

C ILLE DORCHA

OSTARA / ALBAN EILIR: QUIET RISING



Terence Freeland

Part 1 - The Turning

FROM BEING HUNTED TO BECOMING THE HUNTER



I have never felt the need to abandon the word Easter.

Not out of theological allegiance, nor out of defiance, nor even from some sentimental clinging to childhood ritual — but because certain words arrive in the body before they ever reach the intellect. They take root in sensation long before they are contested by doctrine. “Easter,” for me, is one of those words. It carries with it the echo of carpeted stairs creaking under early morning feet, the peculiar brightness of spring light filtering through curtains, and the delicious tension of something hidden that required seeking.

As a child, Easter was not a sermon. It was not the retelling of sacrifice or resurrection. It was a hunt.

Clues would be left — sometimes folded into small scraps of paper, sometimes propped carefully against a plant pot, sometimes tucked beneath the lip of a windowsill. They were written in rhyme, though rarely in perfect metre. They misdirected just enough to require

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attention. A word might lean toward the kitchen when the true answer was the garden. A suggestion of height might lead you to search shelves before realising the “loftiness” referred to the old apple tree at the bottom of the lawn. There was always movement. Always the necessity of stepping outward.

That detail matters more than it first appears.

Winter, in childhood, is largely something that happens to you. You are wrapped. You are carried. You are given. Christmas, with its candlelight and expectancy, arrived like weather — beautiful and enveloping, but not requiring much from me beyond awe and gratitude. Easter was different. Easter demanded participation. It required that I decipher, that I track, that I choose direction and risk being wrong.

Long before I had language for archetype, I was rehearsing one.

The shift was subtle but decisive: from being the one to whom things are given, to becoming the one who seeks. Not predator — participant. Not domination — orientation.

There is something profoundly formative in that movement.

As an adult, I became the trickster. I wrote the riddles. I hid the prizes. I misdirected gently. And in doing so I realised that the game had never been about confectionery. The chocolate was incidental. The real gift was agency. The riddle is a teacher that refuses passivity. It sharpens the senses. It demands attention. It refuses to allow life to be consumed without engagement.

That, for me, is where the word “Easter” still lives — in the embodied memory of stepping into agency.

It is the same reason I continue to use the word “Christmas.” These words are not theological positions; they are sensory archives. They hold atmosphere. They hold formative enchantment. They pre-date my interest in Celtic myth, pre-date my exploration of sovereignty and devotion, pre-date my understanding of magic as disciplined attention. They are simply earlier.

Later, my mythic leanings would tilt toward the Celtic — Eriu over Ostara, Dagda over distant northern figures. And yet I do not feel the need to cleanse the vocabulary of my childhood in order to claim authenticity. My daughter grew up knowing that Santa’s older name was Jólnir. Names shift. Garments change. The current beneath them remains.

Now, when Easter approaches, I feel it less as doctrine and more as threshold.

From Being Hunted to Becoming the Hunter

Ostara — Alban Eilir — is not full bloom. It is not Beltane's abandon, nor the unrestrained generosity of midsummer. It is pressure gathering beneath bark. It is sap rising before leaf. It is the moment when light has tipped the balance but warmth has not yet fully claimed dominion. There is still chill in the morning air. Still restraint. But restraint has begun to loosen its grip.

The image that returns to me each year is not a flower — it is a shell under tension.

Something inside pressing outward.

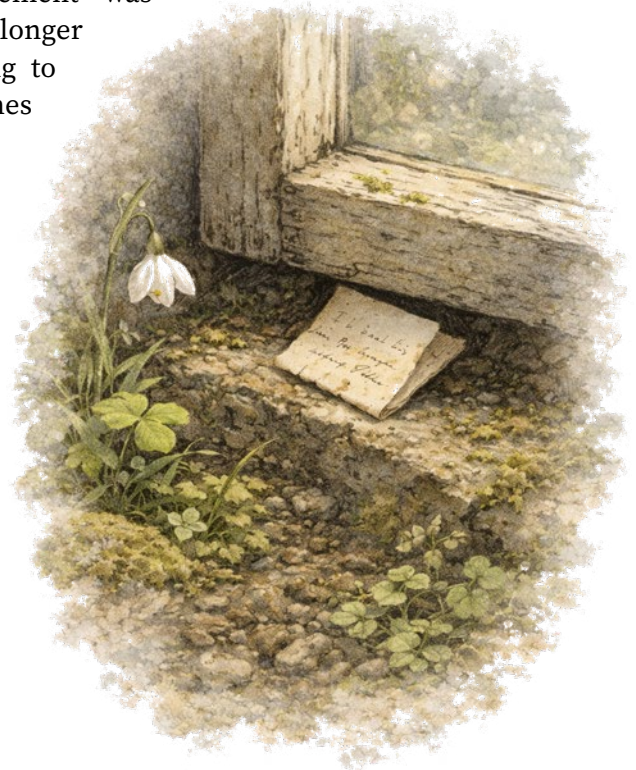
And this is where the childhood hunt and the seasonal shift converge. In winter, one waits. In early spring, one tests. One steps from the burrow. One reads the air. One follows a scent not yet fully formed.

The hunter archetype, stripped of its modern discomfort, is not about violence. It is about attentiveness. The hunter reads terrain. Notices disturbance. Understands pattern. Accepts consequence. There is humility in that posture, not dominance. To hunt mythically is to enter relationship with the field in which you move.

Childhood Easter rehearsed that posture in play. We tracked clues, not animals. We followed signs, not blood.

But the psychic movement was identical. We were no longer the hidden ones waiting to be found; we were the ones who sought.

And that is the beginning of sovereignty.



Part 2 - The Grove

A MEDITATION IN THE GROVE BEFORE THE MAKING



Before I began the Ostara accord, I undertook a period of cleansing — not elaborate, not theatrical, but deliberate. Water over skin with intention. Silence held longer than comfort required. I anointed my wrists and throat with oil of the same character, not yet in its final form but close enough to carry its signature. The scent was green and restrained, more tension than bloom.

Then I sat.

Mist lay low across the ground as the grove gathered around me — not thick enough to obscure, but sufficient to soften certainty. The grass held light along its edges. The soil beneath it felt awake, no longer closed, not yet exuberant. The air carried damp bark, sap beginning to rise, and that faint metallic brightness that comes when earth shifts from holding to offering.

At the centre stood a stone altar, broad and weathered, its surface cool but no longer severe. Upon it rested the materials required for the work

A Meditation in the Grove Before the Making

ahead: bottles, droppers, oils in their separate vessels, each distinct yet waiting to be brought into relation. Nothing hurried. Nothing strained toward completion.

To my left stood the Cailleach.

Not looming. Not harsh. She was stone given posture. Weathered, unornamented, enduring. Her presence did not chill the grove; it steadied it. In her there was memory — of shaping, of testing, of the long discipline that pares away excess and leaves only what can survive. She did not look at the altar. She looked at the land beyond it, as though measuring what would hold.

To my right stood Brigid.

Clear-eyed. Exact. Her presence was finer, sharper — not blaze, not spectacle, but attentiveness honed to a point. She carried the assurance of work already done. The preparation complete. The spark proven.

Between them, there was space.

Not empty.

Attentive.

It was in that space that movement first appeared — slight, peripheral. A hare stood at the edge of the grove.

Not large. Not luminous. Entirely itself. Its coat carried the muted browns and greys of early spring earth, yet along its flanks there seemed a faint flush, as though warmth moved beneath fur not yet shed of its former season. It did not startle. It did not bolt.

It watched.

I did not rush toward it. Nor did I remain still.

There was a pull — not urgency, not alarm — but invitation. I stepped forward. The hare moved lightly away, not in panic, but in deliberate distance, ensuring it remained just beyond reach.

It circled the grove slowly.

Around the stone altar. Between the standing figures. Through the thinning mist. I followed — not at speed, not lunging — but attentive. The act of following sharpened the air. My body became aware of direction, of footfall, of breath. The grove was no longer backdrop; it was terrain.

The Cailleach did not move.

Brigid's gaze tracked me, not the hare.

The animal paused once, ears high, as though listening to something beneath the soil. Then it moved again, passing behind the altar.

I followed immediately — expecting fur, movement, perhaps the flicker of white tail.

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There was no hare.

Instead, standing where it had passed, was Eriu.

Not sudden. Not theatrical. Simply present, as though she had always occupied that place and I had only now learned how to see it.

Her stance carried the same alert stillness as the hare — weight balanced, gaze steady, entirely grounded. There was in her the faint warmth I had sensed before — not ripeness, not fullness — but the early inward turning of growth. A quickening that altered posture rather than silhouette.

She did not smile.

She did not speak.

She looked at me as one looks at someone who has chosen to follow.

Behind her, the altar felt nearer. More central. No longer something to approach through preparation, but something arrived at through pursuit.

The Cailleach inclined her head slightly.

Brigid's clarity remained, but it no longer framed the space. It illuminated it.

Eriu stepped to the altar.

She placed her hand upon the tray, and the materials settled into relation — not arranged by intellect, but acknowledged by land.

The air grew dense with presence.

I returned to the centre.

The hare was gone.

The making could begin.



Part 3 - The Practice

A MORNING MEDITATION FOR ALBAN EILIR



Choose morning if you can.

Not when the day is already structured and spoken for, but earlier — when light has established itself and yet the world remains undecided. Open a window. If possible, step outside. Let the air meet your face without mediation. Early spring does not embrace; it clarifies. There is still coolness in it. Still edge. That edge is part of the work.

Place the oil before you.

Hold it for a moment before allowing it to rise into the room. Feel the coolness of the glass. Notice how your body responds to the air — whether you lean toward warmth, whether you brace slightly, whether some part of you wishes to close the window and return to enclosure.

Ostara begins precisely at that threshold.

When you release the scent into the space, do not draw it in immediately. Let it unfold. Let it meet the air before it meets you. Notice that it does not bloom. It leans. There is green in it — but not flower.

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There is warmth — but not heat. It carries the sensation of movement about to occur.

Stand with it.

Imagine yourself once more in the grove, not in stillness now, but at the moment before movement. Something in your peripheral vision shifts. A presence just ahead. Not threatening. Not fleeing. Simply not waiting for you.

You are not required to decide what it is.

It may be animal — close to the earth, self-possessed, moving according to its own necessity.

It may be fey — elusive, playful, unwilling to be grasped directly.

It may be god — sovereign, demanding recognition rather than pursuit.

It may be nothing mythic at all, only a part of your own life that has grown tired of being ignored.

Do not rush to name it.

Allow yourself the permission to follow before defining.

Notice how it moves. Does it dart? Does it pause and look back? Does it remain just far enough ahead to require intention but not so far as to discourage you?

Now ask yourself:

What, in the physical world, mirrors this movement?

Where in your actual, lived days does something continue to appear at the edge of your attention?

A project you circle but do not begin.

A conversation you rehearse but do not speak.

A change you sense but postpone.

A desire that will not fully disappear.

The hunt at Ostara is not fantasy.

It is translation.

What you follow in the grove may also be waiting for recognition in your life.

Stand with that.

Feel the slight tightening that comes when instinct meets responsibility. The step taken matters more than the image held.

The hunter's work begins in recognition, but it is proven in pursuit.

You do not need to capture what you follow.

You need only to begin tracking it.

Part 4 - The Accord

THE ACCORD IN THE SEASON OF TURNING



Aonta Éirí Ciúin, the Accord of Quiet Rising, was made for Ostara / Alban Eilir not to perform spring, but to align with its first insistence.

Scent does not wait for belief. It alters the air whether we intend it to or not. It moves through the body before it passes through thought.

What follows is simply a way of noticing.

The structure of this accord mirrors the structure of the season — clarity first, then emergence, then steadiness beneath it. Understanding this does not manufacture the effect. The turning happens regardless. But to recognise it is to work with it rather than merely stand within it.

If Ostara is pressure gathering beneath bark, then the scent must carry that same restraint.

It does not begin in sweetness.

It begins in clarity.

Bergamot and petitgrain lift first — not as brightness for its own sake, but as air newly rinsed. They do not sparkle; they clear. Juniper moves

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through them like breath drawn deeper than habit, carrying the faint resinous sharpness of sap just beginning to rise.

There is green here, but not meadow.

It is the green of leaf before flower.

Neroli and geranium follow — not as perfume, but as proximity. They sit close to the skin of the room, warm but measured. Ylang does not bloom into fullness; it hums quietly beneath the surface. Ho wood threads through the centre, smoothing without softening, keeping the composition upright.

This is not blossom in celebration.

It is blossom in concentration.

Beneath it all, the woods do their work without declaration. Sandalwood steadies. Cedar draws a vertical line through the air, subtle but structural. Frankincense does not ascend; it settles — resin as quiet gravity.

And then there is the violet leaf.

Used without restraint, it can dominate — metallic, insistent, almost bruised. For a long time I mistrusted it. It felt too sharp, too assertive, too ready to overwhelm.

But at a trace — only a trace — it becomes something else.

It adds edge without bitterness. It introduces character without disruption. It is the reminder that green is not innocent. Growth carries tension. Emergence is not decorative.

The violet leaf is the part of the season that resists sentimentality.

It keeps the brightness honest.

As the accord settles, it does not sweeten. It coheres. The air feels slightly firmer, as though posture has adjusted without instruction. It does not announce spring. It recognises that something has begun — and holds space for it.

Spring, at this threshold, is not abundance. It is orientation. It is not colour in excess, but direction clarified. This accord does not attempt to perform the season; it aligns with it — measured, attentive, quietly awake.

This is not Beltane's warmth.

This is the moment before.

The moment when the hunter lifts his head.

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