

The Witch Tree

I walk to meet the Rowan on my street. The Mountain Ash. The tree of life. A most sacred pagan tree. Norse myth tells of an ancient Rowan, the tree from which the first woman was made. A choice wood to carve a rune.

A man tells me the Rowan was used as protection from witches. I look up at the red berries. As red as blood. As red as fire on skin. My brow furrows, as if trying to carve its path through an injustice. Pinnate, green feathers tremble in the wind, or perhaps in anger.

Would this tree, that first made woman, preside over her torture? This tree, with fruit bearing a hidden pentagram, where creamy white blossom once burst. This sacred tree. This witchwood.

The Rowan's secret five-pointed star, the endless knot, is said to tie demons into a bind. But those intent on harming women, were unbound. The Rowan's power diminished as nefarious forces claimed its protection for themselves.

I wish to gift this Rowan with a new myth:

As autumn descends and the veil between worlds thins, the Rowan on my street hosts a crowded red canopy. Branded with a pentagram to mourn those banished women most knowledgeable of nature's secrets and wisdom. The Rowan gives a scarlet offering. One berry for every woman on these soils executed as a witch.