



Donate Pahnke McIntosh

Freya's Quest

**A story incorporating authentic elements of Germanic mythology,
suitable for trance work in ritual**



Vanadis Texte

Freya's Quest

**A story incorporating authentic elements of Germanic mythology,
suitable for trance work in ritual**

by Donata Pahnke McIntosh

A long time ago in faraway kingdom lived a young princess whose name was Freya. She was beautiful and clever, and all of the people loved her dearly. But her parents, the King and Queen, were so busy ruling their country that they had no time for their youngest daughter, nor for their two elder daughters, the sisters of the princess. But these sisters were malicious and envious of the youngest one because it was she, according to custom, who would inherit the crown and rule over the land. So never a day went by without the elder sisters making Freya's life a misery with derision, mockery and hurtful remarks, so that the youngest princess became more and more subdued and withdrawn. In her loneliness she longed for a female companion with whom she could talk and laugh, and sometimes she dreamed of a handsome prince who would come galloping up on his horse and rescue her. Only her old grandmother, who lived in a widow's house on the edge of the wood, occasionally looked after her. She told Freya tales and legends of the people of ancient times and taught her about the magic of the seasons and the heavenly bodies. But the grandmother was old and could not compensate Freya for the lack of kindred companions.

Freya's heart was filled with a great, undefined longing for love and wisdom. She felt certain that, if she could only find someone who would take her in his arms, and if she were only a little wiser about life's mysteries, then her luck would change for the better. Then it happened that a dashing young prince came to the court and paid his respects to Freya. The prince lost no opportunity to flatter her. He praised her beauty and told her fabulous stories of the countries he had visited on his travels and how he had fought gloriously in many battles. So worldly-wise and special did he seem to the young princess that she did everything she could to please him. But in reality the prince had a false heart and was only intent on marrying the princess so that he could gain power. One day Freya overheard him with her sisters, talking mockingly and scornfully about her, and she felt as though her heart would break.

That night Freya stood at the window of her room and confided her pain and loneliness to the silver moon, which was spreading her milky light over the world. And suddenly it seemed to her that an image appeared in the disc of the moon: a heart, red and glowing, warm and full of life as though it belonged to

the Goddess of the Universe herself. Then, quite unmistakably, there appeared a sword that pierced the heart through the middle. The young woman was shaken by the sight and unable to explain to herself what it could mean. However, out of the sword came a ray of light, so strong and clear that she was impelled to follow it. The light shone directly on to a path that led out of the palace garden into a dark wood.

Freya followed the light. She felt so desperate, so abandoned and betrayed that she was sure that anywhere in the world must be friendlier than the place where she was. For a long time she ran on, blinded by fear and by anger towards the prince whom she had loved and who had only played with her, anger towards her sisters, who knew only spite and malice, and anger towards her parents, who had not given her the love that she needed.

Just when the moon stood at her highest, Freya came into a clearing where her path crossed another path. In the middle of the crossroads burned a fire around which four dwarves were dancing while they sang a song:

Hill and heather,
 Wind and feather,
 Tears of gold,
 Riches hold,
 Deep, dark well,
 In sacred dell,
 Power free,
 Cautious be,
 Thy wyrd's way
 Now clearly see!

Freya was scared, but she summoned up her courage and asked: "Who are you?" Then the dwarves laughed and cried out:

Round and round,
 Sacred ground.
 South and East
 Shall be your feast

West and North,
Venture forth.
Up and down,
A royal crown,
Reward at last
For trials passed,
Fate will send
At journey's end.

The dwarves had hardly finished their song when, out of the north, rushed a great, grey wild sow, running so fast that her tongue hung out of her mouth and her hair stood terrifyingly on end. Freya would have been knocked over by the boar's headlong rush, had she not jumped to the side. But, as she jumped, the sow shot between her legs and she found herself sitting astride the animal. Desperately she grabbed the bristles on the sow's neck, as she was carried away at breathtaking speed right into the depths of the black wood. At first her heart hammered in her breast with shock and fear, but soon she began to enjoy the dizzying ride. On and on they sped in the pale moonlight, free, unbridled. Freya felt the warm pulse of the animal's body under her, and as the sow leapt at full speed over a thorny piece of undergrowth she let out a loud, joyful shout. Never before had she known such a splendid feeling of energy and strength.

After a while they came to the edge of a secret place in the depths of the forest. Here all was still and no haste and clamour were allowed. The wild sow set Freya down and, with a final grunt, disappeared among the trees. In front of her Freya saw a spring that flowed into a big, wide basin and was filled with water of a strangely shimmering, bluish colour, the like of which she had never seen before. The young woman was thirsty and was about to bend down to the water when a deep voice called out: "Stop!" From out of the shadows of the trees came a giant, an imposing figure in white garments with a great beard hanging right down over his breast. "I am Mimir the giant," he said "the keeper of this spring. It is my duty to make sure that no one drinks from it unless they are ready to face up to their own destiny. Who are you, strange woman, and what brings you to the Well of Eternal Wisdom?"

"I am Freya," the young woman answered. "One day I shall be queen and my deepest desire is the knowledge of love and power."

"Well spoken," replied the giant. "Your wish shall be fulfilled. Sit down quietly by the water and let it work on all your senses."

Freya sat down by the spring and was immediately overcome by a deep, sweet feeling of peace. The voices of the birds and the rustling of the treetops grew fainter and fainter, until all she could hear was the beating of her heart. On the surface of the water many circles and spirals, ripples and whirls arranged themselves into marvellous shapes that seemed to come from the realm of the fairies. In her mind she felt herself diving deep into this celestial blueness. Then the surface of the water became smooth and showed her, as though on the pages of a book, images that told of her destiny. She saw herself as a woman in love, her heart pierced through by the sword of betrayal. And the pain was like a signpost to understanding. For wisdom comes not from the pain itself but from the understanding of its meaning. And Freya saw herself as queen, enjoying the love and trust of her people, for she had learned how to draw from the source that is divine and not be dependent on lust for power. For a long time the young woman sat by the spring, and with each image that appeared to her she became more tranquil and more in harmony with herself. Finally she sighed deeply and, when the giant gave her a friendly nod, she took a drinking vessel that lay at hand, dipped it into the water and drank in long, thirsty draughts.

Freya was exhausted, her eyes were burning and she was close to tears. With a friendly smile Mimir stretched out his arm and, when she looked where he was pointing, she saw the entrance to a brightly lit cave. A cheerful fire blazed invitingly in a hearth, and beside it was a comfortable looking bed, beckoning her to rest. The young woman was so exhausted from everything that she had seen and experienced that she covered on the bed and burst into tears. Freya wept for all the love that she had never known and all the love that she known and lost. She wept and wept, and the more her tears flowed, the warmer the fire grew. It was as though the flames were sucking up the stream of tears. They seemed to say to her: "Look how we dance! Hear how we crackle, see how we glow, see how we flicker and blaze! Sacred power of transformation!" Then Freya let out a cry, laden with all the hurt and humiliation that she had suffered, which burst from her breast and seemed to fall directly into the flames. It left her with a feeling of freedom and well-being such as she had never known before, and she felt the fiery lust for life surge through her body. Yes, she was as free as a wild sow, strong as a sword forged in the heat of the untameable fire. And in her joy she danced a long, wild dance, until at last she fell on to the bed and sank into a deep sleep. When Freya awoke she found beside her a little pile of amber pearls, golden and shimmering. These were the tears of wounded love which she had shed and which had been purified in the fire of transformation. Freya stretched her body and stood up.

As she came out of the cave into the open she saw a great expanse of land stretching away below her. This was the kingdom that she would rule. Born on a fresh breeze, a falcon came sweeping down to her. "Maiden Queen," said the bird "it is time for you to view your kingdom so that you can decide how you wish to rule it, knowing how to recognize good and evil." Then, from out of its plumage, the bird produced a garment similar to his own, made of long,

powerful wing feathers and lined with warm, fleecy down. This was wrapped around Freya's shoulders. Now she could fly over her kingdom and observe whether everything was going as it should. The young woman took a deep breath and stretched out her wings, then stepped into the air and let herself be carried aloft. It felt so easy, as though she herself were the wind. She flew along for a whole day and a whole night, and nothing escaped her eye, which was as sharp and clear-sighted as a falcon's. At the end of her flight there was nothing in her kingdom that was strange to her, and she understood very well how she should begin her work.

That night she went back to the crossroads where she had met the dwarves. They, in the meantime, had made for her a necklace, called Brisingamen, out of the pearls that had been her tears when she had wept by the fire. The necklace was a sign of her maturity and her destiny as queen. Freya hung the necklace around her neck, and wherever she went in her kingdom she opened the hearts of one and all, great and lowly. For the magic of transformation that was concealed in the necklace caused everyone to think well of her. Thirteen moons after her return she found her great love. Then her necklace sparkled brighter than all the stars in heaven and kept the fire in her heart alive until the end of her happy life.

Translated from German by Christopher McIntosh