

The Mushroom Kingdom

By Anna Von Reitz



The past ten years have required me to interact with a constant stream of people pretending to be the kings and queens of this or that; I have even had Americans suffering under the delusion that "individual sovereignty" means something quite different, and had people from places like Cleveland trying to find a place in the weird and discredited world of the European Monarchies.

My relatives left that world and shook the dust off their sandals, so it comes as a surprise to me that anyone would think that they can just walk in off the street and declare themselves a cast member in such a "play"--- because at the end of the day, it is all a theater production in which idolatry results in other delusions. We woke up some generations ago, and realized that a resolution of the question posed by Samuel's anointing of King Saul is long overdue.

Why would anyone in their right mind want to appoint another man (or woman) to rule over them?

Imagine my relief to find myself walking down the driveway in search of a lost dog, and see a forest full of King Boletes, the largest Porcini-type mushrooms?

They had come up overnight in response to the recent rains, and hidden under the thick leaf litter of our northern arboreal forest of mixed spruce and birch and alder trees, grown to a stupendous size, beautiful white stems, red-brown caps, and spongy cream-colored pore tissue under the cap. Not a bug or worm in sight.

I thought I must be dreaming and ran back home for a basket to collect them, and having donned a proper anorak and captured the errant dog, plodded back down the road, collection basket and sharp knife in hand.

As long as I was thrust into mushroom harvesting mode, I decided to look around and immediately found myself in the Mushroom Kingdom, a magical place where everything is as it should be, and it all makes sense to a practiced eye.

The showy red Amanitas with white spots blaring out their warning --- "Hey, I'm poisonous! Look out for me!" were present in abundance, too. Shaggy Manes, Inky

Caps, Puffballs, Oyster Mushrooms, Shelf Fungi -- but, alas, no Turkeytails. Plenty of Chaga. I stood silent and breathing deep, taking in the rain-washed forest tapestry, remembering other rainy summers and autumns.

My first introduction to the Mushroom Kingdom came from my Mother and her childhood friend, Elvie Nandory, a small butternut-brown Flemish woman with smooth skin crinkled at the corners of her eyes --- which were always smiling somehow, looking at the natural world with amused affection. My Mother was an inveterate forager with a vast knowledge of herbs and roots and medicines inherited from her pharmacologist ancestors, but Elvie was more like an elf herself, someone not quite of this world and steeped in a knowledge far deeper than words.

She moved through the forest as silently as wind, stopping to mark a patch of Wintergreen, and then listening intently to a bird, then moving on carefully glancing at the ground and the trunks of the trees, searching for wild mushrooms ---especially morels.

So I spent my childhood days, tagging along, listening, looking, learning. And carrying home baskets of plums and apples from abandoned homesteads, mushrooms from the forests and the edges of old pastures, herbs and wild strawberries, willow wood for craft projects, medicines for the wounds of life, seed pods to seed new wild gardens... It was a blessed life, a magical life, and it was never, ever boring.

All those memories of other times swirled around me, echoing into the present moment, joining past to present. I drew in the biggest breath I possibly could and slowly let it go, life in, life out, all in perfect harmony.

How much better to be comfortable in play clothes and old Wellington boots, at home in the Mushroom Kingdom, crystal rain drops ringing the hood of my anorak? --- than to attend all the fussy state dinners that could ever be?

Give me the Mushroom Kingdom and the forest clad in infinite variety, and I will not yearn for Versailles or the frozen majesty of Westminster or any kingdom made by men, nor will I serve any king, but the King of Heaven who made all this and gave it to me --- and you --- as an inheritance.

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