The Prairie Pagans

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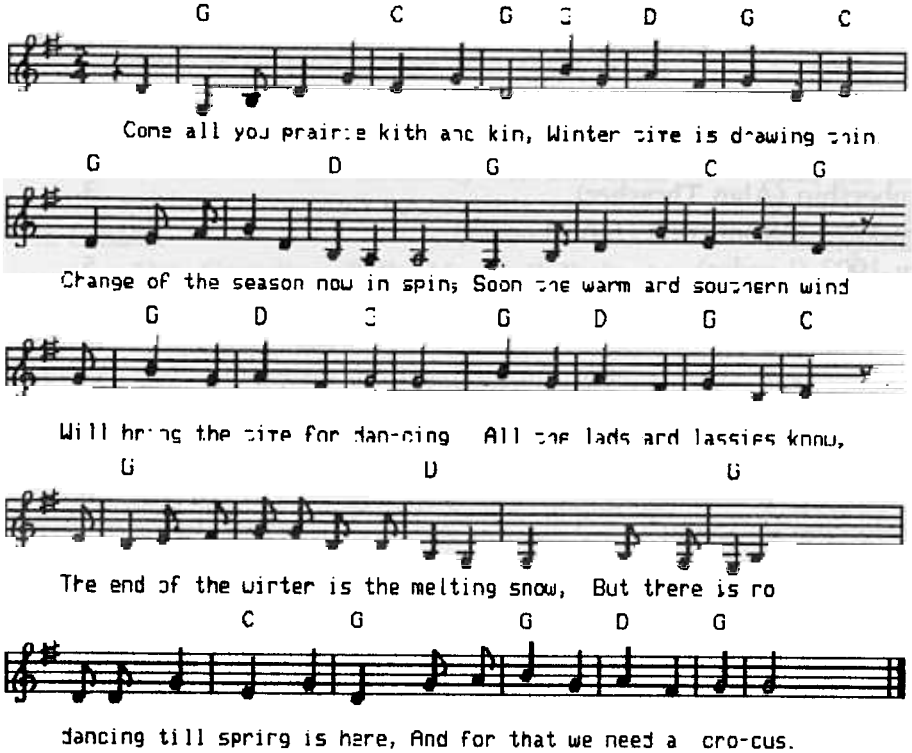

sung by Paddy Tutty on her recording
Prairie Druid PAO3.

Come all you prairie kith and kin,
Winter's time is drawing thin.
Change of the season's now in spin;
Soon the warm and southern wind
Will bring the time for dancing.
All the lads and lassies know,
The end of the winter is the melting snow,
But there is no dancing till spring is here,
And for that we need a crocus.

So don your coats and rubber boots,
We'll chart our course and plan our routes,
Down across the pasture;
Off we go in hot pursuits,
We're off to hunt the crocus!
Now we mind the dangers there,
The barbed-wire fence and the cactus fair.
The rose bush prickles and the old grey mare,
And it's all for the want of a crocus.

We need a crocus as a sign of spring,
It surely is a sacred thing,
Not an excuse for a prairie fling;
Soon its praises we'll have to sing,
All we want is a crocus!
An early gopher will not do,
A pussy willow or a goose or two,
Though a buttercup might have to do,
If we cannot find a crocus.

Our journey ends when someone says,
Behold! A fuzzy and purple head,
All in a brown and grassy bed;
So still, it may be live or dead,
My god! We've found the crocus!
So let the season now be spring,
Arm in arm we'll dance and sing,
Heel and toe we'll form a ring,
All around the crocus.

It's homeward now we must repair,
The way is clear, the weather fair,
Back across the pasture;
We bid farewell to a comrade there,
For we shall not pick the crocus!
Of all the times, if choose I may,
To be out on the prairie on an April day,
It's there I'll pass the time away,
It's all for the love of a crocus!

...cont'd on page 4.

"There is a little-known group of pagans who live on the Canadian Prairies. They peacefully observe the changing of the seasons as marked by solstices, equinoxes, planting, harvesting and so on. However, the real coming of spring is not at the March 20 equinox, not when the last bit of snow disappears, not when Peter Gzowski starts talking about the signs of spring on 'Morningside', but rather at the appearance of the first prairie crocus. There is always a certain amount of fearful anxiety if the quest for the first sighting should fail; winter would end, but spring would fail to materialize. This means that all of the other spring rituals (dancing, singing, eating, drinking, mating, etc.) could not proceed. A year out of balance and harmony would surely follow. Fortunately, there are almost always at least a few crocuses. On the rare occasion of a no-crocus year, another prairie tradition kicks into gear -- making do with what you've got. 'A buttercup might have to do...'."

This is not the "crocus" known to horticulturalists. The Prairie Crocus is given many names in wildflower books, including at least three Latin ones: Anemone Patens, Anemone Ludoviciana and Pulsatilla Ludoviciana; some of its English names are Pasqueflower, Prairie Anemone, Windflower, Blue Tulip, American Pulsatilla, Wild Crocus and Lion's Beard. But of course Prairie Crocus is its real name. -- *J.L.*