



# Seasons of the Witch

*By Patricia Monaghan*

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Seasons of the Witch: Poetry and Songs to the Goddess by Patricia Monaghan is a classic of the feminist spiritual genre. First published in 1992 through Delphi Press, the readings and poetry of Seasons has been used for teaching, ritual, ceremony and many other purposes by a host of Dianic leaders including Jade River, co-founder of the Re-formed Congregation of the Goddess, and Ruth Barrett, co-founder of the Temple of Diana. Patricia's interweaving of nature motifs and Goddess imagery speaks to the yearning hearts of spiritual women. Her poetry never fails to elicit emotion, be it joy, longing, or even sorrow. Her multifaceted writings are wise, insightful, and best of all, fun, mixing lustiness with an acceptance and embracing of the entire cycle of life. As a resource of readings about nature and Goddess, this collection stands alone. This third edition adds a wonderful double CD set of Patricia's poems set to beautiful music by Arctic Siren. In addition, there is artwork by Goddesswoman Sid Reger, a new introduction by the author, and a thematic table of contents that permits the reader to quickly find the perfect poem for any occasion.

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## Spring

Spring would be the beginning, if there were beginnings.

In truth, the world's seasons spiral out from one another. There can be fall in summer, winter in autumn; sudden snow can freeze the summer crop, a warm wind melt the icy river. We complain and call the weather unseasonable, but we are not surprised. We are delighted when summer floods into fall, when a fall-crisp day appears like a miracle in midwinter. But we are not surprised. We know that, in the flux of seasons, we see each one more than once.

But spring seems different. There is, sometimes in January, a springlike day when buds swell and flies' eggs hatch; there is, sometimes late in May, a winter storm to decimate the flowers. Both disturb us, disturb our springtime dream of waking into ceaseless sun and easy growth, of soft buds that flame into lasting blossoms, of graceful ease, easeful grace. Dozens of springs that creep upon us unawares, then fade imperceptibly into summer, can never convince us the season will not arrive in just one trumpet day. Spring, we fiercely believe, comes once to us and stays.

We believe as much of a woman's seasons. Spring, we fancy, comes to us once, goes once, is gone forever. But women spiral through life's seasons like the world does its own: There are days of growth in youth, in midlife, in age, just as there are losses and cold in each. There may be a concentration of spring energies in the maiden, but she can feel as well the forces of fullness and decline. Women in their prime are maids and crones at once. And every aged woman knows still the wild spring winds.

And when it comes, spring does not simply blow upon the warming air like blossom kisses. Spring is as much a time of pain as of growth. Imagine the egg, the bulb, the bud. All begin contained all potential, endless promise. There is a quiet dignity in such presence. There is no strain, no disturbance by passion or power. The being rests within itself.

But when growth begins, things break. Shells and bud casings, those intact perfections, fall away. What is revealed is unprotected tenderness. It is no illusion, this fragility. A fierce storm can shred the new leaf, a cat consume the tiny bird, a hapless word pierce the young woman's heart.

To the beholder, there is only beauty: the frail green hue that rivals all of autumn's glory, the soft maiden gaze with its vulnerable longing. Springtime empowers its witnesses. And the woman gazing back may feel, indeed, the riveting power of her growth and potential. Or she may feel only the pain of new skin against cold wind, of exposed flesh against cruel stares.

There are times the hatchling yearns for the shell, the woman for her girlhood. There are times the new body seems alien and ill-formed, the new skills awkward and mistaken, the new knowledge not power but frailty. Growth may be exhilarating, but it is never easy.

And it is costly. Just as the bulb devours itself in order to burst above the soil, just as the hatchling digests its egg's world, the woman tears springtime out of herself. She has little time for generosity, for she is focused on herself, on her deepest movements, her pain, her hopefulness. She is all stunned inwardness.

She is one, alone, unique. She is pierced with wonder at her existence.

And from this wonder, she creates her world. It is a new world, for the world has never before been inhabited by her singular being. Her creation is a dance of wonder and power, of energy and discovery. Her dance draws the world's eye, for although she has never before lived, she lives now, and in living changes the very essence of the world.

She is each of us. We hold her within, just as we hold all seasons. Bend towards her when she sings her rasping song of growth. Honor both her pain and all her promises. And remember, too, to dance with her, for she is the power of movement and change. She is the soul within the body, the spirit flashing forth from flesh. She is the power of green life. She is the first being in the world—and she is you.

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#### Hera Renews Her Youth

Now is the time that I choose. Hermit

winter is over, my widow season.

I want lust now, endearments,

longing and song. The trees on

the hillside renew themselves

as I do. Oh, my grand thick trunk

that holds me stiff so my tassels

and catkins can fly! Oh, I'm drunk

with my greenness again! Every branch

has budded before, has flown

into leaf and then blanched

into fall. But I'm new in my bones

when I choose, I'm blood-young again,

I rise fresh as washed granite

from foam, I love whom and when

I choose. Here I stand, pomegranate

in hand, ripe as a bud but old, old

as rock, unshakeable now, a power

essentially female and free. Hold

my ripe breasts. I'll be gone in an hour.

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The Goddess Instruction Manual,  
Part One: How to Think like Athena

1. Remove shoes.

Stand on earth.

2. Find your center.

Find your balance.

3. Lift chest. Drop shoulders.

Let palms fall open at sides.

4. Open lips. Breathe.

Feel air pass into self.

5. Open eyes wide.

Look to the horizon.

6. Ask, what says the foot?

Ask, what says the leg?

7. Ask, what says the sex?

Ask, what says the heart?

8. Ask, what sees the eye?

Ask, what hears the ear?

9. The mind is the body.

Think everywhere at once.

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