



Gylden Magick

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Feb. 2024

PRACTICAL MAGICK & UNIVERSAL ENERGY FOR EVERYDAY LIFE

Editor's notes

By Gylden Fellowship

Welcome to **GYLDEN MAGICK** – the spiritual magazine from Gylden Fellowship that spans both traditional and newer pagan beliefs and practice.

Dear readers of **GYLDEN MAGICK**,

It's February (the **Snow Moon**) – I've been reflecting on love and new projects. Let's start with love, once the staple demand of many community witches. Of course, it's the **Feast of St Valentine** on 14 February, but also the Roman festival of **Lupercalia** on 15 February. Altar colours at this time are white, sky blue, pink and rose, with Brighid crosses or dolls to adorn.

On the topic of love though, it's not just romantic love – the Ancient Greeks defined different types of love: eros (most like modern romantic love), philia (love between friends), storge (love of family),

agape (altruism) and philautia (self-love or hubris).

Imbolg offers the opportunity for planning new projects, while the winter rages outside. Talking of that, the birth flower for February is the violet, which indicates modesty and loyalty.

This is a time to imagine yourself as a seed or a bulb, dormant in the soil, but ready to flower once the pagan events start to re-appear.

We continue with the celestial forecasts, love spells, laments and sacred art on the Chinese New Year. Our crystal expert, Charlie, turns her attention to amethyst and, also, fluorite. Our science writer, Mark, has two pieces this month – lost continents and the growth of the universe. We also feature pieces on swamp magick, church bells in folklore and photos from the Rio

Carnival that occurs on 9-17 February.

In past years, we would be frantic with preparations for the Enchanted Market, but not so in 2024. We look forward to the gradual return of the festivals, camps, fayres and markets in a post-covid world. It didn't take very long for the markets and fayres to return to medieval communities after the Black Death – there's lots of hope for our community in 2024, with the Wandering Witches' Fayre in April.

Thank you for all your feedback and many blessings.

Gylden Fellowship admins

For more info, why not join **Gylden River LRC** or **Gylden Fellowship** groups on Facebook today?

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February crystals

By Charlie Foreverdark and Nic the Witch

Charlie Foreverdark is still coping with her new addition to the family! Many congratulations to Charlie and Rob on the arrival of their baby, River Castiel. So, we're looking at the correspondence crystals for February and their healing properties, using some of Charlie's notes from previous years – the key ones are amethyst and fluorite.

Amethyst is one of my favourite stones - a staple in my healing work, alongside snow quartz and blue lace agate. The best stones come from Brazil, South Korea, the USA and Canada. Amethyst is a type of quartz (silicon dioxide), coloured purple from its iron content and other trace elements. As a decoration, amethyst was used in Ancient Egypt and, for protection, in the Middle Ages. And what of its healing or magickal properties?

- It is a brilliant protective stone, particularly against psychic attacks, strengthening one's spiritual defences.
- Amethyst is good for headaches and stress. I have a charm that uses amethyst to ward off bad dreams and keep a piece on the bedside cabinet.
- Further, it's good for meditation and mental health issues involving anger management.
- Amethyst is effective with the throat chakra and can be used to cleanse one's aura.
- It gives serenity to anybody suffering from anxiety or depression by relieving emotional pain, trauma or psychological stress.
- It is a safe stone to use in crystal essences, using the direct method.
- It's a good crystal for the immune system by cleansing.
- Amethyst is good when worn as jewellery, perhaps in a pendant, but single point crystals are great for drawing energy in particular directions. Don't forget that amethyst can fade in direct sunlight.
- It's not often recognised, but amethyst is a calming stone for those recovering from addiction of any sort. Suffice to say, I have personal experience of this and have used amethyst as a balancing crystal for many years.

Fluorite is a key crystal for those who wish to have peace in their lives and, also, to improve their concentration. It appears mainly in purple or green shades, but the polished version often accentuates a wand form and the crystal may show many colours under a UV light. Sometimes known as fluorspar, fluorite is the crystal form of calcium fluoride. I use a fluorite crystal in a number of spells, mainly for its amplification properties. If you add some fluorite stones or wands to others, such as quartz, aquamarine, blue lace agate, etc, you have a good basis for moonlight charms. And what of its healing or magickal properties?

- It rejects any negative energies, frustration, stress or anxiety.
- Fluorite causes peace via its green and purple hues and is very good for meditation.
- It is particularly good when used with the third eye or heart chakras – for cleansing the heart energy and promoting spiritual awareness.
- Fluorite is good for enhanced creativity and soothing over-active minds.
- So, it helps to heal those with ADD, ADHD or ODD issues.
- Similarly, fluorite is known for helping ease the tension caused by migraine or any sort of headache.
- It helps to clear any mental blockages, either by laying on of the crystal or by including fluorite in a bath.
- It can also enhance other crystals within a healing grid.
- As a calming crystal, fluorite helps with new ideas, decision-making and better concentration.

Lost Continents

By Mark Sharpen

Isn't it amazing when you come across a scientific fact and then it stays in your mind for some time? In the last few years, scientists in New Zealand publicised the fact that they'd created the most detailed map of the Zealandia continent on planet Earth. However, this giant project had a major complication: 95% of the continent was underwater.

Zealandia, sometimes referred to as Earth's eighth continent, stretches almost two million square miles (about half the size of nearby Australia) beneath the South Pacific Ocean. The majority of the continent sank about 80 million years ago, when the supercontinent of Gondwana broke apart, though pieces of it still peak out above the water, namely the islands of New Caledonia and New Zealand. So, while it's now the most mapped, Zealandia is far from the only lost continent on Earth. That's because what defines a continent has less to do with its geography and more to do with its geology. Continental crust, whether it's above or below sea level, is thick and made up of rocks like granite, rhyolite and schist. Using advanced imaging software, seismographs and traditional field work, scientists are discovering and describing other lost continents that have also fallen off the map.

Let's start with **Greater Adria**. About 240 million years ago, during the Triassic period, a Greenland-size chunk of continental crust broke away from North Africa. For the next 100–130 million years, Greater Adria, as it's now known, sat beneath shallow tropical seas filled with coral reefs. Eventually, on the move again, Greater Adria began sliding beneath Europe and into the Earth's mantle.

Despite being sucked into the mantle, the former continent wasn't completely lost. However, the top layers of Greater Adria's sedimentary rock were peeled away by the tectonic movement (a process geologists call off-scraping), creating mountain ranges in Italy, Turkey, and Greece. Today, rocks that once belonged to Greater Adria are scattered amongst 30 different countries, but a small strip of the continent remains, running from the north of Italy to the heel of the country's boot in a region referred to by geologists as Adria. In 2019, scientists finished a decade-long process of reconstructing the continent's size and shape using plate tectonic reconstruction software and seismic wave technology. They concluded that Greater Adria now lies about 932 miles beneath the surface of the Earth.



Around the time that Greater Adria began moving beneath Europe, a landmass (**Argoland**), as wide as North America, cracked off from Western Australia. A castaway in the Indian Ocean, Argoland seemed to break apart, head north and then disappear for millions of years. While most of Greater Adria was subsumed into Earth's

mantle and most of Zealandia sank, geologists couldn't find Argoland, named for a deep basin it created off the coast of western Australia, called the Argo Abyssal Plain.

Finally, last year, a team of earth science researchers claimed to have located Argoland in the jungles of South East Asia. After spending seven years recreating the lost continent's journey, they now believe the landmass began crumbling much earlier than previously believed - about 300 million years ago - forming what they called an Argipelago. When Argoland departed Australia, it was a vast system of islands and ocean basins, which all moved together before shattering. Some of Argoland's shards were eaten up by the Sunda Trench subduction zone, while others were off-scraped onto the seafloor and other land masses across South East Asia, including present-day Myanmar and Indonesia, where they lie hidden for millennia.

I suppose one could say that neither Argoland nor Greater Adria are truly *lost continents*. That is true of Zealandia too., All three have broken apart and Zealandia is still here, but underwater, more hidden than lost.

However, there are several examples of Earth's true (non-continental) lost continents.

1. **Beringia** was the land bridge that once connected Asia and North America. It carried the continent's first human inhabitants over a narrow isthmus, but at more than 4 million square miles, Beringia is actually a vanished subcontinent, according to scientists. The US National Park Service describes the lost land as "a huge tundra landscape, bounded by the stocky shoulders of two continents and stretching more than one thousand miles from north to south."
2. **Doggerland** was a landmass that connected Great Britain and Continental Europe before being submerged by a tsunami about 8000 years ago, Archaeologists and scientists have found a number of artefacts from Doggerland over the years, including a deer bone embedded with a arrowhead and a fragment of a human skull.
3. **Ferdinanda**, also known as Graham Island, is a submerged volcanic island off the coast of Sicily that has surfaced and sunk at least four times since 250 BCE. The island's head is above water when lava spills from the top of the volcano and hardens in cold water and then vanishes when seawater erodes it away, usually in a matter of months. A number of nations claimed ownership over the island when it last surfaced in 1831. In 2000, Sicilian divers planted their country's flag on the submerged spit of land, to avoid any further territorial disputes the next time Ferdinanda reappears.



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Chinese New Year 2024: 10 February = year of the Wood Dragon.

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







Celestial forecasts: February 2024

By Joanna Bristow-Watkins



February in Britain sees the steady increase of daylight hours leading us towards spring, but air temperature remains unpredictable with this often presenting as the coldest month of the year with reasonable chance of snow. Look out for snowdrops poking through the soil, together with the yellow, white and violet of crocuses (or croci, apparently both plural forms are acceptable). The subtle aroma of witch hazel blossoms may linger. and the pretty white flowers of the wood anemone, known as an indicator of ancient woodland (rather like bluebells come May), may also appear but it's still early for them. Local ponds should be full of frogspawn, as well as similar gelatinous spawns laid by toads and newts.

The month of February was named after the Roman God **Februa** (sometimes called Februus) and his annual Roman springtime festival of purification and cleanliness. To the Anglo-Saxons, February was called 'Sōlmōnath', derived from 'sōl' - an Old English word for wet sand or mud. However, according to medieval scholar Bede, it relates to the month when ritual offerings of loaves of bread and savoury cakes were typical to ensure a good year's harvest.

February begins with the Pagan Festival of Imbolc, join our online [Imbolc Ceremony](#), 2 February, 7.30-9.30pm for £20. This month we can look forward to the Japanese Celebration of Setsuban (3rd), the traditional Festival of Valentine's Day (14th) plus the Roman festivals of Lupercalia (15th) and Caristia (22nd).

This year, February features the lead up to Lent, including Collop Monday (12th), Shrove Tuesday (13th), Ash Wednesday (14th), Fritter Thursday (15th) and Kissing Friday (16th). We have our only [February Forest Bathing event](#) 11am-1.30pm on Saturday 24 February at Harry Edwards in Shere (Surrey). Our [Full Moon Meditation](#) also takes place 7.30-9.30pm (UK time) on Saturday 24th, with Snow Full Moon peaking at 12:30. We have Forest Bathing and Harmony Healing vouchers available as gifts.

The New Year New Moon New Vision Course ends 9/10 February with a distant [Equilibrium Attunement](#), including symbols to help align us with the current western zodiac (Aquarius) and the Chinese New Year of the Dragon. The attunement is available as a stand-alone purchase for £44 (with 50% concession to my students), go to [Harmony Shop](#) to reserve your place.



Thursday 1 - Friday 2 February is the pagan Imbolc Ceremony, which is one of the four Great Celtic Festivals, and which is a Wiccan and Druid Festival of Fertility and Growing Light. Imbolc (pronounced EE-molk) is the old Celtic word; the celebration is also known as Candlemas (the latter is generally celebrated 2 February).

Friday 2 February, join Joanna and Sarah-Jane Dennis (Priestess of Avalon) for our [Water Ceremony & Imbolc Celebration](#), 7.30-9.30pm (UK time), £20. Book the Imbolc Celebration at the Harmony Shop.

Imbolc is sacred to the Goddess Brigit, Brigid or Bridie, the power of the new moon, the Spring of the year, the flowing sea, corn dollies and the Great Moon Mother - Patroness of Poetry Making and Healing. Brigit is a triple Goddess, so she can be honoured in all her aspects, she is associated with fire, fertility, midwifery and the young.

The Imbolc Festival marks the passing of Winter and the first signs of Spring, with the emergence of new leaves and early flowers such as the snowdrop and crocus, as well as being the transition point of the threefold Goddess energies from those of the Crone to the Maiden. Imbolc is a Fire Festival and it is traditional, at sunset, to briefly light every light in the house. Or, light candles in each room to celebrate the return of the sun. If it's been snowing, take time to enjoy walking in the snow, draw an image of the sun into the snow and reflect on the sun's warmth.

Traditional foods for Imbolc include anything dairy, including sour cream, as the festival celebrated the calving and lambing seasons. Spicy and rich foods, such as curry or anything made with peppers, leeks, onion, chives and/or garlic are appropriate to celebrate the sun, together with mulled wine and anything containing raisins which also represent the sun. It's also a good time to clear clutter and look at what you want to achieve this year and ask Brigit's help in making it happen.

Saturday 3 February is Setsubun Bean-Throwing Festival, which is the day before the beginning of Spring in Japan. The name literally means "seasonal division", but usually the term refers to the Spring Setsubun, celebrated yearly on 3 February as part of the Spring Festival and accompanied by a special ritual to cleanse away all the evil of the former year and drive away disease-bringing evil spirits, or naughty ogres or spirits called 'Oni' for the year to come. Why bean throwing? Families celebrate by scattering roasted soybeans outside the door of their house to chase out the oni (naughty ogres or spirits). They may also throw soybeans at a member of the family dressed as an Oni.



Friday 9 February @ 22:59 is New Moon and it's also a Super New Moon.

The **New Moon Abundance Ritual** should be carried out within 24 hours after the New Moon. It needs to be after the New Moon because the moon should be waxing (getting bigger again) to carry the manifestation energy. Image by Harmony Healing. There are video instructions on my **Facebook Page** or **You Tube Page**.

It is a good day for creating a personal or corporate Vision Board for 2024. Harmony Healing provides a **Vision Board template** and periodically we offer a lunar cycle mentoring programme. Aligning ourselves with the moon cycle is very therapeutic; hence, being aware of the New Moon (good for starting new projects) and Full Moon (a good time for bringing projects to a conclusion) is excellent for bringing harmony and wellbeing into our lives.

Our current New Year New Vision moon connection programme ends today, with an **Equilibrium Attunement** to energetically align participants with the Sun, Moon, planet Earth, the constellations, the current Zodiac of Pisces. The New Year New Moon New Vision Course ends 9th February with an **Equilibrium Attunement** (see **YouTube video 'What Exactly is an Attunement?'**), which is usually available as a stand-alone purchase for £55, but I have it on offer for £44 (50% concession to my students), go to **Harmony Shop** to reserve your place.

Saturday 10 February, following the New Moon on the 9 February, when the Year of the Water Rabbit comes to a close, we progress into the Year of the Wood Dragon, which will last until 28 January 2025. A Dragon is a mythological creature and all Chinese legends about dragons, describe them as coming from the sky, which represents heaven – hence in China, Dragon is a symbol of heavenly power. Dragon is viewed as a noble and untouchable beast with occult and mystical connotations. According to Chinese energy expert, Nicholas Haines, since Dragons are mythological creatures, they bring messages to remind us what we came to earth to do. And that is to be our authentic selves, so this will be the theme of 2024. The wood energy brings in justice and the control of chaos, whereas the Dragon energy supports ambition, confidence, power and idealism. It sounds like an interesting year!

In Chinese culture, homes are thoroughly cleaned at the New Year to sweep away old ill fortune to make room for coming good luck and fireworks are set off. Red clothing (sometimes with gold) is worn to ward off evil monsters and bad luck. Red is an auspicious colour and can be worn to bring energy, luck and happiness.

The Chinese calendar rotates through 60-year cycles based on 12 earthly branches, each represented by an animal year, as well as **five element years** which are wood, fire, earth, metal and water. 2022 was the Year of the Water Tiger, 2023 was the Year of the Water Rabbit. We move into the wood element this year with the Wood Dragon. Each earthly branch is characterised, on a deeper level by a yin or yang force and its own element.

In order, the **12 zodiac animals** are: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. Thus, the sign of the Dragon is the fifth animal of the Chinese zodiac and, with its strong yang energy, represents success and prosperity in their culture - 2024 is predicted to be a Year of Authenticity.



Monday 12 February, this year is Collop Monday, also known as Shrove Monday. It's the day before *Shrove Tuesday* and isn't widely observed, but it is a similar frugal tradition to the consumption of eggs in the form of pancakes to use them up before the start of the fasting period of Lent.

As described in an extract from the *Nottingham Evening Post*, 1931, *collops* are chunks of cured meat (such as bacon) or leftover roasted meat, so this involves using up any remaining meat in the household before Lent. In Cornwall, it's known as *Peasen Monday* because pea soup was the traditional dish of the day.

Tuesday 13 February is Mardi Gras, also known as Shrove Tuesday or, within the UK, as Pancake Day. Being the final day before Lent, this was traditionally a day for confessing sins and using up all the foods banned during the Lent fast. With pancakes containing butter and milk, they became associated with the date.

The verb, *to shrive*, means to gain absolution for one's sins through confession and/or penance. Hence, Shrove Tuesday is derived from the tradition that Christians were shriven before Lent.

The date of Lent - which takes place in either February or March, but always seven weeks before Easter - varies from year to year according to the lunar calendar which determines when Easter falls. Interestingly, as with many Christian Festivals, there is a theory that Pancake Day might actually have originated as a Pagan holiday; when eating warm, circular yellow pancakes - resembling the sun - celebrated the arrival of spring.

Wednesday 14 February is Ash Wednesday, which is generally said to have been named after the tradition of burning away old issues in preparation for Lent. However, Ash Wednesday could have obtained its name from an apparent tradition of placing a stick of ash down one's sock for good luck! Ouch, I can't see that being popular, but then maybe the choice of stick, regarding size and shape, is paramount!

Wednesday 14 February is also Valentine's Day. It is all about love and compassion, which includes Universal Love for all other living things and also self-love, which is so often overlooked. Some bitterly refer to it as Singles Awareness Day and blame card manufacturers and our materialistic society for love being ritualistically forced upon us every year at this time.

Although the story of Saint Valentine long precedes Hallmark et al, the origins are somewhat blurred as there are historical references to the existence of several different Valentines. Folklore indicates that Valentine was a priest during the third century in Rome. Emperor Claudius II outlawed marriage as he believed that single men

made better soldiers than those with wives and families. Valentine, however, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages in secret. Claudius found out and Valentine was imprisoned, where one version of the legend indicates he befriended a jailer with a blind daughter and he may have somehow managed to restore her sight, resulting in the jailer converting to Christianity. Claudius ordered that Valentine be executed on 14 February and, allegedly before his death sentence was carried out, he sent a note to the jailer's daughter and signed it, "From Your Valentine." Hence, Valentine's Day is celebrated in his memory. However, his death day and his association with lovers and notes may have been convenient for Roman Christians looking for ways to blend existing pagan/Roman celebrations into their calendar.



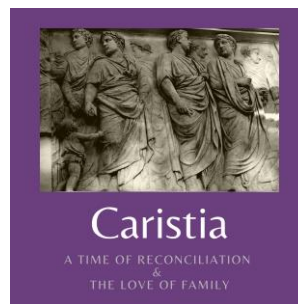
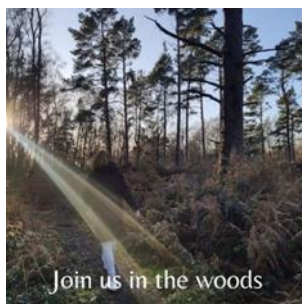
Thursday 15 February is Fritter Thursday. According to [The Free Dictionary](#), *Fritter Thursday* took its name from the custom of eating apple fritters, which were fruit-filled cakes deep-fried in fat, on this day.

I was surprised that this would be an acceptable dish once Lent had commenced (as fritters suggest batter which would contain egg and milk). On further research, I discovered that in [Lancashire](#) (source: [lep.co.uk](#)), traditional Shrovetide meant the three days before Lent and comprised Collop Monday, Pancake Tuesday and Fritters Wednesday (rather than Thursday) with the fritters being sliced apples fried in batter.

Thursday 15 February is also Lupercalia in Ancient Roman tradition. Apparently, this was the popular ceremony of fertility, featuring naked men running through the street! I can't see this catching on in the UK climate! Roman images show men dressed as dogs (or wolves since *Lupus* meant Wolf) and goats, Cupid and other personifications of fertility. Thus, some say this ceremony was the precursor for Valentine's Day.

Friday 16 February is Kissing Friday. According to [historic.co.uk](#), this bizarre custom was especially popular in the Victorian and Edwardian period and only died out in the mid-20th century. Unthinkable these days, a schoolboy could kiss a girl on this day without fear of repercussions. First of all, the girl had to be caught and, in some instances, this involved tying ropes across the street and passing girls would have to pay a kiss for safe passage across the rope. Others would simply chase the girls until they caught them. Indeed, *Kissing Friday* was also the one day every year when girls could leave school early, to avoid being chased home by the boys. In the Leicestershire village of Sileby, this day was called *Nippy Hug Day*. Here, if the girl actively resisted a kiss, the boy could 'louse' (pinch) her bottom, a disturbing reference to the action of pinching off lice.

Wednesday 22 February is the Roman Festival of Caristia. This was a Feast Day occasion of family reunion, when Roman fathers would pay special attention to their families. It was a day of reconciliation when disagreements were to be set aside, but the satiricist, Ovid, apparently suggested this would be best achieved by excluding family members who caused trouble. Families gathered together to dine and offer food and incense to the Guardian Deities, collectively known as Lares.



Saturday 24 February @ 12:30 is the Snow Full Moon.

Between Full Moon and the next New Moon (Saturday 13 March) is considered as a good time energetically for detoxing the body. See entry below for our live online event. Or to celebrate on your own see [Angela McGerr's Full Moon Meditation with Gabriel](#), taken from Angela McGerr's Harmony of Angels book; now out of print but signed copies are available from the [Harmony Shop](#).

Aligning ourselves with the moon cycle is very therapeutic, hence being aware of the New moon (good for starting new projects) and Full Moon (a good time for bringing projects to a conclusion) is excellent for bringing harmony and wellbeing into our lives. Anyway, whatever the weather conditions, it's a fantastic excuse to get people of all ages outside in the fresh air and re-connecting with nature. Something our modern lifestyles and obsession with technology can distract us from doing ...

Saturday 24 February, 11am-1pm, Forest Bathing with Joanna at Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary (Shere, near Guildford, Surrey). Cost is £37.77 (+ PayPal fee if not paid by BACS). This is a 2½-hour Winter Full Moon Forest Bathing session which will take place in all weathers except 30+mph winds or storms.

Join us on a mindful, sensory journey through the beautiful woodland at Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary, deep in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Forest Bathing+ is based on the Japanese art of Shinrin-Yoku and involves a slow exploration of nature through your senses. Image by Harmony Healing.

A deeply relaxing and rejuvenating experience, and which, despite the title forest bathing, does not involve any swimming! Some of the scientifically proven benefits of spending time in woodland include reduced stress levels, stronger immune system response, and a stabilised cortisol cycle. Book via our [Harmony Healing shop](#). Email kateandjo@harmonyinnature.uk to go on our forest bathing mailing list.

Saturday 24 February, 7.30-9.30pm UK time (GMT) is our Full Moon Unity Consciousness Meditation. During this session, we connect with other like-minded people and together we work through a mindful chakra balancing process using colours and etheric crystals, with the aim that all participants will experience a degree of unity consciousness. Participants all receive a deeply healing experience. Cost to participate is £20 by online BACS payment (£1 admin fee added for PayPal, concessions to RSE/VFoA graduates), book at the [Harmony Shop](#).

Events

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Swamp magick

By Nic the Witch

Well, hello, here is one of our occasional pieces about different types of using magick. In this case, it's swamp magick, which is one of the primal types of witchcraft – it includes blood magick, curses, family protection, working with the earth and a basis in feminine nature. Basically, a swamp witch lives alone in the wilderness, feeling connected with nature and using mud, blood or herbs in her rituals. For swamp witches, solitude is the key: they're happy in their own company, but more-or-less OK with occasional social visits.

However, family is very important to a swamp witch and vengeance can be dire for transgressors. For example, if someone hurts or upsets a member of my tribe (a person whom I love or care about deeply), my first response is to help the victim to recover. My second response is to think about an appropriate hex or curse on the offender; this is not very Wiccan, but it's a deeper and fiercer feeling to protect one's own family from hurt. I can't do much about social or financial problems, but I can make the bully's life very unpleasant for a defined period.

This is a facet of the goddess, Kali or the Red Goddess, who is depicted as having supreme life-giving and life-taking power. She embodies both the sexual desire of women and, also, the nurturing or caring mother. It's a rich spectrum from lust and sex to loving maternal care. Kali has been described as the Divine Feminine that is gentle, kind, protective and compassionate. Also, she is the great Mother who possesses the power to create and destroy - the personification of time, death, transformation and the darkness of the womb.

Ancient cultures considered the blood that women release to be extraordinarily potent. Tibetan ceremonies called for the mixing of uterine blood with red wine as an elixir to raise spiritual powers. Many ancient rituals involved the pouring of menstrual blood onto the ground to fortify the soil and plants. Even now, adding blood to a spell will boost its efficacy (*Editor's note: there's a briefing on Blood Magick on our website*).

Like the power of Kali, the blood essence of women is both attractive and fearsome. All through history, women were honoured or isolated during their time of bleeding. They were considered either powerful or unclean, depending on the culture. First Nation traditions consider a woman's menstrual cycle as one of intense spiritual and physical purification - a time to receive visions and wisdom. A bleeding woman is respected and encouraged to sit in solitude to meditate on behalf of her tribe.

Pagans tend to see a woman's menstrual flow as a potent symbol of feminine fertility. One can anoint ritual tools, altar objects, people and places, believing that its power will be transferred to them. It is also used as an offering to the gods and goddesses and mixed with potions in fertility, sexual and blood magick spells. In some parts of Africa, menstrual blood is considered so powerful that it is used in magickal spells for purification or destruction.

In Judaism, a woman who is bleeding is considered to be unclean and has special restrictions. Islamic and other Middle Eastern cultures share this practice. Many require women to have a ritual bath to purify themselves once their bleeding has ceased. However, in the Sikh faith, a woman's bleeding is considered to be a normal and natural event, as God-given. A Sikh woman is not prevented from participating in any activity or from attending any place of worship.

Southern India commemorates a girl's first blood with gifts and celebrations in her honour. Orthodox Hindu culture considers menstruation as an impure time and requires a woman to avoid domestic chores, marital intimacy and many other activities during her flow. Likewise, in the Japanese Shinto religion, a woman is

considered unclean during her menstrual cycle and may not enter a Kami shrine for fear that the blood and death upon her would block the Kami spirits from granting wishes. In contrast, Buddhism considers a woman's lunar flow as ordinary and normal and imposes no restrictions at all upon her.

"I am that which is powerful, potent and strong within you. I am the cycle of ending that leads you to another beginning, the destruction of one thing and the creation of another. I am the single drop of red blood that falls from your womb to the earth. Call upon me for empowerment, for the wisdom to know your blood as sacred, and the courage to know yourself as sacred, too."

Actually, for those who have passed their menopause, one can still remember or revere the sacred nature of your blood. And, if you wish to use blood in magick, it's fine to use blood from a finger as a substitute. A popular Louisiana legend describes the fate of **Kate Mulvaney**, otherwise known as the Swamp Witch of Maurepas. After a troubled life in New Orleans, she was sent to the swamps by a voodoo witch, where she learned the ways of the bayou and settled into a reclusive existence. Another legendary swamp witch was **Baba Yaga**, who loved to eat people. She is a fearsome character from Russian folklore who lives in a hut that walks on chicken legs and either eats her visitors or offers them help. However, perhaps we should lose the folk images of Grendel's mother or Jenny Greenteeth for what is a legitimate branch of traditional witchcraft.



Before we leave this topic, it's worth reiterating the point about labels. Many definitions of witches overlap and swamp witches may resemble green or hedge witches. My advice is not to get too hung up on labels. My path lies with the Celts, long before Wicca and pre-Roman, but we'll come to that type of path soon.

Folklore: Church bells

By the Storyteller

In the Early Middle Ages (about 700 CE), church bells were vital to the life of a village – often new bells were baptised and the sound of bells could drive away demons and thunderstorms. In addition, bells were rung for weddings, funerals, times of services, local celebrations, etc, etc.

On the dark night of 7 October in the 1700s, William Davis became lost in the Hampshire countryside in a thick fog. He was just about to ride his horse over a cliff when the sound of Twyford's church bells rang out. As they did so, William realised he was heading in the wrong direction and pulled up to take stock. Later on, he worked out that he must have been only a few yards away from chalk pits, where the ground had been dug deeply. Had he gone any further, he would have plunged to certain death. When William Davis died, he left some money in his will. The money was to pay the bellringers to ring the church bells of St Mary at 6:30am and 7pm on **7 October** every year, to help travellers find their direction, should they get lost on the same night he had been lost. The funds ran out long ago, but the tradition remains.

Here's another bell-related story from folklore. Back in 895 CE, a marauding Danish raid took everything of value from Bosham community, including the largest bell from the church. The massive bell was lowered into a dragon ship, which sank down under the weight until it was only just afloat. As the ships started to pull out of Bosham Harbour, a group of monks ran back to the church to ring the remaining bells in such a way as to summon a thunderstorm. At once, the sky darkened, the winds became stronger and the waves were choppy. The Danish ship with the bell was swamped, the bell broke free of its moorings and crashed through the side of the ship. Both ship and bell sank to the bottom of the Bosham Channel. Hundreds of years later, the villagers tried to retrieve the bell, but it was too heavy for ordinary nets and chains. Today, it remains at the bottom of the harbour, but it is said that when the bells of Holy Trinity church in Bosham ring out on a misty evening, an echo can be heard across the harbour from the sunken bell.

In fact, there are so many stories about the power of bells in UK folklore that I created another and dedicated it to a friend on the occasion of his solar return - **The Chimes of Life**. This tale comes from the year 1180 and is set in rural Nottinghamshire, not far from the town of Newark-on-Trent. And it covers the strange phenomenon of the GSMC or, to put it another way, the *gladsome spiritual music chimes*.

In 1180, Newark-on-Trent was a major centre for the wool and cloth trade, with two markets a week that attracted both buyers and sellers from England and from abroad. It had been a medieval fair since 1156 when the king (Henry II) set it up. On this particular Wednesday in late autumn, a Flemish wool trader called Gragoor Staal had enjoyed a very successful day at the market and he was making his way on foot back to his lodgings at a farmstead near Newark Castle. He was looking forward to having another good day at the forthcoming Saturday market. It was late afternoon when Gragoor started his journey and the light was fading fast. As he crossed the River Trent, he became uneasily aware of the late autumnal fog around him and the darkness. In the distance, he could hear the howling of wolves and he quickened his pace. Conscious of the stories he'd heard about ravenous vampires in Burton-on-Trent, he cursed himself for leaving the fair so late.

How far was it to the farm by the castle? The path seemed to go on for ever and there were no lights to be seen in the dense fog, but Gragoor was aware that the wolves' howls were closer now. And then the path stopped – Gragoor had gone wrong - he was hopelessly lost in the dark and the cold fog. What to do? He muttered a quick prayer for help and was amazed when his prayers were answered. Dimly, through the fog, he could hear the faint bells of the Church of St Mary Magdalene. He retraced his steps, while listening to the chimes, reaching a fork in the path that he had missed in the dark. As he took the right path home, the bells stopped abruptly, but Gragoor was safe and never forgot his prayers. Since that day, other travellers, lost in the dark fogs of the River Trent near Newark, have also been saved by the spiritual chimes of the Church of St Mary Magdalene. The bells ring out to help such travellers in need, whether the church is locked or not.

Shrooms

By Erica Zann

Hi, welcome to more witterings from an elderly resident of a small English village. Hi, welcome to more witterings from an elderly resident of a small English village. It's just Imbolc, but I'm already seeing Easter products in the shops, such as chocolate eggs, hot cross buns and so on. Ah well, everything is done at such a fast pace now that I lose track of which day is which.

As it's Thursday today, I'll pop into the social club this afternoon at the local Methodist church. It's a very welcoming place and they do know exactly about my beliefs. Although I'm never converting to Xianity, I've always believed in Interfaith events and the club offers an opportunity to meet those of other cultures. And they serve tea and cakes, which are always welcome on a cold afternoon.

Hasn't it been cold at night recently? In my experience, there's only one thing for really cold evenings – warm clothes, hot drinks or soup, a fan heater, the wireless and a hot water bottle for later. If there's nothing on the radio, a good magazine is fine and I have a copy of the *People's Friend* to read. Apparently, this one is the oldest women's magazine in Britain. The slippery pavements in the morning mean that I need a stick nowadays and boots with good grips. I try to donate a small something to various charities for the homeless too. When I have a moment, I try to make some basic remedies for my fellow residents. Examples are winter syrups for sore throats, oil of calendula for dry or chapped skin, oil of cleavers for psoriasis, spearmint teabags for upset stomachs and oil of comfrey for joint pains or pulled muscles.

Do you like traditional recipes? Some meals I can cook for myself from scratch, but my local supermarket now sells mushroom pies and cauliflower cheese pies; both are lovely, but the Editor says I'm not allowed to name the company, so I'll just mention that these are not ordinary pies!! Seeing as we're at Imbolc, home-made shepherds' pie or lamb chops are the order of the day – mind you, lamb chops are quite expensive for the amount of meat. I guess that I'll be using minced lamb for my shepherds' pie.

Valentine's Day approaches. I remember well the cards, flowers, gifts and dates from yesteryear with a degree of fondness and affection. I know that much of it now is an excuse for marketing, but there used to be a romantic day in the middle of the month. I do think that we lose or overlook the old ways at our peril. It's been quite a time since someone asked me to make a love potion or cast a love spell for them, but I do create spells for peace regularly. Personally, I feel there's too much hatred and divisive opinions, which is why I don't vote any more, but try to slow down and spread my words of harmony everywhere.

Many blessings

Erica

Science: universal growth

By Mark Sharpen

Fractal geometry notwithstanding, it has been suggested that the human mind can be traumatised if the shapes and sizes of things are challenged. The sci-fi writer, HP Lovecraft, knew this and referred to non-Euclidean geometry in other dimensions, such as a triangle in which the sum of the angles is less or more than 180° . The size of the universe is another point, because we cannot imagine infinity, although I recently watched a TV programme in which the characters reached the edge of the universe. That's right – the **edge** of the universe – hard to grasp?

The astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered the balloon-like inflation of the universe about a century ago and the accelerating rush of all galaxies away from each other. Following that expansion backward in time led to our concept of the Big Bang. Over the past decade, this idea has been challenged, depending on where astronomers look, because the rate of the universe's expansion (a value named the **Hubble constant**) varies significantly. Now, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) has cemented the discrepancy with stunningly precise new observations that threaten to upend the standard model of cosmology. Since 1998, the discovery of dark matter in space has been key to the universe's accelerating expansion.

Variation of the Hubble constant leaves a dilemma. An official attempt to resolve the issue at a 2019 conference at the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics (KITP) in California only caused more frustration – one school of thought believes that dark matter isn't constant, but evolves across the life of the cosmos according to unknown physics. Another school of thought believes that the expansion rates match the predictions of the Big Bang model. One group of astronomers is convinced that, alongside the observation that the Milky Way is located inside an low-density super-void, means that the Big Bang and dark matter ideas must be thrown out altogether.

What should replace it, according to Pavel Kroupa, a professor of astrophysics at the University of Bonn, is a theory called **Modified Newtonian Dynamics** (MOND). The theory proposes that for gravitational pulls ten trillion times smaller than those felt on Earth's surface (such as the tugs felt between distant galaxies) Newton's laws break down and must be replaced by other equations – “what I am experiencing and witnessing is an essential breakdown of science,” Kroupa said.

Others are sceptical, suggesting that the Big Bang idea needs a tweak or that dark matter is the modern-day equivalent of epicycles (the small circles ancient Greek astronomers used to model planets orbiting Earth) until astronomers placed the sun in the centre of the solar system, when epicycles eventually became irrelevant. The cosmologists are looking for answers in a number of places - CMB-S4 is the next-generation ground-based cosmic microwave background experiment. It has 12 telescopes at the South Pole and in the Chilean Atacama Desert surveying the sky with 500,000 cryogenically-cooled superconducting detectors for 7-10 years, searching for clues in ultraprecise measurements of the early universe's radiation.

And there's the dark matter maps from the ESA's Euclid space telescope, the future dark energy survey conducted by the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument and more research from the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) team, who are making ultra-detailed measurements of Cepheid variables, tip-of-the-red-giant-branch stars and a type of carbon star called JAGB stars all at once distance. (*Editor's note: a Cepheid variable is a type of variable star that pulsates radially, varying in both diameter and temperature.*)

Carnival (Rio de Janeiro in Brazil): February 9-17, 2024 - it is the biggest festival in the world with two million people a day on the streets. Floats, parades, music and dancing are all part of the event

Collated by Gylden Fellowship







Lament singing

By Gylden Fellowship

A ***lament or lamentation*** is a passionate expression of grief, often in music, poetry, or song form. The grief is most often born of regret, or mourning. Related to this idea is a ***dirge***, which is also a sombre song expressing mourning or grief, such as would be appropriate for performance at a funeral. Often taking the form of a brief hymn, dirges are typically shorter and less meditative than elegies. Dirges are often slow and bear the character of funeral marches.

It should be noted that ***somber and sombre*** are different spellings of the same word, meaning (1) dark and gloomy, or (2) melancholy. **Somber is preferred in American English, while sombre is preferred in all the other main varieties of English.** Sombre is the original form, taking the spelling of the French word from which the English word derives. Laments have **four elements**:

- turning to God in prayer
- bringing our complaints
- asking boldly
- choosing to trust (or praise).

The OT Psalms are not the only place where lament is sung. There are communal psalms of lament and individual ones. They follow this general structure:

- address and introductory cry: identify the Lord as the person to whom the psalm is addressed
- complaint or lament
- articulate the problem and ask the Lord for help.

Keening is a traditional form of *vocal lament* for the dead in the Gaelic Celtic tradition, known to have taken place in Ireland and Scotland. Keening in English suggests a high-pitched, inarticulate moaning, but the Irish word, *caoineadh* (***pronounced queen-ah***), from which it derives signifies among other things, a highly articulate tradition of women's oral poetry. The lamenting woman led the community in a public display of grief. Acting out in her appearance and behaviour the disorder brought about by death, she was often barefoot and dishevelled. Her *caoineadh* or lament was a series of breathless utterances of rhymed, rhythmic praise of the dead person and invective against the deceased person's enemies.

Last century, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and others have identified the sequence of emotions which are the necessary components of the grieving process: notably denial, anger, bargaining, sadness and acceptance. Texts of *caoineadh*, mostly from the 18th century, embody a disciplined and powerful expression of these stages of mourning.

In modern Finland, lament singing is experiencing a revival, one sad song at a time. In the past, the custom was observed at funerals, weddings and during wartime. Recent practitioners have a modern application for it: **musical therapy**. By providing an opportunity to process emotions through song, lament singing can confer mental health benefits.



(photo credit: by Tristan Ahtone, 16 May 2017)

Riitta Excell wore a pair of homemade wool socks: white with red floral patterns and rounded blue toes. Around her were women sipping tea and enjoying plum pastries and chicken feta pie. They wore homemade wool socks, as well. It was nearly 3 o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon and Pirkko Fihlman's living room on the outskirts of Helsinki was filled with black-and-white family photos, porcelain figurines of angels and birds and embroidered rococo chairs. The clink of tea cups fell silent – then, Excell squeezed her eyes closed, clenched her fists and began to sing a lament in Finnish.

*"I took pills for my depression
just to smother my emotions.
Doctors said that I would need them,
but I learned to cry without them.
So I stopped taking the tablets,
then I let my feelings rise up
for my mother when she passed on,
for my marriage when he quit me,
left me as a single mother,
with a hard job and no weekends.
Now I weep without taking pills,
yet I still feel very angry,
and the fury seems well-founded,
but the feelings will not hurt me."*

Excell's lyrics may be modern, but the style of singing comes from an older place. "Lament [singing] is a very old, traditional way to express your feelings," says Fihlman, a lament teacher and matriarch of the group. "If you are hurt or you have sorrows or you want to express your feelings, you cry it out. You let it come out. That's what they would do in the old times."

"In lament singing, people can express themselves," Fihlman says. "Very often, people in my courses make laments of their grief. They miss their parents or they have troubles in their marriage or maybe they were hurt in childhood and they never had a chance to bring it up."

While the custom resembles many neo-spiritual practices, Finnish lament singing has a special feature. It has a tradition specific to the region instead of borrowing from other cultures. Originally, the tradition wasn't about emotional healing. "The function of lament singing was to establish positive contact with your ancestors, the dead, and help them in some way," says **Jim Wilce**, a professor of anthropology at Northern Arizona University and author of numerous books and papers on lament singing around the world. This is the factor that makes the revival so unique.

"In every traditional lament ... you have a connection with what I call the divine powers," says **Eila Stepanova**, a folklore studies Ph.D. at the University of Helsinki. "This isn't the Christian god. It's something in between - an older layer of traditional beliefs."

While lament singing exists in communities from Bangladesh to New Zealand, according to Wilce, and has even been documented in the ancient poem, *Beowulf*, the form being practised in Finland has its roots in the area now known as the Republic of Karelia - the region on the Russian side of the Finnish border. Stepanova says the traditional laments, sung for funerals, weddings or war were performed to help people move from one world to the other, be it to the land of the dead, to a new family, or to the battlefield. At ceremonies for the dead, for instance, laments were sung to wake deceased members of the family in the other world to meet new arrivals.

However, traditional laments weren't simply a style of song: They were a unique language in which nothing was ever named directly. In lament singing, positive descriptions are used: things are sweet, light, bright, dear or wonderful. Other examples include the sun, which can be called a golden disk or arms, which can be called shoulder branches. The one exception is any description of the lamenter herself. "She is always the miserable one" explains Stepanova. Instead, when describing herself, the lamenter might say she's the miserable body, a woman of great sorrows or a body made of tears.

Stepanova's mother published the first lament dictionary in 2004, documenting approximately 1400 different metaphors for words used in the songs. Like any language, it's evolving with modern times. Cars can be "headless horses," phone calls can be "messages that come through metal strings," and televisions can be "talking boxes." While Finland is seeing a revival, instructor Fihlman says she has conducted nearly 200 courses with almost 2000 students, other parts of the world are seeing a decline in the traditional practice. Lament singing existed in rural communities for generations, but it was viewed as a pagan tradition. In Bangladesh, for instance, lament singers may face physical violence in rural Muslim societies.

Yet in Karelia, Fihlman says that lament singing existed in rural communities for generations, but it was viewed as a pagan tradition by Orthodox and Lutheran Christians and often driven underground. Urbanisation also threatened the continued existence of lament singing. In the last century, as young people moved away from their home towns to find jobs and schooling in cities, villages began to disappear, along with lament singers. And in the early days of the Soviet Union, authorities often employed lament for ideological and propaganda efforts, creating laments that expressed support for the Soviet system and its leaders. Stepanova says that, eventually, only old people told ancient stories and sang antique laments. "They were museum items and they stopped being a living tradition among people," she says.

Love and romance

By Nic the Witch

It's that time of year again — not long until the feast of the Christian saint Valentine — and a time when the shops are full of cards, flowers and other presents for one's beloved. Love potions have always been a stock-in-trade product for witches, both fictional and community practitioners, but the important point (perhaps the key point) is that of *intent*. For a person to either request or use a love potion or spell to bind another is very wrong. That, it should be said, is my opinion — there is nothing amiss with using a spell to attract love, but not to bind another named person - I'm always happy to discuss the topic.

Attracting love

According to Scott Cunningham, one of the simplest ways to attract love is to use a Japanese custom, namely to tie a single strand of your hair to a blossoming cherry tree. In Japan, as in the UK, cherry blossoms are potent symbols of love and the following spell is supposed to attract a future partner.

What you will need: red or pink thread, as many cherry stones as years of your age, a small piece of red jasper and a sharp tool for making holes (such as a skewer).

1. The spell starts with the first night of a new moon.
2. Drill a hole in one of the cherry stones.
3. Repeat this task on each successive night until the moon starts to wane, perhaps after 13-14 nights.
4. Do not drill any more holes in the stones.
5. When the next new moon appears, thread the cherry stones onto your red or pink thread.
6. With the red jasper in your receptive hand, chant thrice, "*Let the Goddess hear my plea, Send enduring love to me*".
7. Tie the thread around your left knee and sleep with it attached for 14 nights.

Keeping love alive during rocky moments

Tulips are common during the period from Imbolg to Ostara and any tulip can help repair rifts in a loving relationship, perhaps after arguments. Let's say that you have argued with a close friend or your partner and you want to repair the damage. Here is a spell to help restore the love.

What you will need: an object dear to you, an object belonging to the person that you have argued with, several tulips and symbols of the elements.

1. Invoke the elements, using symbols on your altar/table.
2. Create a magic circle and place the two objects in the middle of the circle.
3. Lay the objects together and place the tulips across both of them.
4. Prepare yourself for magic by turning off any distracting electrical gadgets and putting the phone on recording.
5. Empty your mind and look only at the items in the circle.
6. Breathe in and out slowly, noting the scent of the tulip.
7. Chant these words, "*Arguments gone and the break is no more, With the help of these tulips, our love is as before.*"
8. Release the elements and return the objects to their places.
9. Put the tulips in some water. You have done what is necessary to repair the breach.

Herbs of love

If one looks at the appendices to Scott Cunningham's *Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs*, you will find many plants that instil or attract love. I've listed a few of the more common examples below, together with their recommended uses for love, such as in sachets.

Lemon Balm – infuse the herb in wine for several hours, strain and share with a special friend	Rose – long history of aiding love spells, either placed on an altar or worn around the neck (minus thorns) or added to a bath
Catnip – good for sachets or just hold it in your hand until it is warm and then hold hands with others	Rue – sniff fresh rue and your mind will be clear in matters of love
Roman Chamomile – add to a bath to attract love	Strawberry – best for love when added to food or leaves for tea
Clover – if you find a 2-leaved clover, you shall soon find a lover	Thyme – if a sprig is worn in the hair, it makes the wearer attractive
Coriander – good for sachets or add powdered seeds to warm wine	Valerian – if a sprig is worn pinned to clothes, it causes attraction and is good for sachets too
Dill – add to a bath to make the bather irresistible	Vervain – wash with vervain juice to attract new love
Marjoram – good in sachets or added to food to strengthen love	Yarrow – dried yarrow hung over the bed ensures a love lasting at least 7 years

Honey jars

Honey jars have been used to sweeten someone or something towards you for centuries. Write out who or what you want sweetened three times on appropriate paper. You may use pink paper if you wish to sweeten a person towards you that with whom you are having problems. White paper is also fine and write their full names, if possible. Then write your name over the top of theirs at a 90° angle (3x if you wish). Some people use pencil to write the subject's name and pen to write their own name for more power.

Once you have done this, draw a circle around it without lifting your pen from the paper. This circle can be an endless flow of words related to your petition like lovelovelove. Fill it with your intent as you do it. You can add symbols to your petition paper that relate if you like

Once you have completed this, anoint your paper with appropriate oil or fold appropriate herbs into it. Fold your paper towards yourself 3x times, turning right each time and each time filling it with your intent.

Fill your jar with honey, covering your petition paper. Taste your honey while asking it to sweeten your subject to you. Seal the jar and burn an appropriate coloured candle on your jar. Some spells have short shelf lives – it may be necessary to repeat it once a month and burn the candle each week to boost your spell.

Poppets

Poppets can be made from all kinds of materials, namely carved roots, grasses, grain stalks, corn husks, fruit, wood, paper, mud, wax, clay, metal or lead, all formed into human shapes. They are dressed in simple clothes and stuffed with a variety of herbs, stones and other magickal items. Ideally, personal items associated with the subject should be included in its preparation, perhaps material from clothing once worn by the person, a sample of handwriting or a photograph, a lock of hair or nail clippings. The important thing is to create a link between the poppet and the intended recipient of the spell.

The key is focus and intent, but the more care you put into the words, so the stronger and more potent your focus and intent will be. The poppet needs to be consecrated, named and dedicated to the work in hand, then infused with personal energy to bring into force your intentions, perhaps by breathing life into the poppet's mouth through a straw. In this way, the poppet takes on a magickal life of its own, which activates the spell.

Poppets can be used for all types of spells, including curses, hexes, or binding. Here, we're talking about a love spell - depending on the type of spell being worked, various actions are performed on the poppet to cause a similar effect on the recipient. It can be pierced with pins, nails or other sharp objects to cause pain or bound with cords to restrict movement. It can have a heart put on it to boost the love or you can place a picture of you on it to bind both together. Once the spell is done or success has been achieved, the poppet needs to be dismantled and ingredients used disposed of in an appropriate way, making sure that any link between it and what it represented is completely destroyed.



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