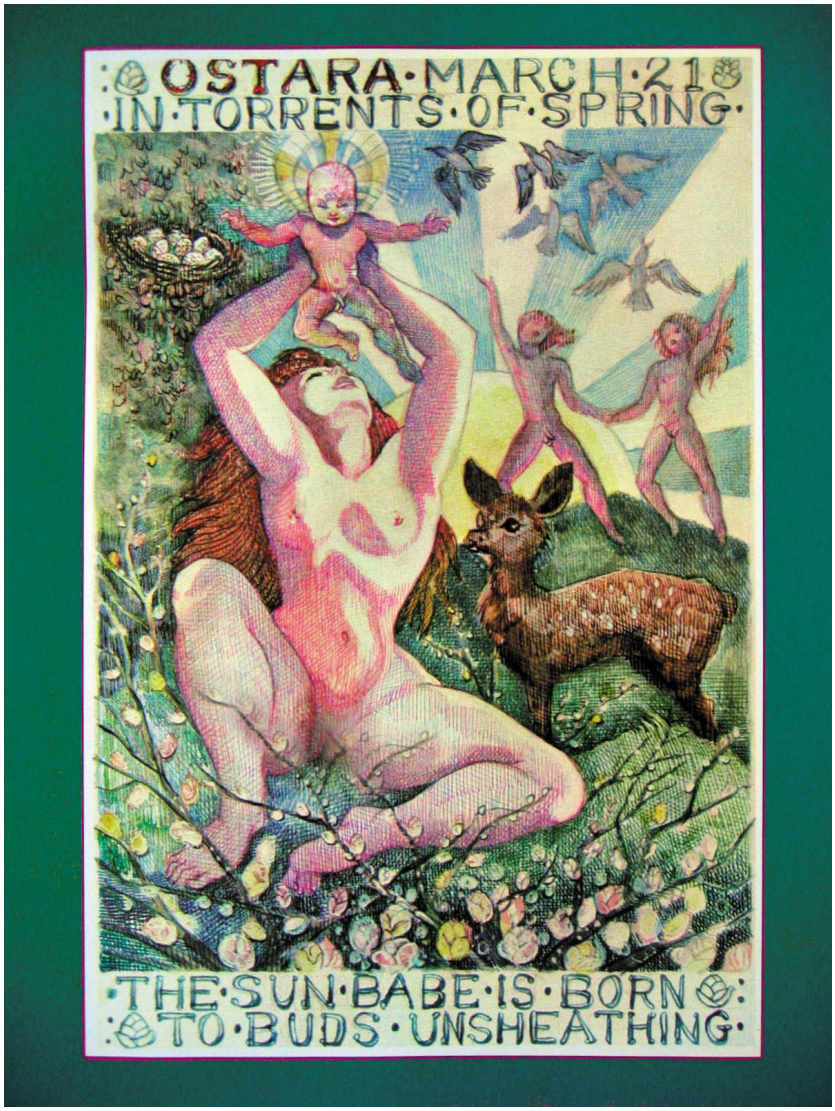


Faeries beat the thickets about the clearing as the green grass thickens in the birth meadow of the Queen of Budding Branches. Stout Alders screen the subsiding river of love behind the Queen. Their roots have held the banks well through the fury of Ash-driven overflow.

The first dawn of Spring breaks through the Alder thickets, all twinkling with myriad fat, dewy catkins. Like a black rain of early insects, the scales fall from thousands of tightly curled buds throughout the sodden woods.

Bearing their Y-staves of Ash, the Fays dance through these arcades of vernal emergence. They leap and spring into the air, to encourage the upthrust of life through the muck of Winter's retreat. But at the same time, the celebrants bid dear Winter goodbye; and they tender thanks to Her spirit of rest and consolidation.

The Sun of the New year, rising through the haze, is as red as the Alder-dyed scarves the Fays wave before Him from the tips of their Alder wands.

As the vernal Sun breaks away from the indicator of Spring, the sacred equinoctial cleft in the eastern palisades, the infant God of the Year slides from between the thighs of the the Great Queen of all life. The Faeries of Spring jubilantly sever the umbilicus with a crescent of white quartz tied with bright sprigs of Alder catkins. They lift the squealing Godling over their heads so He blackens the Sun, now rising over the mighty stone menhir of Spring Equinox - Ostara. The Maiden Mother of all Wild both laughs and weeps for the splendid triumph of nature's aeons in the Thunder Clap of the Moment. Evoe!!

Thereupon some of the celebrants inaugurate the hunt for the Red Glain Egg, the Involved Ball. Through the vibrant Alder thickets the ritual search spreads out, while others slowly pull the eternal virgin Mother and Her adored Son, the perennial God up the sacred river in a splendidly ornamented barge, constructed of water-worthy Alder wood.

Around Vearn 17, Dione Day, the Ostara Egg is found somewhere on the Eastern bank of the River. There the Great Goddess disembarks. She disrobes and plunges deep into the shimmering Sacred Pool which transforms and renews Her. She emerges from the Pool as the Girl-child Goddess - the Kore. The delicate child comes forth midst the clamor of returning migrant Birds, who straightaway begin their festive, comic mimes of pairing.