“A Journey To The Shining Isle,” by Starhawk Taken out of Circle Round by Starhawk, Diane Baker, & Anne Hill.

I have changed some parts of the story to suit the celebration. (Carol)

Circle around sisters and imagine...The air is filled with an earthy, animal smell. Before you stands the glowing spirit of Grandfather Deer, the oldest and wisest stag. He proudly wears many-branching antlers on his head.

“Hop on my back,” says Grandfather Deer. “I will take you someplace.”

You climb on his back, and hold tight onto his antlers. He moves so swiftly and smoothly. You feel like you are flying. You fly out of these woods, over the trees, out into the spirit world of swirling color.

At last you come to a sandy beach by the shore of a dark ocean. You are not afraid, even though you cannot see much in the dark.

“Get down off my back,” Grandfather Deer says. “I cannot take you any farther. Now you must go on by boat.”

You slide down off Grandfather Deer’s back, and thank him. A boat glides across the water and you hear the crunch of sand under the keel as it reaches the beach.

“Do you wish to ride in my boat?” says a voice. You can’t see anyone, but you know the voice is magic because it sounds different to everyone who hears it. Some hear a woman’s voice, some hear a man’s. Some hear a child or an animal or a bird. What do you hear?

“Do you wish to visit the Shining Isle across the Sunless Sea?” the voice says.

“Yes,” you say.

“Then you must gift me something.”

What gift do you give?

“Climb into my boat,” the voice says.

You climb aboard, and the boat slips away from shore. It moves silently over the dark water.

In the distance, something shines. Slowly it grows bigger and brighter. You begin to smell something very sweet on the air, something that reminds you of fruit and flowers.

Now you can see the shining thing is an island in the distance that grows bigger as you approach. On the shore are beautiful trees and flowers that shine with a light of their own.

“Who lives on that island?” you ask.

“The beloved dead, and the unborn,” says the voice.

“Am I dead?” you ask.

“No. Tonight is Samhain, the only night of the year when the living can visit this island.”

The boat reaches the shore, and the sand scrapes under its keel.

“Thank you!” you say, jumping off and wading through shallow water to the shore.

You step up onto the shore of a magic land that looks different to every person who comes here. You see the most beautiful place you can imagine, and just the sort of place you like best, whether it’s a valley or mountains or a beautiful garden or a beach or a warm house. Someone is there to greet you, an ancestor, someone who loves you very much. Who is it? Is it someone you know and miss

and remember, or someone you have never met before? Or is it someone you have met in a dream?

You visit for a long time, and at last, when you get hungry and thirsty and tired, an old, old woman appears. She is so old her face is covered with wrinkles, but her eyes are so bright they glow like two big moons. At her feet is a big, round iron pot-a cauldron and she is stirring something in it with a big wooden spoon, around and around and around.

You go close to the cauldron and look inside. At first it seems dark, but then you notice thousands of tiny, glowing lights, like little stars. Around and around and around they swirl, until you get a little dizzy from watching them.

“Those are the souls of the dead,” the old woman says. “And they are also the souls of the unborn. In my cauldron,

I brew them back into life. Would you like to taste my brew?”

She holds out her spoon and puts one drop of her brew on your tongue. It tastes like the best thing in the world you can imagine. Just one drop is enough to leave you perfectly satisfied. You look into her eyes again and realize she is the Goddess.

“Remember this taste,” she tells you, “whenever you are afraid or have to do something hard. It will give you strength and courage But now, it is time to go.”

You say goodbye to the Goddess, to your ancestors, to everyone you have met here on the Shining Isle. You walk slowly back to the shore. At the shore the boat waits for you. You step inside and feel the scraping of the keel on the

sand as it pushes off across the dark, dark water of the Sunless Sea.

On the opposite shore Grandfather Deer waits. You smell his warm, animal smell and the rich smell of moist earth. Now the boat reaches the shore again, and you thank the magic person who has guided the boat for you. You jump out, splashing through the shallow water, and hop onto Grandfather Deer’s back.

Again you fly through the swirling colors of the spirit world, back over the treetops, back to these woods. You thank Grandfather Deer as you slide down from his back and feed him his special apple. Then you stand in this circle of women, safe and loved, and ready to move forward on your journey tonight.