

Sacred Tree for the Realm of Califia: Sorbus californica/California Mountain Ash. The Rowan is thought to be a magical, threshold tree, giving protection against malevolent beings.

***It is the mighty stone-toothed highlands that harbor the cold Northern Spirit of Winter. In the lofty womb of weather, against a dark curtain of conifers, shines a small, dainty Rowan. The frozen rocks from whose basin a mountain spring bubbles up, feel the delicate might of the tree’s roots groping toward their waters. This exquisitely pure source still runs free when most bodies of fresh water are frozen. Elsewhere Rowans shelter plantations of Oak and other big Summer trees. In time, these grow up to overshadow their Hamadryad[1] foster mothers.

The Rowan by the spring leans expectantly into the chill winds to hear, from lands dropping down below, the first water whispers of melting snow and ice. In low frozen marshes, strange gnome-hooded cabbages thrust their early tips to the thinning surfaces of ice. The explosive reports of cracking ice sheets shiver the brook-girdling boulders under the Rowan. The noises of life desperately thrusting up grow louder.

Then an avalanche of snow, dingy and splintering, slides from a tall cliff-side. Two huge doors of granite swing apart to reveal a cavern within the prominence. Carrying two very long torches, the Queen of Serpents and Subterranean Slumber emerges from the gloom, Her fierce laughter accompanying each step. The Queen's belly distends luminously, heavy with the new Life within.

Processions of sparkling Faery Folk light their brands from Her torches. Chanting, the procession leads the Queen forth. They descend the now audibly trilling stream that issues from

the Sacred Rowan Spring. With the new Star Waters, they go down into hills and dales lying fallow below.

1- Hamadryad: a Greek mythological being that lives in trees. They are a particular type of dryad, which are a particular type of nymph. **Hamadryads** are born bonded to a certain tree. (from Wikipedia)