

# C ILLE DORCHA

LITHA / ALBAN HEFIN: STILLNESS



Terence Freeland

**Part 1 - The Turning**

**WHEN THE WORLD STANDS  
FULL**



There are many for whom Alban Hefin is found in company. In gathered voices before dawn. In the slow movement of people toward ancient stones while the horizon is still dark with night. I understand the pull of this deeply. To stand amongst others at Stonehenge as the longest day begins must carry with it a feeling of continuity that reaches far beyond the self. A recognition that countless others have waited for this same sunrise and felt the same warmth arrive upon their faces as the wheel turned once more toward its height.

Yet my own relationship with Alban Hefin has always arrived more quietly than this.

I do not carry many childhood recollections of the summer solstice. There are fragments perhaps. The nearing end of the school year. Long evenings that seemed reluctant to surrender themselves to darkness. Windows left open late into the night while the air held the warmth of the day. Yet none of these memories settled themselves firmly enough

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to become tradition. Alban Hefin only began to speak clearly to me much later in life, and when it did, it spoke in stillness.

Over the years I found myself rising early at this point in the season. Earlier than necessity required. Earlier than comfort suggested. The house would still be silent. Roads empty. Even birdsong seemed hesitant at first, as though the world itself had not fully decided to wake. There is a peculiar quality to those moments before midsummer dawn. The air feels suspended between states. Coolness still lingers in the earth while warmth already waits somewhere beyond the horizon, preparing its slow return.

At the rear of my home is a single-storey extension with a flat roof that I can climb out onto in the early hours. From there I can look out toward the north-east across distant farmland and the low line of the horizon beyond the nearby trees. The slight height is enough to let me witness the exact moment the sun breaks above the land. That first appearance has become deeply bound to Alban Hefin for me. The world remains hushed for a few moments longer, and then suddenly the light is there, steady and undeniable.

I would sit quietly and wait.

Not for revelation. Not for vision. Simply for morning.

And in time I came to understand that Alban Hefin had less to do with celebration for me than recognition. The sunrise at midsummer does not arrive dramatically. It establishes itself patiently. The darkness recedes by degrees. Shapes emerge from shadow. Trees separate themselves from the horizon. The world slowly remembers its own form. Then, somewhere almost impossible to pinpoint exactly, the first gold appears across the distant fields and everything feels gently affirmed.

There are mornings in life that seem to communicate something without language. Alban Hefin has often felt this way to me. The sunrise carries no command and offers no promise of perfection. It does not insist that life will become easy, nor that suffering can somehow be escaped through ritual or belief. Yet sitting beneath the arrival of that light year after year, watching it spill slowly across the same farmland and hills, I have often felt a profound sense of reassurance settle quietly within me. The wheel continues to turn. Dawn continues to return. Some things remain dependable even while so much else changes shape around us.

I think this is part of why stillness feels so important to me at Alban Hefin. In quietness, the sunrise can be heard more clearly.

Modern life trains us toward constant movement. Toward urgency. Toward the feeling that peace must somehow be earned through productivity or achievement. Alban Hefin seems to offer another possibility entirely. To sit beneath the arriving light without striving toward anything. To allow oneself, if only briefly, to exist without demand. There is contentment in this. A deep and steady kind of contentment that does not depend upon excitement.

The longest day of the year does not feel ecstatic to me. It feels assured.

By Alban Hefin the light no longer carries the fragile uncertainty of spring. It has matured fully into itself. The leaves overhead are established. The evenings stretch long into gold and amber. Gardens spill beyond their borders. Fields stand high and unmoving beneath the heat. Nothing appears hurried. The world seems to rest more completely within its own nature.

I sometimes think the sunrise at Alban Hefin communicates this above all else: remain. Remain present long enough to notice what continues. Remain still long enough to feel the steadiness beneath change. There are few certainties granted to us in life, yet dawn has arrived every morning of our existence whether witnessed or unseen. The wheel has continued its turning through joy and grief alike. Summer reaches its fullness without announcement or applause.

Perhaps this is why I have never felt the need to seek Alban Hefin in noise. What I seek at this threshold is quieter than celebration. I seek the moment the world begins again in silence. The first warmth upon the skin. The gradual brightening of leaves overhead. The distant fields slowly emerging beneath the returning light. The strange and gentle recognition that the sun has kept its promise once more.



## Part 2 - The Grove

# A GROVE AT ITS FULLEST



Before entering the grove, I begin as I always do, with cleansing.

At Alban Hefin this feels gentler than at other points of the wheel. There is less sense of casting something away and more a quiet settling into alignment. The water is cool upon the skin. Windows remain open where possible so that the morning air can move freely through the room. The body slows gradually beneath the sound of running water. Thoughts loosen. Restlessness eases its hold. By the time the washing is complete, the world already feels slightly quieter than before.

Fresh clothes are laid upon the skin with care and without hurry. Nothing heavy. Nothing restrictive. At Alban Hefin

I find myself drawn toward simplicity. Natural fibres. Bare feet against wooden floors. The soft movement of early light through the house as the day continues its slow arrival.

I sit comfortably and close my eyes.

Breathing deepens gradually rather than through force. The body settles into stillness by degrees. Sounds become more distant. Thoughts drift wider apart like leaves moving slowly upon calm water. There is

no urgency here. Nothing to pursue. Nothing to overcome. Alban Hefin asks for presence more than effort.

In time the grove begins to emerge.

At first there is only light.

Not bright in the harsh sense of noon sunlight upon stone, but softened through leaves high above. White-gold illumination filtering through a full summer canopy. The kind of light that seems to rest gently upon the world rather than strike it. The air is warm and still. Somewhere in the distance insects hum softly amongst long grasses stirred only occasionally by the faintest movement of air.

The grove at Alban Hefin feels mature and deeply established. Roots hold firmly beneath the earth. Branches spread wide overhead. Nothing here appears to strain toward the light because the light has already arrived fully amongst the leaves. There is contentment within the grove. A quiet and settled fullness that asks nothing except stillness enough to perceive it.

As I move deeper between the trees, the altar becomes visible ahead.

It stands beneath an opening in the canopy where sunlight falls uninterrupted through the leaves above. The stone surface holds the warmth of the day already. Upon it, the tools and ingredients for the accord have been carefully laid out in readiness. Glass vessels catch fragments of shifting gold. Pale resins rest quietly within small bowls. Oils wait in silence beside linen cloth and polished tools. Everything appears calm. Ordered. Complete.

I approach slowly.

There is no sense of performance within this place. No need to speak aloud or call attention toward oneself. The grove already seems aware. The warmth resting across the altar carries with it a strange familiarity, as though the season itself has paused briefly to observe what is being prepared here beneath the canopy.

Above, the leaves brighten softly.

The presence of Áine does not arrive as form or voice. Instead it is felt through the character of the grove itself. Through the warmth gathering upon the skin. Through the unusual stillness within the air. Through shafts of sunlight descending slowly between the branches until the stone altar seems held beneath their attention.

For a while I simply stand beside the altar and allow the silence to deepen.

The ingredients remain untouched.

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At Alban Hefin there is wisdom in waiting before creation. In allowing the mind to settle fully before the hand begins its work. Modern life encourages constant movement toward completion. Yet here beneath the canopy another understanding quietly emerges. Some things reveal themselves only when approached without force.

I look slowly across the altar once more.

The woods.

The resins.

The floral warmth resting quietly within sealed glass.

The oils that will become light held within fragrance.

Nothing appears excessive. Nothing reaches outward demanding attention. Each ingredient seems entirely at ease within its own nature, waiting patiently for recognition rather than display.

Then the light shifts.

Warmth passes slowly across the stone altar as sunlight moves between the leaves above, lingering momentarily upon each vessel and bowl as though examining them in turn. Glass brightens softly. Golden reflections gather and fade. Pale oils glow briefly beneath the passing illumination. The entire altar seems held within a quiet and deliberate gaze.

And within that moment comes the unmistakable feeling that Áine approves.

Not spoken.

Not declared.

Simply known.

The accord may now be made.

## Part 3 - The Practice

# ABUNDANCE



Alban Hefin is often associated with great gatherings. With crowded stones before dawn, fires upon hillsides and the shared excitement of witnessing the longest day arrive amongst others. For many people this feels entirely right. There is something deeply human in greeting midsummer together beneath the returning light.

Yet Alban Hefin may also offer another invitation. One quieter in nature. One that asks little beyond attention.

It can be helpful to approach the day without haste. To prepare what can be prepared the evening before so that the solstice itself remains as unburdened as possible. Food made ready in advance. Spaces gently tidied. Windows left open overnight if the warmth allows it. Alban Hefin loses something when crowded by unnecessary labour and obligation. The season already carries fullness within it. There is comfort in allowing the day to arrive with that same sense of ease.

Before dawn, gently warm the accord.

This may be done indoors beside an open window, allowing the fragrance to settle quietly throughout the room before morning arrives.

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If the air outside is still enough to hold the scent, the burner may instead accompany the sunrise itself beneath the open sky. There is something quietly beautiful in watching the first light of Alban Hefin emerge while the fragrance rests softly within the cool summer air.

The important thing is not performance, but atmosphere.

At Alban Hefin there is little need to force meaning into the moment. The warmth has already gathered within the earth. The light already rests upon the world. The wheel has already turned toward its fullest expression long before dawn arrives. By allowing the fragrance to warm before the meditation begins, the atmosphere settles naturally into the space around you. The room softens gradually. The scent waits quietly within the air like sunlight held beneath leaves.

If you choose to observe the sunrise, do so without pressure to turn the moment into spectacle. Simply sit quietly and allow yourself to witness the gradual return of light across the land. Notice the way darkness recedes by degrees. The soft emergence of trees, rooftops and distant fields as the world slowly remembers its own form beneath the morning sun.

When ready, sit comfortably and allow the fragrance to settle fully into the space around you.

There is no need to hurry the meditation at Alban Hefin. The atmosphere should already feel softened before you begin. The accord should rest quietly within the room like warmth lingering beneath summer leaves. If the sunrise has already been observed, carry that stillness inward with you now. Allow the memory of the returning light to remain gently present within the mind.

Breathe slowly.

Let the body grow heavier with each breath. Allow the shoulders to loosen. The jaw soften. Thoughts need not be forced away. Let them drift gradually into the background like distant movement beyond the edge of a quiet field.

In time, begin to picture the grove.

You stand at its edge in the early warmth of midsummer morning.

The canopy overhead is already full and established. Leaves gather thickly above, holding the light in shifting layers of green and gold. Sunlight filters softly through the branches, descending in pale shafts that move gently across the earth below. The air is warm, though still touched faintly by the coolness left behind by dawn.

For a few moments, simply remain there.

Nothing within the grove appears hurried. Nothing strives toward becoming. The roots below the earth hold firm. Branches spread outward with quiet confidence. Long grasses move softly at the edges of the clearing while insects drift lazily through shafts of light suspended beneath the canopy.

As you move slowly deeper amongst the trees, the sounds of the outer world begin to soften.

There is only birdsong now. The faint rustle of leaves. The warmth of the season resting steadily upon bark and stone. Even the light itself seems quieter here, held gently within the stillness of the grove rather than blazing against it.

Find a place to sit beneath the canopy.

Perhaps there is warm stone beneath you. Perhaps soft grass touched by shifting light. Settle yourself comfortably and allow the grove to surround you fully. Feel the warmth upon your skin. The filtered sunlight across your hands. The softness of midsummer air as it moves almost imperceptibly through the leaves above.

And within that stillness, sense the quiet presence of Áine.

Not approaching.

Not speaking.

Simply present within the grove itself.

Within the warmth descending through the canopy.

Within the pale gold light moving slowly across the earth.

Within the profound feeling of calm fullness held throughout the air around you.

Remain there for a while.

Allow yourself to feel the strange reassurance carried within midsummer stillness. The sense that the world, for this brief moment, requires nothing further in order to be complete. The light has arrived fully. The wheel has turned faithfully once more. Nothing needs to be forced into motion.

Breathe slowly.

If thoughts arise, let them pass naturally through the grove like wind moving softly through branches. Return your attention gently toward the warmth of the light overhead and the fragrance resting quietly around you.

There is nothing to achieve here.

Only the invitation to remain present long enough to notice what already exists.

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The warmth upon the land.

The steadiness of the turning wheel.

The returning dawn.

The quiet contentment of simply being beneath the light.

When you feel ready, allow the grove to fade slowly rather than disappear all at once.

Notice again the room around you. The fragrance still resting within the air. The soft morning light beyond the window. The lingering stillness carried gently within the body.

Carry that feeling with you into the remainder of the day.

Allow Alban Hefin to unfold slowly around you, just as the sunrise unfolds across the land each morning. Patiently. Quietly. Without doubt.

Once the morning observance has passed, allow the remainder of the day to unfold gently.

There is great value in sharing food at Alban Hefin, particularly outdoors where possible. Not as elaborate ceremony, but as a continuation of the season's generosity. Picnics feel especially fitting. Simple foods prepared beforehand and enjoyed slowly beneath lingering daylight. Fresh breads. Soft cheeses. Berries. Cream. Butter. Cold drinks resting in shaded grass. Scones with fruit and thick cream shared lazily while the warmth of the day settles comfortably across the landscape.

The ease of the meal matters more than presentation.

Little effort should be required once the day itself has begun. Leave space for wandering conversation. Long pauses. Quiet observation. Moments where nobody feels pressed toward schedules or expectation.

If shared amongst like-minded people, the meal itself may quietly become a form of thanksgiving to summer, to the turning wheel, or to deities associated with warmth, sovereignty and light. Yet this need not become formal in order to hold meaning. Some of the most genuine observances emerge naturally through conversation itself. Reflections upon the sunrise. Remarks about the unusual stillness of the morning air. The comfort of lingering daylight. The feeling that the world has briefly settled into calm fullness.

Even amongst those who hold no pagan beliefs, these conversations can still carry the spirit of Alban Hefin quietly within them.

After all, the solstice belongs first to the world itself.

The long light.

The warmth upon the land.

The returning dawn.  
These things ask only that they are noticed.



## Part 4 - The Accord

# THE ACCORD IN THE SEASON OF STILLNESS



**Aonta Uachtair** was created as an expression of Alban Hefin's stillness.

By midsummer the wheel has reached its fullest turning toward the light. The uncertainty of spring has passed. Growth no longer strains visibly upward from the earth because it has already arrived into fullness. Trees stand completely leafed beneath the long arc of the sun. Warmth settles itself into stone, wood and soil. Evening lingers softly at the edges of the day while the world seems, for a brief moment, entirely at ease within its own nature.

This accord was created to inhabit that feeling.

Not the blazing intensity often associated with midsummer, but the quieter atmosphere held beneath it. Light filtered gently through leaves. Warmth resting steadily upon the land. The strange contentment that sometimes emerges in moments where nothing further appears necessary for the world to feel complete.

The name Aonta Uachtair carries several meanings that felt deeply

connected to Alban Hefin during the making of the accord. Stillness. Cream. Softened richness. The upper layer where warmth and light gather gently upon the surface of things.

At Alban Hefin even the light itself seems to soften.

Sunlight beneath a midsummer canopy rarely feels sharp or severe. It becomes pale gold filtered through green leaves overhead. Warm air settles quietly against the skin. Richness appears throughout the season in softened forms. Cream shared amongst companions beneath lingering daylight. Butter melting slowly into fresh bread. Soft cheeses. Warm stone beneath resting hands. Abundance that no longer feels hurried or excessive.

Aonta Uachtair seeks to translate this atmosphere into fragrance.

Warm woods form the foundation of the accord, carrying the calm steadiness of bark and sunlit timber held quietly beneath the canopy. Pale resins lend softness and warmth without heaviness, allowing the fragrance to settle gradually into the air rather than pushing itself outward forcefully. Gentle floral notes move softly throughout the accord like light descending between leaves. Nothing appears sharp. Nothing demands immediate attention. The fragrance unfolds slowly, patiently, with the same quiet assurance carried within midsummer dawn.

The accord arrives already settled.

This felt important throughout its creation.

At Alban Hefin there is little sense of striving toward transformation. The warmth is already present. The light has already established itself across the land. In the same way, Aonta Uachtair was never intended to overwhelm the senses or dominate a space aggressively. It is a fragrance designed to inhabit a room gently. To linger softly within still air. To feel discovered gradually rather than announced.

In this sense, the accord becomes less an object of attention and more an atmosphere through which Alban Hefin may quietly continue to reveal itself.

The fragrance resting softly within the room before dawn.  
Sunlight slowly returning across distant fields.  
The warmth of midsummer held beneath leaves overhead.  
The ease of shared food beneath lingering evening light.

All become expressions of the same stillness.

And beneath them all remains the quiet assurance carried within

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the turning wheel itself.

The dawn will return.

The light will gather once more upon the land.

Summer will reach again toward fullness.

Patiently.

Quietly.

Without doubt.

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