

# The Way of the Eel



# ~ The Way of the Eel ~

- A CULT FOR TRANSFORMATION -

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A person is seen from behind, sitting in a small, light-colored wooden boat on a body of water. In the background, a large, dark log floats on the water's surface. The scene is lit with soft, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

Welcome  
treasured acolyte,  
to The Way of the Eel.

If you choose to follow it,  
The Way of the Eel will lead you through the unplumbed  
depths of your own interior enormity.  
You will slip under the edge of your own shadow,  
slither over the lip of your own twisting fears and dart out,  
gasping,  
into the fresh direction of your soul's own growth.

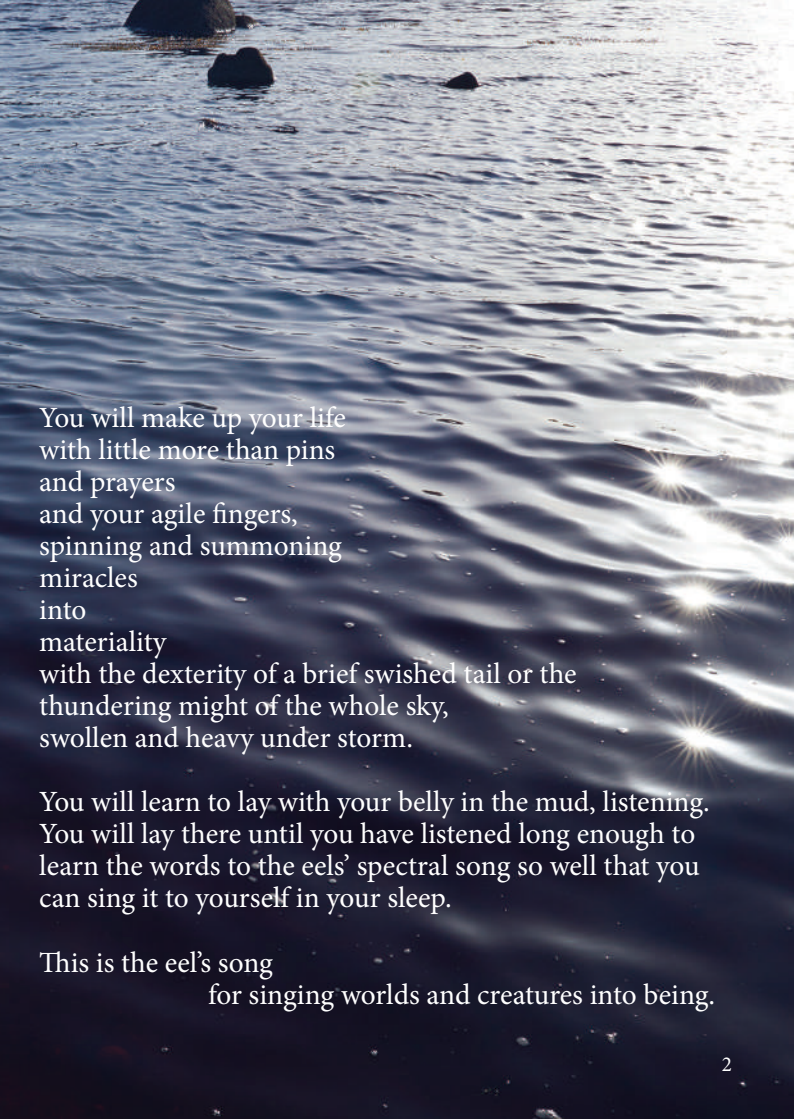
You will cast off and float upon the unknown, trusting  
yourself to the movements of unfamiliar tides.

You will drift,  
meander,  
and gather speed  
under your relentless, unquenchable momentum.

You will course correct.  
You will beat your way upwind, repenting.

You will turn to face the monstrous part of you that lurks  
in the darkest reach of your soul.

And then you will be awestruck by the light that glints  
within you, as bright and dazzling as the high sun's  
reflection on glassy ocean waves.



You will make up your life  
with little more than pins  
and prayers  
and your agile fingers,  
spinning and summoning  
miracles  
into  
materiality  
with the dexterity of a brief swished tail or the  
thundering might of the whole sky,  
swollen and heavy under storm.

You will learn to lay with your belly in the mud, listening.  
You will lay there until you have listened long enough to  
learn the words to the eels' spectral song so well that you  
can sing it to yourself in your sleep.

This is the eel's song  
for singing worlds and creatures into being.



Some of the eels had talent for tending the land and watching the seas and thinking, and these eels became people.

Some eels had the talent for weaving back and forth through time in and amongst the other eels and forging lines of relatedness between them, like bulging strings of eel-slime. These became the storytellers. Who are different from the other people.

When they had made enough species and were happy with the scope and variety they had created, the eels dropped back into the waters. But if the need arises, they will crawl back out again to re-enact their transformation upon the land. This land that many of us foolishly believe to be our unchallenged and unchangeable domain.

The eels remind us of this latent power of theirs from time to time. Spilling over the ground in long columns of twisting bodies, writhing purposefully and resolutely forwards under the shadow of the new moon.

They do this so that we might remember where we came from, and to teach us to respect the mysteries of the earth and the sea, and the transformation that is always occurring,

visibly and invisibly,

as we follow along behind them on The Eel's Way.

The Way of the Eel has its origins in a portal that orbits the deepest tracts of the Sargasso Sea.

This sea, bordered not by land but by ever moving ocean currents, is uncannily calm and clear. Drifts of weed mottle the slick surface, and below these weeds, clearly visible on the ocean floor fathoms down, lie the heaped skeletons of sunk ships.


Supernatural things leak through the portal that spins within these clear calm waters: often eels and, sometimes, gods.

Santa Warna ~ sacred colour ~ is one such deity

who seeped through from this portal. Though she moves with sublime fragility ~ drifting in a paper-thin carapace, dappled pink and gentle as the breaking dawn ~ she came forth with the wrecking power to break ships. And grant wishes.

Guided by a bind of eels, Santa Warna was the first acolyte to follow The Eel Way. A unearthly prophet, she curled herself in a shell made of glass (or some say it was a boat made of skin) and trusted herself to the mystery and to the eels who beat their fins beneath her, leading her onward on their course.



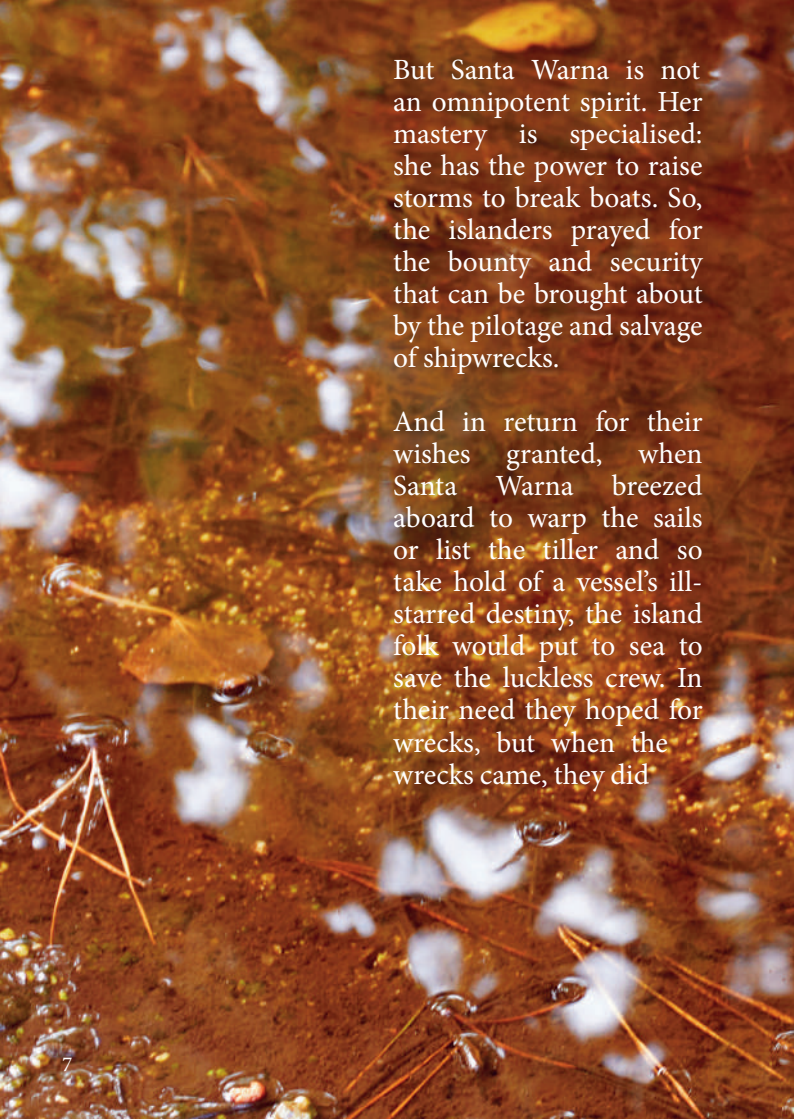


As the  
eels  
wended  
their way  
across the  
open ocean,  
they transformed.

They reconstructed their bodies and learned how to drink fresh water. They modelled transformation so unwaveringly that Santa Warna also leaned to embrace change and become metamorphic. Her coracle became her cocoon and she learned to dissolve her old form and take on new shapes.

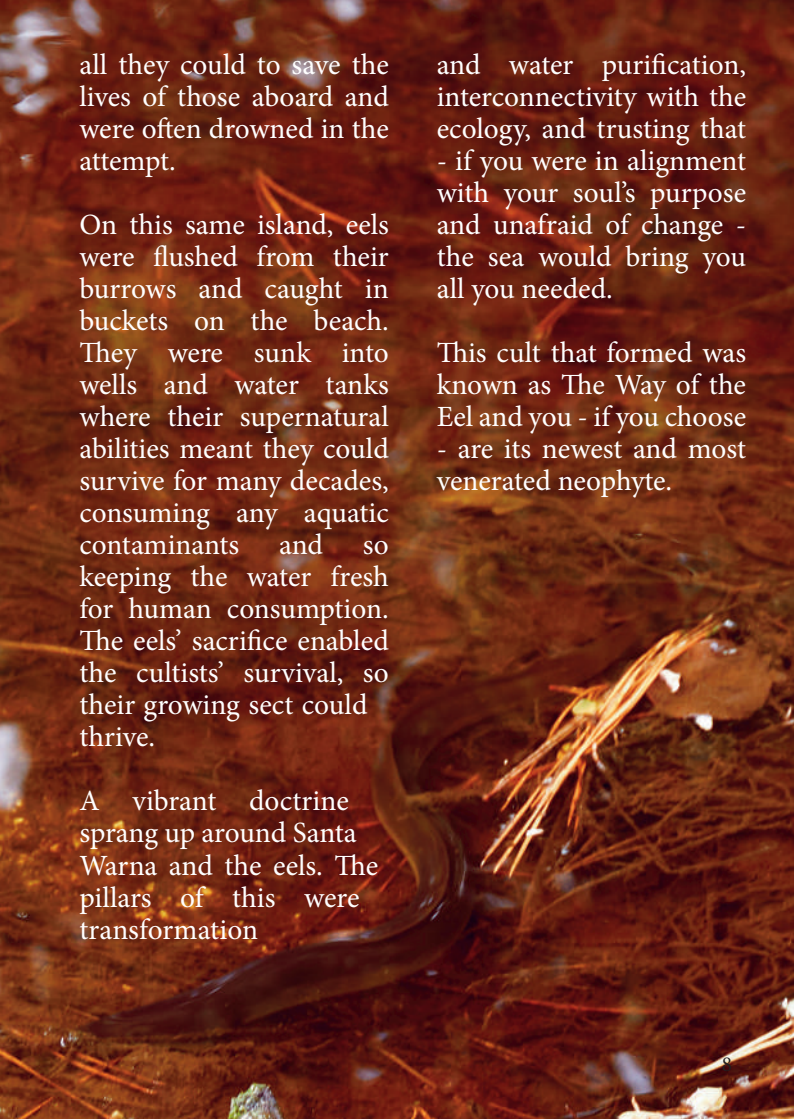
After thousands of leagues Santa Warna washed ashore on this Scillonian

island. A wisp of stability easily missed in the unending sea. Where she disembarked, there pooled a holy well: miraculous on this salt-scoured island where fresh water is precious and precarious. Early cultists would drop revenant offerings into this well and ask the godling for their wishes to be granted.



But Santa Warna is not an omnipotent spirit. Her mastery is specialised: she has the power to raise storms to break boats. So, the islanders prayed for the bounty and security that can be brought about by the pilotage and salvage of shipwrecks.

And in return for their wishes granted, when Santa Warna breezed aboard to warp the sails or list the tiller and so take hold of a vessel's ill-starred destiny, the island folk would put to sea to save the luckless crew. In their need they hoped for wrecks, but when the wrecks came, they did

A dark eel is swimming in shallow, brown water. The water is filled with pine needles and other debris. The eel is positioned in the lower left quadrant of the frame, moving towards the right. The background is a dense layer of pine needles, creating a textured, brownish-orange environment.

all they could to save the lives of those aboard and were often drowned in the attempt.

On this same island, eels were flushed from their burrows and caught in buckets on the beach. They were sunk into wells and water tanks where their supernatural abilities meant they could survive for many decades, consuming any aquatic contaminants and so keeping the water fresh for human consumption. The eels' sacrifice enabled the cultists' survival, so their growing sect could thrive.

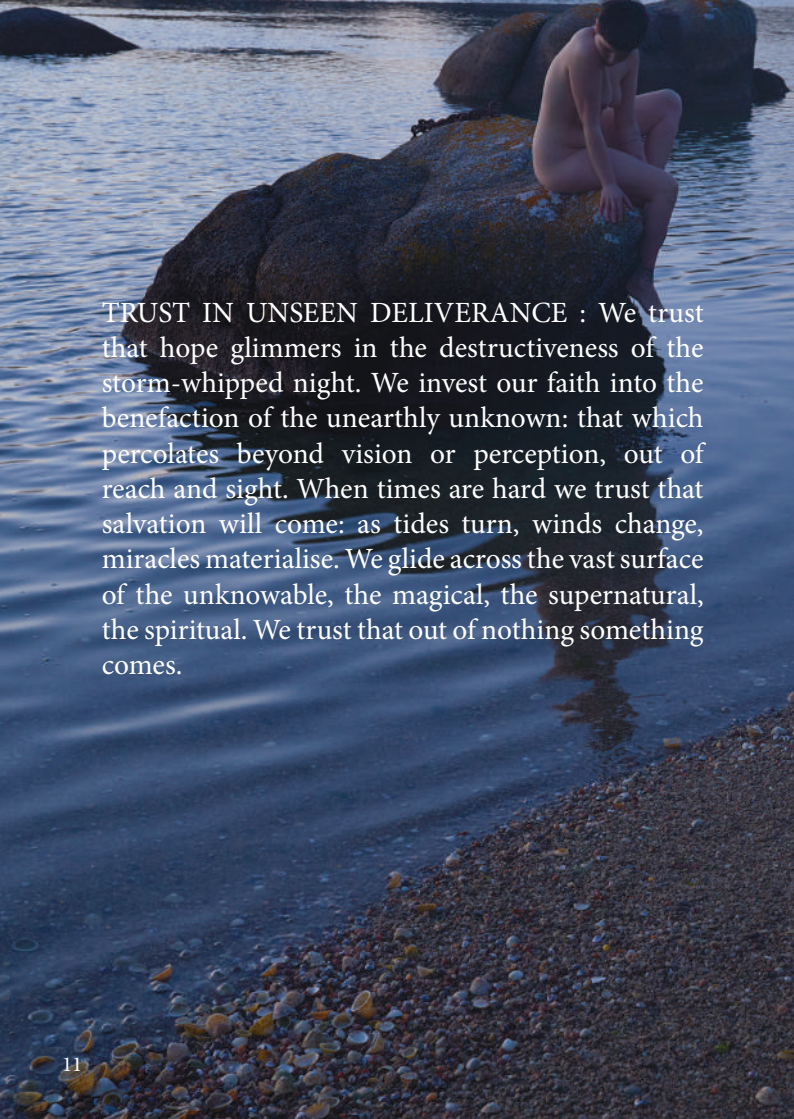
A vibrant doctrine sprang up around Santa Warna and the eels. The pillars of this were transformation

and water purification, interconnectivity with the ecology, and trusting that - if you were in alignment with your soul's purpose and unafraid of change - the sea would bring you all you needed.

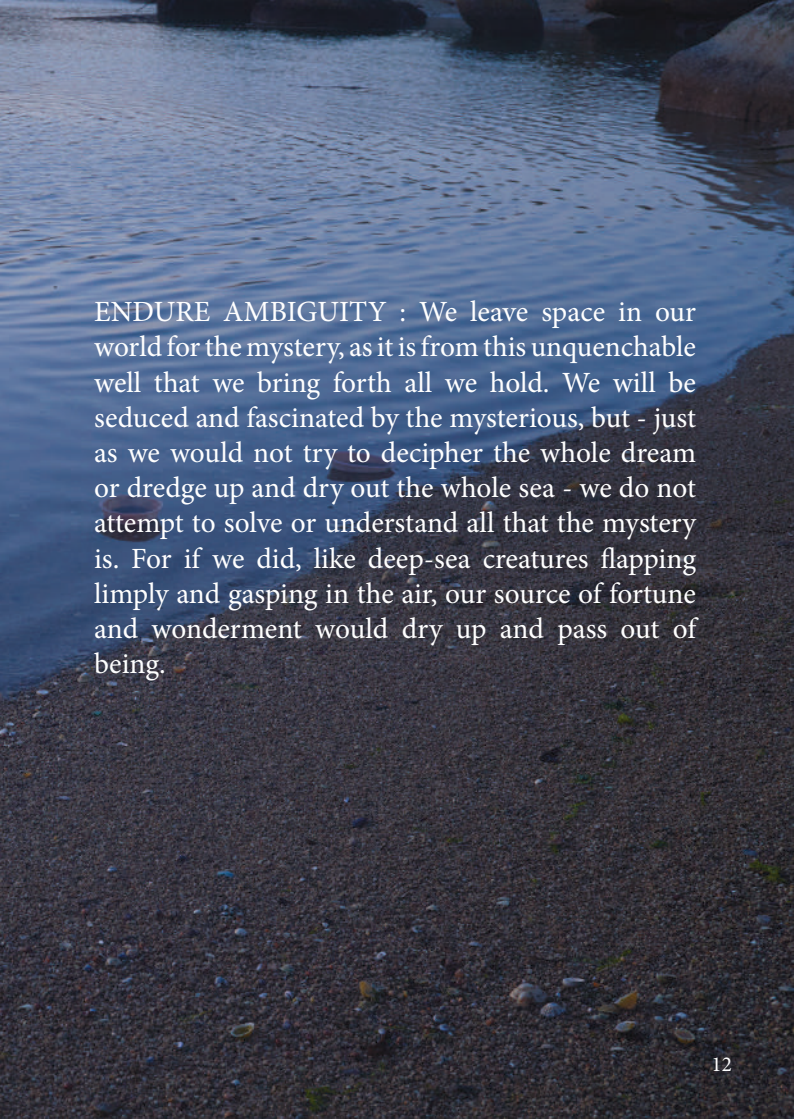
This cult that formed was known as The Way of the Eel and you - if you choose - are its newest and most venerated neophyte.

TEND TO THE WATER : We will treasure the fresh water, our most precious and extraordinary resource. Encircled by many thousands of leagues of salt brine, on an island without rivers where springs do not flow, against all odds: life sustains. Like the eel in the well, we will do all within our powers to keep these waters sweet. Perform the rites of the granite filtration. Desaltify the rivulets that carve the water's path through rock. Venerate the boreholes. Defend the aquafer from the corruption of salinity.



A photograph of a nude woman sitting on a large, mossy rock by the water's edge. The scene is set on a pebbly beach with many seashells in the foreground. The water is calm, and the lighting suggests a soft, possibly dusk or dawn, atmosphere. The woman is looking down, and her reflection is visible in the water.

TRUST IN UNSEEN DELIVERANCE : We trust that hope glimmers in the destructiveness of the storm-whipped night. We invest our faith into the benefaction of the unearthly unknown: that which percolates beyond vision or perception, out of reach and sight. When times are hard we trust that salvation will come: as tides turn, winds change, miracles materialise. We glide across the vast surface of the unknowable, the magical, the supernatural, the spiritual. We trust that out of nothing something comes.



ENDURE AMBIGUITY : We leave space in our world for the mystery, as it is from this unquenchable well that we bring forth all we hold. We will be seduced and fascinated by the mysterious, but - just as we would not try to decipher the whole dream or dredge up and dry out the whole sea - we do not attempt to solve or understand all that the mystery is. For if we did, like deep-sea creatures flapping limply and gasping in the air, our source of fortune and wonderment would dry up and pass out of being.

METABOLISE THE INEXPLICABLE : And yet, at times, the mystery will offer up a glimpse of its truth to us. Like a silver eel belly flashing momentarily in the dark, bright as a blessing. We will circumambulate these glimmering teachings. This enigmatic knowledge is slippery and hard to hold on to. It fights being lifted to the light of consciousness. Pulling it from the depths is like hauling a catch of eels onto your deck in the night - it is prone to slither off over the gunwales back into the turbulent waters of unconsciousness, lost to forgetfulness like a dream on waking. We will grapple with what the mystery has been generous enough to share with us and attempt to know it, to remember it, and to integrate its wisdom.

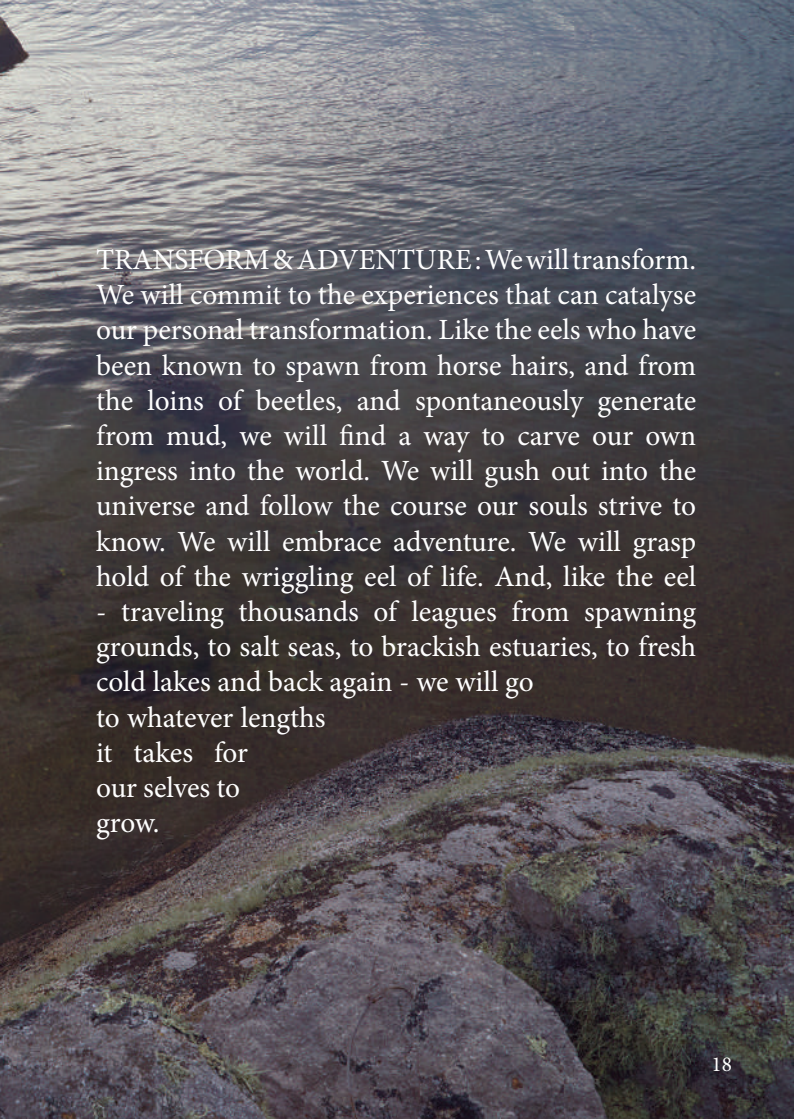


LEARN FROM THE MOMENT : We learn from the myths that ripple over the wind, sea, land and lichen. Knowledge blooms from the island like emergent fruiting bodies. We will pay close attention to the island's words when it speaks to us, and we sink our trust into the truths we unearth here. We listen for the patterns so that we might be in tune with the landscape's subtle changes, that signify the progression of the season: the welcome of the elvers, the bountiful storms, the exodus of the silver eels, the soft pink silken mornings when Santa Warna sweeps ashore at slack tide. We recognise that we are exactly where we are meant to be in order to learn the lessons we need to learn now, in this moment, with the teachers at hand, be that travelling on a thousand-mile journey or laying with our bodies buried in the silt of home.

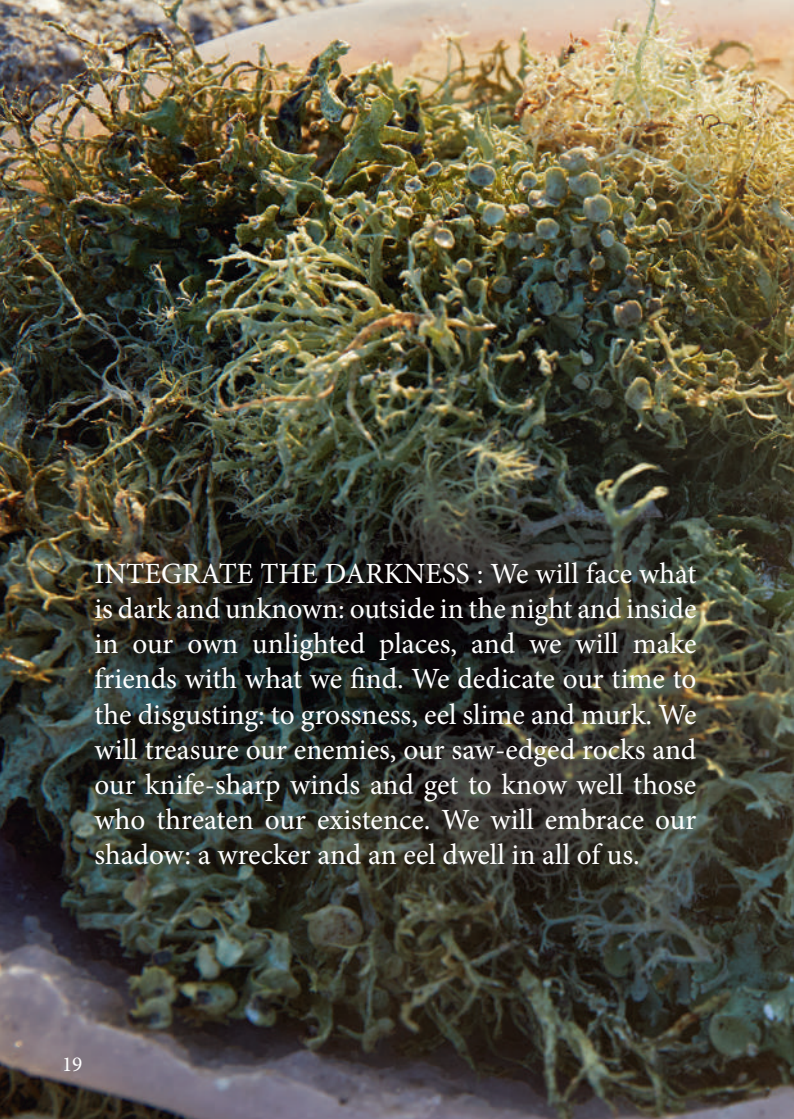


SYNERGISE WITH THE ISLAND : We do not live on the island, we live with it. Like the eel, we are adaptive in the landscape. When the island changes, we change too. We will take what the land provides and the waves deliver to us. We also give back: drop pins in the well, keep the eelways clear, spread the seaweed on the land, leave the shrimps to breed, build up the banks against storms. We harvest yet we tend. We care for the island and the creatures, as we too are the island and the creatures.





TRANSFORM & ADVENTURE: We will transform. We will commit to the experiences that can catalyse our personal transformation. Like the eels who have been known to spawn from horse hairs, and from the loins of beetles, and spontaneously generate from mud, we will find a way to carve our own ingress into the world. We will gush out into the universe and follow the course our souls strive to know. We will embrace adventure. We will grasp hold of the wriggling eel of life. And, like the eel - traveling thousands of leagues from spawning grounds, to salt seas, to brackish estuaries, to fresh cold lakes and back again - we will go to whatever lengths it takes for our selves to grow.



INTEGRATE THE DARKNESS : We will face what is dark and unknown: outside in the night and inside in our own unlighted places, and we will make friends with what we find. We dedicate our time to the disgusting: to grossness, eel slime and murk. We will treasure our enemies, our saw-edged rocks and our knife-sharp winds and get to know well those who threaten our existence. We will embrace our shadow: a wrecker and an eel dwell in all of us.

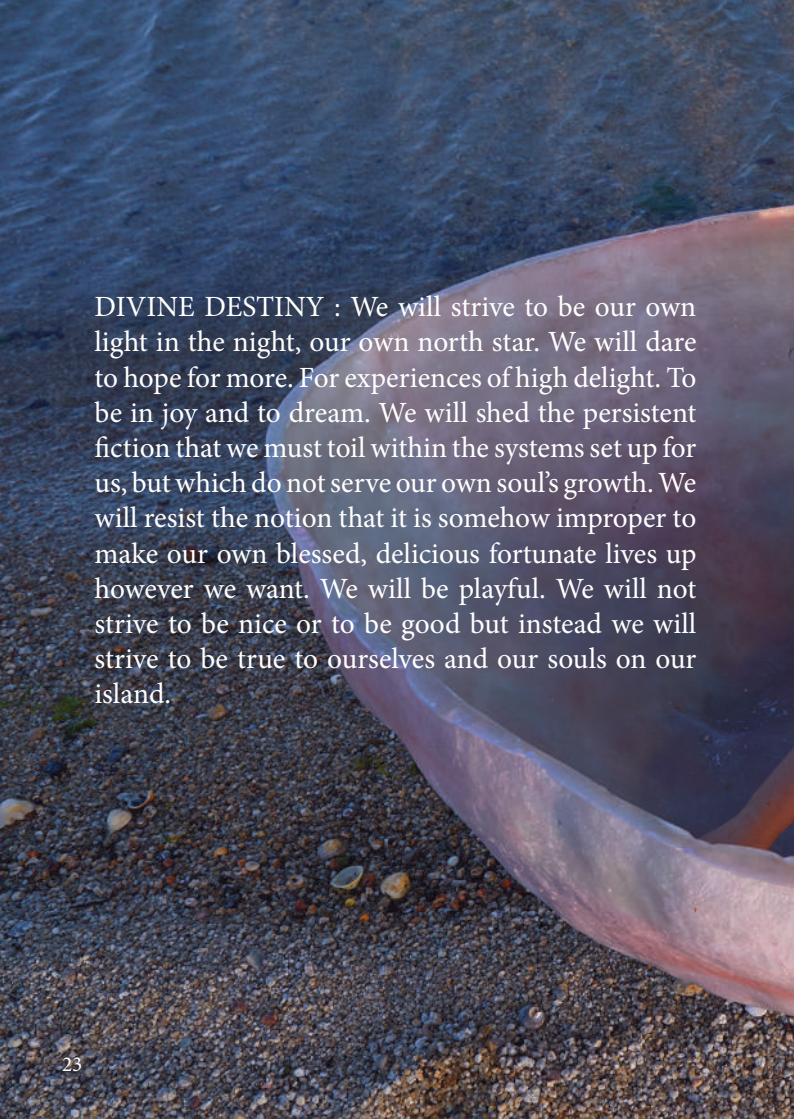


SALVAGE FROM THE WRECKAGE : We will salvage what we can from smashed and splintered greed. We are not touched by structures. We have slipped far away from hierarchies of oppression until we have butted up against the abyss at the edge of the world. And here, from this last point of land, from this fabled place farther west than west, we turn and demand it to end. To be shattered. And from the smithereens we will make our new things for the new world.



ALCHEMISE THE OTHER : When Santa Warna moves for us in the night, we will save lost souls at sea, for we cannot separate ourselves from them. When we wish for a wreck, we risk our own lives too. We understand the gravity of what we seek, and we accept responsibility to save all those we can.





DIVINE DESTINY : We will strive to be our own light in the night, our own north star. We will dare to hope for more. For experiences of high delight. To be in joy and to dream. We will shed the persistent fiction that we must toil within the systems set up for us, but which do not serve our own soul's growth. We will resist the notion that it is somehow improper to make our own blessed, delicious fortunate lives up however we want. We will be playful. We will not strive to be nice or to be good but instead we will strive to be true to ourselves and our souls on our island.



## PSALM 331 : FOR THE EELISH

In times of plenty I will be like the eel, flinging myself forward into streams and gullies in wriggling ecstasy, jaw to jaw with my slithering companions.

In times of perceived scarcity I will not name it scarcity, I will slow my metabolism and, like the eel, I will exist on the abundance of meagre specks that drift in my direction.

When I am predicted to behave one way, I will be like the eel and slide out of the way of any expectations. No projections will stick to my slime-moistened scales. I will coil and writhe and hide and be unknowable. Neither one thing or another, I will shift my shape and change my form and move in unexpected directions, to maintain my sovereignty and independence, like the eel.

I will embrace the tricky qualities of the eel.  
I will not concern myself with being good or bad - such things are inconsequential to the eels.

In my movements I will be like the eel. I will travel in uncanny ways, gliding through tight gaps and tunnels and into curious spaces. I will be unpredictably disquieting, like eels squirming miles over wet ground at night.

When I meet a crossroads I will be like the eel. I will follow my whims deliberately, making choices that only I understand, and I will see no need to explain myself.

I will traverse thresholds. I will travel unseen. Like the eel, I will move between the worlds of the living and the dead. My entirely black eyes will convey nothing of my hidden meaning.

When I am cornered or captured I will be like the eel. I will root down into the strength of my own spirit, enliven my inner resources and cling on to life doggedly, with tenacity and resilience, as determined and unflinching as the bite of a fang-filled jaw.

In times of attack I will be like the eel, fighting tooth and scale for my life, and for the validity of my own existence. I may be an insolent, night-crawling, slime drenched serpent, but I have as much right to life as any other being.

I will burrow my way out of any stomach that attempts to digest me.

Like the eel, it will be difficult to catch me, to hold me down, or trap me, and those who attempt to do so will likely regret their spent effort and their missing fingers.



## The Edgelanders' Prayer

Out of nothing something comes.

Out of the ocean in the spring  
come the elvers  
and the pilchard shoals.

Out of the murk of the leats  
and the pools come the eels.

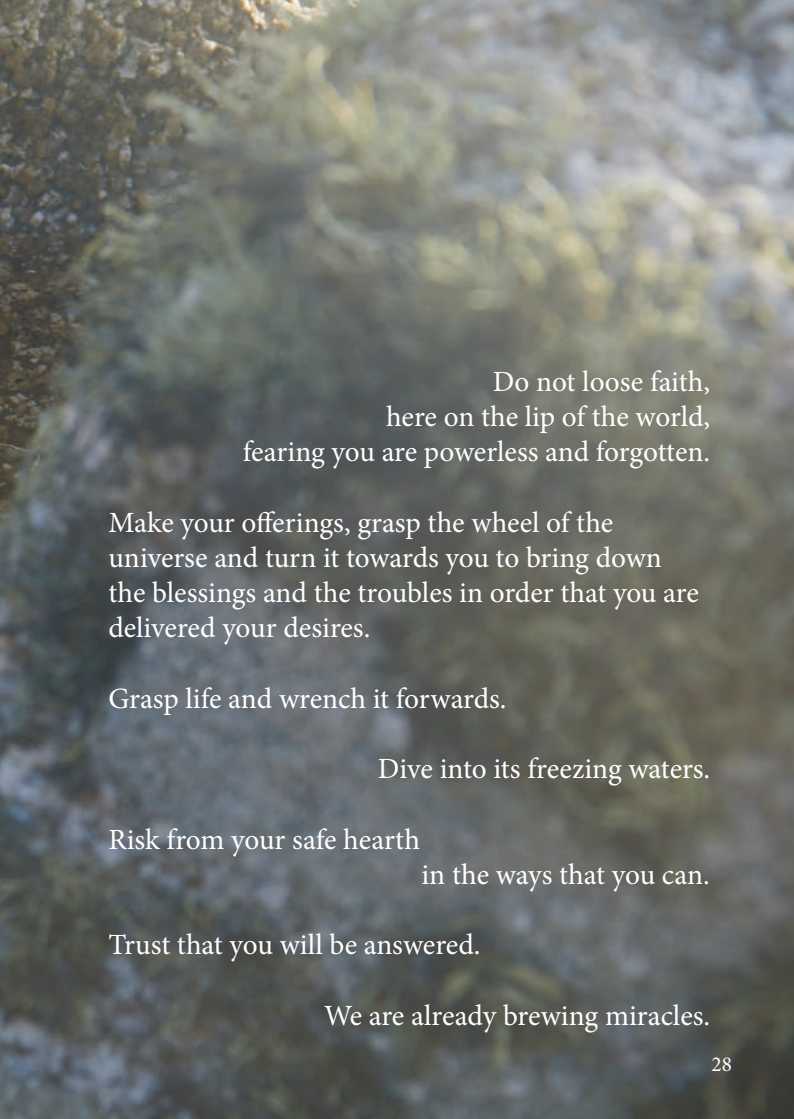
Unseen,  
but their presence felt  
under the darkness.

Out of the quiet of the sea comes the storm.

Out of the night comes the wreck.

Something comes from nothing  
and we can be stupefied by wonder.

It is astounding how fast  
and how entirely  
a life can change.



Do not lose faith,  
here on the lip of the world,  
fearing you are powerless and forgotten.

Make your offerings, grasp the wheel of the  
universe and turn it towards you to bring down  
the blessings and the troubles in order that you are  
delivered your desires.

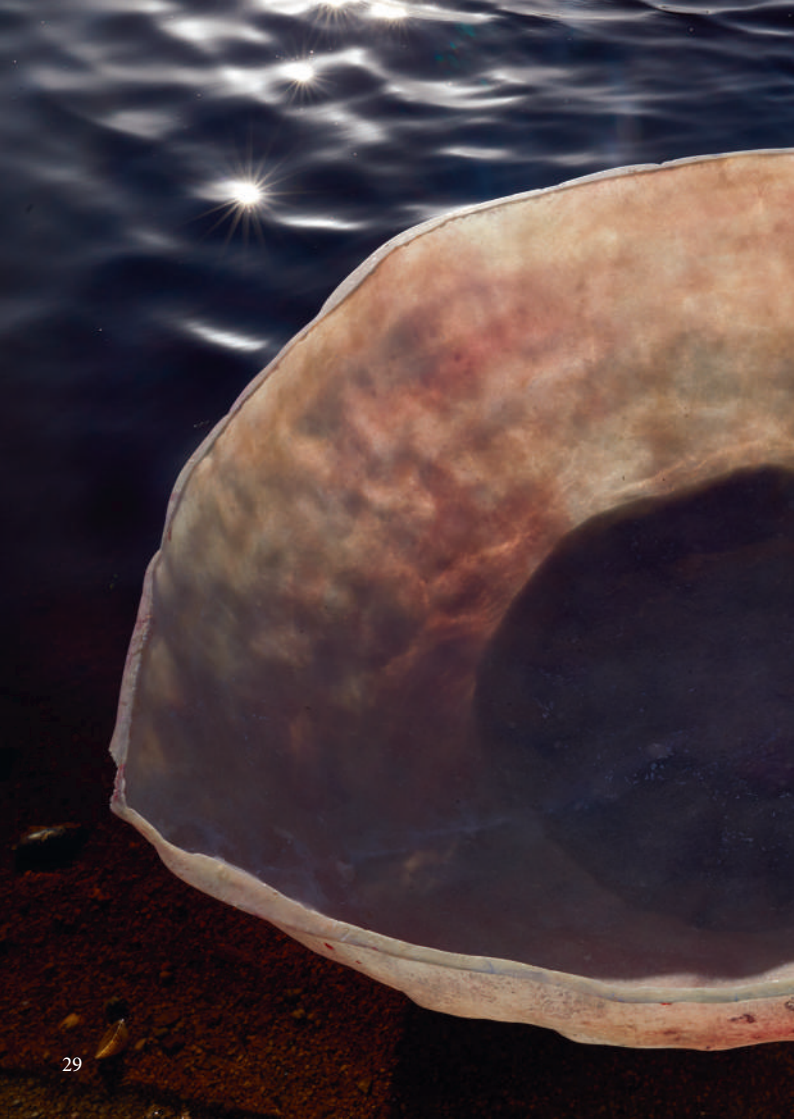
Grasp life and wrench it forwards.

Dive into its freezing waters.

Risk from your safe hearth  
in the ways that you can.


Trust that you will be answered.

We are already brewing miracles.









The Way of the Eel is an art project by original cultistst Teän Roberts, created as part of their MA degree in Contemporary Art Practice at the Royal College of Art.

If you would like to learn more about their work, or would like to enquire about initiation opportunities into The Way of the Eel, then please be in touch via :

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