

The Sentinel Oak

By Susa Morgan Black



*I am the Sentinel Oak
The Wise One of the Druids
And Native Americans,
The guardian of Time, and
The shifting of the Lands.*

*Gnarled, hoary, and arcane, am I,
Who has withstood the centuries, the eons,
The ages of fire and ice.*

*I've scattered my progeny
To the continents of the world,
Nestled deep in sere canyons,
And cool mountain valleys,
Resting in gentle rolling hills,
Dancing deep within forests,
Spreading wide in warm savannahs,
Standing lone on a rocky coastal cliff,
Withstanding the gales of a salty island.*

*Home I am to the birds and the squirrels,
My acorn their nourishing meal,
My branches their nest, their shade, and
Their solace on an inclement day.
The wind, my friend, spreads my catkin-bearing
Seed to the land beyond my mighty branches,
And I am renewed again and again.*

*I've built man's homes and tools and wheels,
I've fed his belly, fed his fires, and dyed his clothes.
His children have climbed my branches to
See their world from above.
His arboreal mother and father,
I've shaded and warmed and protected his family
from want and weather,
From the beginning of history.
And now he comes with his saws and his tractor,
For he needs my ground for his home.
If man does not remember our ancient pact
My kind will be no more.*