**Rite of Handfasting**

it may be that a man and a woman within the Craft will desire marriage, to state their vows of love before the Goddess and to become One within Her court. If their love is honest and deep, and the Priestess and Priest know that it is acceptable before the Goddess, they may take the Rite of Handfasting. The ritual of Hand fasting is best performed at the time of the new moon, so that their love may grow as the moon waxes.

**The Traditional Clothing**

As many particulars of this ancient rite have been lost over the centuries, full details concerning the clothing are no longer available. Some who perform this ceremony will desire to adhere as closely as possible to the feature given, and add such details as seem appropriate and prefer to modify the clothing and for the rite which follows. Most, though, will prefer to modify the ritual to their own tastes, adding, deleting, and modifying parts as a starting point.

The bride should be dressed in a white, spangled gown that comes to her toes. It may possibly be of Cretan design from ancient times, or khiton, or medieval, with the bodice wrapped about with scarlet or blue cord, or with ribbons or silver chain. The bosom may possibly be clasped with a single red jewel. The bridal veil, or net should, if possible, be as long as the gown. The bride should wear a garland of flowers, and other flowers as well in her hair, her net or veil, and her gown. The old tradition of "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" still applies. A small, jeweled scabbard should be fashioned for her athame. The groom should wear a dark, simple robe much like that of a monk, but slightly open at the neck with a white ruffle or scarf. A heavy leather belt, studded with metal, should be fitted with a scabbard so that the coven's ceremonial sword may be worn on his left side. A smaller leather scabbard should be fashioned so that he may wear his athame on his right side. Gauntlets of metal studded leather will be fashioned for his wrist. During the ceremony, he should wear a metal studded headband of leather or horned helmet. Most importantly, though, the bride and groom should dress as they desire!! Variations are encouraged. This rite, more that any, is concerned with love an with the attraction that man and woman may wear the sheerest and thinnest of gowns for the performance of this ritual.

**Preparation for The Rite**

On the day and the evening before the rite, the bride and the groom shall not be allowed to see each other. The man shall remain with the men, and the woman shall remain with the women. The bride shall be with her friends, to finish the making of the gown and veil, and gather flowers to decorate the house, the room in which this rite and the Great Circle will be held, flowers for the altar, and flowers for her hair, veil, and gown. The bride shall be accompanied everywhere by her friends, the Maids of the Goddess. The Old Traditions will be maintained and enjoyed by all. The groom shall be with his friends to finish the fashioning of his wedding equipage, to purchase food and supplies for the rite and the festivities that follow. In the evening the Merry Men will provide the groom with appropriate strong drink and suitable counsel for his last unmarried day. The Old Traditions do apply. Just before the rite, the Maids of the Goddess and the Merry Men will see that all is in order that banquet is prepared, that decorations and gifts are ready, and even that the marriage bed is scattered with flowers. Flowers shall be spread over the altar, and a cauldron of flowers placed before it. The aspergillus, used for sprinkling, may be perfumed. The Great Circle shall be cast in the usual manner, except that the bride shall remain out of sight with the foremost of her Maidens of the Goddess, and the groom shall remain elsewhere with the Chief of His Merry Men. The rest shall be in the circle.

The Priestess and Priest stand before the altar, and the Priest commands:

**I say to thee, O Maiden of the Goddess**

**And Merry Man of the Forest**

**Open the Circle...for two are coming**

**Who would be one.**

The two he indicates shall open wide the Circle. If there is music, it should be played at this time. The bride and groom, escorted by the Maid and the Man, approach the circle, and with a bow, the men allow the ladies to enter first. The bride stands in front of her Priestess and the groom in front of the Priest. The Priest orders the circle to be closed. The Priestess and the Priest move to the other side of the altar and face the Magic mirror. The Priestess says, saluting with her athame:

**There is Magic to be done here,**

**The Magic of love.**

**This place is calling you, O Goddess.**

**Come to us here from Thine own land of beauty**

**To this holy circle, place of Thine own most pleasing.**

**Here then, gracious Lady, bring your Lovable person;**

**into golden goblets stir your Nectar**

**And bless the two who here have come.**

The Priest salutes with his athame and says:

**There is Magic to be done here,**

**The Magic of love.**

**This place is calling you, O Horned One**

**Come to us from Thy wild land of sunshine and forest**

**To this holy circle, and place of Thine own most pleasing.**

**Here then, O bringer of joy and cheer**

**Draw Thy rough Magic**

**And bless these two who here have come.**

The Priestess and Priest return to their former positions. The Priest sprinkles the bride with consecrated water and says:

**Thou art consecrated before the God.**

The Priestess sprinkles the Groom with consecrated water and says:

**Thou art consecrated before the Goddess.**

The Priest then commands to both:

Kneel and receive thy charge.

The Priestess takes the wand and holds it over the top of the bride's head, saying:

**Thou shalt be the star that rises from the sea**

**The twilight sea.**

**Thou shalt bring a man dreams to rule his destiny.**

**Thou shalt bring the moon tides to the soul of man,**

**The tides that flow and ebb, and flow again;**

**The Magic that moves in the moon and the sea'**

**These are thy secret, and they belong to thee.**

**Thou art the Eternal Woman, thou art she..**

**The tides of all men's souls belong unto thee.**

**Isis in heaven, on earth, Persephone,**

**Diana of the Moon and Hecate**

**Veiled Isis, Aphrodite form the sea,**

**All these thou art, and They are seen in thee.**

The Priest then takes the wand and holds it over the top of the groom's head, saying:

**In thee may the Horned One return to the Earth again;**

**Hear the ancient call, and show thyself to men.**

**Shepherd of wild things, upon the wild hill's way**

**Lead thy lost flock from darkness unto day**

**Forgotten are the ways of sleep and night;**

**Men seek for them whose eyes have lost the Light.**

**Open the door, the door that hath no key...**

**The Door of Dreams whereby men come unto thee.**

**Shepherd of Wild Things, may you, one with Him be!!**

The Priestess tells them both to rise. She says:

**It has been said that thou both**

**Do wish handfasting before the Goddess.**

**Is this so?**

When they both answer in the affirmative, she says:

**Draw forth your sacred athames**

**And place the points within the rings**

**That lie upon the altar.**

The bride and groom do so. (Their rings lie atop one another.) The Priestess and Priest also put the points of their athames into the center of the two rings, and the Priest says:

**Oh God of the Forests**

**Place Thy blessing**

**On the two Witches**

**Who stand before Thee**

**Grant unto them joy**

**For as long as they do desire.**

The Priestess says:

**Oh Lady of the Moon**

**Place Thy blessings**

**On the two Witches**

**Who stand before Thee**

**Grant unto them Magic**

**For as long as they do desire.**

All put away their athames, Priestess and Priest upon the altar, bride and groom in their sheathes. The Priest says to the groom:

**If thou dost truly desire, O \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,**

**To marry this woman**

**Give her thy weapon**

**That it may only be used in her service.**

The groom draws his sword, and kneeling, offers it to the bride, saying:

**Gracious and lovely one**

**Accept all that I have...**

**The finest**

**At thy service.**

The bride takes the sword and hands it to the Priestess. The Priestess then says to the bride:

**It thou dost truly desire, O \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,**

**To marry this man**

**Give to him thy jewel, thy crimson jewel,**

**For his possessions as long as love shall be between you.**

The bride curtseys or bows to the groom, indicating the jewel at her bosom. She looks into his eyes and says:

**Thou who art handsome and strong**

**Accept my jewel,**

**My treasure**

**For thine own.**

The groom unpins the jewel, or the bride unpins it herself and gives it to him. The Bride rises, and while they look upon each other the Priest gives each a ring and says:

**Place this**

**Upon the hand**

**Of thy betrothed.**

Each puts the ring on the other. They embrace as the Priestess says:

**Under the blessings of the Goddess**

**Thy hands are fasted**

**And thou art one.**

The Priest then calls loudly:

**Goddess' maid and merry man**

**Break the circle**

**That they may depart together**

**In the name of the Goddess!!**

As the circle is broken, the Priestess says to the bride and groom:

**Come, let us all celebrate**

**Your joy for the future!**

After they have departed, the circle is closed by the Priestess and the Priest as all make merry with wine and cakes and other refreshments. Singing and music should be the order of the day, and dancing as well as the wedding feast.

If the banquet is to be held among those not initiated, the members of the coven may be dressed conventionally; otherwise, they may desire to change into ordinary clothing at this time. A mundane use of the consecrated sword is permitted here it may be used to cut the cake!!