

## Chapter 9



# Making Love with Earth

So by now we're all blossoming sex magicians, burgeoning experts in the craft of conscious and creative pleasure. When faced with one of the most beautiful, generous, and mysterious lovers we can ever hope to encounter—to wit, Nature—we are naturally tempted to get down to some magical business or other as soon as we get out onto her rolling riotous body. Or we feel like we ought to come up with some sweet act of adoration on the spot to express our wonderment at her glory.

I say that there's no better time to take a break from all that doing, all that getting it right, than when you have at last escaped your busy Western existential crisis long enough to find your way to a field, forest, or fjord, and encountered Nature in all her tender and tempestuous splendour.

Of course, it's worth saying hello. It's worth taking a moment, as you step through the portal of the gate into the meadow or between the first two trees in the forest, to be aware of the privilege of what you are about to experience, and extending a silent or spoken greeting to the spirits of the place that is enfolding you with open arms dripping with moss or blossom.

However, before you get your sex witch on, I recommend you take a moment to receive...

## Receiving Nature

“All that you are seeking is also seeking you ... If you lie still, sit still, it will find you. It has been waiting for you a long time,”<sup>35</sup> writes storyteller Clarissa Pinkola Estés. Nowhere is this more true than in the natural world. If you go outside and be still, Nature will come to you. The scurryings and flutterings that ceased with your alien arrival will gradually be renewed; your breath will begin to come and go with greater ease from your body; and you’ll begin to notice things. You don’t even need to try. Stay still for long enough, breathe easily for long enough, you will find there’s nothing that you need to do about it; the magic unfolds all of its own accord.

Nature will come and make love to you.

Her light will warm your skin. Her gales will wipe clean the cobwebs from your mind. The sight of Her will kiss your eyes. The cool waters of Her will cleanse your body, and wash away the burdens from your heavy heart.

We’ve touched already upon the vital component of magic, of living magically, that is surrendering and receiving. There are few better chances to practice this than to go out into Nature, and to allow Her to meet you there.

Go outside. Be still. Breathe. Be loved.

## ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐

### Ecosensual Awakening

This is a more interactive, and more intimate, take on receiving nature.

Go outside in whatever way is accessible to you. Slow your pace. Begin to have a sense of moving on the Earth with the same awareness, the same care, with which you might enter the room in which a lover was sleeping. After a while, allow your eyes or hands to wander, and see if you’re drawn by any particular shapes or objects—ideally things you can pick up and carry with you without doing harm. Once you have a small collection, find a place that feels beautiful to you to sit, and place the objects you’ve gathered within reach.

Begin by looking around you, if you’re a sighted person. Slow the pace of your gaze. Let your eyes rest, here, then here, then here. Let them drink in each detail of each place they rest. Take your time. Receive slowly through

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35. Estés, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, 152.

your eyes. After a while, see if one of the objects you gathered draws your gaze. Pick up it. Examine it. Allow yourself the luxury of curiosity, of the possibility that you've never seen anything like this before. Take at least three to five minutes for your looking.

Then close your eyes. Inhale the air around you. Let your breath expand and relax your body. Breathe into any parts of you that feel tense; expand them as you breathe in, and invite them to relax as you breathe out. Once your body is sitting a little more softly, begin to notice the scents of the air. What can you smell? What aromas infuse the air around you? How is the weather making the land smell? If you can smell one thing, can you catch the scent of other things beneath or intertwined with that? Are you drawn to smell one of the objects you collected? Give your breathing and scenting three to five minutes.

Now listen, if you're able to hear. Let your breathing deepen, and quieten, and make space for your attention to focus fully on what you can hear. Listen outwards for the noises that are calling for your attention. Listen downwards for the softer, subtler sounds that are under them. And listen inwards, for the voices that are whispering in you. Receive with your outer and your inner listening. Take another three to five minutes with this.

Bring your attention to your taste buds. What can they tell you? What can you sense with your mouth closed, and what aromas are made available if you allow your mouth to open and breathe through there? Is one of your objects something you would like to try tasting? Is there something in the natural world around you—a blade of grass, a flower, a fruit—that could awaken your taste buds? How can you allow Nature to kiss you on the mouth in this moment? Give this another three to five minutes.

Finally, pick up whichever of your objects you are most drawn to touch. Inspired by Betty Martin's awakening of the hands again,<sup>36</sup> rest your hands in your lap, and allow them to explore the object. Slow down your touch. Give each millimetre its own time; each change in texture its own pause; each shift in angle its own moment of intimacy. Receive through your fingers. Ask yourself how much pleasure you can get from this touch. After a while, if you feel drawn to, you can explore the object with other parts of your body:

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36. Martin, "The Pleasure in Your Hands."

stroke it up your arm, run it over your lips, roll it along your thigh. Let this small gift from the natural world be a direct invitation for you to come into your own skin, and enjoy being there to the max.

## ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐ Refill and Restore

A more energy-focused way to receive the natural world, this fantastic tool allows the cosmos to give you more resources when you're in need. I also rely on elements of this exercise for the energy I use in many of my sex-magical workings. It can be done inside or out, making it more versatile than the exercise above—but doing it in nature is particularly sublime.

This one is best done standing, with your feet shoulder-width apart, and your knees relaxed. But feel free to do whatever works for you. Begin—you guessed it—by taking some deep, full breaths. When you're feeling more centred and present, drop your awareness down to your feet. Imagine that you can extend roots through your feet, and feel them wriggling down through the surface beneath, and into the Earth. Keep breathing, and wriggle your roots through the layers of mud, silt, and stone, until you come to the fiery core at the centre of the Earth. Now, as you breathe in, let some of the energy from that core flow up through your roots. Feel it rise up into your body. Keep breathing, and let that molten heat flow up your legs, into your pelvis and belly, up your spine, down your arms, into your heart. Have a sense that you're filling up your tank, and keep going until you feel warmed and energised.

Now take a few more centring breaths, and then reach your awareness in the other direction, up towards the sky. Reach past the place you're standing, past clouds, past the atmosphere, and into the stars. Whether you reach for the sun shining down on you, a heaven or divine realm, or for the starlight coming from other solar systems, it doesn't matter. Once you have a sense of a benevolent brightness, begin to breathe it in, back down the thread of your awareness, until it flows into your body. Let it pour through you like soft summer rain, flowing through your crown into your head, down your neck into your shoulders, down your arms and spine, into your torso and pelvis, down your legs. Let it flood your system. Breathe. Fill up.

Finally, bring your attention to your heart. Notice the two energies—the one from above, and the one from below—coming together there. Here you are, betwixt the two, perfectly earthly, perfectly heavenly, perfectly human—and perfectly restored.

## ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐

### Sit Spot

Sit Spot turns receiving nature into a daily practice. To establish a Sit Spot—a spot from which you can encounter nature where you sit for ten to thirty minutes each day—is to enter into an intimacy with the natural world that is not the fleeting glimpse, the rare weekend away, the dalliance with nature that many of us occasionally indulge in. Rather, it is a daily relationship, a committed partnership, a marriage of two mirrors.

To enter into this unique union, you must first establish your Sit Spot. It should be somewhere near your home, easily accessed and safe for you to sit in. A garden serves as well as a forest, or a rooftop with pots on it will do if there is no green space to be had nearby. And it should also be somewhere you find a pleasure to be, somewhere that draws you enough to keep coming back. Next, you must go and sit in your spot on a regular basis—ideally daily—and let your senses take in the nature around you. Breathe deeply. Try not to do much of anything else. And repeat.

Over time, having a Sit Spot allows us to release the illusion that we are a tourist in the natural world. After stripping away some of the weight from our shoulders, the tension from our bellies, the worry from our minds, our surroundings begin to gently blur our sense of separation, until it is less a case of inside and outside, until what we see in the natural world is ourselves. A daily practice like this reminds us of the family of things which we are part of, reconnects us to that family, and in time teaches us how to live as a member of that family.

We learn that all things start from small struggles and humble beginnings: the shoot pushing up, the fledgling tumbling from the nest. We learn that all things must close if they are to open, rest if they are to blossom, let go if they are to be renewed. The fox teaches us how to be present to life. The fallen oak sprouting moss and mushrooms teaches us how to gracefully let

go of the same. A Sit Spot shows us that all things that live are beautiful. And so are we.



Entering into these kinds of connections with the natural world can feel like the beginning—or the rekindling—of an intimate relationship. Like a new lover, nature can awaken our senses, make us catch our breath, and remind us of our beauty and aliveness.

Some of you may already be wondering how you can take this new intimacy towards the realm of the erotic. So let's take our first foray into the sweet and sensual world of ecosexuality—staying, for the moment, with this focus on letting the natural world in.

Ecosexuality is a spectrum of practices that all, in some way, combine our individual eroticism and our natural environment. I believe the magic of ecosexuality is two-fold. Like any consciously chosen intimate relationship, it holds gifts for both parties. On the one hand, as you may have begun to get a taste of via the exercises above, the natural world has unique ways of inviting us into our senses, encouraging us into our own skins, grounding us in the present moment, and reconnecting us to our capacity for pleasure. Nature has a cornucopia of ways to support and enhance our spiritual, sensory, and sensual experience.

The other transformation that entering into intimacy with the natural world can evoke in us is one of compassion. And compassion is the seed of change. Just as when we enter into relationship with another person, we embark on a process of understanding them, learning their story, and allowing their experiences, needs, and desires to touch us, and move us to action—just so, when we take the Earth as our Lover, we experience a shift in how we relate to them. I'm shifting to a gender-neutral pronoun for the Earth here with a purpose. Perhaps like some of you, I very much think of the Earth as a she, but this could be argued to be part and parcel of the way we have treated the Earth in recent centuries.

Our cultural conceptions of the Earth as a mother hold certain implications in a society that has little respect or appreciation for women, or for parents and elders. If we think about our archetypal images of mothers—the Earth mother, the Empress in the tarot, Mary—we see that they are uncon-

ditional, ever-present, always available, always with more to give their endlessly demanding offspring. Think about how we treat mothers in the West right now. As we emphasise single-unit families and individual achievements more and more, mothers find themselves isolated, expected to naturally possess the wide range of skills and interests that will allow them to meet the full spectrum of diverse physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs of their children, whilst simultaneously being fantastic partners and/or providers, and loving the whole experience the whole time—because motherhood is still considered the peak experience that women can have.

If we think about how Western cultures have treated the Earth in the last couple of centuries, it is not dissimilar. We look to our planet to provide for us unconditionally. We expect to be able to simply keep on taking, without Earth requiring anything back of us—after all, “she” is our Mother Earth, and we are her children, and that’s what children get to do. Except that we’re not children. We’re a supposedly advanced civilisation, with an abundance of data in our possession about the impact we’re having on our planet, and the sophistication to be able to process and understand that data, as well as the means to do something about it. And our faculties are telling us loudly and clearly what dire straits we’re in. The term “ecological grief” is gaining ground as a way to describe the mental health impact of “climate-related losses to valued species, ecosystems and landscapes.”<sup>37</sup> The risk of feeling this grief too acutely is one of the reasons why it’s so much easier to lose ourselves in virtual escape mechanisms than it is to go outside and let the world in.

Entering into intimacies with the natural world invites us to become more conscious and choiceful in our behaviour towards it. As in any long-term relationship, there naturally comes a time where we experience a call to make a commitment to the beloved—in this case, in the form of the environment. Annie Sprinkle and Beth Stephens’ marriage to the Appalachian Mountains wasn’t just about their love of the mountains, or the pleasure they derived from being in proximity to that piece of geography.<sup>38</sup> It was also about stating their commitment to honour and treasure an entity that they loved, and to

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37. Cunsolo and Ellis, “Ecological grief as a mental health response to climate change-related loss.”

38. Stephens and Sprinkle (dir.), *Goodbye Gauley Mountain* (DVD).

take action against the mountain top removal that continues to devastate the area.

As you continue to explore ways to allow the natural world to get under your skin, and into your senses, loins, and hearts, allow yourself to be moved by the world around you. As Joanna Macy says in her book *Coming Back to Life* about repressing what she calls our Pain for the World: “If we won’t feel pain, we won’t feel much else either—loves and losses are less intense, the sky less vivid, pleasures muted.”<sup>39</sup> Allowing ourselves to be touched by the natural world opens us up to new depths and breadths of feeling and pleasure, while also inviting us to become better lovers of the extraordinary living system we are all part of.

### ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐ Sun Breathing

Unsurprisingly, this works best when you have access to some direct sunlight, and ideally a safe space to lie on the Earth. But it can also be done in any patch of daylight, with the remembrance that the sun is always somewhere up there above the clouds.

Find yourself a sun-soaked spot on the Earth, or equivalent.

Adopt your pussycat-caught-in-sunbeam posture of choice, and get comfortable. Get some of delicious full breaths happening, and notice how solidly the Earth beneath you carries and supports you. Begin to invite your body to sink into that holding. If it’s been a particularly rough day/week/life, you may want to do this piece by piece, bringing your attention to each part of your body in turn—from the plates of your skull and the muscles of your face, to the softening soles of your feet—breathing into each one, and then imagining it melting into the ground as you breathe out. Notice if you can feel a heartbeat—first in yourself, then in the Earth below you.

Breathe. Release. Surrender. Sink into that embrace. And perhaps take a moment to give profound thanks for the way the Earth keeps carrying you on every step of your journey, no matter what.

Once you’ve settled into the ground, and are really receiving that embrace, start to notice the sun on your skin. Become aware of receiving that

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39. Macy, *Coming Back to Life*, 31.

warm caress—of your cells responding to that life-giving heat—and relax deeper. We're now going to start playing with the Heart/Sex circuit breath we've done before, but this time, we'll be adding sunlight to it.

As you inhale, imagine that you inhale the sunshine, that sensual pulsing heat. Breathe it in through your sex, up your spine, and into your heart. Pause for a moment to savour as it pools there, golden, warm, pulsing ... and then breathe out through your heart, allowing the light to cascade down your arms, through your abdomen and stomach, warming and releasing each part of your body, before arriving back into your sex. Repeat for as long as you wish.

Once you and the sunlight have a good groove going, you could also add self-pleasuring to this practice if you wished. Or have a cat nap. Or you can simply bring the practice to a close when you feel replenished.

However you choose—receive the sunlight. Allow it to fill your reserves—energising, healing, relighting your fire.

This breath can be adapted for whichever of the elements you feel especially drawn to. You can do it while lying on your bed listening to the rain, while floating on your back in the ocean, or standing on a mountain top in a gale!

## ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐

### Sunsoaked Sauciness

This is another take on the above, for those of you who are a little more fantasy orientated—or stuck indoors during the darker months of the year! It can be lovely to do in a sunbeam, but it can also be done in a pillow fort.

Begin, once again, with full deep breaths—breaths that allow you to let go of your surroundings, and get centred and settled in your own body.

Close your eyes, and open your mind's eye to a sun-soaked spot somewhere else: somewhere beautiful such as a dappled woodland or the banks of a mountain stream. Take your time to look around you, to get as clear an impression as possible of the place where you find yourself to be. Once you have a sense of your surroundings, look for a path in this new, inner landscape, and follow it. Follow it until you come to a bower, a resting place formed by nature: moss covered tree-roots curling round to make a perfect nest, or a soft grassy riverbank, or a flower-strewn clearing. Settle yourself

here, check in to make sure you're still breathing, and then invite the sun to come and visit you in a form you can enjoy.

Because the roots of my spirituality are decidedly pagan in nature, for me this would look like Pan, the Lord of the Forest. For you, it might be a being made of light, a particular sun deity you're connected to, or perhaps a group of fire nymphs. Receive this being in whatever way delights you both. Allow the sun to come to you in a form that arouses you. If it's your kind of thing, you can allow the sun to penetrate you in your vision, just as you allowed the sunlight to penetrate you during the breathing above.

Add self-pleasuring how, if, and when you wish, and enjoy...

When this feels complete, give thanks, and allow the sun to bestow any guidance or gifts it has for you before departing. If you're doing this in bed at the end of the day, you can fall asleep in this beautiful place. Alternately, in your mind's eye, walk back along the path to where you started, and from there breathe yourself back into your body and your physical surroundings. Take some time to ground before moving on to other activities.

## ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐

### **Erotic Shapeshifting, Take II**

I now want to introduce you to another tributary of the erotic shapeshifting journey we set out on with the genital shapeshifting in the Making Love with Each Other section, which also happens to be a further way of inviting the natural world into our erotic experiences.

One of the great gifts modern spirituality has been blessed enough to inherit—or, perhaps more accurately, appropriate—is that of the concept of spirit guides. Working with unseen guardians or helpers is a feature of almost all religious and spiritual traditions the world over. However, the spirit guides I'm primarily referring to when I talk about allies in this section are drawn from neo-shamanic and modern pagan traditions, which in turns owe much of their core material to Indigenous American and Eastern European shamanic practices. These allies are often intrinsically connected to the natural world, and communicate with us in the forms of wild creatures, or beasts from myths and legends, that are recognisable to us.

Having worked with guides since the very early days of my spiritual path, I found myself falling in love with a heathen spirit-worker. After he intro-

duced me to the concept and experience of “aspecting” guides—which is to say, inviting them to come and inhabit my body with me—inevitably I got curious about the possibilities this practice might hold for sexual encounters.

Not long after that, a new guide revealed himself to me, and made it very clear that this was a piece of work he was up for helping me with. Since then, that same guide has transformed my experiences of both the shamanic journeying techniques described below, and sex. He has been tattooed on my skin, and has brought a new sexual partner—who also happens to have such a creature tattooed in the same place on the same arm—into my life. In this section I’ll be sharing ways to encounter your own erotic allies, and see what transformations they can bring about for you.

One way to meet your allies is through techniques commonly referred to in modern Western spirituality as shamanic journeying. The version I offer below is the one that my aforementioned spirit-worker beloved teaches.

So, where will you be journeying to exactly? For the purpose of meeting an erotic ally, we recommend the Lower World/Underworld: the realm connected with the Earth, with animal spirits, and, correspondingly, with our more carnal and embodied selves.

And how will you be getting there? To journey in this fashion, you’ll need three things:

A clear intention. In this case, your intention will be to meet with an erotic ally who is willing and able to support you in your own sexual (r)evolution.

A way in. This can be a doorway of your choosing, ideally one that already exists in this world—the Middle Realm—and that you’re fairly familiar with. Somewhere that holds special significance for you perhaps, or that you experience as particularly magical. Mine is an opening in the roots of a particular tree I spent one moonlit night camped under. My beloved’s is a waterfall he’s been visiting since he was a small child. Yours might be a similarly natural portal, or might be somewhere more urban—a door, an alleyway, a train you’ve wondered idly about jumping on. Pick a place you love that you can imagine might lead down into the ground, and visualise it clearly.

A drumbeat. This may seem distracting at first, but it will provide you with extra support on your journey, and we find we’re much more focused with that support than without it. If you’re as fortunate as me in having someone in your household who is willing and able to provide you with a

simple monotonous drumbeat to follow, great—but a recording will do just fine.

Once these three things are present to you, get comfortable in a position you won't fall asleep in, and take some deep, full breaths. The kind of breaths that are going to support you in letting go of your immediate environment, relaxing, and turning your attention inwards.

Once you feel fairly focused, bring your portal to mind, and walk towards it, holding your intention clearly in your mind and heart. Walk through the portal. The rest is up to you. Trust what arises, allow yourself to be surprised, and keep an eye out for an erotic ally. At this point, you're just popping in to meet them, have a conversation, and then come back again. Make sure to retrace your steps when coming back, come back through the portal, and then back to the room you're sitting in. Take your time coming back to your body and opening your eyes.



Some things to be aware of for the exercise above:

Many people are put off the concept of journeying because they imagine that, in order for it to “work,” they need to be very visual people—i.e. to see pretty pictures—and they don't feel adequate to the task. However, just like energy, journeying can manifest itself in harmony with your primary senses—it's about giving yourself permission to have a go, to practice, and to trust the impressions that arise for you, whatever those may look/feel/sound like.

You are in control. Our experience of these realms is that they are inherently benevolent. You have set the intention to meet an ally, and we hope that is all you will encounter. However, if you have an encounter that doesn't feel right to you, while you can certainly reflect on it later, it is within your power and right to thank it for showing itself to you, say goodbye, and keep looking—or indeed just to open your eyes and come straight back to this world.

I'm repeating myself here, but this is important: allow yourself to be surprised. If you're a seasoned journeyer, or trying this for the first time, resist the temptation to censor yourself, trust your vision and your gut, and allow what arises to arise. Remember, your ally is likely to be a being that has some “medicine” for you, that has something fresh to bring to how you already

relate erotically—so their form, manner, or gifts may be unexpected. Be curious, be willing, be respectful. Allow your connection and conversation to unfold, ask them what they have to bring to you, and what you can offer them—and always remember to say thank you!



So, you've hopefully been on some sort of journey, and perhaps you've already met an erotic ally. But how do you bridge the gap between you in this realm, and the magic they're holding for you in that realm?

Your ally may have other answers to that question to offer you, but here's one we love to play with. It's the shapeshifting side of Erotic Shapeshifting, also known as aspecting, or a mild form of consensual spirit possession.

### ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐

## Erotic Shapeshifting, Take II

Aspecting involves inviting your new friend to come and play in your body. This allows them to have fun being in physical form as we know it—and it allows you to literally embody some of the qualities they have to bring to your erotic explorations and expansion. To clarify, we're not talking about handing over complete control to another being—we're talking about creatively cohabiting your body together. You welcome your new friend in, you lend them as much control as you like, and then you thank them and say goodbye. You can even have a chat with them about the boundaries you're willing to play within before you start if you so wish.

If you're trying this for the first time, a good place to start is one very like the place you began when you were preparing to journey. Get comfortable. Put on some steady drum music. Take a few deep, full breaths, and begin to let go of your surroundings.

However, this time, instead of bringing a portal to mind, you're invited to simply take your focus deeper into your physical self. Breathe deeply, and allow your attention to follow the breath, until you feel settled in your own skin, and centred in your core. When you have found a place of stillness and groundedness, and you feel ready and receptive, you can invite your new friend to come and join you in your body.

How this feels will likely be different for each of you. My erotic ally tends to feel like it's wriggling up my spine and over my skull initially, while my beloved describes the sensation of being "put on" from the inside like a coat, and being filled up and stretched out. I encourage you to listen to what is happening in your body, to allow your new friend to arrive without censoring the impulses that come with that, and to give yourself permission to move and shift your body and your breath as feels necessary, in order for them to more fully inhabit you.

What you do once the two of you have found a way to coexist in your skin is up to you. If you're alone, allow your friend to explore your physical environs as they wish. Find ways to enjoy being in physical form together. This may look like a fresh take on self-pleasuring, or something more playful than sensuous. They may have advice to offer you, and they will likely have some attributes to lend you that you could use to your advantage.

If you're with a lover—hopefully someone willing to explore the above exercise as well—then take your time coming back to the space you're in, and allowing your new friend to adjust to your body and environment, as you to adjust to them. When you're ready, make eye contact with your beloved, and see what manner of creature is peering out of their eyes. Allow your new friends to greet each other, and explore, slowly, with great attention to your inner guide, how they wish to interact, and, hopefully, play together. Let this be within both your consent and the consent of your new friend—don't force either of you.

When your play is over, remember to thank your ally, and release them, knowing you can reconnect with one another, in your world or theirs, anytime you wish. Sitting or lying on the ground, breathe and imagine that with each exhale you release your ally into the Earth below, and with each inhale you invite yourself more fully into your body.



With a little practise, it is likely that your relationship with your ally will become more fluid. As my beloved says, the more we travel to Them, and the more we invite Them to visit us, the shorter the distance between us becomes. You may find you can call upon them in a moment when you feel the need for those qualities that enhance your capacity for pleasure or presence

or play—or simply because you’re experiencing something you’d like to share with them. Treat them with the honour and respect they deserve, make time to nurture your connection with them, and know that you can look to them for guidance at those times when love-making feels too scary, or too much like hard work.

### Relating to Nature

We’re now going to shift our focus away from the ways in which the natural world can be an ally in our erotic explorations and expansions, and towards the ways in which our relational and sexual selves can make us better allies for our planet.

**Practical Magic:** *It’s the last night of the retreat I’ve been assisting on. As per tradition, we’re wrapping up the week with a play party. It’s been a sexy, playful, profoundly queer, and thoroughly magical evening. Since we’re in a stunning location in the Swedish woodland at midsummer, I’ve promised an ecowank as the final event of the night. Wrapped in blankets, alternately giggling and grumbling, the group follows me out onto the grass. It’s ten or eleven at night, but the midnight sun is still giving the impression of a twilit evening. We arrange ourselves on blankets in a circle round the midsummer pole we erected earlier in the week. I hand out the lube, and state the intention: to self-pleasure, whatever that means for each of us, and to offer the resulting orgasmic energy to the ground. If we want to add in a circular breath with the Earth, so much the better.*

*I’ve loved ecowanks since my colleague Belle and I ran one at the UK’s first queer sacred sexuality festival four years before this story takes place. Their premise is so simple, and yet they are such inexplicably magical and ecstatic happenings. Sure enough, pretty soon we’re all breathing in time with one another, our sighs and giggles rising and falling in unison. Our collective pleasure moves in waves. A few of us will climax, and the effects ripple round the circle, a murmur of breath quickening in sympathy. Then there is a lull, until someone else starts to sigh a little louder, and we’re off again. We finish with a collective Clench and Hold (from the Genital- and Gender-Free Orgasm you’ll be meeting in the next chapter) which catapults the group into a cacophony of ecstatic moans and laughter.*



While my colleagues and I initially conceived of ecowanks as a way to commune with nature, and to receive stimulus from our exquisite surroundings, I've now added the intention of giving the energy raised back to the Earth in an act of love and gratitude. This has meant that, as well as being ecstatic erotic community experiences, they have also become a way to directly link the erotic and the ecological. The ritual itself acknowledges that our pleasure is supported by the Earth below us, which carries and nourishes the bodies and minds from which we derive pleasure, and which brings us into being through a sexual act. As a ritualist, I believe that there's intrinsic value in offering the Earth our love in the form of a wave of orgasmic energy. But even if I'm wrong about that, in holding an ecowank, I'm still facilitating a reconnection with the natural world. By inviting those participating into an intimate relationship with the Earth, by reminding them of the connection between the Earth's existence and their pleasure and well-being, I hope to remind them to treat our planet accordingly.

### ≧ PLAYTIME ≦

#### What's Your Eco-relating Style?

We're all intimately connected to this planet. A vital part of us moving forward sustainably is the realisation that we're not separate parasitical entities indefinitely feeding off the Earth, but rather that we're part of one big orgasmic organism. There are no real lines between us and our planet. At no point are we not reliant on gravity, breathing oxygen, and using materials harvested from the Earth. We need to see through the illusion of the independent individual that our capitalist culture thrives off, and become aware of our interconnectedness. We are never not in relationship to our planet.

*So what's your relationship style when it comes to that connection?*

*How attentive a partner are you to our planet?*

*How much time do you make for that relationship?*

*What acts of service or gifts do you bring to our earthly beloved?*

*How much do you allow that relationship into your daily life?*

For example, I would say my current relationship style is a little too much conversation, and not enough action. I can talk about the importance of car-

ing for our planet, but I struggle to find time amidst a multitude of different projects to actually go out into nature and spend some quality time there. I'm not as attentive as I'd like to be, and I'm not making as much time for the relationship as I want. At the same time, I make sure we have regular conversations as a household about how we can raise our environmental game, which means that we have, for example, reduced our plastic waste so much that we only fill a bin bag once every three months or so. So we're doing pretty well in terms of incorporating that relationship into our daily lives. And because I talk about those strategies to others, I have inspired other people to adopt some of them as well.

Now ask yourself:

*What kind of partner would you like to be to our planet? If you were the Earth, how would you like to be treated?*

*What are your top love languages when it comes to giving, and how could you offer those to this particular beloved?*

For example, I would like to be more attentive to the land around me, and spend more quality time replenishing, learning, and volunteering there. If I were the Earth, I think I'd like to be listened to more carefully, in all the little and large ways I'm crying out for help, so I guess I want to pay more attention to those cries as they reach me, as painful as it can be to do so. And, as I'm pretty good at giving words, I could raise my game in terms of my online activism, and sharing inspiration for more ethical living with others.



Of course, listening to the calls for aid from the Earth, from the people and creatures and landscapes that populate the surface of our planet, can be profoundly overwhelming. When we turn towards our Ecological Grief, it can be hard to know how to sit with the emotions it stirs in us, let alone how to respond. We can apply the same practices of breath and attention to this grief that seems to come from outside of us that we applied to other forms of grief in earlier chapters. By allowing it to crack us open, by fully welcoming and embodying it, by treating it as a treasured guest bringing valuable information, we let that grief move through us, and move us to action. As author and environmental activist Joanna Macy says: "Our experience of pain for the world springs from our connectivity with all beings, from which also

arise our powers to act on their behalf. When we deny or repress our pain for the world, or treat it as a private pathology, our power to take part in the self-healing of our world is diminished.<sup>40</sup>

But what are our options for action? What can we do besides shutting back down in the face of all that we see happening through our current wide-screen view of our world?

One way to answer this is what I think of as “tending our patch.” Our patch is the place where our skillset, biases, and passions meet the needs of the world. It’s the cottage garden of activism. Just as no one person can try to grow all vegetables and fruits in their own garden, and must instead play to their strengths, to the way their garden is positioned in relation to the sun and the quality of its soil—so we cannot any one of us take on all the woes of the world. We need to pick our battles, and the best way to do this is play to our existing passions and skill set.

In tending our patch, we make creative use of our personal biases, and allow the things that already move us to do so for the benefit of our environment. The anti-fracking movement in the UK called the Nanas springs to mind: a group of grandmothers from diverse backgrounds and walks of life who became activists in response to the impact of fracking on their local villages, and in defence of the environment in which they were raising their children and grandchildren. Instead of leaving what needs to be done to others more radical than themselves, they take over fracking sites with dusters and cake stands, and use their standing with their local communities to start conversations and stir up trouble. In short, they allow things they already cared about to move them into more active relationship with their environment, and utilise their existing skills, tools, and privilege to make change.

## ⇒ PLAYTIME ⇐

### Tending Your Patch

Think of five skills you possess that you can call upon with ease, and perhaps that you wish you were getting to do more of than you are. Make a note of them.

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<sup>40</sup>. Macy, *Coming Back to Life*, 66.

Then think about the moments when you have felt cracked open by the pain of the world. For me, it's the animal cruelty I witnessed growing up. For my best friend, it's the growing homeless population in her city, which reflects her own experiences of homelessness as a teenager. How are you moved by the call of the world around you? Again, make some notes.

Now take a look at your two sets of notes, and think about how they might fit together. Got admin skills? Most charities these days have email addresses and websites as well as phone lines that need administrating. Want to spend more time outdoors? Start a litter picking scheme. Really good with kids? Many conservation projects host family events that need staff capable of engaging children in their efforts.

Where does what comes easily to you meet what the world needs? That could be your mission, should you choose to accept it.



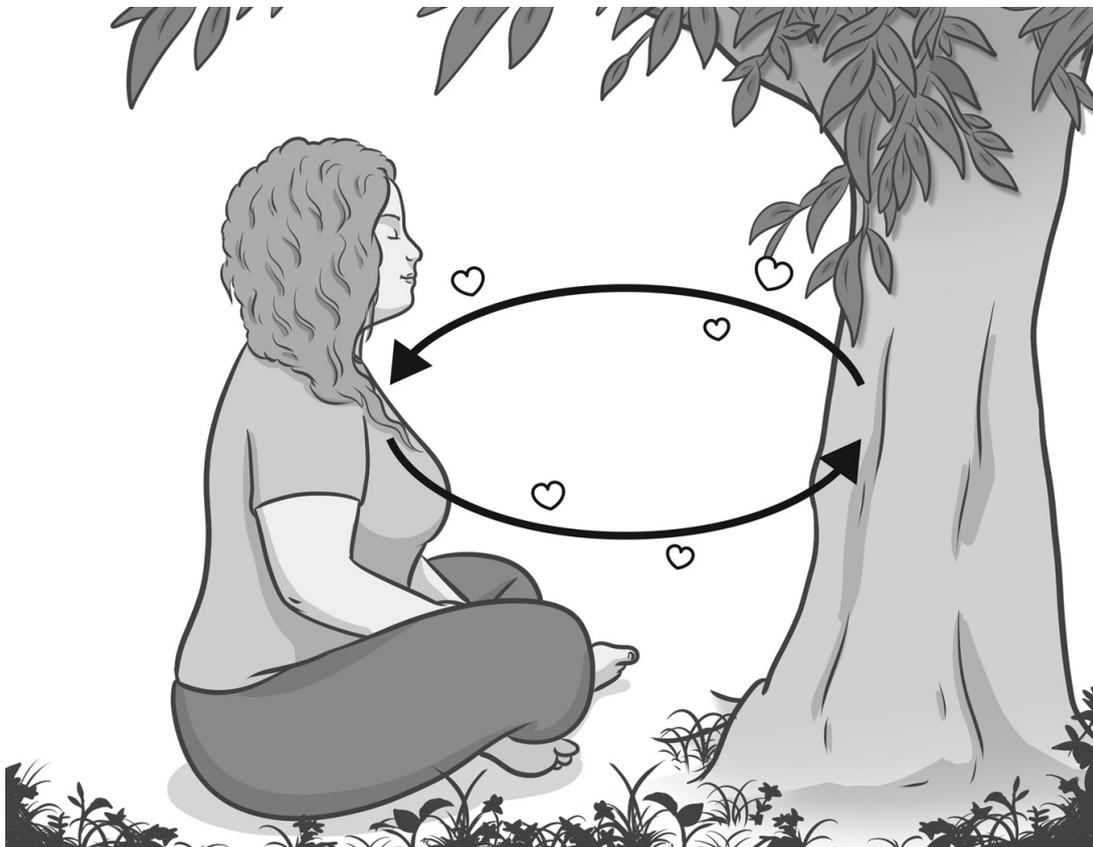
Finding ways to integrate nature into our relational and erotic lives nurtures our awareness of the intimacy that extends beyond us and our lovers: the intimacy we share with our planet. It also helps us to refuel, to draw nourishment from that intimacy that replenishes our resources. And it reminds us to share our lives, and our aliveness, with the Earth. Thus, it supports not only our individual eroticism, but also our capacity to tend to that wider relationship, to tend our patch, to take action.

Some further ideas for including the natural world in your erotic explorations include the following:

- Breath and imagination exercises, like Sun Breathing, like the one described in the memory above, like reaching our roots down into the Earth to build our sexual energy
- Doing the Heart/Heart or Heart-Sex Breath Circuit with the Earth, or with a particular natural phenomenon such as a rock formation or a tree (check in first: Does it feel like you have consent from the entity in question?)
- Using natural ingredients in your play: Simulating the senses with objects from the natural world as we did in the Ecosensual Awakening; ca-

ressing your beloveds with leaves, fallen feathers, catkins, petals; using bunches of stinging nettles or willow in your impact play

- Having sex in sunlight, in the rain, on the earth, against a tree, somewhere you can see the sky
- Bringing the natural world into the space where you usually have sex—rocks, flowers, fragrant greenery; bring the elements to your bedside table—vessels of water, of sand, of pebbles polished by the sea
- Dedicating the energy and pleasure from your lovemaking to the Earth; imagining it flowing into the ground below you from your hands, or your spine, or your feet



**Heart/Heart Circuit Breathing with beings in the natural world**

One of my favourite ways of basking in that planetary intimacy is the aforementioned ecowank. An ecowank is, quite simply, intentional self-pleasuring in nature, where the focus is the connection between you and the natural world.

Solo ecowanks can be combined beautifully with any of the breath, energy, and ecosensual stimulation ideas listed earlier. I like to make them into little rituals, and begin by setting an intention for what I wish to receive, and what I wish to give back. Sometimes, my focus will be on something I wish to call into my own life, but I'll offer the energy raised to the Earth at the end of my ritual; sometimes, my focus is on a gift I wish for the Earth, with a side helping of pleasure for me.

Group ecowanks benefit from a stated intention and an agreed structure as well. Decide why you are doing this; whether it will simply consist of whatever self-pleasuring means to each person, or whether you will also invite a particular breath or visualisation or activity; decide on practical considerations like location, length of time, and supplies; and establish any boundaries that need to be put in place to keep the group and the environment safe. All these things will help your wank run smoothly. That being said, ecowanks do not require a lot of detail to be powerful and pleasurable experiences. Their structure can be very simple, and yet there is extraordinary sweetness, sexiness, and a sense of community in every one.

And remember: if there's ever a time when taking time to receive, surrender, and simply be can lead to particularly beautiful experiences, it's at the end of an ecowank. Make sure you factor in time to lie back, look at the sky, and give thanks for your place on this Earth.



In this last chapter, I've invited you to expand your experience of intimacy to include the natural world around you. My wish for you is that you leave it having planted the seeds of a more conscious and more mutual relationship with our planet, and with the family of things without which we could not exist, or taste pleasure. Having dipped your toes into the possibility of intimacies with the manifest world, I invite you to take a further leap of faith, and journey with me now into intimacy with the unseen ...