

THE UNDERWORLD VISION QUEST

(E.S.S.G) 1 = 10 Material

1. The Entrance

After the Main Ritual is completed, those who have parts to play in the Underworld Vision Quest disperse past the gates and position themselves therein. The Shaman Guide collects those who are interested in the quest together and leads them to a pre-established place some several dozen paces before the Threshold Gate where they should meditate so that they may arrive at the proper state of consciousness. There are two objectives to be gained by the meditation: the first objective is to fashion a new and unique personal spiritual identity; the second objective is to establish a new personal spiritual goal. When the Underworld is ready to receive seekers, a bell is rung from its depths and the guardians at the Threshold Gate begin to perform their duty. The Shaman Guide is the first to walk through the gates and proceeds uninterrupted to the Exit Gate and beyond to a place designated as the place of return wherein the seekers who have completed the Quest shall assemble.

2. Crossing the Threshold

Singular Individuals or groups no larger than three assemble themselves before the Threshold Gate while the rest quietly meditate and await their turn. The First Guardian bars entry past the Threshold Gate and demands, in a stern but quiet voice, to know the objective of the Seeker. When he is satisfied by the answer, the Second Guardian aspurges the Seeker and assists him/her to center him/herself - beginning with hands touching the earth, the feet and on up to above the crown of the head. The Second Guardian then opens the Threshold (with the opening portal gesture) and guides the Seeker to the next stage of the Mystery.

3. Meeting the Wise Crone

The Seeker encounters the next stage where he/she meets a Crone. This elder personage consoles the Seeker, advises him/her about the trials that lie ahead and shares with the seeker the wisdom to understand the nature of his/her quest. All this assistance is rendered voluntarily - but after several minutes the Elder becomes mute and points the Seeker in the direction of his/her destiny.

4. The Ordeal

The Seeker proceeds carefully down a steeply graded hill and climbs over a low natural rock wall onto a natural shelf strewn with large boulders and edged by a steep cliff with a fifty foot drop. This is the place of trials. The gloom is illuminated by flares (making the difficult terrain easier to manage) but there is also a sulphurous smoke which may partially obscure the eerie atmosphere. As the Seeker progresses upon this difficult path, he/she meets several strange human-like creatures who mock and taunt him/her with endless questions, seemingly never to listen to his/her answers.

They ask who the Seeker is, what is his/her magick name - which they ridicule. They demand to know the Seeker's true spiritual goal, which they exclaim as impossible to fulfill. They also heap scorn upon the Seeker, calling his/her life meaningless and directionless. Finally, after reducing the Seeker in such a fashion, they summarily eject him/her from their domain and the Seeker continues to follow the path.

5. The Individuation of Polarity

The Seeker proceeds upon the path and crosses another shallow natural wall of tree-roots and earth and finds the path beyond this wall full of peace and relief from abuse. Thereupon he/she discovers before him/her an open glade where a majestic couple are standing, beckoning to him/her. They are the Archetypal Man and Woman, and they embrace the Seeker in welcome. They then instruct the Seeker in understanding the necessity for the joining of opposites within the Seeker's psyche. They receive the Seeker's 'offering to the Earth' and affirm his/her new identity and purpose after it is revealed. They then give a blessing to the Seeker, which consists of aspurging, anointing and the laying on of hands. They share a libation and then send the seeker in the direction of the Exit Gate.

6. The Return Threshold

At the Exit Gate, the Seeker is warmly congratulated and is given the final instructions which consist of the necessity in finding a practical means of fulfilling his/her spiritual purpose. This also includes finding an artistic method of expressing the Seeker's quest and the resolution to it, so that the knowledge may be shared with others. In this manner it continues to grow. The Seeker is cautioned about the very steep hill which he/she must descend and is directed to follow the path until the Shaman Guide is encountered.

7. The Journey Home

The Shaman Guide greets the Seeker at the end of the path and therein the seekers collect and rest, awaiting the transport which shall return them to the festival site. The Shaman Guide can answer questions and assist those who need help in readjustment.

8. Performing parts and guidelines

The Shaman Guide. A strange personage who has the ability to guide the seekers in meditation and prepare them for the underworld vision quest. The Shaman Guide is the first to transverse the underworld and prepares the performers of each stage for the reception of the Seekers.

The Ancient Crone. A gnarled old woman who gives the seeker advice on how to withstand the ordeal. The truths which she imparts are to speak truthfully and with a determined mind to the questions asked and not to succumb to doubt or despair.

The Two Guardians of the Threshold. Two fierce warrior types who will admit seekers who have passed the simple initial challenge. One Guardian challenges, the other acts as a guide. They are both armed with swords, drawn and ready. In addition, they also have lustral water.

The Temptor and Creature-assistants. Several strangely clad individuals who are rude, lude and obnoxious. The Temptor directs the others as they interrogate and insult ridiculously each Seeker.

The Archetypal Man and Woman. These two are costumed as the God and the Goddess. They have in their possession lustral water, magickal oil and fruit-juice as a libation.

The Guardian of the Exit. This individual should be rather sage and wise in attitude because he/she is required to assist the Seeker in understanding the fulfillment of the initiatory process. He/She should be dressed in magickal robes.

Logistics

Timing is critical to the effective running of the vision quest process. The most important consideration is that seekers should not be admitted beyond the Threshold gate until a flashlight signal is given from the crone that she is ready to receive another seeker. The place of trials can be a collecting point for several seekers, but only one is picked on at a time while the rest are told to sit down and turn away from the spectacle. The Temptor should stagger the seekers in their sequence as they continue to follow the path. This is such that one proceeds every five minutes. The crone and threshold guardians should also stagger the passage of the seekers so that one passes through every five or seven minutes. Seekers may also collect before the Archetypal Man and Woman, but the number should only be a few so as not to cause an anti-climax.

The guardian of the exit should be erudite enough to cover the required message and also advise the seekers so that they arrive safely from down the steep descending hill. The holding site should be periodically emptied of seekers, and they should be transferred to the ritual site so that they may join the festivities therein.