

21st Century Winter Solstice

Sean Arthur Joyce

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Sunlight. Bright star of epiphany's eye. Clockwork god who slinks on all fours. Shy, sly bridegroom. Sturdy silence of Brugh na Boinne, ¹ fields daydreaming with sheep. Spirit flicker in winter's dank well. Wisdom leaps quick and sleek as salmon. ² Catch it if you can. Dawn arrives on burnished amber paling to muslin, the tree crowns embers on the horizon.

Newgrange. Seed of life struck alive on the hammer stone. No wonder women adore this place. Quartz womb of Heaven. Spiral code engraver. Lens of birth focused with celestial precision. The spilled milk midnight a river carrying gods back home. The barrow an earthy, perfect mirror. Portal to afterworlds. How the bones ache for home, the further away. Forget what you've been told. We are not alone. Never have been, from the beginning.

Men stand dumbfaced before the heavenly architecture of the womb. Struck still with fear in these nostalgically fascist days. Careful, the evil eye is recording you—in digital high definition. Twenty thousand apply, cast their lots as generations have done. Few are chosen to be the seed pods breathed alive in her chamber. The ritual may have changed but the outcome is the same. Or is it? Have we learned in five thousand years?

Newgrange. Like so much of civilization, even the name has emptied out. Nothing but a shell left to suck. Desperation dance of slide rule slaves and shadow Cucullens. ³ Fixated on the particle even as they stand on the rainbow bridge. Never quite able to make the ancient leap. Or did the gods close that portal too when they left? Scoop up the white gold dust to the last grain?

Collective unconscious? Tribal memory? Or the forced amnesia of official history? Are we a degenerate empire, or a new species? A dagger for ripping apart worlds? Or a questing spirit, opening outward? What unites these people to smolder in penetrating damp, waiting for the blessed event? What flicker, what white flame warms the chilled hands, dissolves the fences and flags? Forget light years. Think sliding staircases of time.

A curtain of sparrows coughs into river mist. Darkness descends thick and heavy as oil. Apes in chain mail drive out the shapeshifters of light. The Tuatha de Danann⁴ escape in heartbroken battalions. Across furtive ages they reappear, stepping through the veil. Escort the seers into that kingdom under the sod, the city beneath the waves. “*Only the pure in heart shall see God.*”⁵ But finally the crow-black priests have their way. And Tir na Nog⁶ clangs shut with a sickening groan.

Is there anything more dangerous than fear? What celestial navies sank us in battle? When will we finally see their faces? Star sparks struck from the anvil of creation rise up: Boudicea, Arthur, Joan of Arc, Lennon, the Mahatma.⁷ Rebel messiahs rattle spectral steel. The sea thrashes in her long nightmare. Again and again, Atlantis heaves its death agony.

Winter solstice. Carpet of sun dust spread at your feet. The stupefying fog lifts, eyes clear. King or commoner, mortal or immortal, all kneel here. For 17 immortal minutes, the dark splinters like a mirror. The stars are drawn down close. The sun seeds a stony womb. The sun—that absent lover that burns white-hot for a new day so it can kiss morning awake.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Brugh na Boinne: the bend of the River Boyne in County Meath, Ireland that lies below the Newgrange megalithic site.
2. The salmon was considered by the ancient Celts to be the wisest of animals, represented by the god Lyn Llyw.
3. Cucullen, or Cuchulainn, the legendary Irish hero from the ancient tale The Cattle Raid of Cuilaigne (Cooley).
4. Tuatha de Danann: the People or Tribe of Dana, the ‘fairy people’ of Ireland who are said in Irish mythology to have been driven beneath the Earth by successive waves of invasion.
5. Matthew 5:8, “Happy are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”
6. Tir na Nog: Land of Eternal Youth, where some of the de Danaan were said to live.

7. All historical characters who in some way resisted a dominant, unjust order, some with violence, some without.

