

Tee-shirt design for NABC III held in the Mish bioregion, by Alison Lang.

FANTASY OF A LIVING FUTURE

Starhawk

You are walking the dogs up on the hill they call La Matria, the Mother's Womb. Below is spread a sparkling panorama of the city, a living tapestry of rainbow colors on a warp of green. Toward the west, the Maiden's Breasts thrust their twin peaks up into a clear sky. All during Sunreturn Moon, fireworks lit the sky there, celebrating La Purisima, the festival of the conception of the Virgin. The streets were filled with processions, the Catholics and the Pagans dancing together without arguing about which Virgin they were celebrating, and everyone else in the city, it seemed, joining in just for the fun of it.

Now it is Fruit Blossom Moon, no fog, and the winter rains have turned the hillside green, dotted with the orange of a few early poppies. Three cows graze the hillside; the dogs are used to them and ignore them. You smile a greeting at the young girl who watches them; she is sprawled on her back in the sun, not working too hard. The cows are the project of the kids from your own child's school; the neighborhood market collective buys their milk and cream, and with the money and their own labor, they are constructing what you believe must be the world's most elaborate skateboard run.

Atop the hill stands a circle of stones. You pause for a moment, feeling the energy of the city, the hill, the sky all converge here, remembering the bonfires and the dancing and the rituals. On the Jewish New Year, they blow the shofar, the ancient ram's horn, here. On the Winter Solstice, you climb this hill at dawn to welcome the newborn sun.

To the east stretches the bay. The air is so clear today that you can see all the way to Coyote Mountain in the distant hills. Great

flocks of pelicans and seabirds wheel and dive around the fleets of fishing boats, their bright-colored sails plumped out by the breeze. Among them sail the great ocean-going trade ships, their huge sails spread like wings. No need today to switch to the solar batteries; the wind is strong.

You call the dogs and head down the winding, processional way, reveling in the scent of the blossoms from the apple trees that line the walkway. You glance into the gardens of the houses on the hill; it would be a great day to double-dig your tomato bed and plant out the seedlings. The dogs run ahead as you follow the road down, past the park at the bottom of the hill. Sidewalk cafes line the park; you spend pleasant hours there watching the kids play on the slides and swings, taking your turn, as do most of the neighborhood adults, on playground watch.

Now the walkway narrows as you turn down your street. On your left are the front gardens of the old Victorian houses. On your right, a low greenhouse structure lines the roadbed where trolley cars and electric autos

run on the one-way street. The greenhouse is the neighborhood waste treatment plant, where banked rows of water hyacinths are aquacultured to purify wastes and generate clean water and compost.

You pass another small park, where a group of older people sit conversing under walnut and almond trees. Like everyone else on the street, they are a mix of races. Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, all contribute to their heritage, and you smile with pleasure, for to see a group of elders who embody the Four Quarters is considered extremely good fortune. "Blessed be the elders; blessed be the Four quarters that complete the circle," you murmur as you pass.

There are several elders' houses on the block: equipped with elevators and intercoms, the older people can live independently in a suite of rooms with someone always on call; some take turns cooking and baking, some pool together and hire local teenagers to cook and clean. In your own house, each of you cook once every two weeks. Once a week, you eat out at friends' or go to restaurants. On another night, you go to the neighborhood dining club, where, for a fixed membership fee, a collective provides a good organic meal. The dining club is a place to meet, talk, socialize, do informal business, and talk politics.

The fruit trees that line the sidewalks are very old now, planted years ago as an attempt to provide free food for the hungry. Now, of course, no one goes hungry. The very thought is barbaric, amidst all this abundance. No one lacks shelter, or care when sick, or a chance to contribute to the work that sustains abundance.

You open the door to your collective house. The dogs run in. Your computer sings to you: someone has left you a message. One of your housemates calls to you to tell you the news.

"The ship's in! The Chocolate Consortium called—they want everyone who can to come down there and help unload."

All thoughts of gardening disappear. You hop on your bicycle and speed down the

path that winds past houses, shops, and parks to the docks.

The ship is in from Central America: one of the great winged traders, carrying your long-awaited shipment of cocoa beans and cane sugar. You greet your co-workers from the Truffle Collective and say hello to your friends from the other collectives in the consortium: the Candymakers, the Bakers, the representative from the Ice Cream Consortium, the Chocolate Chip Cooperative. Together, you unload the heavy sacks, count the inventory, and examine their other wares: the finely crafted hammocks, the innovations in intelligent crystal technology in which Central America leads the way. The ship will return laden with fine Sonoma wines, precision tools from the East Bay foundries, artichokes from Santa Cruz, and, of course, a load of state-of-the-art skateboards from the City.

You have arranged this deal yourself and it has been a complicated one. Your work collective is part of an extensive tradeweb, involving the households of your members, your sister collectives in the Delta grain-growing region and the Wine Country, your lover, who works in an East Bay steel mill, where the worker cooperatives pride themselves on producing the finest alloys in the cleanest, safest plants in the country, your ex-lover, who is a computer genius, and your housemate's brother, who repairs and maintains ships. You can resort to currency if you need to: the City's money is good anywhere, but you prefer to trade when you can. Fortunately, with a few exceptions, everybody loves truffles. The Tofu and Tempeh Consortium won't touch sugar products, but many of the soybean growers have voracious sweet tooths, so it all works out.

The work is hard but you enjoy the physical labor as you all talk and joke together. It's a nice change from the candy kitchen and the computer terminal. The smells and the staccato sound of Spanish remind you of the winter you spent visiting the Cooperativa de Cacao, where the beans come from. You remember the lush fields of corn and

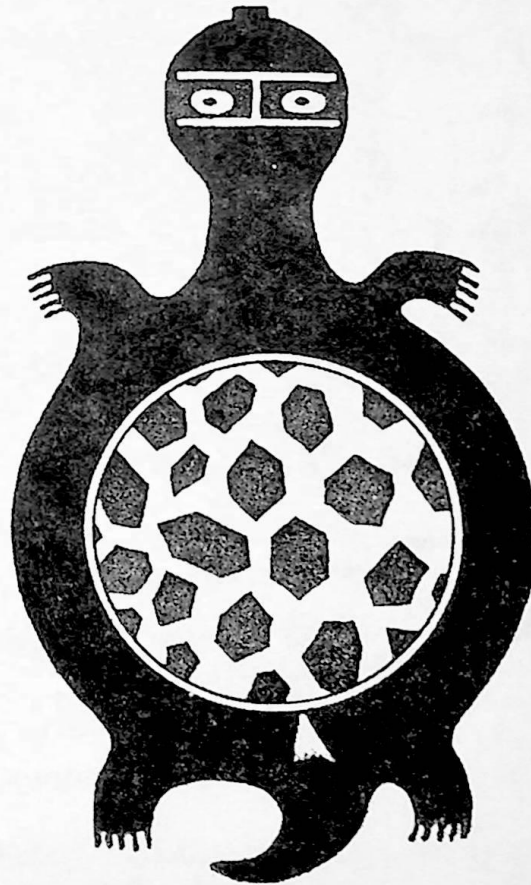
vegetables, the sturdy children, the trees you helped plant to hold the slopes of the mountain, the doorways open to the mild nights and the people calling out as you took an evening stroll. The visit cemented the friendships that established your trade contacts.

Finally, the whole shipment is packed away on electrotrucks that will take it back to the factory. The captain invites you and your friends up to her cabin for a cold drink. After you ritually exchange compliments and computer software, you invite her and her *compañeros* to spend the evening with you. The moon will be full tonight; your ritual circle will meet up on the hill and guests will be welcome. You will dance to the moon and then head downtown, for it is Chinese New Year and the dragon will dance through the streets. There will be fireworks, parades, and

celebrations.

You bicycle home. In the last hour of daylight, you have time to pull a few weeds and turn the compost. Your household, like most of the city's living groups, grows much of its own food, providing all its salad greens, most vegetables, many fruits, nuts, and herbs. Your housemate feeds the chickens and milks your goat. You can shower, soak your sore muscles in the hot tub, chat with your child, and relax before dressing for the celebration. It's been a long day—but a good one. Now for some good food, and you'll be ready to dance all night in the friendly streets aglow with moonlight.

(From *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.)



Mimbres pottery design.