Brigid—mother, daughter, healer, bard, warrior, fire goddess, goddess of the oak, animals, and magic. Brigid of the spring, her festival Imbolc, oversees fertility of all kinds. Brigid is many things to many people. In this enticing book, Courtney Weber offers up a wide-ranging exposition and celebration of all things Brigid, who is arguably the most popular figure in Celtic mythology and religion. Meet Brigid in her various incarnations: Celtic pagan goddess, Christian saint, Caribbean Voodoo deity.

"Brigid’s origin myths bring no peace to the logical mind. She appears as an important daughter of a God in one myth, but the mother of that God in a different telling, while vanishing completely in a third version. Which version is the right version? Does any myth from any source even have a ‘right’ telling? The various versions tell us about the storyteller. Brigid’s myths had many tellers and, therefore, many versions. Stories varied widely, circulated through oral tradition in local vernacular. As Christian monks later recorded the myths, characters were often augmented to fit Christian ideals.” — from the book

Each chapter ends with guided meditations and exercises that help readers tap into Brigid’s healing powers. Inside you’ll find Brigid-focused spells, blessings, recipes, and rituals for love, harmony, protection, and much more.
CHAPTER 1
Who Is Brigid?

Brigid, that is, the female poet, daughter of the Dagda. This is Brigid the female seer, or woman of insight, i.e., the goddess whom poets used to worship, for her cult was very great and very splendid. It is for this reason that they call her the goddess of poets by this title, and her sisters were Brigid the woman of leechcraft and Brigit, the woman of smithcraft, i.e., goddesses, i.e., three daughters of the Dagda are they. By their names the goddess Brigid was called by all the Irish.

—CORMAC MAC CUILENNÁIN, Tenth-century scholar

A character quaint and fierce, powerful yet graceful, has woven a trail across oceans and borders, cultures and languages, practices, folklore, prayer, and song, creating a strangely perfect sort of unity melded only under a divine hammer. She stands watch over the delicate, serene trickle of Ireland’s holy wells and stoic Welsh cathedrals. She appears in Glastonbury’s healing temples, depicted with flaming sun-hair, and also in murals of the Haitian Voudon Lwa, with a pale face in a wild, clashing costume, watching over the cemetery. She stands with a shepherd’s staff over a tiny fox as the patron saint of New York City’s Loisaida. In Ireland, she has been called Bhríde, Brig-eoit,
Brigid. In Scotland, Brigh, Bridi, Bridean, Brüd. Wales has called her Bregit, Breit, Breid, Freit, Ffraid, Ffred, Fride. In what is now France she has been called Brigette or Britta, and in England, she was known as Brigita or Brigantia. This is the Goddess of the forge and anvil, of poets, painters, and prophets. She is a Goddess of healing as well as battle, of fire but also water, of love and of death. She blesses small animals, guards orphaned children, and challenges authority. She has crossed the chasm of regional land Goddess to Christian saint and back again to a contemporary Goddess of a global scope. Distinct as the multitude of tongues that speak her name, and deeply rooted in creation, destruction, regeneration, and sometimes contradiction—this is Brigid.

A teacher of mine believes a whole spiritual tradition could be filled solely with Brigid devotees. In the Neo-Pagan community, I have seen a plethora of covens dedicated to her and met more Brigid devotees than I can count. This does not include the hundreds of churches, women’s groups, convents, and other spiritual or secular charity organizations dedicated to Brigid. She is everywhere and she is not relegated to one faith.

But who is Brigid? So much about her remains a mystery. How did a Goddess whose origins lay in the soils and waters of the Celtic world slowly but deftly take hold in so many places, both at the source and thousands of miles away? How did she begin and, perhaps more curiously, what has she become?

BRIDG THE EXALTED: A CELTIC GODDESS

To understand a Deity, one must attempt to understand the history and nature of the first people to worship that Deity. Brigid originated in the pantheon of the Celtic people—the residents of Ireland and the British Isles. Much like Brigid, the history of
these people is mysterious and complex. I once heard a description that exploring the Celts’ historic identity is like watching television with the sound off. One can kind of decipher what’s going on, but quite a bit of the story is lost. Mysterious artifacts tell us a bit about what the ancient Celts were like, but prior to the introduction of Christianity, the Celts left no written records. We are left guessing at what these pieces meant to the people who utilized them. Neighbors of the ancient Celts left the most descriptive accounts, but this is a little problematic. Most of the history written about the ancient Celts was penned by foreigners or enemies who may not have had an adequate understanding of Celtic culture or who likely wrote slanted accounts. Sometimes, Deities and their myths are the best informants about the people who worshipped them, and in looking through the Deity to understand the people, we learn even more about the Deity.

What we do know about the ancient Celts, based on their peers’ writings, is that they were envied for their beautiful clothing and jewelry, but feared on the battlefield. They were criticized for indulging in booze and sensual pleasures, but also praised for their health and fitness. Some marveled at the Celtic society, where it was said no beggars could be found, and admired their extensive hospitality to friendly guests. Other accounts describe the Celts as shrewdly protective over their lands and tribes, wary of strangers, unabashedly willing to shed blood to defend what was theirs. Their religious world was equally passionate, and it was from this that Brigid’s iron-strong legacy was born.

The ancient Celtic world was a massive civilization whose height of power occurred roughly 600 B.C.E. to 400 C.E. in Ireland and the British Isles, as well as what is now Portugal, northern Italy and Spain, France, southern Poland, and central Turkey. It was a melting-pot culture which originated from tribes that immigrated from extensive regions of the world, intermarrying
with pre-Celtic indigenous peoples. Brigid likely began as a collection of Goddesses—some regional Stone Age Goddesses, some imported with immigrating tribes. In the way that streams feed rivers, these early Deities fed into Brigid—her own ancestral streams possibly tens of thousands of years old.

As Celtic culture grew, its pantheon exploded. One explorer counted over 400 Deities in the British Isles, alone. The names and myths of many were lost to time and eventually to religious conversion when Christianity moved in. The few that did find their way into written lore often did so centuries later through the pens of Roman explorers and Christian monks. Some were painted with a seemingly subjective slant as frightening characters that could have been the new religion’s interpretation. Yet, some of the descriptions may have been somewhat accurate. Celtic Deities were literal representations of forces of nature which could be unpredictable and not always benevolent. Ocean Gods could supply food and travel, but could also flood coastal villages and swallow sailors. Sun Gods could nurture crops, but also hide behind a rain bank for months leaving the fields to rot. Celtic Goddesses were typically not gentle, loving mother-figures, but aggressive, voracious, highly sexual, even bloodthirsty. Ronald Hutton in The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles points out that it is difficult to tell whether these were real reflections of the Goddesses, role models for Celtic women, fantasies of the Celtic men, or the nightmarish visions of the Roman explorers or the Christian monks who eventually wrote down the descriptions. In general, Celtic Gods and Goddesses were feared much more than beloved. A far cry from the sedate churches or ceremonial circles of later centuries, the religion of the ancient Celts was primal, wild, and fierce. Worship was less about reverence and more a line of
defense against these Beings. Brigid’s earliest worship may have originated out of fear.

Even as the Celtic culture grew, it remained far from homogenized. The numerous tribes retained their own regional practices, dialects, and customs, but there were still quite a few similarities. Most practiced animism, a belief that all things contain a cognizant spirit. Another commonality was a term for an exalted being: Brig or Brid. One medieval inventory listed ten different Brighids, twelve Brigs, and three known as both. This led researchers, Goddess lovers, and folklorists to believe that there once was a great Goddess named Brig (later, Brigid) and she ruled over all the Celtic world. In reality, Brig’s literal meaning of “the Exalted One” or “The Great Lady” was frequently applied to female entities as well as women in positions of power. One example in Ireland was a first-century woman called Brigh who held office as a judge. It is less likely that the woman’s name was Brigh and more likely that it referred to her position as a supreme judge who was also female. Brig and its variations were attributed to sacred items, places, and concepts, such as Bríg Ambue (The Great Lady of Justice) or Bríg Brigug (The Great Lady Who Provides, a reference to fertile earth). The animist spirit was often female and so the title Brig was often applied to the spirits believed to inhabit sacred places such as wells and blacksmith shops. Practices of great renown such as the Bardic arts were also believed to contain feminine spirits, which influenced their cultivation. Over the centuries, foreign ears heard the term Brig and may have assumed it to be a singular Goddess who held jurisdiction over innumerable things. Over time, Brig popped up in various roles—large and small—in myth and lore, and eventually evolved into a singular, massively popular figure with highly diverse traits.
Brigid, the Exalted One, was said to be so great that a human could only reach as high as her brass shoe. While Brig was spirit of many things, she was primarily the green earth itself. This should not be confused with being a Goddess “of” the earth. Brig was not a caretaker or steward. The earth was alive and cognizant. Brig was its spirit and the soil, rocks, hills, and rivers were her body. Today, images commonly associated with Brigid include three identical women, but these do not appear on any pottery, monuments, or artifacts from the pre-Roman Celtic era. For centuries, the Brig existed in word and worship of the landscape, alone. The Celts made few—if any—carved images of their Divine. If their Goddess could be seen in the earth they walked upon, was a carved image even necessary?

Eventually, Brig would emerge in chiseled stone. Statues of Brig appeared in what is now Britain, where she was called Brigantia. These carvings made their appearance as the Roman influence increased in the Celtic world. The Romans carved images of their Deities and likely inspired the process. Some of the first statues and etchings of the Celtic Deities were courtesy of the Romans, themselves. Brigantia’s first images are quite similar to those of the Roman Goddess Minerva, a Patroness of wisdom, war, and urban living. Like Minerva images, Brigantia was depicted wearing a helmet and carrying a spear, but her trademark image was a jug of water, which Minerva was not seen carrying. The water image preserved her connection to the rivers and streams sacred to the Celtic world. Minerva was indelibly important to the Romans. Brigantia’s strikingly similar depictions underscore her equal importance to the Celts. One theory suggests Brigantia was a sole invention of the Romans, looking for a local Goddess to identify with in their newly colonized land. Hearing “Brig . . . Brig . . .” on the tongues of the natives may have confused the Romans, leading them to assume
there was a great regional Goddess named Brig rather than
Brig being an animist-influenced title. Then again, maybe they
were right.

THE EXALTED ONE IN IRELAND

Relations between the Romans and the Celts were tense. Both
groups were pillagers and plunderers of one another’s resources,
and wars were frequent. After centuries of reciprocal “sack-
ings,” the Romans ultimately took control of much of the region
by striking the spiritual and political nerve center of the Celtic
world: the Druid caste. Some believe Brig, the Exalted One, was
the patron Goddess of the Druids, which makes sense if one
considers the exalted position the Druids had. The Druids were
the priesthood and the ultimate authority of the Celtic world.
Strabo (around 24 B.C.E.), described the Druids as three honored
classes: Prophets, Philosophers, and Bards. Other writers of
that era noted that, “No man speaks before a King, and no King
speaks before a Druid.” But as Roman rule gradually increased
throughout most of Celtic world, the Druid priesthood was sys-
temically disassembled and the Exalted One’s presence dimin-
ished in the land named for Brigantia—Britain. Brig remained
in folklore and customs throughout the region, but it was in Ire-
land where the Exalted One would ultimately thrive. It was there
she was called Brigid.

Some believe that British Druids, fleeing Roman oppres-
sion, brought their Brig, as Brigantia, to Ireland where the Irish
Druids quickly included her in their regional pantheon. Others
argue that Brigid was in Ireland all along, her worship perhaps
enhanced by the refugees who recognized their own versions
of the Exalted One in her. Still others say Brigid was only ever
the regional land Goddess of the Irish province of Leinster and

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never had anything to do with the Minerva-influenced Brigantia. The Romans never made it to Ireland, so while Brig in her many forms would dwindle in most areas, much about the Celtic world remained preserved in Ireland, including the Exalted One.

Celtic spirituality linked the number three with all things divine and so Brigid the Goddess began to appear in lore and image in triplicate form. Contemporary images of Brigid often depict her as maiden, mother, and crone, associating the three sisters with the phases of the moon: waxing, full, and waning, but this is not a correct correlation. Brigid has historically been considered a solar Deity and as three identical women of the same age, sometimes called the Three Brigid Sisters: Woman of Healing (Ban leighis), Woman of Smithwork (Ban goibnechtae), and Woman Poet (Ban fhile). In addition to being the living earth, Brigid was also seen as the living embodiment of spring. In Scottish folklore, Brigid was imprisoned in the Ben Nevis mountain by the Calleach, the Winter Hag, every year when
winter set in and then released in the early days of spring. In other depictions, Brigid and the Calleach were the same Goddess with two faces—one comely and one haggard. Brigid was credited with milk production, which would occur around the beginning of February at the holiday of Imbolc, a word meaning “of milk.” For this reason, she was also credited as a Patroness of sheep and cattle. Brigid’s characteristics represented those held in highest regard by Celtic culture. Her prominent presence continued, even as Christianity crept into Ireland.

**BRIGID: WARRIOR SAINT AND HISTORIC REBEL**

As Christianity spread across Europe, the Gods of indigenous faiths were either disregarded by the Church or absorbed into folklore. Some were demoted to demons in the new Christian lore. Others were transformed into heroes of a legendary past where they continued to be revered with magick and significance. Still others, particularly those of paramount importance, were adopted as saints. The role of beloved saint was the next chapter for Brigid.

The idea of a beloved God or Goddess of ancient Pagan history turning into a saint can be a painful one for those who love old religions and Goddess worship. For many, the movement from God to saint may seem a demotion, although those who have loved and honored the saints would likely disagree. Particularly in the case of Brigid, the new saint lost few, if any, of her Goddess characteristics and was revered with power and prestige in Ireland on a level only rivaled by St. Patrick. St. Brigid was identified with the Christian Mother-Goddess figure of Mary, as “Mary of the Gaels,” or sometimes “the Foster-Mother of Christ,” and in some stories as Mary’s midwife. With the
exception of the archangels, very few saints enjoy such inclusion with the two most important figures in Catholic Christianity. Even so, St. Brigid is an unsaintly character, one known for screeching across battlefields or flagrant defiance against Church leaders.

St. Brigid is both historical figure and character of folklore and shared more than a name with her Pagan Goddess counterpart. It is through St. Brigid that the clearest glimpse into Brigid the Goddess can be found. The great cathedral of St. Brigid in Kildare, Ireland is believed to have been founded by the saint herself. It is widely accepted that the church was built upon an even older Pagan shrine, where a perpetual fire was kept in honor of the Goddess Brigid. Like the legacy of Brig, Brigid was probably a title rather than a name for a leading Druidess the Brig or Great Lady of Kildare. This Brigid oversaw the shrine’s care, later leading its conversion from Pagan to Catholic. Perhaps the crafty leader saw a way to preserve veneration of the sacred sites under a seemingly inevitable Christian transformation and coordinated it on her own terms. The story goes that the Druidess-nun was consecrated as Bishop of Kildare by accident. According to legend, the Bishop Ibor, performing the liturgical rite, read from the wrong passage and gave Brigid a status of power unheard of for women, even in contemporary Catholicism. If the story is true, it was almost certainly not an accident. Druidesses commonly held high posts, although nuns did not. To keep the respected Druidess in a powerful position would have been to the Church’s advantage, strengthening alliances with the local population. After her death, she became St. Brigid. Even in the new faith, Brigid remained exalted.

This character entered lore with the same ferocity and warriorship found in the Pagan Goddess, as well as relentless work against poverty. St. Brigid was known for giving anything she
possibly could to those in need. After her death, this important lady was buried in the church of Kildare in an elaborate coffin and reportedly surrounded by treasures and gifts from the community. Shortly thereafter, grave robbers stripped the tomb of its riches. Although a sad crime when we consider what sorts of treasures history has lost, it is true to the legacy of the saint who, even in death, continued to give all that she had to those in need.

St. Brigid was sometimes said to have had a woman friend or fellow nun in the convent named Darlughdacha, the literal translation of which means “Daughter of the God Lugh,” who herself became the leader of the Kildare abbey upon Brigid’s death. Other stories say that Brigid was actually Darlughdacha and a daughter of the God Lugh, herself, Brigid being only her title. Brigid and Darlughdacha reportedly shared a bed each night. One day, Brigid caught Darlughdacha gazing at a passing warrior. Brigid demanded she walk in shoes packed with red-hot coals as penance—either in sanctity of her convent vows of chastity or possibly to subdue Brigid’s personal jealousy, indicating that the two were lovers. The coals and the rage are among many, many other traits that resonate far more with a Pagan Fire and War Goddess than a standard saint. Additionally, the Church at Kildare has lost few of its Pagan roots. Kildare (cill dara) means “Church of the Oak Tree.” Oak is not a tree regularly honored in Christian lore, nor are perpetual fires commonly dedicated to Catholic saints, yet both are prominent in the reverence of St. Brigid. The gap between the Pagan and Christian rites of Brigid are quite small indeed.

St. Brigid formed an important link in the religious and spiritual life of the first Irish Catholics in bridging their ancestral religion with the one newly imported. St. Brigid was known for her miracles of healing, care for animals—particularly livestock that produced milk, as did her Pagan incarnation—dedication
to the poor, and fighting oppressive forces, including (and sometimes especially) Church leaders. St. Brigid cannot be cast off as a modification of the Goddess. Rather, the canonization of Brigid as a Catholic saint preserved her and stands as a testimony of the Goddess’s enduring importance.

**BRIGID BEYOND IRELAND**

Brigid’s influence did not stop on the shores of her homeland. From the early 1700s to about the mid-1800s, nearly half a million Irish traded years of unpaid labor in exchange for passage to the Western Hemisphere, a process known as indentured servitude. Landowners, most often in Trinidad, French Guiana, and Suriname, would provide the indentured worker with clothing, food, and shelter. At the end of their agreed term of servitude, the worker could—in theory—walk away as a free person to pursue landownership and opportunity. Unfortunately, these promises were often empty and the workers faced frequent mistreatment and cruelty. Illness and death due to hunger, disease, and exposure was common.

Indentured servants worked and lived alongside enslaved Africans also brought over to work, but who did not have the prospect of eventual freedom. Practices and religious beliefs of the Irish and various African cultures were shared under these torturous conditions. The religion of Voudon (sometimes called Voodoo) was born in the Caribbean from the cohesion of these and indigenous island practices. Voudon is composed of spiritual beings called *Lwa* (also called Loa), which could be compared to exalted ancestors or a form of saints or angels. This is far from a comprehensive explanation of the world of Voudon, and I encourage those who are intrigued by this passage to seek out further knowledge. Approaching and sharing this material
is tricky for me as a writer and Priestess. I have a deep love and respect for the practices, culture, and history of Voudon, yet am not an initiate of it, nor is it part of my ancestral heritage. Because of my lack of direct experience, I have not included Voudon practices or rituals in this book as I am without the founding to do them proper justice. Still, a good overview of the complex world of Brigid could not be complete without investigating Maman Brigitte.

Many Catholic saints whose devotees passed through the islands found new roles and life in the Voudon religion. Among them was St. Brigid who was reborn as the Lwa Maman Brigitte, the Lady of the Cemetery. Maman Brigitte is the only Lwa with white skin and red hair. She is sought for issues pertaining to justice or contacting the Gede—the ancestral spirits. Maman Brigitte is a tough character, often described as a profanity-spewing, hardened presence, yet still full of fierce love. She is made of a presence that could wrap someone up in the toughest, motherly embrace, or cut with a hidden blade if crossed. She is symbolized by a black rooster, and known for donning bright, clashing costumes, use of rancid profanity, and flagrant sexuality. Maman Brigitte lives in an oak tree in the cemetery and is married to Baron Samedi, a Lwa of the Dead. The first woman buried in any cemetery is called “The Brigitte” and considered sacred to Maman. Likewise, the first man buried in that cemetery is known as the Baron.

Maman is known to love a spicy rum drink called piman, which is infused with a combination of twenty-one hot peppers. This drink is often offered at circles honoring her as a way to test if a person is mounted by Maman Brigitte. The concoction is so intense that a mortal, living person could not hold the drink in their mouths without help from the Divine. Persons possessed by Maman are known to rub the hot rum on
their genitals, another tell-tale sign of possession—if a mortal cannot hold the drink in their mouth, the drink is certainly not going to end up willingly on their privates without that Divine help. The practice referred to as being “mounted by” or “ridden by” a Lwa refers to a type of ritual possession akin to the way that a mortal person would ride a horse. The person is under complete control of the Lwa and is known to be able to perform certain feats unthinkable under normal circumstances. The festival of *Fet Gede* honors Maman Brigitte on November 1st, a date shared by the Celtic fire festival of *Samhain*, which was believed to be the day when the winter hag Cailleach whisked Brigid away until spring.

Some argue that Maman Brigitte’s connections to Brigid are overblown or even contrived, citing that Brigid’s fire and wells stand in too stark a contrast to Maman Brigitte’s patronage of death and the cemetery. Others argue that the name, appearance, championship for justice, and connection to the oak are parallels too strong to ignore. There is a Voudon song that goes, “Maman Brigitte who came from England,” which in considering Brigid’s history as Brigantia may be even more basis for connection. On my last trip to the Kildare Cathedral, I asked the cemetery groundskeeper where I could find the grave of the first woman buried there. “St. Brigid herself was the first,” he said. Brigid was her own Brigitte. Perhaps that connection made its way across the Atlantic and south to the Caribbean Islands, expanding the web of influence of both the revered Irish Fire Goddess and the beloved Lwa.

**FOR MY PART . . .**

Brigid was the first Goddess I met when I started my Pagan path. After attending a series of Brigid rituals and hearing
personal stories about this Goddess’s impact, I decided to give her a try. I was at the end of my college career, and because she was a Goddess of the arts and my major was theater, it seemed a good match. During these early days of praying to Brigid and lighting red candles for her in my tiny college apartment, I took an elective creative writing class and discovered that writing, more than theater, was my real passion. Yet despite my love for writing short stories, I was thoroughly stuck on how to do it. I felt the story in me, but the words would not come. It was like turning the key in a dead ignition. I knew the story was in there, somewhere. Getting it to work was the problem. Frustrated, I performed a creativity spell to help move the process along. As part of my spell, I offered to write a book dedicated to Brigid, if she would help me to give the story life.

In the days that followed, the hopelessly constipated short story pulled itself together. I would wake with dialogue and action played out before me like a teleprompter. When I turned it in, not only did my professor and classmates love it, the story was published by a national magazine and nominated for an important fiction award. Problematically for me, I forgot about the book I promised to Brigid. Perhaps it’s not surprising that I had little luck with fiction again after that initial success. I was frustrated and blocked once again.

I moved to New York to look for the lost inspiration in the underground performing and writing scene. I found inspiration of a different kind in the members of the first coven I would lead, which would eventually grow into one of the largest Pagan communities in the northeast of the United States, but I still could not write. Our first circle took place at Brigid’s holiday of Imbolc and has since attracted droves of lovers of Brigid and Brigid devotees. My work with Brigid took me to Ireland several times and New Orleans once. With each class, circle, ritual, or eerily
synchronistic meeting with a new friend in Brigid, I fell deeper in love with her mystery and magick. Still, creativity on the page remained stunted. Finally, in a way greater than studies or sacred site visits, Brigid’s true nature came to me through the form of the anvil when I became her Priestess.

Toward the end of my twenties, I was in a situation common to many persons, and unfortunately, many young women. My purpose, magick, and faith were funneled into a hopeless romantic relationship. Like a toddler screaming for cotton candy, I fixated on it as though it were the only thing in the entire universe, ignoring any signs or warnings that it, like cotton candy, was fragile, empty, and composed more of whimsy than the kind of nurturing and sustaining love needed for a true partnership. It shaped all of my plans for the future, absorbed all spare time as well as quite a bit of money. Every spell focused on keeping us together. Every prayer, thought, and combination of the two was directed toward keeping that relationship going. Immersed in a city drenched with art, culture, and friendships, I shut out these influences to focus personal, magickal, and spiritual energy into the relationship. I felt Brigid’s presence turn from a warm and boisterous guide to an eerie, prickly one, like the sense one gets in a room full of quietly angry people. In my heart, I knew that Brigid’s energies did not align with the situation. Even deeper down, I knew it was wrong, too. My prayers turned to explanations, as if to prove that I was “more right” about this than the Goddess. Eventually, Brigid’s presence went silent. I thought this meant I finally had her on my side, but the silence was more like foreboding, as in the proverbial calm before the storm. This was the energy in the days surrounding my initiation to Brigid. Still, I traveled to Ireland to formally dedicate to her.
The ceremony was simple, but the aftermath was not. Prior to the ritual, I was left alone in a room to meditate. In the quiet and darkness, I heard Brigid’s voice coming up from inside me, firing verbal bullets about my current path and future, not the deep, loving wisdom I’d come to know in my meditations. I blamed insecurities. It couldn’t be Brigid. Brigid was on my side, wasn’t she? I was surely just a little nervous. But when I was taken out of the meditation and into the circle, the presiding Priestess whacked me across the face and eerily continued the same verbal barrage I heard in my private mediation only moments before, only the words were clearer: “WHAT ARE YOU DOING? STOP WHAT YOU ARE DOING! STOP! STOP!” At the end of the barrage, the Priestess placed a gentle hand on my cheek and she said, “This will never happen to you, again.”

I spent the following day sobbing into my friends’ living room carpet. The morning after the initiation, thanks to the oracle that is social media, I discovered that back in the States, my relationship was over and with it, all the plans I’d so diligently made. Worse, the break-up ended a nearly lifelong friendship, which proved the most painful sacrifice of all. In retrospect, it was the greatest day of my life, but at that point it felt like the end. To soothe my shattered nerves, my friends took me for a walk in the forest. Up above, a storm cloud took the undeniable shape of an anvil. Brigid had a hand in that nasty business, I was sure of it. In the following months, I let go and “let Brigid.” While my past had a six-mile roll-call of break-ups, this one was different. Instead of dissolving into my old, angry coping manner of “you-go-girl” pep-talk to myself about “other fishies in that big ol’ sea” that would unravel into wine, and tears, and chasing after yet another assured heartbreak, I sat with Brigid. I examined my choices. I reflected on the lies I’d absorbed and told. I owned the harm I
caused myself and others and then looked at a decade’s worth of habits that set up all those glass walls in a prime place for one trusted sledgehammer to crash—why I surrounded myself with people who hurt me or themselves, why I wandered through jobs without pursuing something fulfilling, why I wrote about the sensational instead of the words and experiences my heart screamed for. One by one, I allowed Brigid to pound away the hurtful things blocking my path. Each pound left me stronger and healed.

Within a few months, I was accepted into a graduate school program. My coven emerged from a tiny fringe group casually meeting in members’ apartments to the prominent presence that it is now. Best of all, I met the man with whom I am now partnered who himself is a devotee of Brigid—the relationship fulfilling in ways the previous one, or any before that, had never been. Despite my initial anger and pain, epitomized by the anvil I saw in the sky, I had no doubt that the losses were directly connected to Brigid and that it would eventually be for the best. Indeed, it was. I now call this period “my time on the anvil.” I could probably dedicate a whole book to my anvil time, and maybe someday I will. But this book isn’t about me. It’s about Brigid and hopefully you, too.

Eventually, it was time to fulfill my own promise to Brigid.

Over the years, I received one same message from Seers, Priestesses, and in readings: “Where is the book? Where is the book?” I assumed this book was one already written, locked away in the rumored secret libraries of the Vatican, and it was up to me to break in, find the book, and release The Truth to the public. My graduate school was at a funky locked-crossroads due to the logistical infeasibility that comes with needing to work to pay for school, but being unable to go to school because of work. One night, a fellow Priestess of Brigid who knew nothing of the
promises I’d made to Brigid (because at that point, I’d forgotten the promises I made to Brigid) looked at me with fiery eyes that weren’t hers and said, “Why do you think I’ve frozen your life? Why do you think you can’t finish anything? You promised me a book and I won’t help you with anything until you get it to me.” The Priestess then closed her eyes, shook her head, and returned to our previous conversation as if the whole thing had never happened. My mind burned with the flash-fire memory of lighting a red candle in college and promising Brigid a book if she would help me with that one short story. A few weeks later, I started writing the book you are now reading.

*Let this serve as a testament to anyone who might want to work with Brigid: do not make your promises lightly as Brigid will surely not take them lightly!*

Brigid’s energy is real. Brigid’s magick works. I have seen people make offerings to her, whether at wells in Ireland or in the center of an urban Imbolc rite, and borne witness to their manifestation. Every spell I have worked through Brigid has come to manifestation. Everything I have asked has ultimately been fulfilled—not always in the manner I initially wanted, but fulfilled nonetheless. When I have been in need and not sure where the need’s fulfillment would come from, it has been consistently met through perfect synchronicity.

This book is an attempt to share with other Brigid lovers an opportunity to relish her beautiful myths, explore her vast history, and learn new ways to connect with her. I also ask you, the reader, to keep in mind that much of this book also reflects Irish history, culture, and lore, but you are reading it from a foreigner’s perspective. Like most Americans, I have a healthy dose of Irish in my DNA mix, but the branches of my family tree stemming from Ireland have been on American soil for over a
hundred years. My upbringing, experiences, culture, and family practices vary every bit as widely from those of my Irish friends as they do from my Jamaican, Haitian, British, Italian, Argentine, or Mexican friends. To pretend to be otherwise or to pretend to know what it means to have been born on and experienced the tides of the land, culture, and historic events of a region undermines the experiences of those who have. I am not an academic. I am not a historian. I am not an anthropologist or an archeologist. I am a Priestess, a writer, and a glutton for history, folklore, and mythology. Above all, I am a lover of Brigid. I write this book with humility and respect for the cultures and regions my beloved Goddess comes from. I have tried to present the stories and theories with as much objectivity as possible. I have made very clear the few places where I have taken creative license for the purpose of providing tools for better understanding Brigid’s role in the myths.

If you are indeed reading this, it means I have finally fulfilled my promise and can only hope that it not only serves it well, but provides tools for anyone who seeks the history, mystery, and magick found in the Lady of the Wells, the Flame, and the Earth itself: the great Goddess Brigid. Throughout the book, I use Brigid and St. Brigid interchangeably as I do not believe them to be separate characters, but rather evolutions of the same. In reading through the myths and stories, allow yourself to be led with the heart rather than the head. Notice what pieces of story touch or excite you. Also notice what pieces make you wish to resist. Often, the sense of resistance points to where the work really needs to happen. Above all, enjoy it.

Blessed be your journey. I am honored to be a part of it.
Who Is Brigid?

The anvil cloud. Does it look like an anvil to you?