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# QVAREIA - THE APPRENTICE

Module 4 - Death and the Underworld

*Lesson 6: The Thinning of the Veils*

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BY JOSEPHINE MCCARTHY

QVAREIA

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# WELCOME

*Welcome to this lesson of the Quareia curriculum.*

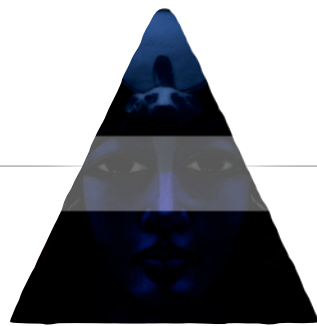
*The Quareia takes a magical apprentice from the beginning of magic to the level of adeptship and beyond. The course has no superfluous text; there is no dressing, no padding – everything is in its place and everything within the course has a good reason to be there.*

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*So remember - in order for this course to work, it is wise to work with the lessons in sequence. If you don't, it won't work.*

*Yours,*

*Josephine McCarthy*



# QVAREIA - THE APPRENTICE

## Module 4 - Death and the Underworld

### *Lesson 6: The Thinning of the Veils*

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Within Autumn/fall there is a time where ‘the veils thin’ throughout the northern hemisphere. Why this happens I have no idea, other than that it is a time where things are dying back for the winter. Nature has a series of tides that ebb and flow through the world, bringing in energy and taking out energy. It is a time where the various worlds seem to draw closer, and the thresholds between the living world and the underworld become thin and permeable for a short time (one cycle of the moon).

Casting various traditions and their stories aside, over the years I have observed these tides and the effects they have on the inner worlds and on the outer world that we live in. As I looked through various traditions around the world, the one thing that stood out was times spanning October and November that were marked with light or fire festivals. For the tides in my own land, Britain, I did notice from quite an early age that around this time there is an upswing in spirit activity and it becomes easier to connect to and with the newly dead: it was like a lot of people were hanging around, became more visible, and were badgering me to do things for them, to help them.

In my early thirties I still worked very much by instinct, and around that time of the year I would have the urge to light candles after dark and keep them burning all night. By the middle of November the urge would

fade, and everything would settle back down. But one incident marked a turning point in my understanding, and gave me something more solid to work with.

It was the end of October, and I was living in a small town in Wiltshire. I lived with my family in a house that was very old—parts of it dated back to the fifteenth century. It was dug into an ancient, unexcavated burial mound, and in general was a very ‘busy’ house in terms of spirits.

It was a few days before the full moon, and I got an irresistible urge to go and lay out on the mound one night (like you do). As I lay there, I looked up at the stars. It took me a moment to realise that I was lying on the mound directly under the constellation of Orion, which was lying across me in exactly the same position as me: head where my head was, feet where my feet were. Suddenly I got a strong flash-vision of a man lying in the burial mound who was waking up. I was fascinated. It felt strange: the vision was strong, but I was still too young and dumb to realise what was happening. I went back into the house, and that night I dreamed of a man waking up and finding himself not only alone, but trapped.

Out of sheer curiosity, every night for three nights I went out and laid on the mound, with Orion over the top of me and the sense of the man awakening deep in the mound. I did not get the message (I can be a bit slow) until the fourth night, the night before the full moon (which was 30th Oct that year), that I was being asked to do something to help this awakening sleeper.

But I had no idea what to do. I laid and stared at Orion until a flash of fire dropped into my mind. Then I remembered the autumn fire festivals and the fact that although Bonfire Night (5th of November) in Britain was supposed to be a tradition that only went back to the 1600’s, there had been a bonfire at this time of the year on the town’s common land for nearly a thousand years: a much earlier folk fire festival.

So I built a small bonfire and, as the full moon did its thing, I lit the fire and sat in front of it on top of the mound. Beyond lighting a fire I had nothing planned and had no idea what to do next. So I just sat there. After an hour or so I was about to go back in the house when a huge pressure started to build up within me: something was happening. The pressure built and built, and I simply sat and watched the fire until the feeling became unbearable.

Without any warning, it felt like I was about to vomit into the fire when something passed through me and into the fire. At the same time I suddenly became aware of the gates: they were open, very present, and very strong. It was hard to stay sitting still, as my body was struggling with the sensation which I know now to have been a bridging action. I was hit with waves of nausea, sweating and dizziness.

Suddenly the pressure released, and something moved quickly through one of the gates: the spirit of the man in the mound had bridged through me and used the fire as a porthole to access the gates into death. I sat stunned for a short while, and as I sat I became aware of other spirits drawing near to the fire and then passing through it, heading west as they began their journey deeper into death. Many came, passed into the fire, and then vanished.

When I finally went back inside, I felt like I had been sitting on the mound for about an hour; but in fact, once I looked at the clock, I realised that I had been out there for six hours. For days afterwards I felt like a piece of well-chewed toffee. But I had learned a lot. Also, the mound became very quiet after that night, which in turn brought peace and quiet to the house.

In subsequent years, I worked with the idea of a fire as a gate for the dead at that time of the year, and I discovered that it was much easier on the body to work with a fire to do bridging if it was done over a three-day period, or with a group of people all doing the same thing. A few years later, when I lived in California, a small group of us decided to work with the same tide, and with a fire. We waited until the full moon that fell between the middle of October and the middle of November. On the days leading up to it, we visited the hill where we planned to do the work and we sat there each night, just keeping vigil with the intent of helping any lost souls wandering around the area.

On the full moon, we lit the fire and sat around it, at first chatting, until finally we fell silent and settled into our own thoughts. One woman, on instinct, starting singing a death song I knew from my childhood, the Lyke Wake Dirge (see below). This old remnant of Heathen folk tradition from Yorkshire was a song that was sung as the body was carried from the church for burial. It was often chanted without instrument but to the slow beat of a large drum, like a slow, deep heart beat.

As she chanted (it is more spoken than sung), we started to pick up on spirits drawing near, attracted by the singing. Over the span of about two

hours, spirit after spirit drew near to the fire and then passed through it, vanishing through the fire and into the west: their deeper journey into death and separation from the living world had begun. They didn't pass through us this time; rather they gathered around us and then plunged into the fire.

We expected a handful. Two hours later they were still coming: it felt like hundreds of spirits had passed through the circle of women and plunged into the fire. None of us could move, speak, or break the pattern: we had to stay there, silent, until it was done.

We were all impacted for a few days afterwards, but we recovered quickly enough, and it gave us all a lot to think about. What we had intended, in a rather naive way, was to hold the gates open for a lost soul or two. We didn't expect half the dead population of the area to turn up; nor were we prepared for the amount of energy it would take.

The reason I tell you this story is because it is important to understand that while we as magicians think we have it all sussed out in our different traditions, with rituals for this and visions for that, to be honest, we do not have a clue—we are barely scratching the surface. We may have evolved technologically as a species, but when it comes to magic, inner worlds and power, we are still struggling to climb out of a dark age.

Because of that, while there is a lot of organised magical learning to do as an apprentice, there is also a lot for you to learn using your own intuition and instincts—and learn to listen to everything around you. Sure you will make some mistakes, and some of those may be major ones, but you will also have breakthroughs, make connections, and stumble across things that move you forward in your development. The key is to try and stay in one piece throughout the process, and that in turn comes from using your common sense.

In the decades since those events, I have observed more and more tides that flow across the land and that seem to do different things. I have learned not to try to over-organize them in my mind, but just to be aware of them, and to be acutely aware of how they make me act (am I suddenly needing to spring-clean, or sleep a lot, or stay in after dark, or keep lights on?). The ancient wisdoms around these tides will not be found in books but in our ancestral knowledge that is buried deep in our blood; in our DNA. That knowledge can surface if you let it, and stillness is one of the keys, as is know-

ing what is your own imagination and what is something deeper. That comes from practice, common sense, and discernment.

When it comes to these tides of death, tides of scale-balancing, and tides of renewal, always observe and keep diaries of how they affect you. If you find yourself feeling out of character, or feel something strange happening to you, look around you. Is everyone else acting up, or is it just you? If everyone else seems to be going through the same thing, the chances are that a tide is flowing through to bring change or shake things up a bit. If you do observe something like this happening around you, simply take notes: write down the date, the moon cycle, the moods and actions of the people around you, and what is happening in the news (sudden increase in violent crimes or natural disasters?).

It is about learning how to observe for yourself rather than stick your head in a text: everything that is written in ancient texts comes from the direct experience of the people: it all started with someone taking note, someone observing and experimenting. Become a part of that process in magic by slowly becoming more and more aware of what is happening around you.

There are a lot of magical rituals, visions and so forth that can be used to work with a lost soul or a problematic spirit, but it is not yet a safe time in your training to dive into that. However, you can start that working process by tuning in to the next autumn death cycle, if you so wish. And this is something that you can do each year if you wish to, as a service to the land and to the people where you live. If you do work with this cycle, then work with your instincts, and write everything down.

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## *Working the Death Cycle*

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From what I have observed over the years in different countries, the tide seems to start with a new moon in October and finish with the new moon in November; and it peaks with the full moon in the middle. I find it interesting that at this time of year, lighting fires and lights in the window to guide the dead should come straight after a time of harvest, both of food and of the weighing of scales/opening of the Book of Life in Jewish traditions. They dovetail together quite nicely.

What you can do as a magician is to start working with this autumn cycle on the new moon: start by keeping a candle burning at night, potentially where its cast of light can be seen from a window. Hang wind chimes outside near to the window where the light can be seen, and when you do your daily meditations, think about the many souls who get lost in the death process because they have no compass, no way of knowing what to do or where to go. Many figure it out for themselves, but some do not.

I would not use religious texts for reciting at this time; rather it would be better to learn to work with the tides of nature, to learn for yourself how to work and be with the dead. A compromise could be to go out each night and talk to the dead—spend a few minutes each night standing in the darkness, and speak to the wind (the magical power of utterance): tell the dead who can hear you not to be afraid, that a fire will be lit at the full moon and the gates to death and renewal will be open for them. Tell them that in the meantime they are safe near you, and can rest a while around the outside of your house until it is time for the fire.

The fires for the dead, I have found, are most effective and have least impact on the worker if they are lit over three nights: the night before the full moon, the night of the full moon, and the night after. Either light a fire on the ground or in a fire bowl, and just sit with the fire each night, with the intent of providing a gate for the dead. As you light the fire, be aware of where the west is, and simply see in your mind the west gate. That is as much as you need to do magically.

This passive way of working can be a major lesson: often our rituals, visions and actions can get in the way of a natural flow of power, and there are times when it is very powerful simply to turn up somewhere with intent, light a flame, and just be present. There is no need to behave as if you are in a church, with whispers and reverence. Just as it is with the dying, often simply being there, chatting, or singing is enough, if the sacred intent is held.

The major magical trigger is the lighting of the fire: treat the fire as if it was the central flame in your workspace. Ground yourself with your feet upon the stone in the underworld, the stars above you, the ancestors behind you, the Noble Ones before you, and with your intent of service and compassion. Then light the fire. That simple tuning will trigger a cascade of events that will culminate in the spirits drawing near and knowing it is safe to pass



through the west gates via the fire. Some may bypass the fire and walk straight into the west.

You will know when you have done enough: the atmosphere will change and become more normal again, you will be sleepy, and you will feel that it is okay to leave. While you sit around the fire, take note of everything that happens around you (and turn your phone off!!): watch nature, watch the stars, listen to the sounds, and listen to how your body reacts. Those of you who are sighted will have more than enough to keep you busy. For those who are not naturally sighted, learn to listen to the slightest whisper on the wind, the slightest change in how you feel, in what is happening around you. Don't, however, get jumpy and dramatic, nor think that everything around you 'is a sign': be grounded, be open, be aware, and use your common sense. None of this is 'paranormal'; it is in fact perfectly normal.

If you are interested, do some research on old folk traditions about this time of the year. Don't fall into the trap of looking only for death-related traditions: cast your net wider and you may find some interesting things around the theme of fire, light, darkness, and a soul finding its way home.

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## *Summary*

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As you will have noticed, this is not a heavy-duty lesson, and there are no practical exercises or tasks for you to do. This is one of those lessons that is here for you to read, take note, and then file away so that when this time of the year comes around you can revisit this lesson and decide if you wish to work with the idea of holding the fires of death.

I also thought, after the last heavy lesson, that you could do with some light relief! You have two more lessons in this module, which is a difficult module to study just because of its subject matter. Once you get to the end of this module, you will be back in full ritual mode for the next module, which will give your mind and spirit a much-earned rest from the heavy aspects that were covered in this module.

***The Lyke Wake Dirge (written in old Yorkshire dialect)***

*This ae nighte, this ae nighte,  
Every nighte and alle,  
Fire and fleet and candle-lighte,  
And Christe receive thy saule.*

*When thou from hence away art past  
To Whinney-muir thou com'st at last  
If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon  
Sit thee down and put them on;*

*If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane  
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane.  
From Whinny-muir when thou may'st pass,  
To Brigh o' Dread thou com'st at last:*

*From Brig o' Dread when thou may'st pass,  
To Purgatory fire thou com'st at last;  
If ever thou gavest meat or drink,  
The fire sall never make thee shrink;*

*If meat or drink thou ne'er gav'st nane,  
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane;*

*This ae nighte, this ae nighte,  
Every nighte and alle,  
Fire and sleet and candle-lighte,  
And Christe receive thy saule.*

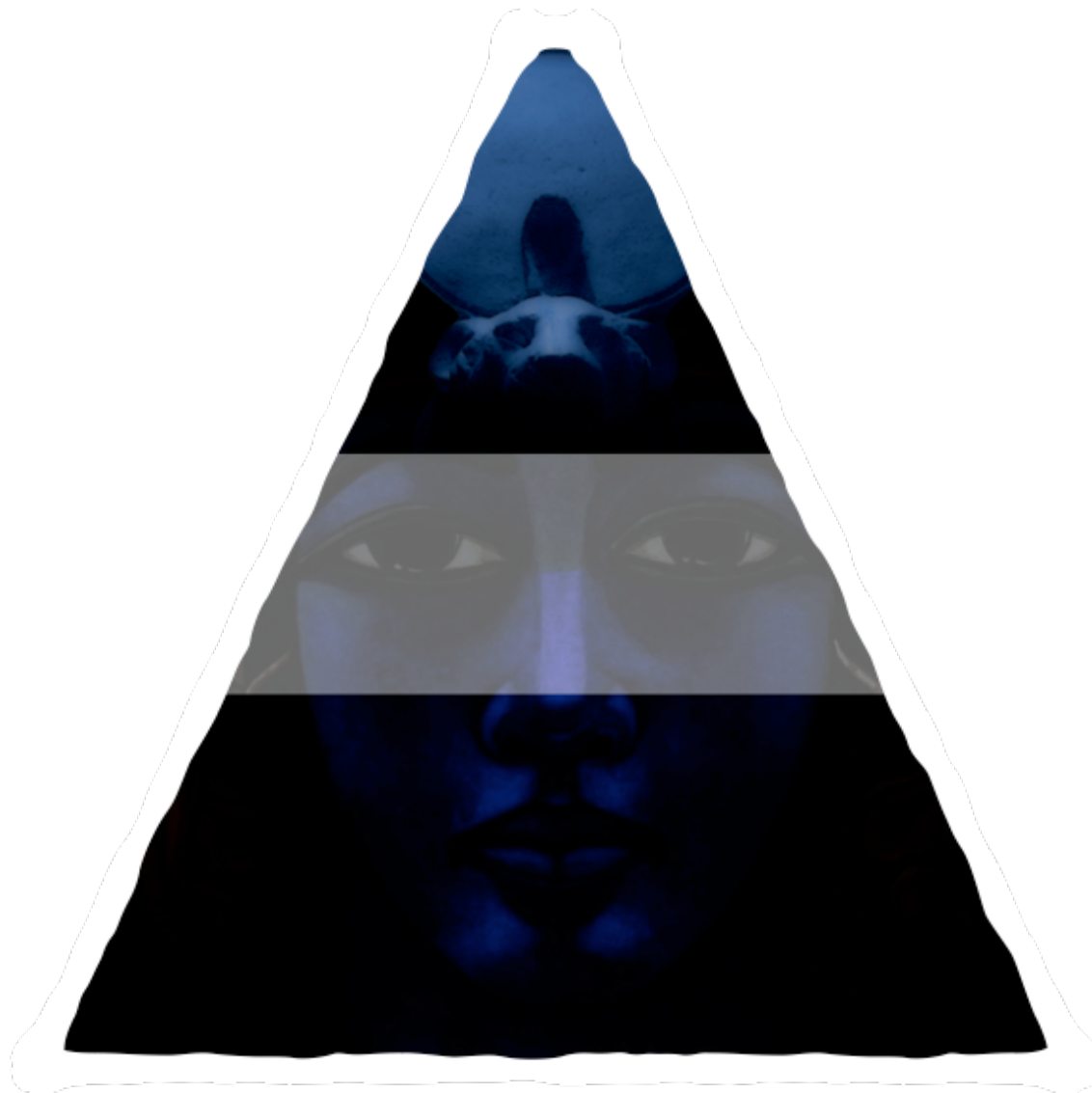
**Note:** I have never found a recording that sounds anything like how it was back when I was a kid; most recordings in the last few years all track

back to a group from the 1960s called the Young Tradition and are very much styled in the 1960s folk revival. Traditionally it was more spoken to a drum than sung, with only the refrain sung (And Christe receive they saule).

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