

# *Edgeriders:*

## AGE OF THE HAGS



"Edgeriders" is a story for Winter Witch Camp 2016.

Created by members of the Teacher and Theme Selection Committee...

Jennifer Byers  
Leora Effinger-Weintraub  
Alex Iantaffi  
Katie Neff-Dawson  
Karin Levitski  
Kari Rightfoot

Artwork by...  
Leora Effinger-Weintraub  
Kollin Leisinger  
Karin Levitski  
Angela Maki-Jones

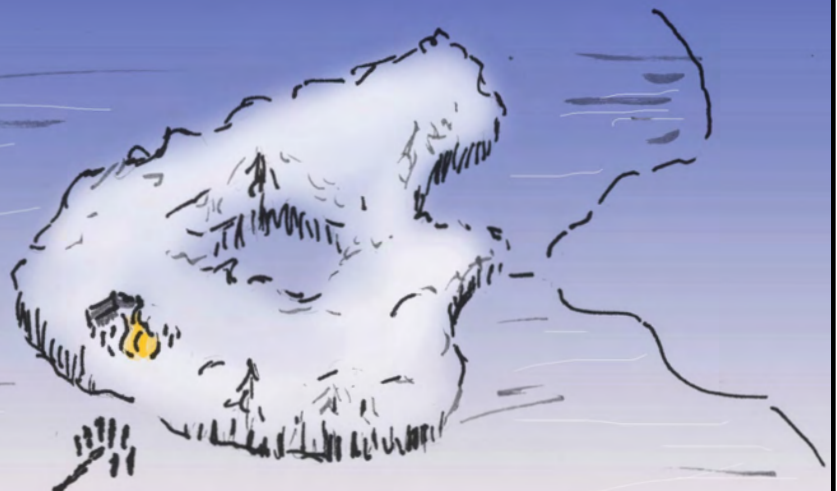
Many thanks and much love to the Weaver team, and the WWC community.

In the month of February, in the year 2015, the people came. They came to Wisconsin in search of a heart-shaped island in the snow.

They came to honor the spirits of the land, with desire for healing and change.

They came, willing to surrender, wanting to feed the magic of transformation.

First they listened, and shared the messages that came. They were reminded to patience. They felt a call for accountability, and the great need to ask for help.



So, by winter's kiss, they began to weave a spell. With reverence, they laid out three groups of light, each shaping a rune (ancient symbols and demi-gods of old).

On the frozen lake, some lay the symbol Isa, "Ice", and then circled around it in stillness.



Outside the glass of the ritual hall, some lay the symbol Nauthiz, "Need".



Beside it, they began to tend a Nyd fire as a call and a prayer.

Within the hearth of the hall itself, some lay the shape of Laguz, "Lake", and they swayed like moving, living water.



Out of the quiet, they began to chant. "ISA!" called the voices on the ice, that rune glowing in the center of their circle. "NAUTHIZ!" called the voices outside the hall, their breath stoking the Nyd fire's flames. "LAGUZ!" called the voices at the hearth, their movements inviting flow...change.

Into the night they chanted,

Isa

to

Nauthiz

to

Laguz;



in solidarity and asking for help, may we transform stagnation to flow... may we manifest justice and love.

The voices grew, and the people poured their energy into the spell, dancing and singing the three symbols into one. They sealed the new symbol, a bind rune, with their sweat and prayers.

And under the stars, the Nyd fire burned...its charged tendrils unfolding and reaching out into all the worlds.

The call to Isa rattles my bones. The shaking shimmering call to ice awakens a familiar ache in my joints. I disregard the ache, sure that ice is just groaning as it does in winter. Swish, swish is the sound of my broom on the walk. Isa is getting louder, more impassioned. This is not just the usual moaning-groaning of ice. There is fire under this call.

Isa...isa...ISA...ISA...louder and louder, more sure, more insistent.

I shake my shoulders and steady my broom and continue sweeping the narrow walk along the hedge that surrounds my cozy little cottage in the birch forest and gently separates me from the rest of time. I swiftly brush the ice crystals off into the night to do the magic that they will, trying to ignore the cries.

The ice is heating up, vibrating faster with each call. Nauthiz... Isa...Nauthiz...the acrid blue black smoke of the Nyd fire is wafting through the starry sky. I have not heard this call in oh so many ages or maybe it was the other day. Who can keep track with time shifting and swirling so much?





I wonder, how did they know to add Nyd to Ice? There must be vitki\* there, versed in the speaking of the runes that are tattooed to my bones.

Isa...Nauthiz...Laguz. Water, too.

Oh my. This is THE call. This is the S.O.S.

Which of my hag-kin have also heard this call? Surely I am not the only one.

I walk over to the frozen hedge of time, a frozen lattice-work of icy vines and thorns that glisten like the stars, and peer through to see when the call is coming from.

Anyone can figure out the where, but the when, that is a special magic few remember to learn.

So, before heading out into the night sky to skip across the time ripples to join my hag-kin, I finish sweeping the ice from the walk and put my broom away in its special spot by the side of the only door leading into my cottage.



I walk through my beloved kitchen to the age-worn closet with the faded floral scrollwork and runes painted on its door. I begin to pack up my bag with those things I must bring.

It is starting again. The witches are waking up to the real questions. Are they ready for the real answers?

\*Rune-talkers



I stand in the desert, deeply worn bark, gnarled limbs reaching towards the sun. It's been a dry year. But I have survived dry years before. What is one year, when my life has been measured in millennia and I have seen the rise and fall of civilizations?

These dry years? These many dry years? They feel.... different. They hurt. They may be insurmountable. Yet I stand. And I thirst. And for now, I survive.

In the distance, I can feel a call. Heat. Voices. Need. It is a call for community, for justice, from the land of ice and snow. I've not known such cold for many years. The cold and the fire call to me. The voices call to me.

They are so insubstantial. They cry so loudly of their need. What do these voices know of need? What do they know of thirst that lasts a decade?

They are in such a hurry, so anxious. What do they know of time? What do they know of waiting for the change that will heal?

They call. They want. They need. They strive.

Ah. That is the key. They strive. Shall I tell the of striving, so we might strive together?









You could see my eyes... if my eyes were open.

A hooded moonlit figure, I stand near a modest wood-heated home built from the trees in the surrounding many miles. I'm content here with the wild familiars of this womb-like woodland and the solitude I need to do my world work.

Rarely do I get a taste of the wanderlust these days.

Now I'm held in the stance of a statue, head tilted as I listen. With a slow expansion of my chest, my chin rises... opening an awareness to all my senses.

Another breath in.

Familiar smells. Fire, yes... with a certain taste of intentionality.

My attention turns fully towards listening.

What messages does the Wind bring to these senses? The sounds of passionate singing... melting ice... no, shattered.

This indicates a quickening pace! Yes, a purposeful flavor. And is it blended with sincerity...? Sharp snapping sounds of laundry on the line - the Wind speaks with an accent of affirmation and urgency!

I hear the revving engine of my zooming four-wheeled beloved, I feel the highway wind chaffing my face; and that sweet, distinct, and undeniable urge to reunite with the Open Road returns in an instant. I'd almost forgotten the sensation of being so clearly pulled into motion.


My eyes are wide open now. Time again to meet with other Edgeriders. We're guided to gather - our guidance is desired! We're being called. We are called.

Who will listen...?



Saturday night was quiet at the grocery. Less crowds, less random elbows from rushing, young folks. Saturday nights had more respect, and did not care if you squeezed each piece of produce, or squinted for ages at the tiny print on the backs of tins. Food came from anywhere nowadays, and sometimes wasn't food. The edgewalker knew the power of knowing (or at least trying to know) so they squeezed, and read, and took their time.

A few needed items tucked into a rusted metal cart, they rolled home, noting the breath of sleeping spirits as they passed. It was milder this February, but real dry, and the wise ones were worried. Still, there was not much wind, so they stopped on the sidewalk and gave themselves time to sense. There was always news of the world travelling on the ether, and though news sometimes wore them out, the edgewalker wanted to know.



Closing their dark eyes and grounding, they dropped in and reached out, feeling the dryness of the earth, feeling the laughs of a family meal down the block, feeling a vast web of breath and being: love, hate, joy, grief, injustice and striving for freedom. They tasted it all, aching with the aches, soaring with the kindnesses - they floated, almost forgotten, in the flow.

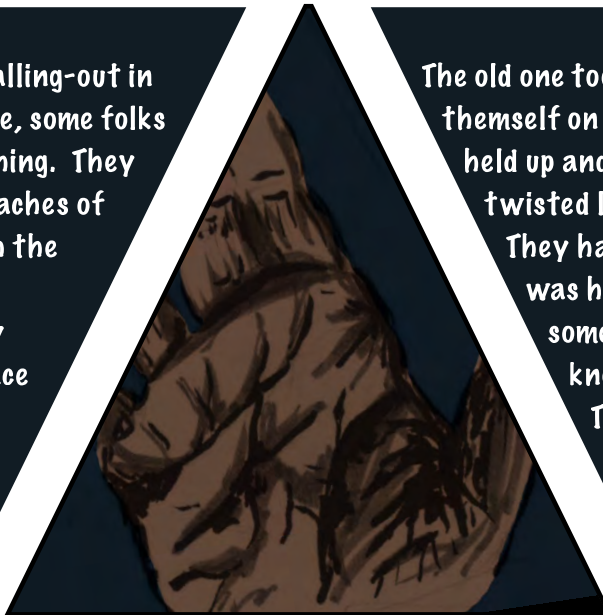




Then something tugged at them with the stinging stillness of ice. Something pulled with the smell of smoke and magic. It yanked at awareness and rang along the web. The edwalker noticed, was curious, and wanted to know.

Honing in, the old one found its source. Huh. It felt like a prayer for change, a fist against stagnation.

Yep, it was a nyd - a calling-out in the old way. Just there, some folks were waking and reaching. They were aching with the aches of injustice, soaring with the hope of love, and they wanted to know. They wanted to learn, to face the sharp and the sweet; they were talking of being accountable.



The old one took that in, then drifted back to themselves on the dark and chilly walk. They held up and flexed each hand, bent and twisted like branches of the Angel Oak. They had worn this skin so long, and it was harder to travel these days. But something in them wondered, knowing they had magic to share. They had long loved the forgotten, the "unworthy", the oppressed, and they were starving for justice.

A nyd call was no small thing. It would be noticed, and that would mean a gathering. The old ones, edge ones, wise ones would notice. The hags would want to gather and gossip. They would have opinions.

Head shaking in a half-chuckle, they went inside. For now, they were not sure about that call, but they would travel for the gathering. They would join in the gossiping, the opinionating, the cackles, and they would consider this nyd.

Who knows? Maybe these winter folks would listen. Maybe they too wanted to know.





My body is so tired and I could really do with another cup of coffee. There is always time for one more coffee while checking emails. My arthritic hands lift a song of gratitude for speech recognition software as I dictate my replies and "away for a while" message.

Ticket is booked too by the time I refill my cup. Thankfully no more broom rides in the cold night air nowadays.

NONSTUDIOS  
design+print

**My body is so tired and I could really do with another cup of coffee. There is always time for one more coffee while checking emails. My arthritic hands lift a song of gratitude for speech recognition software as I dictate my replies and “away for a while” message.**

**Ticket is booked too by the time I refill my cup.  
Thankfully no more broom rides in the cold night air nowadays.**

Business is booming. Everyone wants a fix, nobody wants to slow down. I kiss my familiars goodbye and ask my apprentice to look after my garden. Tinctures still have to be made and orders delivered. And then away.

I wonder who else will be there. I know many others must have sensed that same fire... All our children together, lifting their desires, needs, fears, and hopes into the night sky. Not that this is the first time this happened. There have been other times of fear, despair, scarcity, and the faintest glimmer of hope. People used to know who to call on then. Now, well, now it is more complicated. This fire smells of ice, fire, and water, of fear and hope. The call feels open. The desire for older wisdom deep, yet murky. Enough smelling. Time to pack my bags and go.



Ahhh, I love plane riding. I can think while up here, leaving someone else to steer for a change. I don't like everything about this time but some things are truly remarkable. This ease won't last long, of course, unless people get smarter faster and figure out less toxic fuels. For now, I enjoy the ride, sit back, and tune in. I sense my children restless, afraid, many of them hopeless. This is one thing we have not yet learned. How do we stop this living out of fear. Fear of not enough, fear of transforming, fear of death, fear of failure, fear of the other.

I am so familiar with this fear. I have been told I was the other for a long time, at the beginning. Other because I knew how to mend a broken heart, soothe a cold, aid a birth or simply be there with the dying. Other because I did not fit some people's expectations of gender. Other because I chose to live alone. Easier to tune in that way, to stay away from the jeers.

Strega, vecchia, nonna, recchiona, santa, puttana\*. Some terms endearing, others offensive, many changing over time. Edgewalkers all of us. The edges change yet the fears do not. Not fast enough. I wonder who else will turn up this time. I wonder if we are going to be quite who they expect...

\*Witch, old, grandmother, faggot, saint, whore.



And so we gather... in a place  
between places and a time  
between times.

Edgeriders, hags, old ones,  
wise ones.

So many of us... gathering  
together from all corners of  
the world to discuss the call  
we have all sensed. Some tell  
their tales and some listen.

We have questions to ask and decisions to make.  
What can we teach these witches, in their time  
of need?

They yearn for justice. They crave accountability, to the earth and to each other. They  
are taking the steps and reaching with open hands, hearts, and minds ... towards what?

Desire,



Surrender,



Transformation,



Solidarity,



Manifestation.



This is their work.



Who of us  
feels called to  
join them?



