

# The Wilding

by Margot Edwards with the IWD Women of Margaret River March 2018

Pulling a story thread from the hearts and minds and fingers and feelers of the wild women in us all - starting a story and handing it on to be shared

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The women weavers sitting and weaving their baskets in colourful colours and threads of cloth and clothing, speak of sisters, weaving the tale of the willing victim ... They call them Witch: some sense the ancient wisdom stored and passion for healing; some in hatred, with fear in their hearts and minds, wishing to capture and constrain.

What brings the wasp willingly into the web, to become a vessel for another's survival. A weed is a willing plant in the wrong place.

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Wild woman dances alone, sister woman in the wilds, free from all restraint. She lives outside time, collecting ingredients from the bushtucker places, weaving flax and olive into baskets and hearts. Building bark hut to weather the storms, singing her heart songs on the wind to those who wish to listen.

Hearth Sister stays home, the nurturer, the bound one, carer for elders and young. Routine is her ritual timekeeper and has kept her company through years of service. But Mother is dying, leaving her alone to endure the hands of a hard Father. She is lonely and tired, her stoic spirit calls for release, for fairness and honour.

Mother connects the ebbs and flows of her daughters ... through her sickness she calls for the Wild One, calls her in with aching heart, with feeble voice. Mother calls in the Wild One to bring her vagrant soul to the fire-hearth and dance the Dance of the Dying.

Hearth Sister hears her mother's prayer and the spark stirs in the cold fire of her soul; her time is soon to come. She harvests the fruits of her heavy labours and digs the roots from her earth garden. She piles high the cutting board with abundant bounty, cleans leaf of loam, chops stem and stalk, tumbling all into her crucible. She concocts a calling card of smells divine, to waft its wending way, taking the message to the Wild One, to follow her feet, find the wild weeds and bring them home.

Hearth Sister longs for communion with her long lost sibling. She holds pain to the core of her body and aches for connection. For so long now, she has not seen beyond the walls of her unhappy heart, entrapped in a web of hateful love for her Father and bound duty to her companion, her beloved Mother. Never one to dance, she has become a weaver of her own sorrows; the receiver of blows, the bastion of deep strength denied light. She turns her hand to the cauldron and casts the first calling card with a silver grey thread of her mother's hair into the whirlpool she stirs. From deep within, she calls her own incantation:

"I weave you into my loom wild sister, warp and weft. I call you in wild spirit, in our Mother's name. Time has lead our choices, the threads of our journeys from womb to

womanhood; divergent pathways, calling now the turn, finding the wild weed, bringing it home; convergence ... full circle closing in our mother's call."

Hearth Sister pulls out a single dark hair, wincing at the stab of pain in her head, and lets it drop to the stirring pot beneath.

Wild Sister woman stops in her tracks. She turns her head, tilts her nose up to the wind, her heart clenches, fingers to fist, reliving a thousand childhood moments in the smell of the wafting brew. She knows this moment, has held it tucked behind her ear with a wisp of her hair. She turns to return, without question. Light rain softens her first footsteps homeward. Time's choices have carried her away, now the calling ... willing her home.

Wild Woman senses the storm. The path winds and bends, the way is far and no magic spell can lessen the distance. Ascending the range, she stoops to gather the weeds needed, her calling card to the women witches of her clan. Clouds jostle each other for space above, and the cold change moves in with the front. She gathers her cloak and hood close about her. Time now her enemy as she senses desperation in the wind ... willing her tired footfalls over the pass before the storm breaks. The first fat drops hit her face.

Mother rolls awkwardly in her bed unable to wrestle sleep. Rain thunders on the roof like black charcoal. She hears the door open to the hall. The heavy footfalls down the corridor. The smell of the brew from the hearth in the centre of the house still strong in the thick air of her room. The door opens.

"Where is she?" he growls.

She pretends not to hear him. He approaches the bed and shakes her shoulder harshly.

"Where IS she?" he yells, two hands on her throat.

She coughs mildly and opens her eyes a slit.

"She's coming," she whispers, almost smiling.

He withdraws a step, sensing the futility of threatening the almost dead.

"She better be! I smell evil conjuring, I smell your wickedness woman." He swings away, leaving the door open as he leaves.

Mother closes her eyes and sends her daughters her silent prayer on the cold draft.

Hearth Sister steps up as the man known as Father roars into the room. She is woman enough to hold her own for a time, but his fists can be persuasive and she stands by instinct to ready herself for best defence.

"Damned witches - I smell your deceit! Not since your sister went wilding-"

He lurches forward at her, his hand ready to strike; his heavy boots shake the floor, as she throws a ladleful from the cauldron pot between them. A silver web appears at knee height, liquid magic dripping from its interwoven fibres. He trips as his shins make contact with the web, heaving him forwards to land face down within inches of her frame as she holds her breath. Suspended above the floor like a captured insect, he lashes out at her skirts, entrapping himself further in the sticky web, cursing her existence and bellowing threats. Carefully she slides along the front of the hearth, away from his reach but the web has her trapped as well, between him and the cauldron. She is free to move within this small space but she must endure his shouted abuse. She pushes down the panic rising,

knowing the spell will only last until the storm passes, unless... His fury fights the storm outside. Her feet fight her instinct for flight. They are locked between past and future.

The mud slurry carries Wild Woman downwards sliding uncontrollably toward that one white light in the darkness. Her years of conditioning in the wilds have taught her to roll with the punches dealt out by Nature's fury. She bounces off rocks and branches scratch her face and every limb. The lightening shows her flashes of the way and the potent smell carries her forwards. Nothing can slow her down. No thing can come between her and her passage to justice. Her cloak flies out behind her, her feet liberated momentarily from the ground with each increasing stride, her flight forward in the face of evil unstoppable. She sees the window ahead in the moon's feint light and instinctively she knows the storm has passed. She reaches for her pouch.

Mother steadies herself on the door frame. The rain has stopped. The bellowing from within has gone silent. Then a scream racks her ears. She lurches into the corridor in time to see the web dissolve and hear his heavy bones hit the floor, released. He grunts as he rises. Her solid stoic daughter in his sights, trapped between him and the cauldron. Mother hears his voice, as if through water, as he tears away the threads of web hanging from his arms. She can see the veins in the back of his thick red neck and her daughter's terror as the women lock eyes.

"Scream you may girl, for no spell can keep me from you now. Your Witch Mother is dying and her web will no longer work on me. Her treachery may have saved one daughter but not two!"

Mother lets go of the wall frame. As she screams at his back, she collapses to the floor. No breath in. Just one deep final outlet of air as her lungs collapse. He turns, laughter mocking in his eyes.

"So finally I am released and you have failed!"

He rises to his full height, a true demon immersed in his own power and glory. His eyes shine red with lust as he turns back to Hearth Sister.

Beside her stands the Wild One.

Time staggers ... the Demon Father opens wide his eyes in shock.

With hands together the sisters stir the weeds from the mountain pass into the brew.

Without a word, the Wild One shakes her hair from behind her ear, pulls one silken strand, and releases it into the cauldron below. Hearth Sister dips her ladle and throws the steaming hot liquid lava in an arc; like a whip in her hand, the molten lasso wraps around the Demon Father, picking him up and spinning him around the room, till his body dissolves into the swirling mass, and she flicks it back into the boiling brew.

Together the sister's chant - a humming throbbing incantation from the deep well of release ... as Hearth Sister wraps their mother in a cloth of colour and light, the Wild One begins to dance ...

"...we be sitting and making together once, some thing of colour to catch the living light; walking collecting weaving together once and thence and now on forever onwards; connection through the women's weft and weave of lives and births and deaths; knotted into the loom; now transformed to unravel cunning deceit and stave off demons of the soul. We are women, we are willing, we are one."