



Legends of the Grail: Stories of Celtic Goddesses

Ayn Cates Sullivan

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A unique, colorful take on Celtic myths, Legends of the Grail is a work of both self-exploration and religious discovery.

Ayn Cates Sullivan's *Legends of the Grail* is an in-depth, spiritual exploration of Celtic folklore and the impact that age-old stories have on modern women. Sullivan delves into the history of goddesses, what they stand for, and the people who worship them.

A combination of short stories, spiritual reflections, and historical insight, the book weaves the world of Celtic mythology into the present day. Divided into seven sections, it is a powerhouse culmination of the stories of Danu, Ceasair, Áine, Scáthach, Emer, Caer Iborneith, and Cailleach, Celtic goddesses with varying understandings of, and who give various advice related to, power and womanhood.

Each section includes a journey through a goddess's history, an intimate short story told through the eyes of the goddess, and a final reflection on how to travel with the goddess to discover her meaning and place within the real world.

Sullivan, whose foreword reveals her desire to connect with her ancestral roots, delves deep into each of the goddesses' stories and contexts. Details speak to careful research, and passages are laden with sympathetic emotion. Goddesses are humanized and come alive on the page.

Writing is colorful and evocative, breathing life into the stories and their histories. Scenes are immersive, painting an exciting, spiritual world rife with insight and self-reflection. At times, colorful prose bogs down the story, and portions of the history are heavy-handed.

The book carries a heavy feminist message, both as it conveys the versatility and strength of the goddesses and as it calls upon women to reflect and join the goddesses on a journey of self-exploration, though womanhood here often seems reduced to experiences of conception and birth. For modern women, the way that the stories look to the past, highlighting both the struggles and strengths of ancient women, may be more of a guide for the present if kept in context.

The book weaves historical beliefs and fantastical elements together, bringing forth questions of what constitutes truth and what constitutes fiction. It proposes journeys of healing and paints goddesses in terms of colors and blessings. These elements make space for spiritual epiphanies.

A unique, colorful take on Celtic myths, *Legends of the Grail* is a work of both self-exploration and religious discovery. It can be read for the inspiration of its strong feminist message or simply enjoyed for the thrills of its fantastical tales.

TIA SMITH (December 29, 2017)

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