



## THE ILLUMINATED TREE

*Enter Avalon by the Mist Gate, as follows: Relax, ground and center. Enter the silence. Take some deep breaths and exhale fully. When you feel very calm and still, imagine that on each exhalation, you breathe out a fine white mist that forms a veil in front of your inner gaze. . .*

**T**he mist slowly unfurls like a curtain to reveal before you two tall and spreading oak trees like the pillars of a great gateway. These trees form the entrance to a long avenue of oaks that wind away southwards up a broad, green slope that leads to Glastonbury Tor. You can see the Tor about a mile away, rising up from the leafy woods that cover its sides, the tower on the summit silhouetted darkly against the sky.

You take a step between the trees and begin to walk along the avenue. Its green and gold canopy of leaves makes dappled patterns of light and shade on the ground beneath your feet. As you tread this ancient trackway, you are dimly aware of those who have gone before you – for this was once a processional path of the Druids of Avalon, and you may sense the presence of white-robed figures about you, or catch the sound of low murmuring voices in the rustling breeze.

You are beginning to feel dreamy and drowsy in the warm summer's heat, almost as if you are wading through warm water. Time seems to slow down and you are not aware of how long you have been walking – when suddenly you realize you have reached the foot of the Tor. The last two oak trees stand like sentinels on either side of a cave-like opening, whose darkness is a startling contrast to the sunlit day. You almost miss seeing the shadowy figure standing by the cave – as it steps forward, you see that it is your Guide, one of the Watchers of Avalon, who is here to escort you safely into the UnderRealm below the Tor. He or she bears a slender wand tipped with a small jewel-like light, and, holding it aloft, enters the dark mouth of the cave, beckoning you to follow.

You find yourself walking down a tunnel that spirals down between walls of rock that glisten and drip with moisture. Now and then, the light from the wand illuminates rune-like sigils and spirals carved in the stone. Faintly, you can hear the dim roar of subterranean rivers far below.

After a long time, the passage opens up into a vast cavern around whose walls the thick, twisting roots of a mighty Tree wind like living veins and arteries. Between the roots, the

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walls are encrusted with gemstones of many glowing colors: amethysts and moonstones, garnets, sapphires and opals. They sparkle in the reflected light of a fountain of Crystal Fire, that wells up from the center of the cavern. The roots of the Tree are continuously drawing up this living light from the heart of the Earth: You watch the crystal fire as it flows unceasingly up through the roots and into the trunk which soars up into the heights far above. You notice also a dark polluted stream, descending from above, which flows down one side of the Tree into the cavern. Here it is filtered and purified in the fountain of crystal fire, then rises up the trunk once again. Thus does the Tree of Life perpetually regenerate all the energy of our world so that light and dark, life and death, is always maintained in perfect balance.

A low humming sound catches your attention, and, looking closer into the shadows beyond the Crystal Fire, you are astonished to see the figure of an Old Woman, very small and half hidden among the tangled roots. She is seated at a loom whose warp and weft are of many colors, both light and dark. She is in fact the Weaver of Life and Death, and as she throws the shuttle through the loom, she sings in a soft low voice. She looks up at you with deep-set ancient eyes, and speaks words of greeting in an archaic tongue, which, strange to say, you understand. As if within the very cells of your body, distant memory stirs like a dream that is almost, but not quite, remembered on awakening, and you feel a deep sense of awe in her presence. It is clear she is inviting you to speak with her. If you choose to do so, to meet the gaze of those knowing, ancient eyes, much may be learned and much understood . . . Notice also what she is weaving . . .

And now your Guide is beckoning you towards a stairway cut into the thick roots of the Tree that spirals steeply upwards and to the left before vanishing into the vast heights of the cavern above. Up you go, winding around and around, following the Tree of Life up into the roof of the cavern, until at last you emerge into the fresh air of the warm summer's day.

You step out onto soft green grass and find yourself in a woodland glade on the slopes of the Tor. In the center is the Tree of Life, a sturdy tree of mighty proportions, soaring up into the heavens. Within its great trunk is the glow of a Green Fire, pulsating with light, like the heartbeat of the forest itself. You can see the streams of energy flowing up and down the trunk like the lifeblood of all green and growing things. The green fire of the Tree and golden fire of the sun, the warm earth beneath your feet, and the fragrant, flower-scented air all combine to fill you with a deep contentment and well-being. An answering green spark is kindled within your heart, and warmth spreads throughout your whole body. You close your eyes for a moment to drink in the sound of murmuring bees among the clover, the riot of

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bird-song in the green canopy of leaves . . . and when you open them again, a figure stands before you, as if newly emerged from out of the tree: an immensely tall woman with a flowing cascade of lustrous brown hair that tumbles over the soft mossy gown draping her curving body. She gazes down at you with clear wide eyes that are hazel brown and flecked with silver like forest pools, and her face is alight with a smile of radiant compassion and kindness. It is as if she knows you through and through, and accepts all that she sees with an unconditional embrace. You feel more at home in this glade and in her presence than you have ever felt in your life, and you bask in the warmth of the sun and the warmth of the one who is your original Mother, the Lady of all Living Things. Although no words are spoken, there follows a timeless time, during which she radiates such love and healing power that you are filled with a deep and serene contentment and quiet joy. . .

As if from a distance, you become gradually aware that your Guide is calling your name, and the next moment, the Lady is no longer there. The Tree ripples with a shimmering glow as if someone has just dived into its green heart of light. . .

And now you are walking to the summit of the hill, where the tower stands in solitary splendor against the sky. You stand for a moment looking up at its height, noticing the strange carvings around the ornate stone archway: one of which resembles the Lady, milking a white cow; and one with Angel's wings holding aloft a great sword and pair of scales. You step inside the door, the sunlit day is left behind for the cool darkness within the tower's thick walls. Your Guide takes you to the foot of a winding stone staircase which spirals up to the left, where he or she waits while you climb to the top. As you place your foot on each step, you notice how it is worn away in the center from the passage of so many feet over the centuries. Although you are climbing steadily upwards for a long time, the tower seems taller on the inside than it appeared on the outside, and the higher you go, the steeper the steps become, so that now you find yourself using both hands and feet to climb each one. After what seems like hours of upward toil, you emerge onto the roof of the tower, to find that the sun has set and the sky is a deep and luminous violet-blue, in which hang the lamps of a million stars.

One constellation in particular glows with dazzling brilliance right above the tower itself. You see by the pattern of its seven living gems of Star Fire that it is Ursa Major, the Great Bear, that circles Polaris, the North Star. As you watch, seven iridescent rays of pulsating light shine out from it and surround the entire Tor with a shining, many-hued rainbow. As the arch of the heavens opens, a gigantic figure ablaze with light appears. He reaches up to the heavens above the tower and grasps the North Star, which becomes a mighty starry

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sword whose hilt and blade are made of dazzling shafts of light. From the tip of the sword, the Star Fire streams down like silver rain over the crown of the spreading Tree of Life below. It pours into every branch and down into the trunk of the Tree which has become transparent to your view, so that the Star Fire of the Heavens mingles with the Green Fire of the Earth and the Crystal Fire of the UnderRealm. The entire Tree is illuminated within and without as if it is on fire, and yet not one leaf of it is consumed. Within its branches, trunk and roots, you may see moving pictures of many things that hold you enthralled . . .

After gazing for some time at the wondrous Tree, you raise your eyes to the Great One above. Eternities pass as you gaze into those eyes which are as oceans of unutterable wisdom, radiating a love as vast as the universe. Every one of the cells of your body is filled to the brim with a heavenly light, and your entire being is suffused with a deep and abiding sense of inner peace.

After a long time, you hear from below the gentle voice of your Guide calling you back to the tower, and you easily descend the steps as if floating on air, filled with the ineffable wonder of these visions. Once outside the tower, your Guide leads you down the wooded slopes of the Tor by a small path that eventually joins up with the avenue of oak trees by which you came. Soon you are walking out beyond the last two giant oaks, and see before you the gate of mist. As you step through, you become aware that you are sitting in *this* place, in *this* time, and it *is* time to return, fully awake.



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