

## **Water and the Woodcutters: Water's Power in Aletha Kontis' *Woodcutter* series**

While water is a powerful symbol for rebirth and renewal, we tend to ignore the role of the destructive side. The plots of books and novels often center around drought and floods, which resolve themselves in a traditional renewal or regeneration. These symbolic changes are common for purification by water, but authors rarely dwell on the negative results of water's power. Floods tend to be plot-points: a challenge for the protagonist to overcome, a setting for a story, or an event that changes the protagonist's point of view. If something like a flood is seen in-depth in fiction, it's in a story about the struggle to survive the flood and escape.

Renewal and growth from the destructive side of water is dealt with less frequently. Once the flood setting is dealt with, unless it's a man vs. nature adventure, the story focuses on the new life that was created. The duality of the water's force—both for destruction and renewal is clearly seen in the *Woodcutter* series by Alethea Kontis.

Water, both creative and destructive, is a driving force in the fictional country of Ariland, at least for the *Woodcutter* sisters. The first novel, *Enchanted*, starts with a version of "The Princess and the Frog," beginning with an animal closely connected to flood and rain in many cultures. Saturday, as they say, "broke the world" when she inadvertently caused a massive flood by calling the ocean to her home. And Friday is increasingly associated with rainbows, especially as she helps deal with the aftermath of the flood.

Through these three books of the sisters' adventures, they experience both the good and bad of water. The effects of water on the sisters, their family, and the country are explored. There are the large themes, such as the flood in *Hero* and *Dearest*, and the smaller motifs such as the water-related adjectives.

These books present an interesting view of the range of water's power, both positive and negative. It's a range of power that is also located in and around female control.