

# VENUS



## THE REDEMPITIVE POWER OF BEAUTY

*We have no art. We simply do everything as beautifully as we can.*

### BALINESE SAYING

When Venus walks into the room, everyone becomes wittier. Whereas Mars takes action, Venus attracts and elicits response. Following Mars, Venus is the second planet in the realm of the personal gods. She reminds us to honor our individual affinities—those people, colors, tastes, animals, art forms, and interests to which we are drawn. Venus doesn't have hobbies, she has passions. Our attractions are our primary clues as to how we can make a unique contribution to the world.

Venus is the invisible force of attraction, love, kinship, art, and relationship. Venus strings these ideas together to suggest that the artist is the truly *related* person. Venus's meditation on relationship has two aspects. One is contemplative: observing patterns of relationship, not just between people, but in nature as well—watching how, when a leaf falls into the water, the ensuing ripples radiate out forever. The other is dynamic: bringing things into relationship—“Here, meet this person, read this book”; “Paintbrush, meet this

PLANET: VENUS

SIGNS: TAURUS; LIBRA

Glyph: ♀

**Key words or qualities:** What we love; the manner in which we love. How we love the world by creating art and beauty. Our affinities reveal to us that for which we are an ambassador in the court of the human world.

**Color:** Emerald green

**Metal:** Copper

**Physical body affinities:** Kidneys, and all fleshy, curvy, luscious parts of the body

**Day of the week:** Friday (“Freya’s Day”—the Norse Venus)

**Festivals:** Beltane (May 1, “May Day”), the cross-quarter holiday in which love and our sensual kinship with the physical world of nature are honored and expressed. Autumnal equinox, which marks the beginning of Libra, and the world of more complex social relationships that arises in the fall.

**Way of honoring:** Making things beautiful. Remembering that the opposite of “aesthetic” is “anesthetic.” There is no solution to anything unless Venus is involved—unless beauty and love are present.

**Shadow, when not honored:** Vanity and indolence. Indolence does not mean not being busy—in fact, being busy can be the perfect cover for procrastinating about doing the one loving thing that we need to do for ourselves. Like its metal, copper (which conducts electricity), Venus can work to conduct social electricity—or it can gossip, quoting others in an unloving way. Like copper, which will bend until suddenly it snaps, Venus will accommodate, overaccommodate, then abruptly become toxic.

paper." Part of Venus's artistry is that often the vivid palette from which she paints is made up of colorful people.

Venus is the ruler of both Taurus and Libra. As the ruler of Taurus, she governs the sensual realm of the rich earth: agriculture and flowers. In her rulership of Libra, she presides over the festive social world. Venus wants to create a setting where creative interaction can take place. The invisible rides on Venus's visible props: flowers, perfume, art, wit, and conviviality. All that makes the world more lovely is Venusian, as is all that acknowledges the marvelous symmetry of intricate interrelatedness.

Mathew Arnold said that "to be cultured is to be acquainted with the highest possibilities of the human spirit throughout time." The first definition of *culture* in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "worship; reverential homage." Then it lists soil, husbandry, tilled land, plants, crops, and bacteria. Only at the end, and only by analogy, do we come to human culture: what we choose to cultivate in ourselves and in the community. Venus asks, "Do we live in an economy or in a culture?" Venus finds an economy a distasteful and tawdry abode. So Venus continues, "If we live in a culture, what will we cultivate together?"

Venus's affinity for both Taurus and Libra indicates that human community depends upon an intimate relationship to the natural world. The garden is the primary metaphorical guide for the appropriate way that we are meant to relate to creation. Jung wrote to a friend of his who had finally acquired land, "Ah, how wonderful for you. The chthonic earth spirits love nothing more than to be wedded to human ingenuity." The wedding of human creativity and nature continues a grand love affair.

In her affinity for Taurus, Venus asks, "To what part of nature are you lovingly drawn? Is it the birds, the land, the water, these kinds of rocks, this kind of animal?" We are the ambassadors of whatever we love in the human world: they have sent us here.

A man named John Seed (destiny in a name), who works to save the rain forests, was asked why he did not feel completely depressed

at the apparent futility of his work. He replied that if he thought he was just John Seed, he would be completely depressed. But he thinks of himself as that part of the rain forest that has evolved into being human. By thinking of himself as the rain forest's Visionary Activist agent, he forms a connection through which its power flows to him, making more possible than if he were laboring alone.

Love forms an electrical arc between us and our beloved (in this case the rain forest), opening up a current that flows both ways. We know that when someone is possessed by Venus—in love with another or in love with their own expressive art—they glow, suffused with the energetic delight of feeling connected.

Venus presides over the whole realm of art, and therefore reminds us that the opposite of *aesthetic* is *anesthetic*. Either we have a cultivated sense of beauty, or we are asleep. Being thus anesthetized has infinite implications. If we are asleep, we cannot have democracy, because political participation requires active, alert players. Democracy therefore depends on beauty (no wonder Jesse Helms hates the National Endowment for the Arts). Because Venus has been effectively exiled from our inner cities, we are anesthetized and made callous in their environs. Remember, when Venus is not present, Mars runs rampant. Venus would therefore say there is no solution to crime in the inner city until there are gardens there. (Venus would also say, "Hey, who stole my tomato?")

No problem has a solution that is not in some way beautiful. To recover from the dark sleep of anesthesia, the aesthetics of love, beauty, art, and gardens must move to the center of our lives and our culture. Venus wants to make necessities out of those arts that have erroneously been dubbed luxuries.

### THE STORY OF DAME RAGNALL

An Arthurian legend that embodies many of Venus's teachings is the tale of Dame Ragnall.

One day while hunting in a thicket, King Arthur wounds a deer.

In order to follow it into more dense brush, he takes off his sword. When he comes to a clearing, who should be waiting there for him but an old enemy who threatens to kill him. Appealing to his opponent's chivalry, Arthur points out that he is unarmed and that any attack would be tremendously unfair. His enemy proposes to give Arthur a question that Arthur must answer in one year's time or forfeit his life. Arthur has no choice but to accept. His enemy responds with a smirk, "What is it that a woman most desires in all the world?"

Dismayed and daunted at the seeming impossibility of the task, Arthur scours the land for the next year, asking everyone he meets, "What do *women* want, what do women *want*?" But no one knows. The answers he receives, though often madcap, outrageous, or whimsical, are clearly insufficient.

Arthur is in deep despair as the fateful day draws closer, when the most hideous hag he has ever seen rides into court. Her name is Dame Ragnall. She is described as having huge yellow tusks and smelling like the sea at low tide. She rides up to Arthur and says, "I know what the question is, and I have the answer."

"Oh, that's wonderful, Dame Ragnall, how very kind of you," Arthur says.

"Not so fast, King. If I give you the correct answer that spares your life, then I will marry your nephew, Sir Gawain, the handsomest man in court."

"Oh no," Arthur sputters. "I couldn't possibly agree to those terms." But Gawain says, "Of course. Of course I would do this to save your life, Uncle. And who knows—perhaps we can find the answer from another source before the time is up." So the agreement is struck.

The big day arrives. Arthur tries all of his other answers. "Nay, nay, Sir King, thou art but a dead man," says the king's shadow opponent, sharpening his blade. Finally, Arthur uses the answer that Dame Ragnall has given him: "Above all things, women desire sovereignty, for that is their liking and that is their most desire." His

grouchy yet civil enemy pauses and mutters, "And she that told thee now, Sir Arthur, I pray to God I may see her burn in a fire, for that was my sister, Dame Ragnall. Now have a good day."

Guinevere, of course, thinks that a small wedding would be nice, but Dame Ragnall will hear none of it. She wants a huge wedding and a banquet feast. At the banquet, she devours entire boars and rips at them with her tusks and is generally foul and terrifying and funky. Everyone present laments, "Oh, poor Gawain!"

Late that night the wedding couple retires to their chamber. "Gawain, how about a little kiss?" Dame Ragnall says to the back of her husband. Summoning all of his chivalry and all of his kindness, he says, "Nay, I will do more than kiss." As he turns to her, his eyes are greeted by the most beautiful woman he has ever seen.

"Ah, Sir Gawain, your chivalry and kindness have but half released me," cries Dame Ragnall. "Here's what remains of the spell under which I am bound: I can be beautiful, as you see me, for only half the day—either alone with you at night or in the court by day. Which would you prefer?" Gawain sputters, "Oh, my goodness, I— On the one hand—but on the other hand . . ." Finally he spits out, "I couldn't possibly decide for you. You choose."

To which Dame Ragnall laughs, "Ah, you have entirely released me. Now I shall be beautiful all the time." And they made love for days, joy out of mind, without emerging from their bower. The rest of the court was extremely puzzled.

This story gives us a key to love, which is seen as inextricable from sovereignty and self-possession. Some say that Dame Ragnall is the land (the Taurean natural world) and that the king or the court (the Libran social world) must always wed the land, as evidenced in the word *husbandry*. The Celtic name for Ireland is *Eire*, from the goddess Eiru, implying that the land is the body of the goddess. But as part of the prenuptial agreement, Venus wants her sovereignty back. With Venus we cooperate with and adore, rather than dominate, the land.

Nature can be funky. Sometimes she does indeed smell like the beach at low tide, drip with seaweed, have tusks, and act raw and fierce. Sappho said, "If you are squeamish, do not prod the rubble on the beach." Venus adds, "Nor be intimate with women and their kinship to the raw processes of creation." There must always be a Venusian love affair between us (personally and collectively) and nature, even her most bad-breathed, foul, intense, and lively elements.

Venus in Libra is the social wedding aspect, in which each person grants the other his or her sovereignty. This art form of cooperative alliance is sealed by a kiss. A Jungian analyst friend's take on the story of Dame Ragnall is that "men need to learn to kiss the hag." In any relationship, there is an aspect of a woman who nags, "You're not really going to wear that, are you?" (Read: "That tie is an anesthetic affront to Venus.") My friend adds, "You have to go ahead and kiss her anyway."

## WHAT DO WE WANT? SOVEREIGNTY! WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW!

### THE ASTRONOMICAL CYCLE OF VENUS

In most preindustrial civilizations, Venus was intently watched and her cycle was intimately known. In many cultures, Venus's cycle played a crucial part in determining the social and ritual calendar.

Venus rises ahead of the Sun as the morning star for roughly 260 days (an approximate human gestational cycle), then disappears for around fifty days. She emerges for close to 260 days, visible just after sunset as the evening star, and then disappears (to the Underworld, it is said) for nearly seven days. When she "goes to the Underworld," Venus is retrograde, or appears to be moving backward. Because of the almost perfectly circular symmetry of her orbit, five of her 584-day orbital cycles occur in exactly eight Earth years. Venus will revisit any chosen point in the sky or in our charts in eight years. Five cycles charted onto an abstract horoscope creates

a pentagram, which is why all five-leafed plants and all five-petaled flowers have traditionally been sacred to Venus. Every eight years the Sun and Venus will duplicate their original relationship, which means at the ages of eight, sweet sixteen, twenty-four, thirty-two, forty, and so on, Venus is thematically strongest in our charts. At those times our original issues around love, creativity, and relationship will be most emphatically dramatized. Those born when Venus was the morning star give expression to her in her guise as the youthful, impetuous war goddess; while those born when Venus was the evening star express her nature as the civilized love goddess.

In Babylonian, Sumerian, Mesoamerican, Native American, and subcontinental Indian culture, Venus's return from the Underworld (called the heliacal rise, when Venus first appears ahead of the Sun) is considered to be the time when she (or he, in Mesoamerica) assumes the garb of her next incarnation. This heliacal rise is the emerging image of the Goddess in her new expression, which will describe the way she wants to be honored, and the kind of art and relationships that will be most appropriate during this cycle. Venus's sojourn in the Underworld commonly signaled a time when the elder women would gather to determine the course of culture upon her reemergence.

For the Mesoamericans, emergences (the heliacal rises) and disappearances of Venus, like birth and death, were considered so dangerous, powerful, and tricky as to require human sacrifice. The cycle of Venus was used by the Mayans—for whom Venus represented Quetzalcoatl, the Redeemer—to determine the timing of ritual warfare and blood offerings.

The mythologically literate look to the heliacal rises of Venus for the next imprint of the Goddess, who determines the role of art in culture. My astrological colleague Daniel Giamarrío has added up the number of Venus's heliacal rises, by sign, from 1930 to 2018. He has discovered that they are predominately in the signs of Scorpio, Aries, and Gemini.

Scorpio, Aries, and Gemini are not traditional Venus images. Venus's frequent occurrence in these signs suggests that our culture right now requires a very different, emerging image of the feminine. Venus's presence in both of Mars' signs, as well as in the androgynous and dual sign of Gemini, reminds us that the feminine does not just live in women, nor does the masculine live solely in men. This is another reason why members of the astrological orthodoxy, rarely comfortable with ambiguity, consider these Venus placements nontraditional and suspect.

#### V E N U S I N S C O R P I O

In old-fogey astrology, Venus in Scorpio (in Pluto's and Mars' shared sign) was called "afflicted" or "in its fall"—think "fall from grace" or "fall from the garden of Eden"—because of its powerful eroticism and its association with the Underworld. In medieval texts, Venus in Scorpio was called "the nun" or "the whore," as these were the only two roles available to women who wanted to be sexually self-possessed. But this is actually Venus in her snaky, transformative power. Venus in Scorpio presides over the shamanic practice of mediating with the invisible. Because art is the visible evidence of one's invisible growth—"Art is the tracks, not the animal," according to a Japanese saying—Venus encourages us to create magically potent art.

Venus in Scorpio reminds us of the belief that fuels the art of transformation: that which is hidden is often more powerful than that which is visible. I remember walking into a shrine room at a Tibetan Buddhist retreat center and experiencing a tangible, audible pulsation (*wong-wong-wong*) of vibrational energy. I kept leaning outside the threshold, where there was only silence, then leaning back into the room where—yes, absolutely—*wong-wong-wong* was definitely radiating out from a statue of the Buddha. An attendant watched me with a bemused expression, and finally said that yes, the resident lama really knew what he was doing when he sculpted

that Buddha. She went on to explain that ninety percent of Tibetan religious art is invisible. What we see is but the outer form, under which are layers of art imbued with magical intention and prayers. We feel the art, but only see a tiny fraction of the work. I have felt a similar pulse at remote sites of standing stones in Ireland.

Attempts to re-create ancient monuments such as Stonehenge and the Pyramids of Egypt using technology available to the ancients have thus far failed. The engineers who have made such attempts have been left asking themselves, "What did these builders and artists have that is unavailable to modern efforts?" The answer is that they had a community of shared invisible intention with which they imbued their constructions.

When Venus is in Scorpio, allied with the passion of Pluto-Mars, she is imbued with beauty and elegance. But, Venus reminds us, beautiful is not pretty. Pretty has a pastel vulnerability. Instead, this Venus says, "Beauty is fierce."

#### VENUS IN ARIES

Venus in Aries represents her alliance with the springtime Mars. Venus in Aries insists on gender redefinition to allow both sexes much more room and many more options. Thanks to the conscious work of women and men, Venus in Aries is now available to each of us in the art of dynamic, provocative, effective leadership. Like the mountain lion, who in Native American tradition leads without creating followers, real leadership inspires rather than commands.

Venus in Aries—also Mars' domain of dynamic self-assertion—says art wants once again to assume a heroic leadership function in the world.

#### VENUS IN GEMINI

This Venus is goddess with a mouth. Venus in Gemini (Mercury's sign of multimedia expression) says the Goddess wants a say in

mass consciousness. She is the voice that shouts, "I've been quiet for 3,600 years, and look where that has got us. Now I have some things to say. Woof!"

## THE RETURN OF THE SNAKE GODDESSES

An astrologer from India says that in Calcutta, which is the home of Kali, Venus's descent to the Underworld is always celebrated by the Kali Puja, the festival of the Goddess of Darkness. She said, however, that Venus devotees had been waiting 3,600 years for November of 1994 because it signaled a profound turning point and a reemergence. At that time, Venus was in the Underworld conjunct a solar eclipse and Jupiter, all in Scorpio. (A genuine, one-hundred-percent certified astronomer confirmed that this pattern really was that rare.)

The mythological implication of this powerful pattern is that whatever was exiled from human culture 3,600 years ago, as represented by Venus in Scorpio, wants to reemerge through us and make us its ambassadors. The snaky Underworld goddesses of creative compassion, exiled for 3,600 years, now begin their triumphant world tour. We are invited to join with Pele, Durga, Kali, La Diosa de las Serpientes, and the rest of the gang to conspire to change the entire climate of culture.

Clues to what was exiled and wants to return are available to the historically literate. The fall of Crete occurred 3,600 years ago. That civilization thrived from 6000 B.C. to 1600 B.C. with no evidence of a military, or a dominant sex or class. (A common misperception is that it is human nature to be violent. Acquainting oneself with a peaceful culture that existed for far longer than our current society is the remedy for such limited thinking.) Instead they had high art, architecture, prosperity, and really sexy clothes. The copper trade, sacred to Venus, flourished, as did trade in a highly effective herbal birth control.

Nicholas Platon, an archaeologist who studied Crete for fifty years, said, "The fear of death was almost obliterated by the ubiquitous joy of living. The whole of life was pervaded by an ardent faith in the goddess nature, the source of all creation and harmony. This led to a love of peace, a horror of tyranny, and a respect for the law." According to Riane Eisler, "In Crete, for the last time in recorded history, a spirit of harmony between women and men as joyful and equal participants in life appears to pervade all of culture."<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps the Golden Age ended 3,600 years ago with the fall of Crete and the exile of Venus. The cooperative trade network fell apart. And the Kali Yuga Hindu age of darkness began when the snake goddess of Crete was driven out by the invading Achaeans.

The association of the serpent goddess with Venus is pandemic in the ancient world. Anyone who was anyone in the ancient world was a snake. Everywhere you look, you find one. In southern Borneo, there is the story of Firewoman, wherein eating the snake brings a great deluge and drowns all but one woman. (Why doesn't *she* have a comic book?) Lack of respect for serpents followed by floods is an ancient theme.

In Mesoamerica, Xochiquetzal is associated with Venus and the sensual eroticism symbolically associated with the serpent. "Especially was she honored by women who lived as they pleased, for they say it was Xochiquetzal who taught the goodness of woman's sensuality and that when a woman felt the pleasures of her body, it brought special joy to Xochiquetzal." And the prayers say, "From Xochiquetzal's mouth came words like sweet flowers, from Xochiquetzal's mouth came words as sharp as the blade of a knife."<sup>17</sup> In this incarnation, sweet, sexy, sharp, insulting Venus is very like the wrathful extremophile Dakinis we met in Pluto.

In Egypt there is Isis; in Greece, Gaia; in Nigeria, Ala; and in Ireland, Brigid—all are goddesses associated with Venus and serpents in the waters. All teach loving compassion and respect for every element of creation. Astarte, like the Babylonian Ishtar, is called the

Queen of Heaven, Serpent Lady, and the mother of Semitic people. Throughout the Semitic world she is pictured with the sacred serpent wrapped around her body and emerging from her forehead. She is also associated with the great flood.

Shakti is the serpent of kundalini in India. The Sumerian serpent goddess of wisdom is Numi. In Egypt, Hathor was celebrated in her ancient form as the great serpent. In Japan, Izanami is the ancient serpent mother goddess.

Gaia's shrines exist across ancient Greece and Crete. Priestesses of Venus were known as sibyls and pythias. The major shrine beneath the Temple of Delphi is associated with the sacred serpent known as the Delphina. The Greek Demeter is pictured with snakes. The earlier name for her daughter Persephone is Proserpina, meaning "first serpent." The name Eve comes from the Hebrew word *chava*, which not only means "Mother of All Living Things," but also "serpent."

Ancient creation myths everywhere, especially in the Mediterranean, describe trees of life and knowledge, a serpent, a fall, and a flood. Sumerian writings documenting these stories from 2000 B.C. preceded the Bible by a thousand years. Originally there were three characters in the garden story: God, Man, and a serpent deity. How those characters were combined in the mythological narrative determined a culture's outlook. In narratives predating the Old Testament, the snake was a sacred ally who promised women ease in childbirth. In later mythology, by contrast, Yahweh cursed the woman with pain in childbirth and said that henceforth she and the serpent would be enemies.

With that, the serpent was overthrown as a threat to future Western civilization. Allegiance to one male god of linear progress superseded cyclical regeneration. Wisdom would no longer be gleaned from the Venusian kinship rituals occurring to the rhythm of the solstices and the equinoxes. For the first time in mythological history, men believed in a god who created without a sexual partner. Previously it was understood that both a Venus and a Mars were required.

Now, 3,600 years later, the astrological language says Venus and Mars want once again to create a culture where all are invited to celebrate the divine without mediation. They want to co-create (through us) a new culture that resonates with the best aspects of ancient Crete.

Venus in Scorpio defines the task of the millennial artist, as poking holes in realism so that serpentine magic can once more reenter the world through these portals. We can be inspired by the ancient statues in which snakes whisper the secrets of the Underworld into Demeter's ears (the most famous of which is "The Head of Demeter" in the Terme Museum in Rome). The snaky goddesses invite us all to be possessed by the new-ancient vital Venusian imagery.

### EATEN BY SHADOW: ROMANCE ADDICTION

Signing up for any path means one will also experience its opposite. To be devoted to following Venus's path of relatedness means we will experience feeling "not related," or lonely. Loneliness makes us vulnerable to romance addiction, our culture's toxic mimic of love. Love unites us with the community, whereas romance addiction isolates us; we seek total fulfillment through another and, consumed in small dramas, neglect to give our gift to the community.

Cartoonist Flying Fish, of Inglewood, California, has a woman saying, "Oh my God, I think I'm becoming the man I always wanted to marry!" It would be intriguing for guys to say, "Oh my God, I think I'm becoming the woman I always wanted to marry." We escape from the narrow confines of gender and the shuck-and-jive of romance only when each claims his or her opposite polarity internally rather than seeking it externally.

Venus is associated with copper, which is a beautiful metal that conducts electricity. Venus is electrically social and connecting. But if you bend copper wire repeatedly, it will bend and bend, then suddenly it will snap. Venus's shadow can be one of overaccommodat-

ing the needs and demands of others. “Here, snookums, do you want me to do this for you?” Who wouldn’t accept the ministrations of Venus, who says, “Here, I will make your life beautiful.” The love object puts his or her feet up on the table while the flowers, candlelit meals, bright fabrics, and potions flow all around. But at some point there comes the snap. No more Ms. Nice Venus—the sex goddess is replaced by raging Kali. The challenge is to invoke Saturnian boundaries to prevent overgiving. Otherwise the dark aspect of the goddess is involuntarily invoked, laying waste to the living room and the relationship.

#### BANISHING OBSTACLES TO LOVE

Venus likes for us to banish the past before invoking the future. Right now, close your eyes and rapidly summarize in your mind all of the miserable, wretched love affairs you have ever had. But do not spend too long on it. In your mind’s eye, put them all in a silver ball. Now move the silver ball way out into the horizon in front of you, until it completely disappears. Next, imagine a copper ball on the far horizon where the silver ball disappeared. It is the earned gift of appropriate equal love. The copper ball comes toward you and surrounds you with its warm light, which settles at the base of your spine. There it forms a beautiful copper serpent that curls and swirls up your spine and hovers over your head.

#### TRY THIS AT HOME

If we were creatively suspicious, we might wonder why Friday the thirteenth has been deemed “unlucky” in the modern world. Friday is Venus’s day, sacred to Freya, the Norse Venus. The number thirteen is sacred to the goddess, because there are thirteen lunar months in a year. The pre-Christian tradition was that on Friday the thirteenth, a powerful convergence of goddess imagery, you were supposed to honor Venus by making love all day. Once the Reality Police noticed this holy day, they thought, “Good heavens, this will

ruin the five-day work week. This will forestall industrialism. We can't have this! Let's make sensuality unlucky." Thus, this fun holiday celebrating the art of sensuality was kept under superstitious wraps. But feel free to take the wraps off and liberate your Venus, celebrating as you and she deem fit.

Venus says that eroticism is what binds all creation together. She naturally does not mean the modern world's literalized physical Eros that limits the imagination. Venus says that eroticism is scattered throughout the universe and is the language with which the universe talks to itself. The universe is a flirt, says Venus in Gemini, and we should be, too.

Kierkegaard says, "Presume love in the other." As a working experiment, presume that the whole realm of the other—all the quirky and impossible people that we daily have to deal with—is connected by an erotic circuit.

Now we are ready for the serious trouble of summoning love. Venus wants all of us to be joyfully partnered.

Rituals can be performed either to deepen commitment or to attract love. Oshun is the Venusian deity in the Santería pantheon who presides over love, beauty, wealth, money, and a playfully flirtatious attitude toward all of life. Her affinity is with all sweet (non-salt) water. She loves to set us on fire and heal us with refreshing coolness afterward. Aromatic flowers and cooling mint are among Oshun's profusion of gifts.

The following Venus/Oshun ritual is highly effective if you want to attract someone into your life to love. (The author disavows responsibility for any unsuitable lovers who may result.) Again, believe nothing, entertain possibilities.

On a Friday, take a round piece of bread, such as a roll, make a hole in it, and put a nickel inside (the number five, represented by the nickel, is sacred to Venus). On top of the nickel, place a little piece of folded paper on which you have written the qualities you desire in your beloved. Put a little bit of honey on top of that, for

obvious symbolic reasons, then place a short yellow candle in the hole. Light the candle.

You can do anything you want while that candle is burning. Honor Venus: play beautiful music, go out to a seafood dinner, get a pedicure. Prepare yourself and your home for Venus's arrival. When the candle is completely burned down so that only melted wax remains on top of the bread, take it to sweet water. Go to a river or pond and throw the completely biodegradable bread-candle remains into the water while saying, "I am the presence bringing into my life my beloved, free and willing to be my mate and partner. I am so inspired that I find the courage to play and the wisdom to love with a cheerful heart."

All rituals are really offered to prime the pump of your own associative creativity. You can rewrite the words, or substitute a bran muffin if you want to see someone regularly. In the ensuing days, each morning repeat that phrase, or a phrase of your own preference, to the four directions until you get desirable results.

This ritual always seems to work. It has broken the droughts of a number of friends and clients who were fearing spinsterhood or involuntary monasticism. It stirs things up immediately, but it can also be tricky. You might want someone who has a lot of time for you, and they turn out to be unemployed. You might want someone who's not going to move away soon, and they turn out to be in prison. Oshun/Venus is a playful, witty goddess who will give you what she thinks you need. She will keep your petition in mind if you are willing to play. In addition to honoring the flirtatious Venus, this ritual reintroduces a sense of beauty, playfulness, and willingness to be in the relationship dance.

Many of you may have already tried *this* at home. To further honor Venus, we remember James Hillman's words: "Laziness goes with mental brilliance. Long hours of waste that accompany intellectual activity, inertia, and dullness, are necessary." The Venus part of ourselves responds, "Yes. Absolutely. Bring on the chocolates."

Leisure and waste are necessary accompaniments to creativity, essential compost for Venus's garden, and ways of honoring Venus in our lives.

Even if you're not in the market for a mate, you can still celebrate Venus on Fridays by making a cornmeal glyph on the threshold of your home to honor the Venusian part of yourself as you come and go throughout the day. Venus's glyph is a circle (reminding us of her perfectly circular orbit) on top of a cross. The circle of spirit now supersedes the cross of matter. Art raises us above the confines of realism.

To honor, feed, and further work with Venus, her mudra would be any graceful dance. As you dance, imagine filling yourself with Venus's color, which is deep emerald green. Return to the primeval garden. Eat an apple. Give a dinner party. Serve ribs!