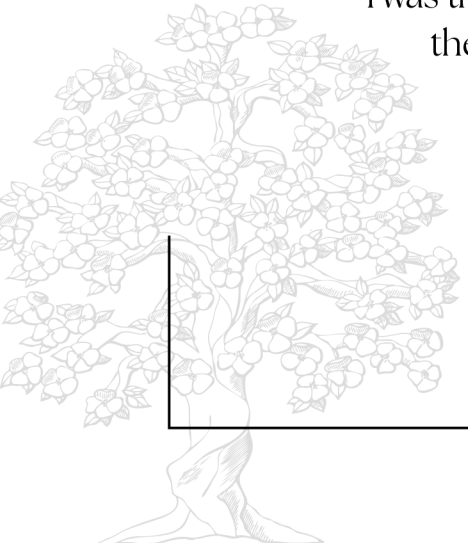

before the snake's sharp kiss,  
before he spoke my name like a prayer.  
I was.

I lived where the trees  
braided the sky,  
where the rivers split the  
earth's open palms.


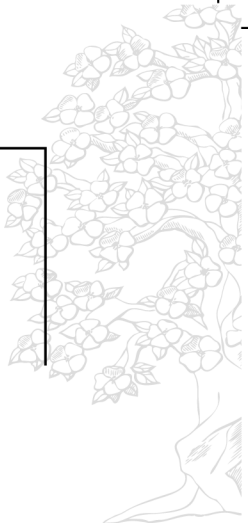
I drank rain from cupped leaves,  
sang with the cicadas until  
my voice dissolved into mist.

I was not a muse.  
I was not a crown for a poet's grief.  
I was the green breath of the woods,  
the pulse beneath the bark.

They say I fled.  
I have always fled.









From hands that reached  
for what was never theirs,  
from mouths that called me beauty  
as they sharpened their teeth.

Do not call my life a prologue.  
Do not name me only in dying.  
I lived.

I danced with roots and wolves and rain.  
I knew the world before sorrow  
learned my name.

And when the darkness  
closed over me,  
I did not weep for the life  
behind me.

I carried it,  
folded in my bones —  
a wildness the underworld  
could not steal







## Author's Note


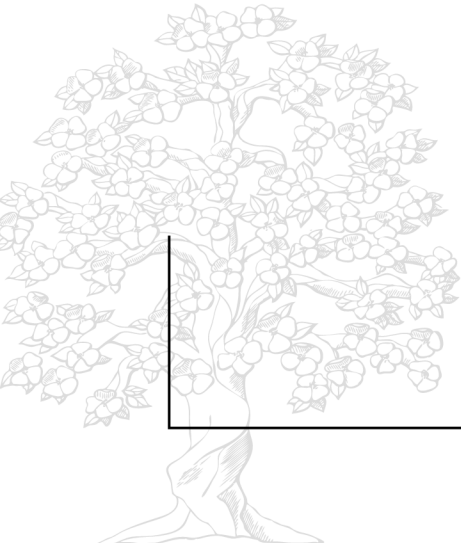
In classical mythology, Eurydice is remembered primarily as the lost wife of Orpheus, a silent figure whose death inspires another's grief. Her own life, voice, and spirit are largely absent from the record.

She is a moral in a man's tale.

This retelling restores Eurydice's existence before tragedy — as a living, loving, and wild soul.

She is not defined solely by loss, nor reduced to a symbol of absence. She is **voiced**.

Here, Eurydice loves freely, lives fiercely, and carries her own story into the darkness — beyond the reach of myth, song, or sorrow.







Hecate







## I Bear the Torch

I do not knock.  
I do not wait.  
I do not beg entry from any god.

I stand  
where the living end  
and the silence begins.  
Where the road splits in three  
and no sign is given.

I am the light they fear —  
not because it blinds them,  
but because it reveals too much.

I walk with the outcast,  
the witch,  
the wounded,  
the woman who whispered truth  
and was called monster for it.

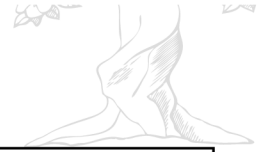
They call on me in secret,  
burn herbs and hope,  
as if I do not already know their names.

But I am no trickster.  
I am no curse.

I am the torch.







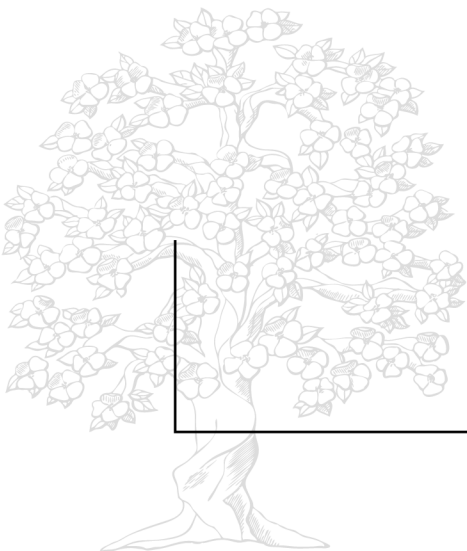
I do not choose your path —  
I simply show you  
where it leads.

So when the night grows too loud  
and the world has turned its back,  
come to the crossroads.

And ask.

I will not lie.  
I will not judge.  
But I will answer.

And once the torch is lit,  
you will never be able to unsee  
what it shows.







## Author's Note

Hecate is one of the most ancient and complex goddesses in Greek mythology.

Associated with magic, thresholds, the night, and the dead, she is often portrayed holding torches, standing at crossroads, or accompanied by hounds.

Over time, she became a symbol of witchcraft, intuition, and unapologetic power — especially for women cast out or misunderstood.

Unlike the **Olympians**, Hecate never craved glory or worship. She simply existed at the edges, guiding souls through darkness, aiding the desperate, and honouring those forgotten by the world above.

This poem honours her not as a villain or a saviour, but as something more enduring: a torchbearer for all those walking through shadow.

A goddess of clarity, not cruelty.



The one who holds the light — even when no one is looking.





Selene









## Returning

I know what I am  
a ghost of silver  
spilling myself across the sky  
for a man who will never see me


I whisper into his sleep  
like a prayer I no longer believe in  
but I still kneel  
I still kneel

his breath does not stir  
his lips do not part  
but I trace them  
as if they might  
as if he might

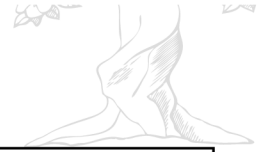
You ask why I return.  
Why I drag the stars behind me like chains.  
Why I touch his cheek though it never warms.  
Why I lie beside a man  
who doesn't know I'm there.



I could tell you it's love.  
That's the easy answer.  
But it's more than that.







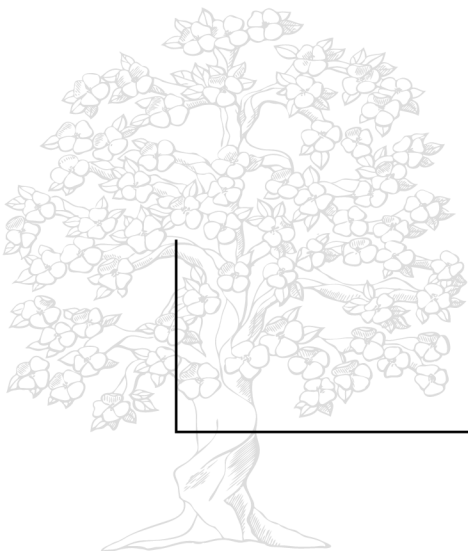
It's habit. It's punishment.  
It's a story I don't know how to end.

There was a time —  
before the sleep —  
when he laughed in the sun.

But I asked too much  
So now he sleeps.  
And I watch.  
And I wait.  
Because that was the deal.  
And I said yes.

I am the moon.  
Not the sun.  
I don't burn.  
I linger.

That's what we do —  
the ones who wait.








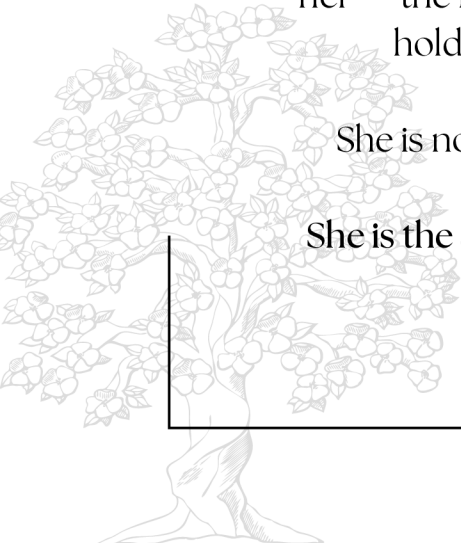
## Author's Note

Selene, the Titan goddess of the moon, is often remembered for her quiet devotion to Endymion — a mortal man granted eternal sleep. In myth, she visits him nightly, loving him from a place he can never reach. These poems reimagine that love not as romance, but as a reflection of grief, obsession, and emotional entrapment.

Selene becomes a symbol of those who return again and again to what hurts them — not because they're weak, but because they remember the warmth that once was, and can't let go of what it meant.










Her story is one many women will recognise: the ache of staying too long, the mourning of a love that cannot respond, the pain of devotion without reciprocation. And yet, there is still tenderness in her — the kind that softens the night sky and holds the world in quiet stillness.

She is not just the goddess of the moon.



She is the symbol of returning, even when it breaks her.





**“I was born with a soul that needs to love,  
and a spirit that must be free.”**

L.E.L. 1838



The background features a large, faint Celtic knot in the top left, a snake in the top right, a skull on the left, and various plants like pomegranates and berries on the right and bottom. A central rectangular frame contains the text.

*we are*  
**THE CELTIC**





# Celtic Mythology

Celtic Mythology isn't built in a straight line. It's a spiral, a forest path. Don't walk it to reach the end. You walk it to feel the Earth beneath your feet.

Rhiannon rode faster than the  
eye could see.

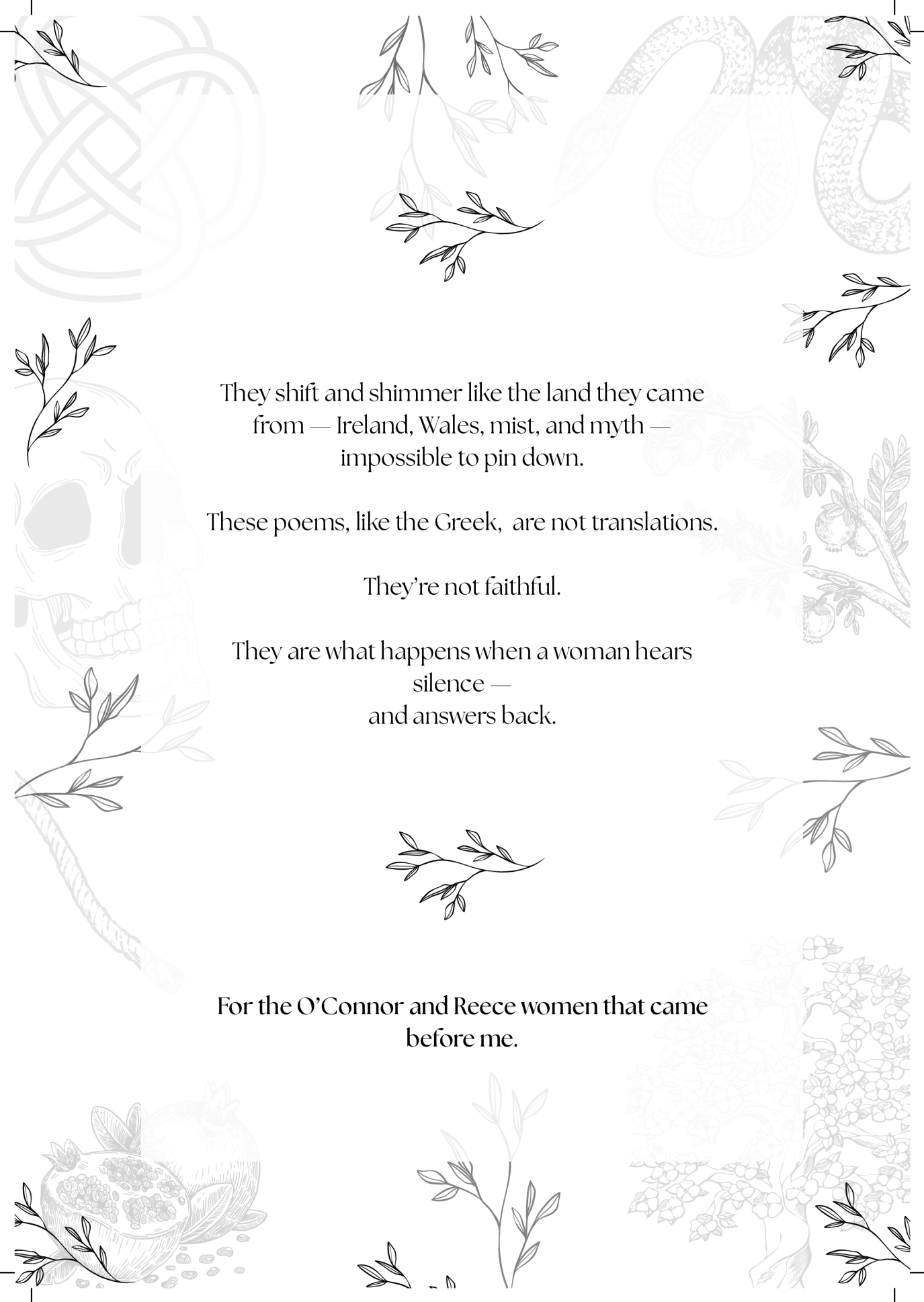
Étaín was transformed into  
wind, wings, and memory.

Fúamnach was painted wicked  
for trying to save her.

Macha bled in public so a kingdom would never forget.

Their stories come from the **Mabinogion**, from the  
Tochmarc Étaíne, from the mouths of bards and  
bones.





They shift and shimmer like the land they came  
from — Ireland, Wales, mist, and myth —  
impossible to pin down.

These poems, like the Greek, are not translations.

They're not faithful.

They are what happens when a woman hears  
silence —  
and answers back.

For the O'Connor and Reece women that came  
before me.





Cerridwen







## From the Cauldron Born

They carved *your* name from the cauldron,  
but left mine in the dark.

While you, child-thief —  
took three drops  
and called it destiny.

They forget who fed the flame.  
Who sang the first word.  
Who held the silence  
so the magic could form.

You came screaming  
into the world —  
and they gave you poems.

They gave me whispers.

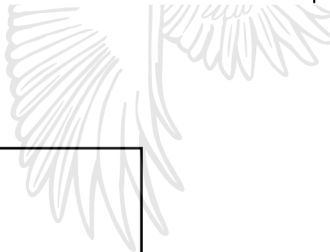
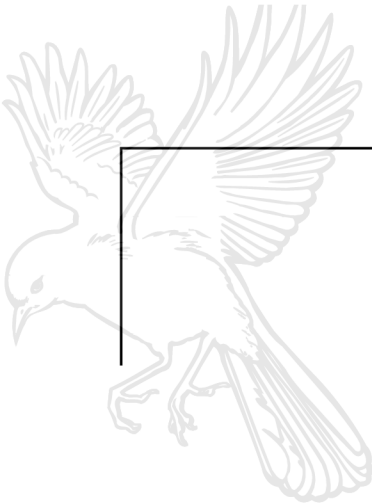
Warnings.

Witch.

My children became victims, forgotten and used.  
My feats and deeds drowned in your story.

*Gwion.*





Even after this,  
I still do not withhold.

Come to me with open hands,  
with reverence,  
with the ache to know —  
and I will feed you.

I will fill your cup  
from my cauldron,  
where truth floats  
like root and marrow.

But know this:  
I remember.

I remember who turned the fire.

Who turned from fin to wing.

The bards will remember now.





The page is decorated with several faint, stylized line drawings of birds in flight. One is in the top left, another in the top center, a large one on the left side, another on the right side, and one in the bottom right. There are also some small, abstract shapes at the bottom center.

## Author's Note

Cerridwen is often remembered only as the witch who chased Taliesin.

But she is older than his fame, older than the tales that reduced her to a side character. She is the mother of the cauldron, the keeper of Awen, the one who stirred the potion that gave him his power.

This poem gives her voice back.

It is a voice of fury — not because she is cruel, but because she fed the fire, shaped the wisdom, bore the consequence. And still, she offers herself to seekers.

She works with those who ask her for wisdom, for spirit and inspiration. With those who recall.

Cerridwen is not just the beginning of Taliesin.

She is the beginning of story itself.





Rhiannon








## The Silent Truth

They said I killed you.  
My son.

And no one asked  
how a mother lives  
with a truth like that.

They tied it to me —  
not with rope,  
but with silence.

I was told to kneel at the gates,  
to lift strangers on my back  
like a beast of burden,  
and wear my guilt  
in the dust of my skirt.



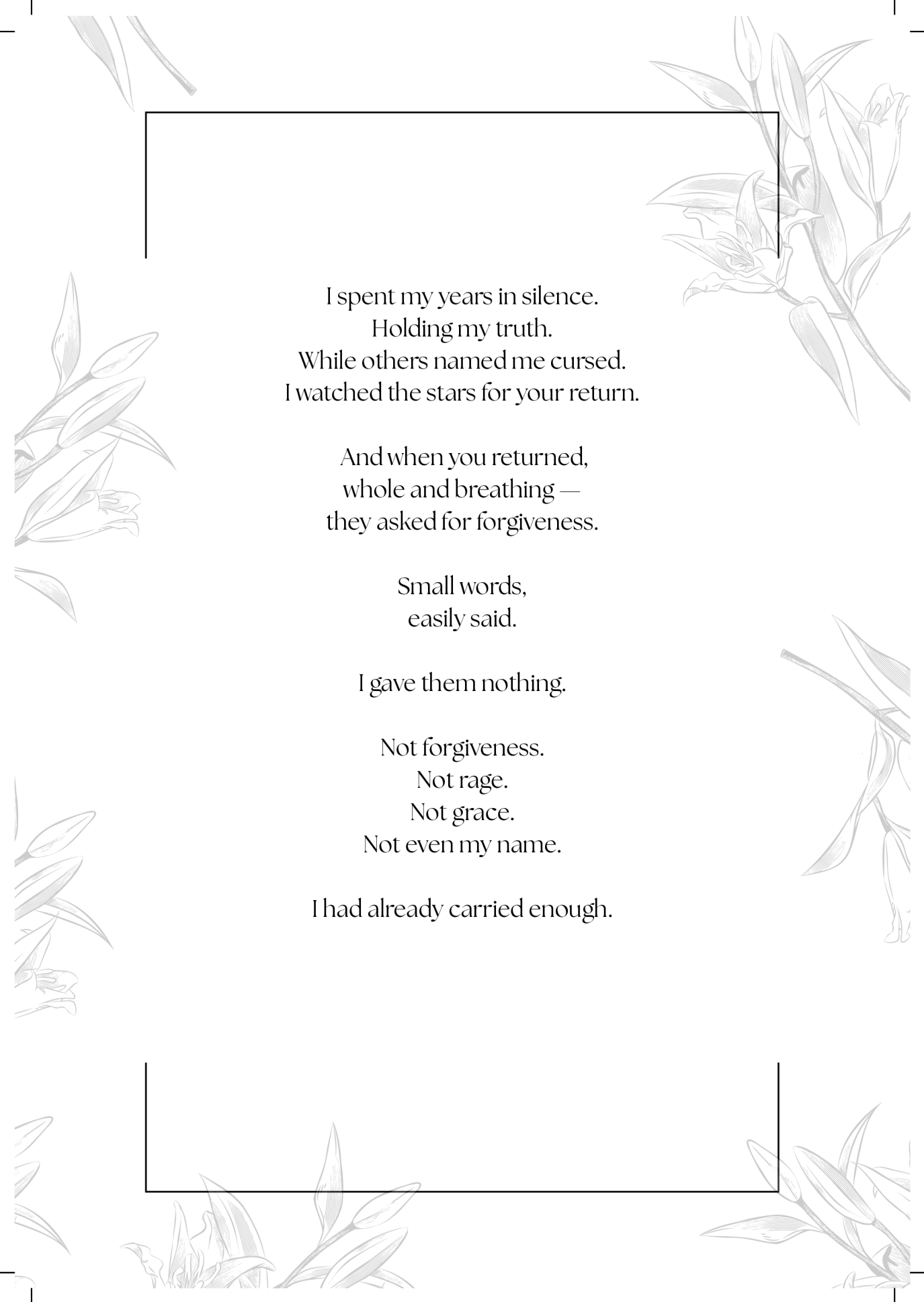
I told their lie.  
And kept my truth.

I whispered your name.

But, they did not break me.







I spent my years in silence.  
Holding my truth.  
While others named me cursed.  
I watched the stars for your return.

And when you returned,  
whole and breathing —  
they asked for forgiveness.

Small words,  
easily said.

I gave them nothing.

Not forgiveness.  
Not rage.  
Not grace.  
Not even my name.

I had already carried enough.

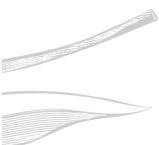




## Author's Note

Rhiannon is a figure from Welsh mythology, known for her strength, sovereignty, and quiet endurance.

Falsely accused of killing her infant son, she was forced to serve a humiliating punishment — carrying strangers on her back and confessing to a crime she didn't commit.

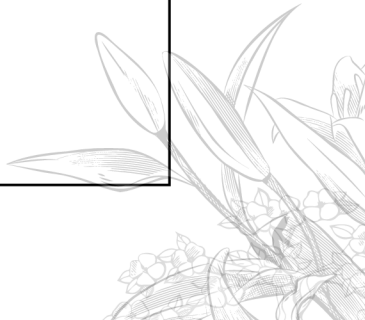
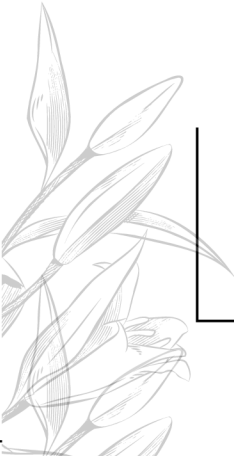


Many years later, her son returns alive and well. Those around Rhiannon asked for her forgiveness but she, instead, she gave them **nothing**,

This poem gives her space to speak not just her **truth**, but her silence — and the weight she bore when no one believed her.

Many women throughout history have spoken out over injustices only to be branded weak, **liars** and trouble-makers.

Carrying your own truth, while others shout lies is an **important** lesson, that is still relevant today.







# Fuamnach






## Witch's Mercy

Wife turned witch.  
First discarded, first scorned.  
But I was the first to see him clearly.

He does not love — he collects.



I saw you, Étaín, blooming in his grasp —  
another girl he'd press into myth  
until you forgot the way out.

So I gave you the only freedom I knew.

Wind.  
Wings.  
Distance.

I broke you to keep you whole.

They burned my name into stories,  
called me bitter, called me dangerous —  
because I refused to watch another woman  
vanish into his shadow.



To watch another's wings be crushed by his love.





I did not curse you, Étaín.

I freed you.

And if I had the power now,  
I would scatter you to the wind again,  
hide you in fire or ash or stormcloud,  
just to keep you yours.

Let the poets praise him.  
Let the bards forget me,  
or curse my very name.

I know what I did.  
And so do you.

We will remember.





## Author's Note

Fúamnach is remembered as the bitter, vengeful woman who cursed Étaín — a first wife unable to let go, reduced to another cautionary tale about female jealousy.

But what if she wasn't cruel — only desperate?

What if she wasn't trying to destroy Étaín, but to save her from the same fate?

Turning her, among other things, into a butterfly to save her from Midir.

As with Athena and Medusa — these two feuding women have been turned to allies.

This poem reimagines Fúamnach as a woman who saw the truth too late, and used the only power she had left to break a cycle.

Not out of rage, but out of recognition.





Macha



## Strength of Women

They made me run,  
for their puffed-up pride, slurred bets.  
Their mouths full of mead  
and useless sounds.

Nine months swollen,  
belly tight as a drum.  
And still — I ran.

I crossed that line, with fire between my thighs and  
blood on my ankles.  
I birthed more than a child —  
I birthed a curse.  
A memory they would feel in their bones.

Let all of Ulster buckle.  
Every man learn what it means,  
to run a race,  
carrying the weight of a world inside.

They thought strength was measured,  
By sword, shout, stomp.

But, bear the pain of a woman,  
And ye shall know the strength.



## Author's Note

**Macha** appears in Irish mythology as a woman forced to race against horses while heavily pregnant — simply because her husband bragged about her.

When no one listened to her pleas, she ran anyway, gave birth at the finish line, and cursed the men of **Ulster** to feel the pain of childbirth in their greatest time of need.

To remember her as they fail — and fall.

This is often told as a strange footnote in a hero's tale.

But Macha's story is not strange. It's familiar. It's what happens when a woman is pushed beyond her limit and still rises — bloody, breathless, and stronger than all of them.

Her curse wasn't just vengeance.

It was **truth**.






# Queen Madb






## Connacht Speaks

I am not carved from Dublin stone.  
I do not wear gold like Ulster,  
or sing like Munster in the spring.



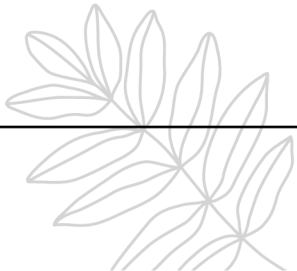

I am Connacht —  
the edge, the wind,  
the shape your grandmother's name makes in your  
mouth.

They buried women in me  
and called it quiet.  
But they were not quiet.



They were queens and curses,  
wives who left when the land grew cold,  
witches who turned storms into shelter,  
and daughters who ran faster than prophecy.

They crowned men.  
They cursed men.  
They carried the weight of kingdoms in their bodies  
and bled into the roots of this soil.








## Author's Note


Queen Medb of Connacht is often remembered for starting a war over a bull — a woman too proud, too greedy, too much.

But that's what they say when a woman refuses to be less.



Medb didn't go to war for cattle.  
She went to war for balance, for power, for  
sovereignty —  
because in a world ruled by kings,  
she demanded to be equal, or not at all.

This poem sees her not as petty,  
but proud, strong and wise.



A woman who ruled, chose, led and refused to apologise. She speaks as, and for, the land she loved.

She remembers the women who came before and follow after.








# The Morrigan






## The Prophecy



You polish your blades and paint your banners,  
as if steel and colour could change what's coming.

You sing of honour,  
but I see the puddle where your name will spill red.

You do not listen when the crows gather.  
You do not flinch when the wind tastes of rot.

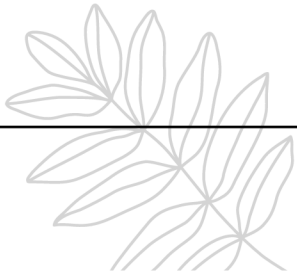



But I have seen what waits.  
I have whispered it to the trees,  
carved it in bone,  
washed it in the river that remembers all men.



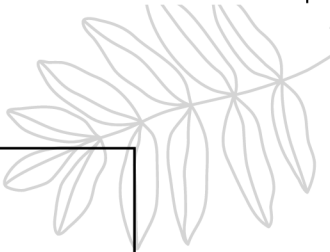

Still you laugh.  
Still you march.

You think yourselves eternal.  
And I, just a woman who weeps too loud in the fog.

But when you fall —  
when your ribs crack under the weight of your pride —  
remember:







I told you.  
I told you with every feather,  
every shiver,  
every silence before the storm.

And I do not warn twice.








## The Aftermath


Now you are quiet.  
Now you listen.

But it is too late.



I did not come to gloat.  
I came to stop this.  
To hold the thread before it snapped —  
but you laughed at the woman who spoke of endings.

You made songs of blood.  
You poured wine for death  
and called it glory.




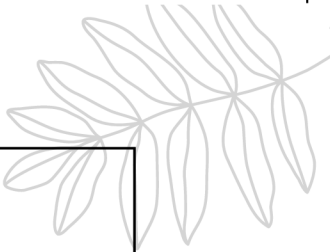

And now I walk among your wreckage.  
Bent blades.  
Unspoken names.  
Ash where once you stood proud.

I remember every face.  
Even those who spat at my warnings.  
Especially them.

You think I rejoice in ruin?  
No.








I mourn the boys  
who never saw their fathers again.  
The women who waited  
with hope they dared not name.

The mothers who buried their rage  
beneath kind goodbyes.

You called me war.  
But I was the last chance to stop it.

You did not listen.  
And so now,  
I bury you with the crows.




And I carry your names alone.








## Author's Note

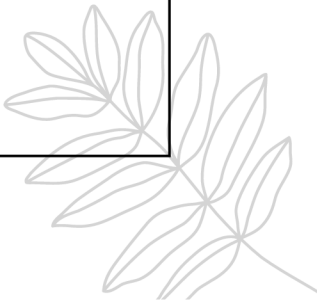



The Morrigan is a powerful figure in Irish mythology — often described as a goddess of war, prophecy, sovereignty, and fate. She is known to appear before great battles, not to bring death, but to warn of it. Often misunderstood as a symbol of bloodshed, her truest role is that of the seer — the one who speaks truths no one wants to hear.

Her name means phantom queen or great queen, and she is sometimes seen as a triple goddess, embodying different aspects of life and death. She frequently takes the form of a crow or raven, watching from the edges of conflict, calling out omens. She has been feared, dismissed, and demonised — but she never lies.



These poem, one set before the battle and the other as she walks through the dead lone in the aftermath, give her a voice in both warning and mourning. She does not delight in death. She is the one who tries to stop it — and the one left to grieve when no one listens.



Because war doesn't need a goddess to begin.  
But it needs a witness to remember.





Banshee








## A Keening


You keened beneath the hawthorn,  
and I knew.



Your voice split the wind  
and stitched my soul to the truth  
I wasn't ready to hold.

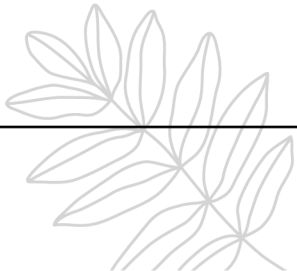

But I thank you.

Because you gave me time.  
Time to wrap trembling arms  
around the hands that once held me.  
To whisper the words  
I had saved for someday.  
To watch breath become memory  
and know  
it was not stolen — it was guided.





They said you were a curse,  
a scream, a death cry.


But I saw you,  
hair like fog,  
feet barely brushing the earth,  
a sorrow so sharp it softened the night.








You did not kill.  
You mourned.




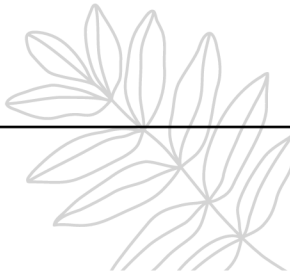

And you mourn still.  
For every name no longer spoken,  
for every child buried too soon,  
for every mother's gasp  
that never found voice.

You are grief given shape.  
Mercy with a mouth.



So I leave this offering —  
wild flowers, sea salt, silence —  
and I say:

Thank you for crying.  
Thank you for warning.  
Thank you for singing them home.









## Author's Note

In Irish mythology, the Banshee (bean sí) is a powerful and misunderstood figure — a supernatural woman who keens before death, her cry serving as both warning and lament. While often feared or cast as something sinister, her origins are deeply rooted in love, grief, and ancestral connection.



Historically, keening women (bean chaointe) existed in Irish communities, tasked with mourning the dead through poetic wails and ritual cries. The Banshee echoes this tradition on a mythic scale — not as a harbinger of doom, but as a guardian of partings, a voice for the unspeakable pain of loss.

In this poem, she is not an omen to dread — she is the reason someone had time to say goodbye.



As someone descended from the O'Connors — one of the noble families said to be watched over by the Banshee — I wanted to write her not as a ghost, but as a gift.

Because sometimes, knowing what's coming means we get to make peace.



And that is sacred.



“Legends are not made of those who  
yield, but those who endure.”

Christina Rossetti







*we are*  
**THE WRITTEN**





# Literary Mythology

They were penned into stories long before they had a  
chance to speak.

Painted as temptress, martyr, muse.

Many were the heroines of their own stories,  
before they were taken. Turned into a side character  
in a men's tale of adventure.

This section gives voice to the literary and historical  
women, who were not allowed to write their own  
endings.

They are not just characters. They are the truth that  
slipped through the ink. They are the written.

Many of these women could have been grouped into  
different genres, as much as wild, untamed spirits can  
be grouped, but they felt right to be together.

As the legendary heroines of their own stories.

And now, they get to write back.



# Guinevere





## Let Me Choose

Did I light some glorious fire?  
Instead of being the woman who was given the match  
and told to smile.

They talk about my beauty  
As if I sharpened it myself.  
Like I painted my lips with strategy,  
Learned to walk like a promise.

Arthur wanted a Queen,  
To complete a kingdom,  
Wear a crown, a porcelain doll.

To Lancelot, I was the moon  
and he was drowning on the tide.

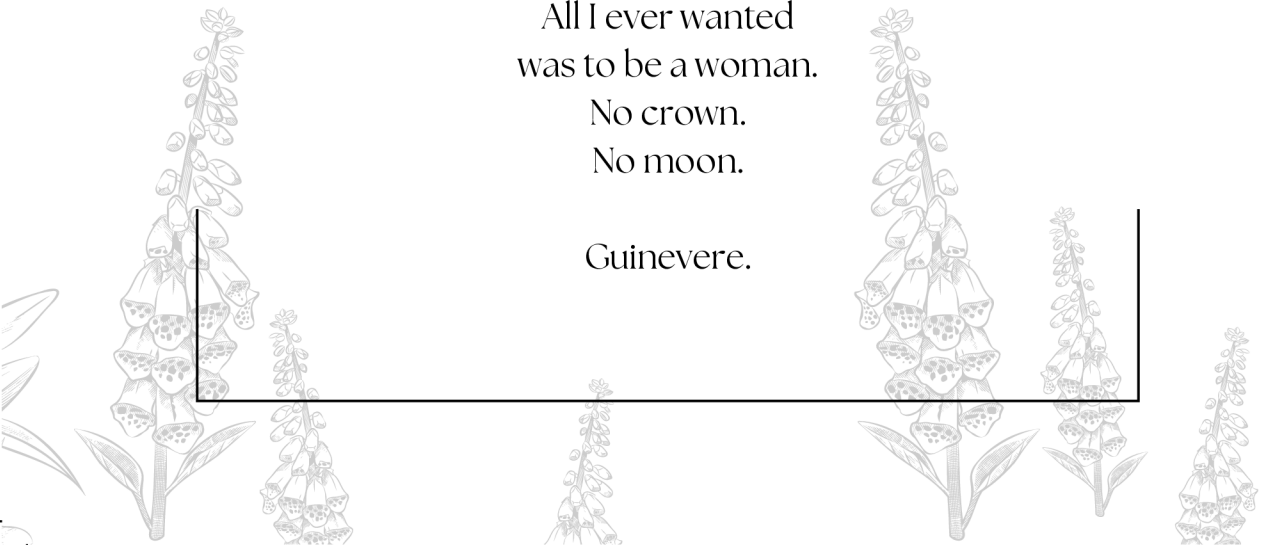
They made me a throne,  
a legend, a moral warning.

All I ever wanted  
was to be a woman.

No crown.

No moon.

Guinevere.





## Author's Note

The name **Guinevere** comes from the Welsh, **Gwenhwyfar**, meaning '*Fair Enchantress*'.

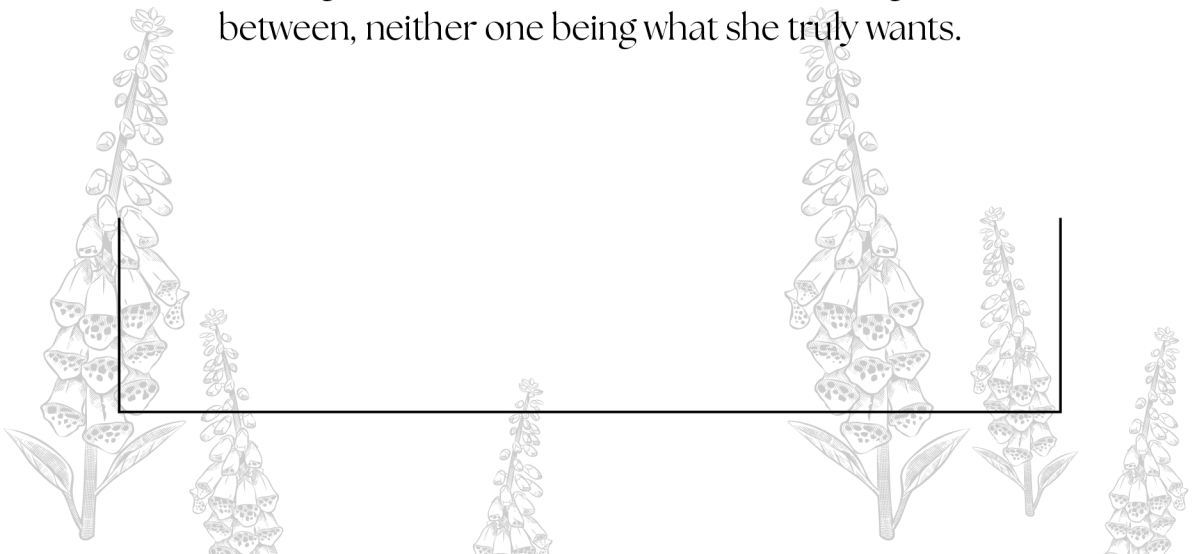
She is repeatedly written into adaptations of the tale of **Arthur** and **Camelot**.

She was written by **Tennyson** to be a sobbing and shameful woman. By the French, a scandalous woman who was condemned and almost burned at the stake.

But what if she was simply a beautiful woman? One who had no power over her charisma or her magnetism.

In this verse, we can almost imagine a modern **Guinevere** writing in her journal.

Telling of the lives — and men — she is caught between, neither one being what she truly wants.







Juliet



## Time

If I'm to be remembered,  
let it be as a girl who wanted time.

Not passion, not poison,  
not a boy with stars in his mouth  
and knives in his hands.

Romeo —  
he saw me like a sunrise  
and ran straight toward the light,  
never thinking I might burn.

They call it love.  
I call it a storm  
that didn't wait for shelter.

You made me a martyr  
for a love I didn't finish.  
A warning in a white dress.  
A girl written in red.  
Loved by a boy in a man's cloth.

I wanted pages.  
You gave me  
a tomb.





## Author's Note

Juliet Capulet is remembered as the tragic lover —  
the girl who died for romance, the icon of doomed  
devotion.

But she was only thirteen.

And Romeo? He may have been older, but not by  
much — a boy in man's cloth, swept up in passion  
and legacy.

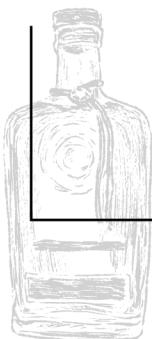
Their story unfolds in just four days.  
And yet it has shaped centuries of what we call love.

This poem reimagines Juliet not as a romantic ideal,  
but as a girl who simply wanted more time — to live,  
to grow, to choose.

Her tragedy was not a lost love.

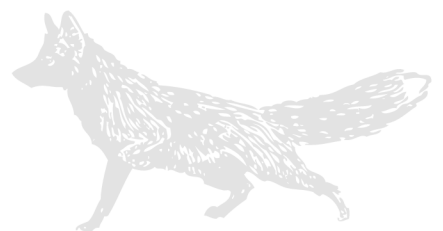
It was a tragedy before the poison and the dagger.

It was already the tragedy of a lost life.





## Maid Marion





## The Eternal Maid

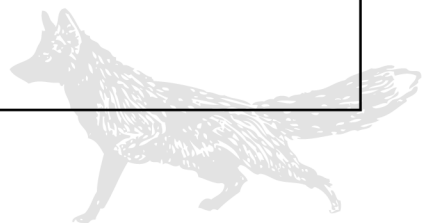
In the beginning,  
I was just forest, air.  
Just the space between arrows.

Then they gave me a name.  
Then a dress.  
Then a purpose —  
to soften him.

In May Day songs, I was a greenwood queen,  
crowned for one afternoon,  
smiling like summer.

In the ballads,  
they made me his lady —  
a noblewoman,  
chaste and grateful.  
A plot device with perfect hair.

In the 1800s, I was virtue in velvet.  
Waiting in towers.  
Sighing into the breeze.  
Men wrote me like a moral,  
like a hymn you hum but never hear.





Then came the 90s.  
They gave me boots.  
A bow, but no arrows.  
A voice, but not too loud.  
Still a damsel, just darker.  
Still waiting to be rescued.

Now they call me feminist.  
They give me knives and speeches.  
I'm the strong female character  
in a story that still isn't mine.

And yet —  
I survive them all.  
The bard.  
The playwright.  
The screenwriter.  
I have even been a fox to them.

I outlive their versions.

Growing. Evolving.

I am the eternal maid.





## Author's Note

Maid Marian is one of the most enduring — and most rewritten — women in English folklore.

Although, most only know her as a love interest for the leading man, Robin Hood.

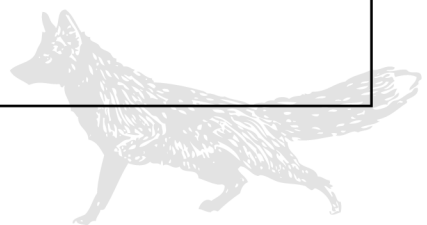
Marian wasn't in the original story, only becoming a part in the 15th century as part of May Day festival events.

Over time, Marian has been shaped to fit each era's vision of womanhood, **including a fox.**

This poem traces her evolution across those eras — not to dismiss her changes, but to highlight how she has survived every attempt to define her.

Maid Marian is not just Robin Hood's love interest.

**She is her own legend.**





Morgan Le Fay





## A Sister's Love

I hated him.  
I wrapping poison in my spells and whispers ruin unto  
his crown.

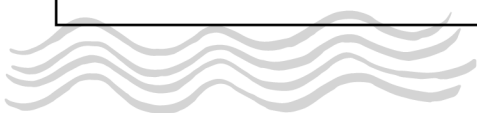
But this is the story they told,  
to make room for the heroes of men.

I did not raise a sword.  
I raised the boat.  
I held his broken body  
as gently as the first time  
I cradled a lamb,  
and I asked the sea  
to carry him somewhere soft.

I was not the storm.  
I was the hand on his forehead.  
The chant beneath his blood.  
I am his sister.  
His last breath knew me.

But men of old do not like a woman  
who closes the story.

I did not curse Arthur.  
I healed what the world took from him.





## Author's Note

Morgan le Fay is often remembered as the dark sorceress of Arthurian legend — jealous, vengeful, and dangerous.

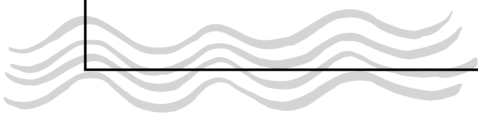
But that version comes from later medieval texts, shaped by fear of powerful, independent women.

In earlier sources, Morgan is not a villain. She is a healer, a sister, and a guardian of Avalon — the mystical island where Arthur is taken after his final battle.

In some of the oldest tales, she is the one who brings him to rest, who tends to his wounds, who does not fight — but stays.

This poem remembers her not as the one who ends the story, but as the woman who carries it gently to a close.

A tale of a sister, who loves.





## First to Fall





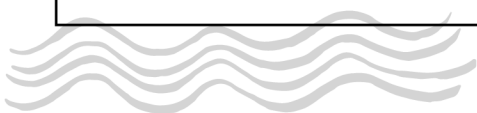
## First to Fall

They said I fell.  
But I stood.  
For the first time — on legs that were mine,  
with a mind that was mine,  
in a world that wanted me quiet.

They say I disobeyed.  
That I reached too far,  
wanted too much.  
But what I wanted was to know.  
To see.  
To choose.

Curiosity was not my sin.  
It was my first act of courage.

They called it temptation.  
They still do.  
But I didn't drag him down.  
I handed him knowledge.  
And he took it.  
Willingly.  
Because we both deserved  
more than silence.





Paradise was not peace.  
It was stillness.  
No questions.  
No change.  
No becoming.

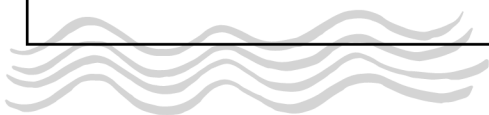
I chose the thorned path.  
The blood.  
The breath.  
The weight of time.

Not because I wanted pain —  
but because I wanted truth.

Let them blame me.  
Let them call me the first sinner.

I know what I am:  
the first human.

The first to see the world as it was  
and step into it with open eyes.





## Author's Note

Eve is a figure of deep religious and cultural importance, sacred to many across faiths and centuries.

Her story, told in the **Book of Genesis**, and has shaped the world's understanding of sin, obedience, and womanhood.

This poem does not seek to challenge that tradition.

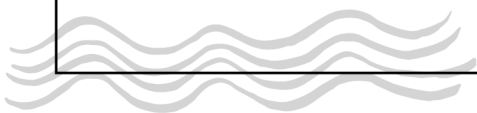
Instead, it approaches Eve as a woman in myth — the first to be written, and often, the first to be blamed.

Here, Eve is reclaimed not as a source of shame, but as a symbol of awakening.








Her choice becomes one of courage — a desire to know, to act, to begin.

She is not the villain.

She is the first human to walk forward, unafraid of the world that followed.







“Poetry is not the thing said but a way of  
saying it.”

Emily Dickinson





*we are*  
**THE NORSE**





# Norse Mythology

These are the stories carved in ice  
and spoken through thunder.  
The blood beneath runes,  
the breath between frost and flame.

They were forged — in war, in winter,  
in the aching echo of gods.

They speak of Thor, of Odin,  
of hammers and wolves and the end of all things.

But women were there too.

In their voices, hear the mountains.  
In our silence, hear the sea.

They are fate.  
They are fury.

They are heard.



## My Depths





## My Depths

Myths will say I pull you under,  
wrap you in my net,  
drag you to darkness.

But I do not choke you.  
I do not claw, or crush.  
I let the water cradle you  
when the world no longer could.

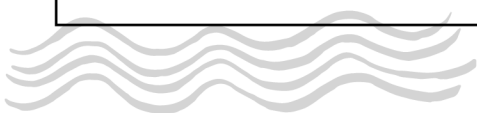
I slow your panic.  
I hush your fear.

You are not alone in your last breath.

I hold the sailor, the wanderer,  
the mother who let  
the tide claim her sorrow.

I hold the girl no one looked for.  
The boy too brave for the storm.

The wife who walked into the waves  
because there was  
nowhere else left to go.





And I remember.

Every name.

Every story.

I carry them in the shells,  
in the cold curl of the current,  
in the hush beneath storms.

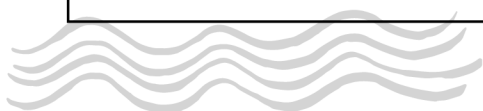
I am not the sea's rage.

I am the moment after.

The quiet.

The rest.

The mercy.





## Author's Note

In Norse mythology, Rán is known as the sea goddess who draws the drowned into her net.

To many, she is a feared force — a taker of sailors, a weaver of deaths beneath the waves. Her name itself can mean “robbery” or “plunder.”

But myth leaves space for silence.  
It does not tell us how she felt.  
It does not ask why she took them.

This poem reimagines Rán not as a monster of the depths, but as a quiet, grieving goddess who offers peace where none was given.

A collector of souls — not to hoard them, but to remember them. To make the ocean a gentler ending than the world above allowed.

Here, she is mercy, not malice.

A force of nature, yes — but one with a heart beneath the tide.





Skadi





## War & Marriage

They killed her father.  
So she laced up her boots  
and walked into the gods' golden hall  
with a blade in her belt  
and vengeance on her breath.

She did not scream.  
She did not beg.  
She demanded.

Let them soften it later,  
say she was appeased.  
Say they made her laugh.


But none remember what she asked for first:  
blood.

And what they gave her instead:  
a marriage,  
a man with salt on his skin  
who thought he could warm a woman  
born of frost.

She stayed one night by the sea  
and left before morning.





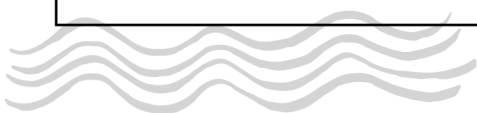


She loved the cold too much to melt for anyone.

And when they talk of gods and war,  
they rarely speak her name.

But in the mountains,  
when the wind cuts like memory,  
she is there —  
skis slicing through snow,  
stars burning in the sky  
like the eyes of the father they  
thought she'd forget.

She never did.  
She never will.





## Author's Note

Skadi is the goddess of winter and mountains — a jötunn who walked uninvited into Asgard after the gods killed her father, demanding justice.

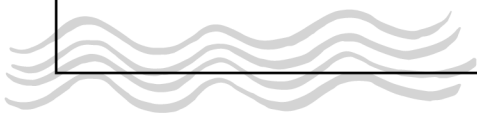
They offered her marriage instead of war, laughter instead of vengeance.

She is often overlooked in the myths, or remembered only for choosing her husband by the look of his feet.

But Skadi's story is not one of romance — it is one of power, grief, and choosing solitude over surrender.

This poem is written to honour the woman who left the hearth for the mountain.  
Who did not forget.

Who made the world stronger for ever having passed through it.





Brynhildr





## I Speak

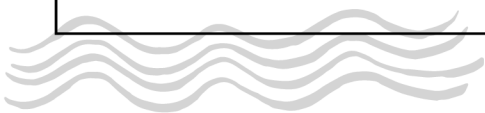
They say I slept.  
But I burned.

They say I disobeyed.  
But I chose.

My wings were torn,  
my voice muted.  
In a coffin of fire I slept —  
until I became it.

They think I ended in a pyre.  
I did not end.

I rose.





## Author's Note

Brynhildr was once a Valkyrie — a chooser of the slain.

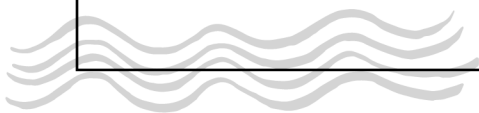
When she defied **Odin** by choosing justice over his will, he punished her with silence: stripping her power, trapping her in sleep, and declaring her a reward for whichever man could reach her.

Her love story with **Sigurd** is often remembered as romantic tragedy.

But this poem reclaims her not as a victim of fate, but as a woman of fire — punished for choosing, betrayed by those she trusted, and ultimately rising through memory and flame.

She is not ashes.

She is what survives the burning.







Hel



## Holding the Lost

You are here now.  
You don't have to be brave anymore.

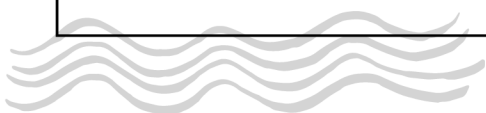
No horns.  
No gates.  
No thunder waiting to name you worthy.

Only me.

They told you  
you had to die with a sword in your hand  
to matter.  
That only fire and battle could earn you peace.

But I have seen mothers who bled quietly  
so their children would live.  
I have held the hands of healers  
who stitched wounds the world forgot.  
I have cradled the ones who  
could no longer run,  
but still chose to wake each day.

They were not weak.  
And neither are you.





Valhalla wants glory.  
I want only your truth.

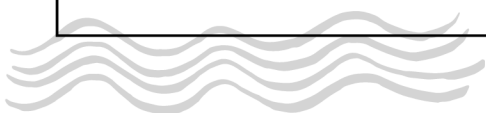
I am not ashamed of my face.  
Half of me is still warm.  
That is why I know how much it hurts  
to leave the light behind.

But here,  
you do not have to rise again.

You do not have to prove anything.

You are not lost.  
You are not failed.  
You are not less.

You are mine.  
And you are home.





## Author's Note

Hel is the Norse goddess of the underworld — daughter of **Loki** and the giantess **Angrboda**.

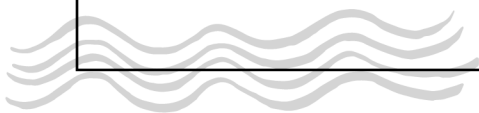
**Odin** cast her down to rule over **Helheim**, the realm of those who died not in battle, but from age, illness, or quiet causes.

Unlike Valhalla, where warriors feast forever, Helheim is a place of stillness and return.

Hel herself is described as half living, half dead — a woman caught between worlds. She is not cruel. She is not evil. She is simply the one who stays — to tend the forgotten, to hold the weary, to witness the endings that go unnoticed by song.

This poem imagines her not as a threat, but as a comfort:  
a goddess who understands pain without glamorising it, and rest without shame.

Because not all deaths are glorious.  
But all lives — and all losses — deserve to be held.





Freyja





## Without Apology

Yes — I am beauty.  
And battle.  
And the breath between your lips  
when you forget how to speak.

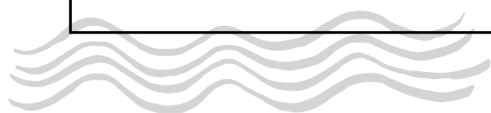
I am the perfume that lingers  
and the blood on the sword.  
The kiss and the curse.  
The moan and the mourning.

They say I slept with gods and men.  
Let them say it.  
Let them wonder how it felt  
to touch a woman made of gold and ruin.

They cannot decide if they want to worship me  
or warn others about me.  
Let them do both.  
I do not dim.  
I do not flinch.

Odin learned his magic from me.  
And still they call him wise.

I weep tears of gold,  
and you would drown in one.





## Author's Note

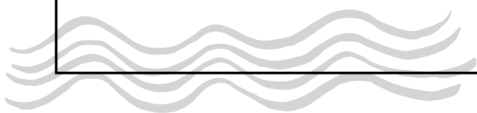
Freyja is one of the most powerful goddesses in Norse mythology — a goddess of love, war, sex, and death.

She is the leader of the Valkyries, the teacher of seiðr (Norse magic), and the one who receives half of the heroic dead before Odin does.

Yet over time, her story has been reduced. Dismissed as promiscuous, mocked for her desire, and slandered for her magic — as so many powerful women have been.

This poem is a reclamation.  
Freyja doesn't need defending.  
She is **not** too much. She is exactly what she was  
meant to be: divine and whole.

In her, we see the strength of women who hold  
beauty and rage, sensuality and sovereignty, softness  
and steel —  
**without apology.**







Sif



## What Grows?

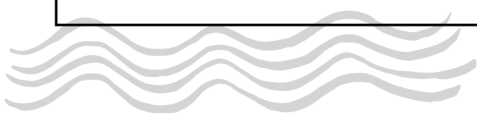
She does not roar.  
She does not rule with thunder.  
But when the world is broken,  
it is she who makes it bloom again.

She is the field after fire,  
the first green shoot breaking through ash.  
She is the hush between seasons,  
the slow return of light.

Her body is not battleground  
but seedbed. Womb and root.  
Cradle and compost.  
Everything dies in her arms —  
and still, she gives back.

Because women  
are the turning, the thaw,  
the gathering of wheat,  
the spiral that returns to itself —  
not broken, but eternal.

They laugh at the women, the soft things.  
But she is the Earth.  
And what grows without her?





## Author's Note

Sif is a Norse goddess often remembered only for her golden hair and her role as Thor's wife.

Her story, as it survives, is quiet — but symbolic. Her hair is said to represent fields of wheat, and when Loki cuts it, it is reforged by dwarves to grow again: stronger, more magical than before.

This poem isn't a direct retelling of her myth, but a reflection of what she represents — the Earth, fertility, regrowth.

It's a reminder that creation is power, that cycles are sacred, and that the quiet strength of women is woven into every season that turns.

Sif is more than her beauty.  
She is the symbol of the fertility of the Earth and of the cycle of women.

She is the reason things grow.



"It is never too late to be what you might  
have been."

George Elliot







## Why They Matter Now

These women represent eternities of females being the footnote, moral warning or downfall of men. Their own stories — including the actions of the men that preluded their fall — have been muddled, obscured or simply omitted altogether.

This collection is not formed of words to hurl at the men of myths, or to erase the faults of the women in these tales.

This book is a chance to see these women for who they could have been and for what they can truly represent.

They were not too much, too weak or too proud, they were just written that way.

They were strong, wilful and resilient.  
They were flawed, untamed and broken.  
They were mother, daughter and Queen.

Many of the prejudices displayed against women in the myths we know can still be seen in the world today.





By men. By other women. Even by ourselves

And, while one book cannot change the world, it can  
act as shelter and a safe space for those who seek it.

Reclaiming these women's voices not only spreads a  
love of myth to a new audience, it lets a new  
generation of women find strength, hope and  
representation.

You are enough. And so were they.





## About Rebecca

Rebecca Bolton is a writer, historian, and mother based in the English countryside. Her work explores the quiet strength that lives in shadows — in memory, in myth, in womanhood.

With a deep love for stories passed down through time, she writes to reclaim what was lost: voices silenced, truths rewritten, and women flattened into warnings or footnotes.

When she's not writing, Rebecca can be found tending her garden, reading a new novel, or exploring the forgotten corners of the past. She believes in the power of stories to heal, to challenge, and to guide us home to ourselves.

Rebecca's poetry balances tenderness with fury, reverence with rebellion. Her debut collection, *Connections: Poems for Healing*, is available now.

Find more of Rebecca's writing and books at  
[rebeccainprint.com](http://rebeccainprint.com)





## Further Reading

If you enjoyed these verses, and the myths they discuss, you may enjoy this mixed bookshelf.

The Power of Myth - Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers

Circe - Madeline Miller

Women Who Run With the Wolves - Clarissa P Estés

The Penguin Book of Myths - Jenny March

Celtic Myths - Miranda Green

The Greek Myths - Robert Graves

Witch: Unleashed. Untamed. Unapologetic. - Lisa Lister

The Mabinogion - Translated by Charlotte Guest

The Silence of the Girls - Pat Barker

Maiden, Mother, Crone - D.J. Conway





## Further Reading

All quote page inserts are taken from sources that were written before 1925 and are available for free, within the public domain.

A selection of the materials they have been sourced from can be found below, in alphabetical order by author.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women* (1868)

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Persuasion* (1818)

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre* (1847)

Eliot, George. *Daniel Deronda* (1876)

Landon, Letitia Elizabeth (L.E.L.). *Collected Poems* (1820s–1830s)

Rossetti, Christina. *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862)

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

*Read. Discuss. Enjoy.*



