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# Bringweather and the Portal of Giving and Taking

By Barth Anderson, illustration by GAK

6 May 2002

We found her that sterile winter night with *Ariel* by Sylvia Plath on the bathroom sink and the first Cowboy Junkies CD tolling from the stereo. The philodendrons, the ficus, and the Swedish ivy in their terra-cotta planters had wilted. The Prophetess herself lay in her clawfoot tub with Xs carved in her wrists.

"Obviously, my boy," said the Great Bringweather after smelling the bathroom, "this was a kidnapping!"

I was crying so hard that I could only speak in fits. "D-D-Don't -- you think it's more -- likely -- that she committed suicide?"

"Suicide, Brune?" Bringweather spun away from the bloody tub and aimed his eagle face at me. "Suicide?" The yellow tassel of his Minnesota Vikings stocking cap bobbed over our heads. "If you're so certain, where's the note, eh? Hmm? Answer that!"

The Prophetess's final letter was in my hand. I'd found it on the lid of her indoor compost heap when I came home. Crying loudly now, I handed him the note.

"Oh. I see. Well." Bringweather removed reading glasses from his London Fog trench coat. "It's her handwriting, at any rate." He smoothed one handlebar of his outrageous moustache and read as if to an audience. "I hate the incessant needs of my barren body." He stopped and looked at me over the top of his glasses. "Incessant? Is that a word? It is? Sounds French to me." He cleared his throat wetly and continued reading. "The eating, the sweating, the brushing, the bathing, and worst of all, the emitting. All to what end? Old age.' Oh, terrible! The Prophetess stopped seeing the poetry and love of the Great Heap! 'Every morning a trip to the toilet, and it never ends all day long in the unyielding variety of emissions -- the pale liquids, the thick liquids, the odious solids, the gases--"

Bringweather dropped the note on the bathroom floor.

"Sad," I sniffled, wondering if he'd read what I had read between those lines.

"Evil!" Bringweather declared. He strode into the living room, then he stopped by the Prophetess's compost heap and pointed back at the paper on the floor. "An evil spell that decries life and the Cosmic Animus, and we never should have touched it. This was no accident, just as I suspected. Sorcerous trickery is afoot. A midwinter strike against the Holy Heap! Brune! Come with me!" With the skirts of his trench coat flaring, Bringweather took

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by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

[Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

*You can never let anyone suspect, his mother told him. That was the first rule she taught him, and the last, before she left him here alone with It.*

[Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

Pale as he was, it was hard to believe

