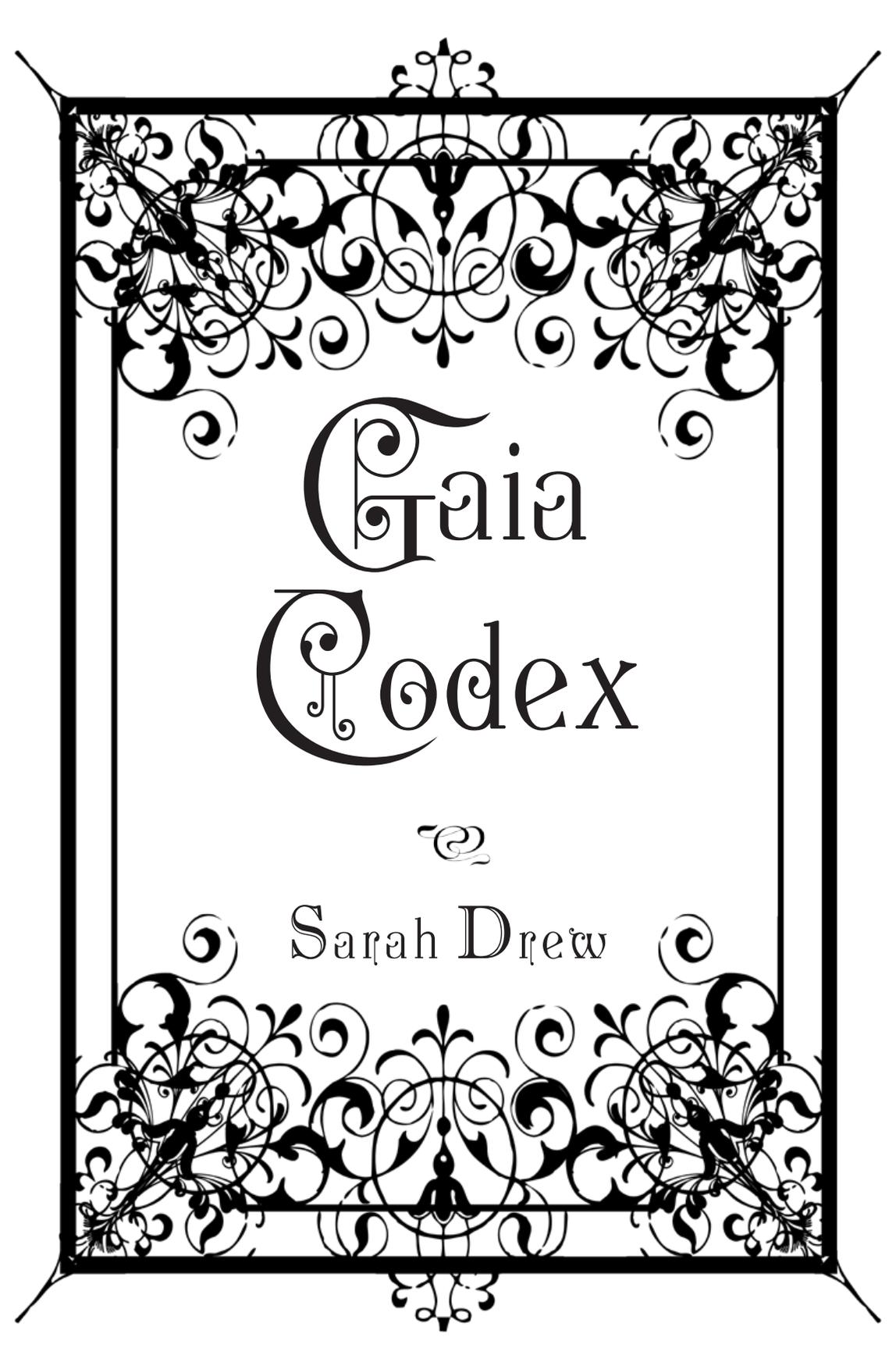


Gaia Codex



SARAH...DREW



Gaia
Codex

—

o Sarah Drew o



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*For Nicole, Page and Greta ... and all Dear
Sisters connected through time.*



PART THREE

Delphi





CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Sibyls, seers, and prophetesses—for millennia, women such as these guided the affairs of men and the fates of dynasties and kingdoms. But everything changes, and what was once revered became shunned and feared. The Oracle is quiet through many cycles, waiting for the wheel to turn.

Gaia Codex: Node 55.821.91

THE ROAD TO Delphi snakes and winds up toward Mount Parnassus, home of the *Pythia* and the mysterious oracle priestesses. It is an ancient thoroughfare, once travelled by kings and queens, scholars and peasants, and warriors and healers in search of answers about life, death, and destiny. I inhale deeply. I feel my breath in my chest. I notice the tops of my hands. I feel the beat of my heart. Instinctively, I touch my tongue to the roof of my mouth. These are all techniques that Old Woman taught me for navigating the world of the Dreaming.

I open my eyes again. I am at the top of this long road among fallen marble pillars softened and rounded by time. The grounds appear empty. The sun is high in the sky. I walk ahead as a gentle breeze cools my skin.

I see her first from a distance. Perched upon one of the marble blocks, her face partially covered by glistening black hair. Her eyes steady on the horizon. As I quietly walk forward, I see that she appears to be my age or just a little bit older. I am drawn—the bee to the flower, the sprout to the sun, the wave to the shore. My body is electrified. I feel the startled connection when lightning touches the ground: a visceral sensation like the one that has always come to me before a vision, ever since I was a child. The flow of a poem, or the singing of those songs that erupt from the depths and make us cry out new melodies that shape our mouth—the kiss of the Muse, the Goddess, as she descends to speak. As I move closer, she turns and smiles at me. Her eyes are deep green, magnetic. She is casually dressed in black trousers and boots, with a finely tailored black blouse.

“Do you remember being here before?” she asks.

“Pardon?” I am not sure if I have heard her clearly.

I look into her face, and again I shudder with electricity.

“We often make the mistake of thinking that our history begins in one life and that our memories extend only from the moment of our birth,” she answers.

“Those who follow the more ancient rituals of life are rare in these times, but there are a few of us still wandering the planet.”

“I am Lila Sophia.” My introduction is clumsy but I do not know what else to do. I am mesmerized.

“And I am Rhea.” She is close to me now, just inches away. Her skin is as pale as the moon and her eyes, the deepest green.

Her voice awakens an intimacy that swells up inside me, known but unknown, and the sound exposes memories I never knew I lost. The web of connection and lineage is deep. I feel that ancient streams shape her words, despite her appearance of youth.

Hot tears swell in my eyes. “I recognize you, but there is so much that I am just remembering,” I whisper. Something inside me is unwinding, releasing, and remembering things long forgotten.

I know her like my own skin and breath.

“They say we priestesses know each other when we meet. Do you think this is true, Lila?” I do not immediately respond. I am entranced by the rhythms of our mutual breath.

“I know that we are here right now and that you feel deeply familiar to me,” I finally answer.

As we stand, a white owl swoops overhead, flying low, almost alighting upon us. *It is the owl of Minerva. It is Athena—the Goddess of Wisdom. In ancient Greece her name was Glaukopis: she of the owl eyes, the clear eyes, shimmering, translucent, gleaming eyes, eyes like sapphires that see beyond the beyond.*

“We help each other, Lila Sophia, you and I. Lock and key.” Her voice is tender. *This is how it has been—in the past, the future, and in this moment now.*

The tears that roll down my cheeks are unexpected, and I let myself rest in her open arms.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Technologies surpassing those we currently know span ancient and future time, and yet today, many do not recognize them. Instead they remain hidden placed in plain sight where all might see, in a mountain, a rock, or a tree. What better place than this to hide such treasures of wisdom that have been carefully stored for the future?

Gaia Codex: Node 333.45.851

RHEA AND I walk, arm in arm, toward the Phaedriades: tall cliffs known by the ancients as the “Shining Ones,” portals and doorways to the inner sanctum of the Delphic Oracle.

“As you may remember, the Pythia, the oracles of Delphi, were priestesses, initiates of the lineage of the Goddess Gaia, Mother Earth. A select number of the Pythia were also Priestesses of Astera. It seemed a perfect fit for our clan. It allowed us to speak and share our knowledge directly with people from all walks of life,” Rhea explains.

We are now at the base of the cliffs, in a cool and sheltered ravine where water rushes and echoes against the walls. Rhea kneels down and puts her hands into the stream. She then places two of her wet fingers softly onto her tongue.

“This is the Castalian Spring, the ancient waters where seekers cleanse themselves before entering the hidden chamber, the *adyton*, where revelations are revealed.”

As Rhea speaks, echoes of the water resonate against shadowed cliff faces. The sound seems to carry other chants, ancient callings that fill the spaces between.



In the flow of the Castalian waters you can empty yourself of everything—the past, the present, the future. Become a pure, open vessel for the wisdom of the Oracle. For these Castalian waters are the sweet wine of muses. Imbibe deeply and words will run from your mouth. The wisdom of the ages will become the blood that flows through the rivers of your veins.

Gaia Codex: Node 45.681.731



These words flow through me. I think back to Old Woman’s words: “The knowledge of the Codex is here in the trees. It is here in the streams, in the mountains and the breeze. If you know how to read it.”

Rhea again takes two fingers and dips them into the water. She then touches my forehead. Instinctively, I stick out my

tongue for sacrament. The water moistens my lips as it falls from her fingers.

We move further into the ravine.

“Lila Sophia.” Rhea draws me in closer. Instinctively our foreheads touch. We inhale and exhale breath, synchronized in rhythm.

“Thank you for coming. The task before us cannot be done alone.” Her words fall between each breath.

“It is fated,” I answer. There is no hesitation as I say this for I know it is true. Looking into her eyes is like gazing into the depths of my own soul—different and yet my own. It is the continuation of a story started long ago.

The light shifts ever so slightly, and Rhea takes my hand. “The ancient Greeks considered this place the center of the Earth, the belly button of the world. In myth two eagles flew from either side of the earth, crossing paths here in Delphi, at the center point, the inner sanctum where the Pythia, the oracle priestess, sat on a tripod chair, her legs opened and exposed to receive the Mother Earth herself.”

In front of us is a weathered stone, four feet high, shaped into a dome. As I look closer, I notice that a web is carved into the stone surface. The object is curious and compelling, both mysterious and familiar.

Rhea continues, “It is an *omphalos*. This stone marked the entry into the Oracle’s inner sanctum. The name translates loosely as the belly button of the world.”

“The *omphalos*.” The name rolls over my tongue.

Rhea runs her fingers across the carved stone net. “Look closely, Lila.”

As the sounds of the Castalian stream gurgle in the

background, the surface of the stone begins to shimmer, and the stone web takes on a translucent, luminous hue, vibrating and moving. The *omphalos* appears as both a stone and an active, living hologram with each node of the net seemingly reflecting all the other nodes. In some I see images, flashing pictures that seem to be drawn from both the past and the future.

“It is an activation of the *Hieros Delphus*, the *matrix* as they call it in Latin, or the Divine Womb, the birthright of every woman. It also is a representation of the Gaia Codex itself. In times past, it served as a reminder to both men and women of our deep essential connection to the web of life. To all time and space.”

The *omphalos* in front of us shudders—a living, breathing net of life contained within a circumscribed space—seemingly infinite. “It is beautiful,” I say softly, “and so deeply known.” I feel myself opening up to things I have kept long hidden, to pasts that I have known.

“It is a technology that many have forgotten. We priestesses have protected it for many cycles,” Rhea says. “The *ophamolos* here at Delphi is one representation that has allowed people to access the Gaia Codex, the records of Earth.”

The echoes of the Castalian Spring continue to resonate through the ravine. Moist sweetness of water fills the air.

Rhea grasps my hand again as we move forward. There is a pulse of energy between us.

Rhea pauses. “Can you see it?”

The cliff ahead is in shadows. Form masked in possibility. I squint my eyes, trying to see. As I deepen my focus, the shadows on the cliff appear to shift.

“I see it.” There is a vibration, a movement, solid matter transforming.

“Will you come with me, Lila Sophia?” Rhea’s green eyes are bright as she stares deep into mine. I feel attraction, desire, and destiny as we stand here together. So close. My flesh touching hers.

“Yes.” Her hand is warm and wraps around mine.



As we approach the cliff wall together, my body temperature rises in tandem with the vibration that explodes from inside. The syllable HUM—HUM—HUM resonates like a hive of bees on a warm summer day, yet today the bees are the cells of my body, vibrating at higher and higher velocities. *Our ability to work with matter like this is not limited to the dream realms*, Rhea silently reminds me.

The rock cliff before us becomes fluid. We are a connected field—our bodies and the solid surface of the wall—and it is with ease that both Rhea and I move through it, my body heating up, melding with rock, then passing through into darkness.



CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Descend once—and you are opened, broken, and revealed.

Descend twice—and others look to you for the path.

Descend thrice—and Below and Above become as One.

Gaia Codex: Node 23.22.321

CROSSING THE BOUNDARY, we are inside. Darkness permeates, the temperature drops, scents swell—the dankness of the interior Earth, suddenly, wholly consumes. In the blackness all other senses come to life. My hand is on Rhea's back. I feel the warmth of her skin through her soft cotton shirt as we slowly make our way down the narrow shaft.



We humans enter this mortal coil in the velvet warmth—the midnight of our Mother's Womb. The human embryo's senses come to us in stages—first we feel, then we smell, then we taste, hear, and see.

In the diurnal, nocturnal turn of Mother Earth, every twenty-four hours we plunge into night and then into day: darkness and light, the essential rhythms of this terrestrial life. To hold on to one or the other brings only loss; we humans are the alchemy of both.

Gaia Codex: Node 4445.7811



Our footsteps echo as Rhea and I descend into the bowels of the Earth. Rock walls narrow: our shoulders brush against the porous limestone surface on either side. Our breath shortens as we are compressed. It is black upon black.

We are guided by smell and touch: laurel leaf infused with musky labdanum, the royal aroma of mastic, the sweet clarity of iris, warming amber, and electron. The rhythm of our footsteps echoes in the cavernous labyrinth.

Immersed in darkness, our sight is a sacrifice to the Goddesses, so that we may truly see.



After some time, a sharp turn reveals a small chamber, brightly lit with flaming torches. The air is heavy with fumes, the incense is intoxicating. I grasp Rhea for support. She holds me steady.

In the center of the room is a woman perched on a high tripod throne, her legs spread wide over what appears to be a crevice in the Earth pulsing vapors and mist. The woman's long black hair is plaited into multiple braids and hangs in a wild frenzied mass past her waist, covering her face. Her breasts are exposed, voluptuous, fecund, and full. The Oracle, the Pythia, the priestess of Delphi revealed, the Mother in her subterranean element.

The Oracle sways back and forth. She chants, guided by ancient, stellar, telluric rhythms that undulate her body, first as a murmur and then as the wild, unfurled dance of the Serpent climbing up her spine, that Tree of Life rising inside every human, waiting to be ignited.

Rhea and I move in closer, listening as the stream of chant flows and erupts from the Oracle's lips. Her salty sweat flicks onto my skin, our skin, as she moves in wild spiraled spins.

This penetrating voice has echoed in my mind longer than I can remember. This lyrical, lucid tongue composes a body woven from words, a body much larger than my own and yet integral to my essence. As I listen, the Oracle's rounded vowels and plosive consonants transpose into words that I intuitively comprehend.

Rhea says nothing, but she is by my side, holding my hand tight. My flesh is hot. Hers is cool and clear.

The Oracle slowly looks up. Her eyes are glistening, the deepest black. Flashing and piercing, they are ringed with charcoal kohl. There are symbols drawn and tattooed on her forearms and on her cheeks: spirals and circles, captivating geometries, the scrolling of ancient alphabets, perhaps from the future or from civilizations long since past.

The Oracle leans in. Her glance acknowledges our presence and pierces straight through us as well, as though her focus also encompasses universes that rise and fall, expand and contract, on distant horizons.

My curiosity ascends, and I am about to say something when Rhea sharply grabs my wrist warning me of ancient protocols: the Oracle will speak first.

The sway and swirl of her movements slow as the Oracle takes her place on the tripod throne.

Her eyes pierce deep into my heart, melting resistance, protection, and ignorance. I am riveted. I am exposed.

Sisters, fellow priestesses,

The Glass shatters.

Passing through the Mirror,

Present in the Translucency,

The Veils of Time dissolve and melt.

We join as One.

You see me, and I see you.

Dreams and premonitions come to Life.

At the Center of the World,

The Wheel does not spin.

In this stillness, in this timelessness,

All is revealed.

There are those who remember

Through the cycles of birth and death,

Through rise and fall of civilizations,

Through the birth and death of worlds.

The Oracle pauses for a moment. I slowly exhale and am perfectly still as she continues.

*For many cycles the Oracle has rested in silence.
Answering no queries, heeding no calls.*

*There is a time to hold the council of silence
There is a time to speak Truth.
There is a time when ancient seeds, long dormant,
Are once more planted and fully bloom.*

The Oracle continues to sway back and forth, her voluptuous body undulating in spiral rhythms, ever turning, ever twisting, moving upward and outward. My hand is tightly in Rhea's.

*We are dear sisters, fellow priestesses, at the Great
Turning
When the future of humanity is being dreamed, created,
and activated.
Death begets new Life.
Humanity's future will be different from its past.
And my sisters, my fellow priestesses, it is time for us to
activate
These ancient, timeless codes that we have been protecting
That we have nourished through the rise and fall of
civilizations.*

I listen, I feel, I taste, I embody, I know with sweet intimacy the Oracle's fertile words as they flow from her mouth and enliven me. They are mine, they are hers, they are ours, and they are known. Words that create worlds.

The warmth of Rhea's flesh grounds me and anchors me.
The Oracle continues.

This ancient Codex, this Gaia Codex has been passed down through the ages. This ancient lineage of priestesses, these Priestesses of Astera, have nurtured and protected it, waiting to reveal its content in times such as these, when one world dies, and another is born.

The revelation of the Codex is held by many, not by one. It is revealed in the communion and synergy of many coming together as One, when the parts become larger than the whole.

All of Life is connected—and in this remembering, we become whole with all of Life itself.

As the Oracle speaks, my senses overwhelm. I see. I feel.

Cities filled with millions of bodies, people moving through their lives, grey in color, robotic in their actions, their soul-pulse faint and tepid. Mother Earth dead and quiet with no discernable sentient life, her lush fecundity burned barren. A man crouches alone bent, broken, crying dry tears, crushed under the weight of a wound that will not heal, the collective wound of humanity. A child cries, and there is no Mother to hold it.

The Oracle pauses.

Like pieces of a puzzle, the secrets and seeds of the Gaia Codex are held at different parts of the Planet, within ancient traditions, the storytelling of the tribes who live through many cycles. We priestesses help weave the pieces together for the benefit of all Being. This path calls for the utmost purity of heart.

The Oracle looks directly at me.

Are you willing to offer everything? For you will be asked no less than this.

The Oracle's eyes pierce my heart. Rhea's warm hand steadies my body.

What more must I offer? What must I give? I wonder.

Your identity, your heart, your life, and your death.

The Oracle answers as her voice pierces my head.

I shudder. My eyes roll back as Rhea catches me in her arms.

I do not know if it is I or the Oracle who brings her hands together over her heart, bows low and then sinks back into the silence of this hallowed cave. In this moment we are one.



When I open my eyes, the chamber of the Oracle is empty. It is cold and dark. Rhea and I return ascending to the opening and to light. We hold hands. We speak no words.

Far away, I hear morning sounds in London as the Phaedriades, and the sounds of the Castalian stream begin to fade. "We will see each other soon," Rhea says, "in the waking world."

I am not ready to leave her. When I open my eyes, to London and to the morning light, she is gone.