



# WITCH

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Crows Feet Press

Issue 18  
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# WITCH



WELCOME TO ISSUE 18 OF WITCH!

This month we have all your usual favourites from our Witch and Residency Writers, and more!

We also have a bumper selection of witchy fiction for you to curl up and enjoy!

As we move towards Midsummer, we hope you enjoy this latest issue!

As always, if you have something you would like to share with us, we'd love to hear from you! Our submissions are open until 7th June for the next PRINT edition, due out 21st June. Preorders will open soon, so keep an eye on the website!

**Bekki**

Editor of WITCH magazine

Contact us

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ISSN 2635-2176

[www.witchzine.co.uk](http://www.witchzine.co.uk)

Printed in the UK by Continuum Digital

Published online and in print by



Crows Feet Press

FEATURED  
WITCH WRITERS

Words from the Witches  
Journal

Michelle Boxley for Sisters  
of the Moon

Fairy Bec

Black Moon Cove  
Tarotscopes

Wise Words from the  
Old Crone

Grimoire

Helen JR Bruce

Poetry and Fiction

Additional art and photos  
by Ayshe-Mira Yashin  
and @magiaziemi

# WITCH

## RESIDENCY WRITERS

### NYA HOUSE

Nya is an artist and a writer living in Knoxville, TN with her wife, teenage son and two boxer girls.

Her writing passion comes from the bliss of getting lost in creating worlds and characters in her head. Her art and writing leans towards expression of powerful and strong women as she is always traveling on the journey of bringing that version of herself out. Her background comes from ten years of teaching yoga and mediation with trauma informed practices and reiki.

She is an empath that always forgets to shield herself, An eclectic witch that lives by the turn of the wheel and a creator that just can't stop the waterfall of ideas from spilling all over her studio.

Last year she launched an oracle deck that features all her previous paintings on kickstarter and it was funded in three hours.

This year she launched a Lenormand deck and her Tarot deck launches on 13th March. You can follow her work on instagram: @the\_ritual\_muse or on her website, [www.theritualmuse.com](http://www.theritualmuse.com)

### KELLY BUCHAN

Kelly Buchan is an eclectic witch and professional tarot reader from the North East of Scotland.

With passions for philosophy, ancient divination systems and both low and high magick, her writing seeks to uncover the structures upon which spiritual concepts are built, while introducing witchcraft to those yet to be initiated into their divinity



### K.D. PHILLIPS



K. D. Phillips is more of a modern conjurer of spirits, describing himself as a modern Cunning Folk type.

He has read and practiced multiple summoning books, The Lesser Key of Solomon, The Sacred Book of Abramelin the Mage, and such.

He has recently begun a journey to decipher what works and what doesn't. And actively invites you all along on this journey.

His fiction is relatively unconnected to his magical practices, and is working his way to being traditionally published. He was shortlisted by New Writing North for BBC's Radio 3 show The Verb (Verb New Voices), and mentored by Leeds Playhouse for two years.

He has a new YouTube channel following his search for the paranormal, the strange, and the magical.... Haunting Lands... [https://youtube.com/channel/UC65-KK177\\_ruYgFGOeFw9xQ](https://youtube.com/channel/UC65-KK177_ruYgFGOeFw9xQ)

### STEPHANIE ULPH



Stephanie Ulph is a Reiki and Sound Healing Practitioner who feels blessed to live near and work within the magical town of Glastonbury, Somerset. She follows her own path, but enjoys making sense of and finding interconnection between all paths, spiritual practice, myth and

religion, though her path is most closely aligned with Shamanism and Paganism in her knowledge and practice. She loves nature, travelling, music and dancing, and assisting people along their spiritual journeys.





## ANYA LUKOVER

Hi, I'm Anya and have a passion for helping people to bring balance to their mental and physical wellbeing so that they can enjoy the experiences that life presents as they awaken to their true self.



I have trained in various energy therapies that I now blend together to create unique and tailored 1:1 & group sessions for people who are ready to shift out of the programs that they feel stuck in and connect to their power.

I enjoy talking and learning about energy & frequencies, alchemising shadows, wellbeing rituals, essential oils, connecting with plant majick and any other gifts & wisdom that Mother Earth has to offer us. I teach online Qigong classes and hold bi-monthly moon circles.

I absolutely love writing and excited to be joining Witch Magazine.

Find me on IG @ awaken\_with\_anya - I'd love to hear what my transmissions awaken within you

## F.R. MAHER



F.R. Maher graduated with a first in Creative Writing a couple of years back. Prior to that, she published her first novel, a fae fantasy called *The Last Changeling*, plus a horror series. Whilst still at Uni, a trip to a library in Leeds saw her uncover some startling new evidence in a 100 year old case which led to her non-fiction book *'The Secret*

*of the Cottingley Fairies.'*

A regular contributor to *The Fortean Times*, she also co-presents *The Fairy Podcast* with Dan Baines and now has six books to her name. As 'Tink' she organises festivals in non-Covid times, including *The Legendary Llangollen Faery Festival*. With over 250 stallholders plus bands, walkabout acts and set-piece shows plus 12,000 visitors, it's easily the largest fairy gathering in the UK. She lives in Wales with three opinionated cats.

## MIKE SPROUSE

Mike is a dad, a veteran, a voice actor, and podcast host.

He has been practicing almost 30 years as an eclectic solitary witch, and currently a 1st degree Cabot Witch with plans to eventually become a High Priest in the tradition.



Since last august he has created and hosted the podcast "Son Of A Witch", delving into topics concerning the witchcraft and pagan community...with a healthy smattering of pop culture, comic references, and guest interviews. Mike currently resides in New England with his fiance and their 2 fur babies.

*Read more about our  
writers and  
our residencies*  
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# The Storyteller's Moon

## The Full Moon Lunar Eclipse in Sagittarius

Dear ones,

*Our next full moon is here and we will be welcoming in a lunar eclipse in the sign of Sagittarius. May's full moon is referred to as the flower moon, the milk moon and the corn planting moon and will reach fullness on 26th May 12:13 (bst). Eclipses can be intense and we can probably already feel the effects of the upcoming Mercury retrograde which is taking place on May 29th. This full moon is also a super moon so definitely up your self care and grounding practices in the days before. Retrogrades and eclipses can provide us with the opportunity for shadow work. Ask yourself as you head into this lunar eclipse, what shadow parts of myself are making themselves known at the moment?*

Michelle Rose Boxley  
for Sisters of the Moon

Sagittarius is a masculine fire sign, ruled by the planet Jupiter and the 9th house of Philosophy and long distance journeys. Jupiter is often referred to as the great benefactor, it is the largest of the planets and has the largest number of moons so has this beautiful expansive and abundant quality. Sagittarius moon is a wonderful time to focus on manifesting your dreams, cultivating gratitude and joy, and elevating your thoughts. With it being an eclipse we can ask our self what is holding us back from manifesting our goals and dreams. It's also the perfect opportunity to check back in with your new moon intentions and tend to them with the expansive qualities of Sagittarius. Sagittarius has a childlike curiosity about everything and will always look beyond the ordinary, everyday appearances - they seek adventure, truth and crave independence. I see them embodying the Huntress archetype.

Sagittarius themes: *freedom, expansion, knowledge, abundance, joy, travel, philosophy, light, growth, limitless opportunities, adventure, curiosity, meaning, direction, focus.*

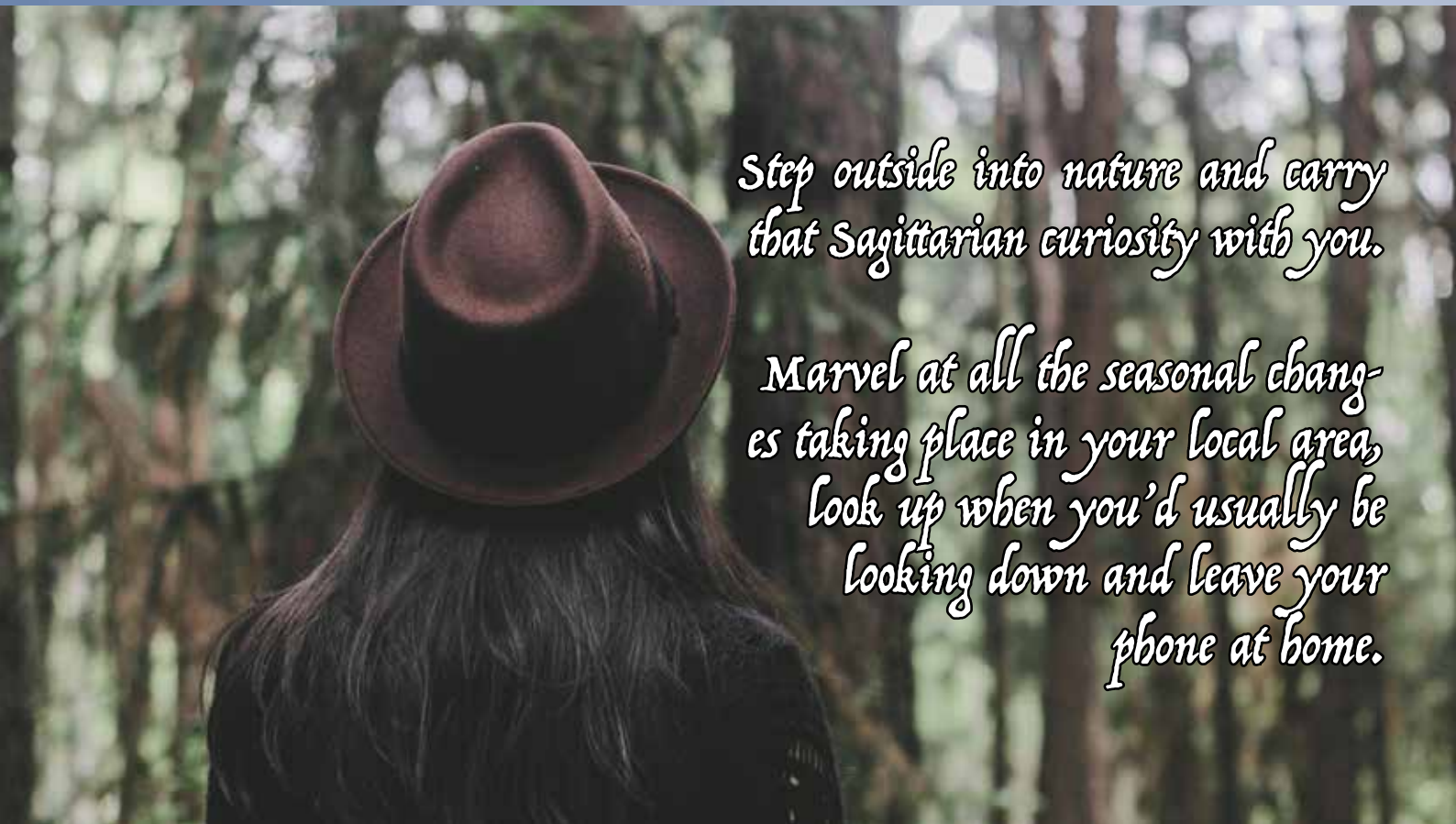
For this full moon we will have the sun in Gemini and the moon in Sagittarius, these two signs compliment each other really well as both are to do with the mind. Sagittarius is known as the Philosopher of the zodiac and can help to ground Gemini's constant quest for knowledge and information and it's somewhat flittish tendencies. This full moon helps us to see the balance between intelligence and wisdom. Do we spend too much time absorbing information but then not actually integrating it into our life? For example, maybe we have been reading about certain



topics for a long time, like meditation, but don't actually put them in to practice. Intelligence comes from the gathering of knowledge whereas wisdom comes from putting that knowledge into action and gaining insight and experience from it. That's where doing the work comes in! It also invites us to ask whether we feel like we constantly need to be doing another course or qualification in order to feel ready to step forward into our future?

Sagittarius wants to learn, understand and gather knowledge and wisdom. They want to learn from others, travel to other lands and gain insight into how other people think and experience life. I often think of Sagittarius as the travelling storyteller or Bard - welcome at everyone's hearth to fill the room with wonder and enchantment. Embrace your inner bard and expand your mind with books, podcasts, blogs and conversations. Use your journal to record the things you've been learning. Start or join a book or philosophy club. Enroll in new studies. The world is your oyster!

**Sagittarius Self Care**  
*Sagittarius rules the hips and thighs. On Sagittarius moon days it's important to look after these parts of the body. Due to the optimistic and joyful nature of this sign, uplifting Citrus oils such as Bergamot, Orange and Mandarin are lovely to use and these oils help to lift our mood and connect us to hope. Why not add some of these oils to a base oil and make yourself an uplifting leg massage oil.*



*Step outside into nature and carry that Sagittarian curiosity with you.*

*Marvel at all the seasonal changes taking place in your local area, look up when you'd usually be looking down and leave your phone at home.*

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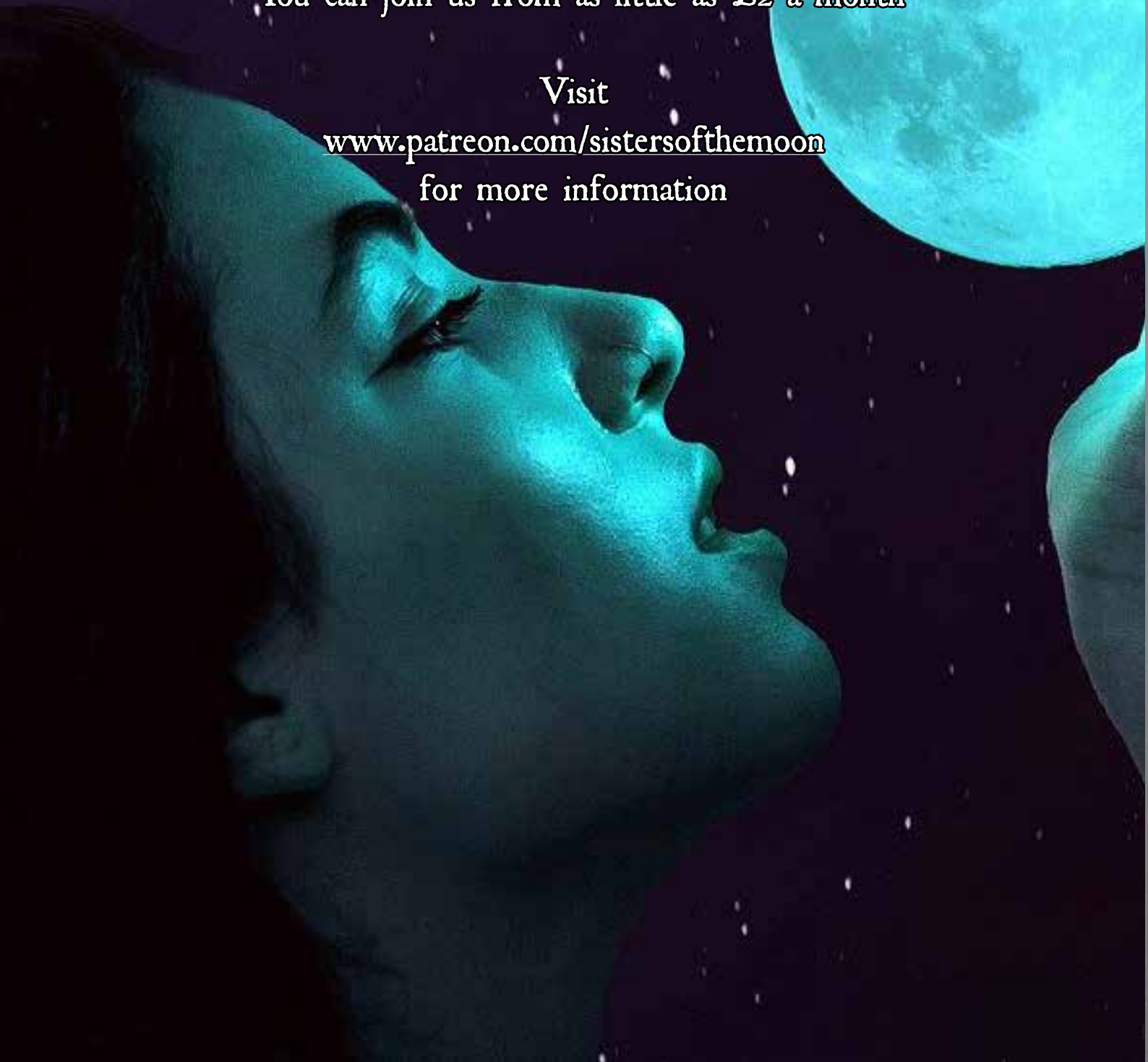
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New Dawn

'Veilchenblau' (niebieski pod nazwą 'let blue', jest już...  
 że była pierwszą...  
 1909 r. G. C. Schmidt...  
 son Rambler' z siewka...  
 silnie rosnący, do wysoko...  
 o średnicy mniej więcej...  
 baldachogrona. Odnacza...  
 małością na złe warunki...  
 latwo poraża go mączniak...  
 wszystkie róże pnące o małych...  
 się do okrywania ogrodzeń, pergoli itp. Jest to już...  
 raczej krzew historycznych kolekcji róż, ale nada-  
 je się także do zwykłych ogrodów.

'New Dawn'...  
 okrojony...  
 set. Jest...  
 an Fleet...  
 (ci) i je...  
 Kwitnie obficie aż do...  
 jesieni...  
 Odnacza...  
 okryw...  
 pergoli, można go również zastosować jako zwisa-  
 jący krzew obok tarasu, zbrocza itp. Jeśli uprawia  
 się go „luzem” — bez podpór, wymaga wówczas  
 dużo przestrzeni. Szczepiony na wysokiej pod-  
 kładce tworzy ładne „placzące” drzewko.





The Phoenix Guides

*New Edition!*

# Hookland

## A PLACE BEYOND

F.R. Mayer

Witch Residency Writer

In 1980, as part of their 'Strange England' series, Phoenix Garages published their guidebook to Hookland, updating it with a new cover shortly thereafter.

Six years later,

as a victim of Margaret Thatcher's redefinition of Britain's county boundaries...

...Hookland vanished.

Hookland, with its 'corpse lanes' and 'cunning folk,' a county that was often prefixed by the words 'liminal' or 'eerie,' has since slipped through the cracks in our collective memory.

All that's left is ephemera such as *The Phoenix Guide to Strange England* to acknowledge Hookland ever existed.

**None of the above is true.**



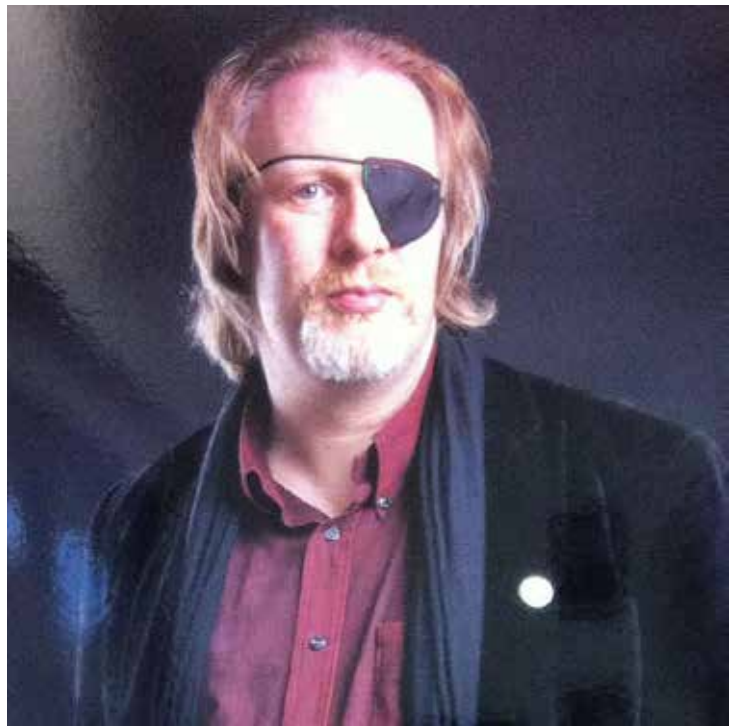
Hookland snags the imagination with significant detail and fools the unwary. It is the magnificent conceit of writer David Southwell.

Such is his trickster nature even his Wikipedia page is not entirely to be believed. It suggests he is a bestselling author of many fiction and non-fiction books.

One link to a book called '*Dirty Money*' takes you to an album of that name, another to a documentary page. But even these 'false claims' are a double-bluff. It's all smoke and mirrors - he's published *many* books from conspiracy theories to pub jokes.

By 2012, Southwell had stopped writing about conspiracies and was looking for a new direction. In a chance conversation, JG Ballard advised him to concentrate on writing about place:

*I wanted to do something that dealt with the ghost soil of Britain - all the folklore, all the high strangeness that grew and bloomed in the gloriously strange TV, film and books I grew up with as a child in the 1970s. I wanted to put the weirdness back. I strongly believe that re-enchantment is resistance and even back in 2012 you could see how the fight for the national narrative was going and how the ghost soil voice needed to be heard more strongly within it.*



The idea of a county that never existed was born. It suits the oddness of Southwell's creation that he began revealing it on Twitter. Over the last few years, layers of history have accreted around the central idea and Hookland has been realised thousands of tweets. Many people began following @HooklandGuide after seeing Southwell's contributions to #FolkloreThursday.

Using Twitter means Southwell hasn't the word count to explain his enigmatic posts. The result is a lightness of touch that makes Hookland so compelling. Because everything is suggested, it's up to the reader to fill in the gaps. This deceptively simple device has garnered growing numbers of loyal fans. Anyone with an interest in folklore or *English Eerie* will find this co-creation deliciously addictive.



Southwell credits listening to the news as a child in the 1970's as a major influence: *The news was dystopian prophecy manifesting: oil crises, killing fields, three-day weeks - as if our time itself was being stolen - Black Septembers turning to Cold War winters of discontent. Yet the high strangeness of the times meant it would cov-*

HOOKLAND IS THE  
RECOVERED MEMORY THAT  
YOU CANNOT DISMISS.

HOOKLAND IS THE  
RECOVERED MEMORY YOU  
SECRETLY HOPE IS TRUE.

HOOKLAND IS THAT PLACE  
YOU VISITED ONCE, BUT  
CANNOT FIND ON ANY MAP.

HOOKLAND IS WHERE ALL  
THE WEIRDNESS YOU'VE  
EDITED OUT OF YOUR LIFE  
COMES FLOODING BACK.

HOOKLAND IS GHOST SOIL.

*er UFO sighting, poltergeists and cryptids with exactly the same editorial voice of serious calm. The news treated the weird as normal and horror as everyday ... I wanted to write something where I could put back all of the weirdness that has been edited out of cultural dialogue.*

Hookland is peopled by an extraordinary cast. I asked him where he found their unique voices:

*The popular DI, Roger 'Cunning' Callaghan who investigates anything with a whiff of ritual or*

*the occult is based on a senior ex-Vice and Drug Squad detective who was this wonderful mix of spiritual insight and a policing with your fists 1970s copper.*

*My pastiches of John Betjeman's non-existent BBC TV series The English Alphabet even drew angry letters to the Beeb and to me from one American Betjeman scholar. However, some things are sacred to me, beyond pastiche and Arthur Machen is one of those. I wanted a Machen-like voice in Hookland and so that led to the creation of C.L. Nolan, an Edwardian writer of strange stories,*

The haunting tweets quoting C.L.Nolan, are often accompanied by dramatic monochrome shots of bleak landscapes, tilted at Hitchcockian angles. Nolan's words are poetry.

*I shunned the church with its brutal, fort-like tower for the sermon of blossom falling like soft rain.*

Superb images match almost every tweet, from cleverly manipulated book covers perfectly in keeping with the time they were allegedly written, to old British Rail posters, to album covers by Hookland bands.

So why present it as a guide book?

*I have often said Hookland is partly a love-letter to Paul Nash and it really is. I chose to tell many of the stories of Hookland through a guide-book format not only because of a childhood love*



*of guidebooks, but because it let people create their own joined-up narratives from small glimpses. However, that choice was also a direct tribute to Nash's 1935 Shell motor company travel guide to Dorset. Nash was this incredibly powerful artist who got the strangeness stored in the English landscape. He had this incredible ability in his paintings and photography to playfully connect the past and present through place, manifesting not just in folklore, but a sense that even distant dinosaur eras could still be felt in the stone; a sense that profound primitive mysteries could be glimpsed in dead trees and the plough-broken barrow. He directly inspired me to ensure that Hookland had a sense of personal mythology and ancient Albionic mystery manifesting through place, through an environment that everyone could recognise as their own. That ever-present sense that the land itself is in us, that we enjoy a constant relationship to it.*

Hookland has a growing lexicon of local slang; to evade the Twitter character limit, pages are photographed from an invented dictionary. Very entertaining, often bawdy, one of the tamer examples is 'Mouth Pie' whereby to take a severe scolding is to 'take a slice of mouth pie.'

Southwell has created a Hookland 'bible' to keep track of the multiple characters, places and situations, and its scope is breath-taking. It lists the settlements of Hookland, down to the *drifts*, a local word for those tiny rows of two or three houses often seen on country roads. Everything has been considered; from the police author-

ity to food. The county produces two cheeses, Stinking Tom and Burnt Bishop and a local delicacy is *plate pudding and scrap*, an elaborate toad in the hole. Thirty varieties of apple originated in Hookland and the locals have a preference for pork over any other meat.

This prosaic detail makes a perfect foil for the overlay of weirdness that Southwell creates. One tweet speaks of *doomed* archaeologist *Copeland Blight*. That word *doomed* conjures up every cursed artefact story you've ever heard.

He wrote this about Hookland's canal network:

*The cut has a malignant gravity that seems to pull unsettling stories to it. Drowned babies, eel-eaten corpses found floating, strange knocks on the underside of boats at night, all leading C.L. Nolan to say in a 1933 BBC radio talk: 'The canals are veins furred with trauma.'*

In the oddly but plausibly named village of *Finchford Dignity*, the Black Frog pub boasts a haunted grandfather clock of which Nolan says:

*There were souls trapped between the tick and the tock. Souls he could hear whisper just before the chime.*

This enchanting observation of a clock 'drawing breath' before striking is supported upon foundations of compelling



detail; the bible expands that one Timothy Tidy bequeathed the clock to the pub in 1876:

*... regulars will retell the clock's tale and if a glass smashes, a shout goes around the bar of: "Careful Timothy!"*

I've never heard this in an English pub, but it's pitch-perfect; a typical oddity no-one pays much heed to anymore but which a visitor might ask about.

Whilst almost everything is covered in Southwell's comprehensive guide, there's one obvious omission: Hookland's exact location.

*It is about 90 miles from [[redacted]], a journey that takes two hours and five minutes on the fastest train and about two and half hours in a fast car if the gods are with you.*

Famous people have 'been there,' Aleister Crowley and Sir John Betjeman amongst them - and you can go too, for Hookland is common land and open for anyone to enjoy. Southwell isn't precious about his creation; you can borrow whatever parts of it suit you best. You can take what you wish and make of it what you will.

*Making it open means people can use it in any way they want and play always throws such wonderful, expected directions. I didn't expect people to writing music inspired by it, I didn't expect*

*people someone would have written a novel set in it even before I'd finished my own publications on the county. I'm still gloriously delighted when someone says can I use this C.L. Nolan quote for my book or mention the county in a horror film they are making. I'm still overjoyed when some ask for a visual guide because they want to do Hookland-inspired graffiti or paint portraits of cunning folk that previously only existed in their mind, but that they hadn't realised it till they began walking in the county. I never expected to be interviewing people playing their own fictional creations that reside in Hookland before live audiences or selling hand-drawn maps of the county to people living in Hollywood. Hookland is one imaginary place where no-one evicts when you try to build a home there and where no-one ever tells you that there are planning regulations. The only decent imaginary places are those that escape from their creators and I'm pleased that Hookland is well on the way to that already.*

If you reciprocate with the same openness and allow others to build upon your contribution, it will become cannon and you will have made your own, lasting mark upon Hookland.

As a project whilst I was still at University, I 'found' a guide to Hookland in a junk shop in Shrewsbury, and went there to research the infamous Mordant family; local aristocrats who had contact with the realm of Faerie long ago. I suffered satnav malfunction, became hopelessly lost and dropped my phone so it only took



moody, monochrome photographs.

At the time @HooklandGuide retweeted my plight with the unsettling observation:  
*I have a terrible feeling this will not end well.*

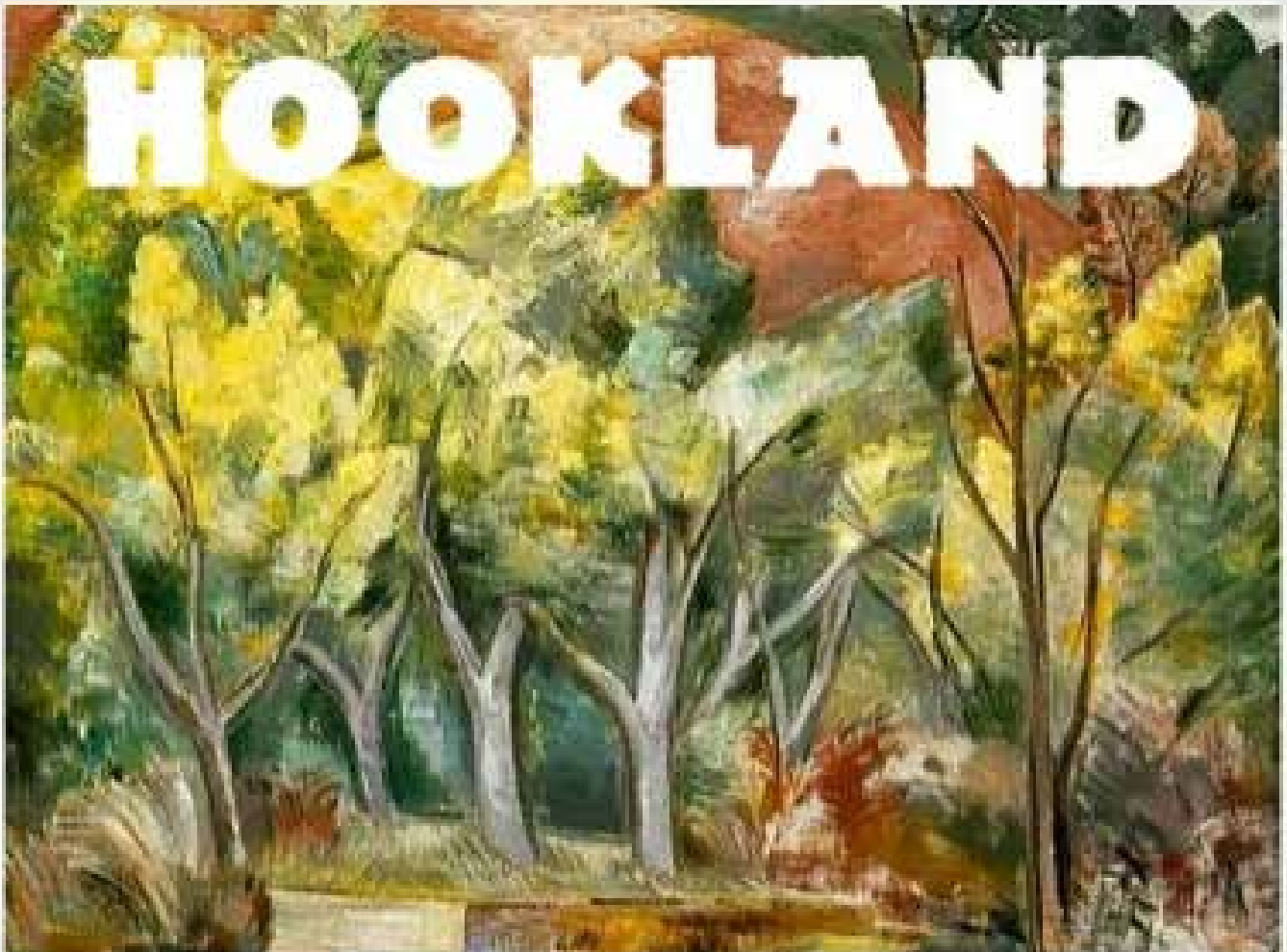
I escaped, eventually, but Hookland left its mark.

David Southwell's creation has a way of burrowing deep into your psyche and resonating with latent memories; setting up a tension that's disturbing and comforting, like stroking an old scar. I doubt I'll ever be free of Hookland. Then again, I don't want to be.

*Find Hookland and  
David Southwell on*

*Twitter:*

*@HooklandGuide and  
@cultauthor*



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# DAYS OF

*A walk in local woodland would not be complete without the beautiful trees that become our companions. Perhaps you have your own favourite tree, which you return to again and again. Or perhaps there is a quiet glade in the forest, where you can while away hours listening to birdsong and watching for shy, silent deer.*



Helen J.R. Bruce  
Witch Writer

# HOLLY

Here in the UK, we are most likely familiar with the towering oak, dark-berried elder and the glossy-leaved holly. We may also know the white flowers of hawthorn, sacred blossom of Beltane, and the bright striped bark of the birch. But the learning of tree-lore is a lifelong journey, and the magical and practical uses of the many varieties of wood in our forests can be studied almost endlessly.

Alongside the rich symbolism of trees, and without touching on the great depths of the Ogham, there is also a native British lunar tree calendar, which comes from a cycle of observances traced back to Neolithic times. To delve into this more deeply, I recommend looking into the work of Dusty Miller, a hereditary wise man from Kent. For this article we will turn our attention to holly, whom we might know as the winter rival to the oak king of summer. We may see holly as one of the two, or many, faces of the Green Man or we may even associate it with Gwyn ap Nudd, who leads the Wild Hunt at Samhain and enacts a yearly battle with his flame haired counterpart, Gwythyr ap Greidawl.

Having just said all this, it is interesting to discover that the full moon in holly falls in May, according to the lunar tree calendar previously mentioned. According to this system, the month of holly brings in a gentle paternal energy, allowing the activities of summer to be tackled with positivity and assurance. Being a masculine force, the holly very much calls us to get out there and get things done, but this is in no way tied to any modern perception of gender. Each and every one of us contains a balance of masculine and feminine energy, and as we settle into



ourselves we become more and more comfortable with calling on either, depending on which is best suited to a given task. The traditional summer jobs of sowing, harvesting and driving animals between pastures require our muscles and the single mindedness needed for repetitive actions. Likewise, the actions of now slowly coming out of hibernation and getting ourselves back out into the community require a level of masculine drive. The lunar cycle of holly is the perfect time to begin calling up this energy. Both the full moon and dark moon can be used to focus this intention, and the protective attributes of holly are suited to being called upon during the dark moon.

When we work physically with the wood from holly we may remember its protective properties, as it is said to guard against lightning strikes and also ward off evil spirits. If turned or carved, it can produce beautiful pale wood bowls and implements, plus also striking objects which make use of the patterned, spalted wood. Holly symbolises sacrifice and reincarnation, due to its evergreen nature. Also, the red berries are sometimes described as symbolic of the live-giving blood of the mother Goddess, although the tree itself is masculine. Deities linked to holly include the Norse god Thor, unsurprisingly given the fact that holly is said to protect a person or dwelling from lightning strikes! In folk cures, hot compresses made from the bark and leaves were used to help ease the pain of broken bones.

This month is the perfect time to find your local holly trees and get to know them. Holly

is often found as either single trees or small groves within deciduous forests. It is also commonly found in gardens and even growing on the verges alongside roads and trimmed into hedges! Approach your chosen tree with respect, not least because of the prickles, but also take time to sense the energy of the tree and allow time for it to welcome you into its space. Once you have visited a few times, and perhaps spent time sitting with your back or hand to the bark (if possible) you may begin to find the tree begins to share some of its vast knowledge with you; either through phrases that pop into your head or as visual memories. You may simply feel held and protected, as if a kind father figure is standing alongside you. At this stage, you might wish to bring small eco-friendly offerings for your tree or even, if the location allows, involve it in ceremony or ritual.

Holly is often associated with the darker and colder half of the year, but the summer placement of it in this calendar reminds us also of its evergreen properties. It may show up more in winter, when many other trees are bare, but the beautiful, waxy leaves and tiny white flowers are present in summer, reminding us of the cyclical nature of all things. When the holly king reigns through the winter, the oak king remains deep in the bark; not vanquished, merely sleeping. Likewise, in the long, hot days of summer, when the oak king brings rising sap and vitality, the holly king is resting in the cool depths of the earth. Like the masculine and feminine energies within all of us, these dual aspects weave an ongoing dance of balance.





# ENERGY MAINTAINANCE

Many of us may feel like we have been in some kind of protective cave. (Especially those of us who are 'clinically vulnerable' or even more so 'clinically extremely vulnerable'.) We are being asked to step outside our cave with a level of uncertainty as to what we will face when we do so. That in itself can drain our energy before we have even done anything.

If you are an empath like myself, you may find this 'return to normal' even more exhausting as you subconsciously read and absorb the energy of other beings.

Personally, I am still enjoying the social etiquette of asking people what they are comfortable with (e.g. meeting indoors or outdoors, to hug or not to hug) so that we are setting our boundaries with mutual respect before we meet or at the start of a meeting. I feel that many of us have re-claimed our personal space and in the long run, that is a good thing. However, as we interact more it can be difficult to then share this space.

I'm sharing some suggestions for energy maintenance, whether it be retaining it or re-balancing it.

*I am having a lot of conversations with people about fatigue right now. As we slowly start looking at our social diaries again, start traveling more and are building more social interaction, we are having to shift our energies and focus into different gears which can be exhausting.*

*Fairy Bec  
Witch Writer*



## CRYSTALS FOR PROTECTION

Crystals can really aid the balance of energies. You can meditate with them, have them in a pouch in your bag or place them somewhere within your home that feels right or follows feng shui suggestions.



Here are some suggested crystals to help you protect your personal energy fields.

**Tiger Eye:** - Provides you with protection, increases mental clarity, dispels fear and soothes anxiety.

**Black Tourmaline:** - Absorbs negative energy, detoxifies, enhances energy flow and aids understanding of oneself and others.

**Hematite:** - Helps bring balance, helps build self-belief and establish grounding & stability.

**Smoky Quartz:** - Clears negative energy from the aura, retunes emotions, settles energy and builds resilience.

**Obsidian:** - Shields, blocks psychic attack, strengthens you from the inside and helps to dissolve emotional blockages.

You can team these with “happy” crystals such as sunstone, Yellow Calcite, Rose Quartz, Citrine and Clear Quartz to lift the energies once you have established your base.

## THE ENERGIES OF MOTHER EARTH

I have met many healers and readers who get quite exhausted from their work. Personally, I usually feel quite energised and elated after readings and healings so I wondered what I did differently. I use my Reiki energy flow during these moments (and through my every day). What I discovered is that many people see themselves as the vessel not

the channel. A vessel can only hold so much energy but a channel can pass on as much energy as the source can provide. My source is Mother Earth. I imagine that roots are growing from my feet down to the core of the Earth. I draw warm golden liquid from those roots, up through my body and into whatever I am doing. I also channel that right up (As above, so below) into the clouds, imagine it dispersing before returning to the Earth. Much like the cycle of precipitation.

You can use this transmission of energy at any time day or night.

## THE BUBBLE AND ENERGY VAMPIRES


I often imagine that I have a golden bubble around me, especially when I feel unsettled somewhere or with someone. I also do this when I am going somewhere new and unknown or where there are large crowds of people.

When I finish a healing, I also surround my clients with a golden bubble to keep the lovely healing in. There are some people who are Energy Vampires. Some are aware of it, such as Chaos Magicians who thrive off scattering other people’s energy then sucking it up and others are simply not comfortable in their own skin yet and have an unconscious requirement to soak energy from the people they are with. Most of us can identify those who we feel exhausted from being around but identifying those who slowly drain us can be challenging. My main advice here is to work on building your bubble quickly so when you start to feel these moments of potential energy scattering or absorption by others, you can get that bubble up and maintain your personal space. You will be amazed how these types of people slowly drift apart from you and your energy field when you prevent them from draining you.

## BOUNDARIES

Lastly, I feel that boundaries are extremely important. If boundaries are set then we will not take or allow too much to be taken. If you view interactions with other humans as an exchange of energy then the concept of equal exchange is set from the beginning.

# CROSSING REALMS



In almost all (if not all) cultures and esoteric teachings there is the understanding of 'our world' - the physical world and what is commonly known as the otherworld. In shamanic teachings there are three aspects of the otherworld - the upper, lower and middle worlds. Norse teachings are very similar, with each level being further divided into 3's, giving the nine worlds, connected by the great tree yggdrasil. In Jewish mysticism one can journey the kabbalistic tree of life and traditional crafters 'ride the hedge' to the otherworld. The purpose for such work varies but generally can be rooted to accessing information that may assist one (or someone they are journeying for) with specific enquiries or with their overall soul evolution.

The purpose of this article is a short guide for beginners and those wishing to further their journeying skills. My personal training is predominantly rooted in Shamanic trance work, therefore much of the information and techniques I offer are derived from this path. However, it is important to understand that journeying, trancework, astral travel, entering the twilight, communing with the gods, faery realms and other spirits are much the same thing and are essentially different ways of describing the shifting of one's consciousness into the other realms. Journeying is something that anyone can do. Like anything else it may come more naturally to some, but I believe it is an innate skill we all possess that like any skill is improved with practice and experience.

With so called 'new age' teachings having become more mainstream, I believe this has both positive and negative connotations for the practicing magical person of any path.

STEPHANIE ULPH  
WITCH RESIDENCY WRITER



The obvious positives are greater ease in sourcing magical knowledge, items, equipment and remedies (though for the traditionalist of any magical culture this was never really an issue, especially when the earth was more wild). It is also mostly positive that it has become somewhat easier in the modern world to find like-minded people, share ideas and be accepted by a larger part of society.

Negatively, traditional crafts, cultures and sacred knowledge are at risk of being watered down as well as the risk of cultural appropriation, with huge corporations now exploiting spirituality and many of its utilised 'products' with only profit in mind. The reason for my digression here though is where ego has become a part of spiritualism in a big way and in many ways - most relevantly in some people making quite extraordinary claims that have become so commonplace that those who do not make false claim on their abilities can feel quite diminished and at worst give up thinking themselves unable.

One area I see this quite a lot is with astral projection. Many seem to like to lead the belief that they are able to totally leave their bodies on command. I cannot speak for everyone's experience but in my own I have to say that 1, truthfully a full OBE (out of body experience), even with the use of the strongest psychoactive aids is fairly rare. And 2, these claims miss the point of the journeying practitioner entirely.

The most advanced forms of trancework (separate from séance style trancework) is the ability to be present in both realms.

The goal, or effect of experience over time is not about who can get the furthest away from their body, but rather to be able to access the other realms very quickly with little or no aids.

So, to get started with journeying and to hopefully assist in reaching this point, I will go through the techniques I personally find most useful and make mention of a few that I don't personally tend to use but many do.

Beginning with the core basics, your mind needs to be still - the more experienced you become you may be able to shift your conscious easily when not totally calm, but as I experienced recently when attempting to use a fairly frequented well as a portal, I was unable to proceed through. The guardian initially did not recognise my 'energy signature' and so stopped me going through. I was able to calm from there and commune with the guardian so was not a pointless venture at all, but was not my initial aim.

Before you begin on a journey, the first thing to do is choose your aids. Helpful aids are incense (ideally of high quality, and can be appropriate to the intent of your journey but not essential), natural candles or dim light. Slow rhythmic sounds for which you can use drums, rattles and singing bowls, etc (you can use them yourself or have someone play for you).

Singular tones signifying the beginning and end of a journey work well too, as does using suitable pre-recorded music. These

'setting the scene' practices let your mind know you are preparing to shift conscious as well as assisting you in relaxing. Blended herbal teas are wonderful too, which can be homemade if you have good herbal knowledge or bought made specifically for purpose

It is relatively important (many say a must) to set an intention, this can be as simple as wanting to gain some journeying experience or to meet your spirit animal, or as elaborate as making bonds with some form of otherworldly being or gaining insight on the intricate workings of the universe.

If you think of your mind a bit like a satnav or a search engine, sometimes you may stumble on something interesting without any programmed destination but for the most part it works best with.

The next factor is to decide on your method to cross the boundary or for my personally favoured technique of using portals, deciding on your 'route'.

This is some form of entrance to the otherworld - it can be an altar. A tree is very effective, with the branches reaching the upperworld and the roots taking you to the underworld. Walking into the mist is particularly good to get to the faery realms but can be disorientating. Bridges, caves going deep into the earth, any body of water (I am particularly fond of wells), rainbows, riding the wind, crossroads, any sacred place and many more are good portals to the other realms. The tree is a very good starting point.

I will briefly somewhat digress again in order to mention that in ritual, spellcasting and other magical practice you will naturally go through very similar steps if you are to perform excellent magick.

You will set your scene or create your environment; you will set your intention and you will commonly hallow your compass or cast your circle, partly as a means of protection but more so as a means to set aside a space where the otherworld and our world may meet - literally you are creating hallowed space. If done correctly, in this space you will 'enter the twilight' which is required for extremely effective magick.

The hallowing of your compass is of course not necessary before conducting all magick but similar to what I touched on earlier when you are able to enter this state very easily you can perform some magick simply and very well.

To go on your journey (using the route method), you can sit or lie down, bearing in mind that if you lay down and get fully relaxed when tired you are likely to fall asleep. Begin with some relaxation techniques (if unsure of any look these up separately and get comfortable with doing this before proceeding).

Once relaxed let your subconscious mind/ your imaginative mind know where to head. Allow your mind to find its own way of doing this - try not to consciously use your imagination but rather let your subconscious mind present imagery to you however it comes. If you don't get very





far straight away don't worry, keep trying and you will get there. Sometimes persistence is required at all levels of journeying, as is patience.

When you have successfully found yourself (in your vision) in the otherworld, initially take note of your surroundings, the scenery, the colours, the likeness to this world or to where you live, whether there are any inhabitants etc. It is good to journey to meet your spirit animal quite early on as

they will help keep you safe especially when going deep into the other realms and when meeting other beings.

Your instincts work well here too and in some ways your spirit animal is a manifestation of you and your instinctual nature. As you progress you can try different portals and going to different places - it is possible to journey to the Heavens, to Hel, to Mount Olympus to Hades, to the Stars and the Nebulas and the Faery realms and



the Akashic library among many others.

What you will most certainly experience along your journeys wherever you go is the inability to progress past certain points. You may find a guardian does not let you pass or you may find your mind puts up a block which your imagination may translate and show to you as a closed gate or barrier for example.

This is a positive thing, protecting the inhabitants of each realm, including you, so don't feel you are not making good progress when this happens. When ready you will be able to go on, until then carry on but just accept you cannot go in that direction just yet.

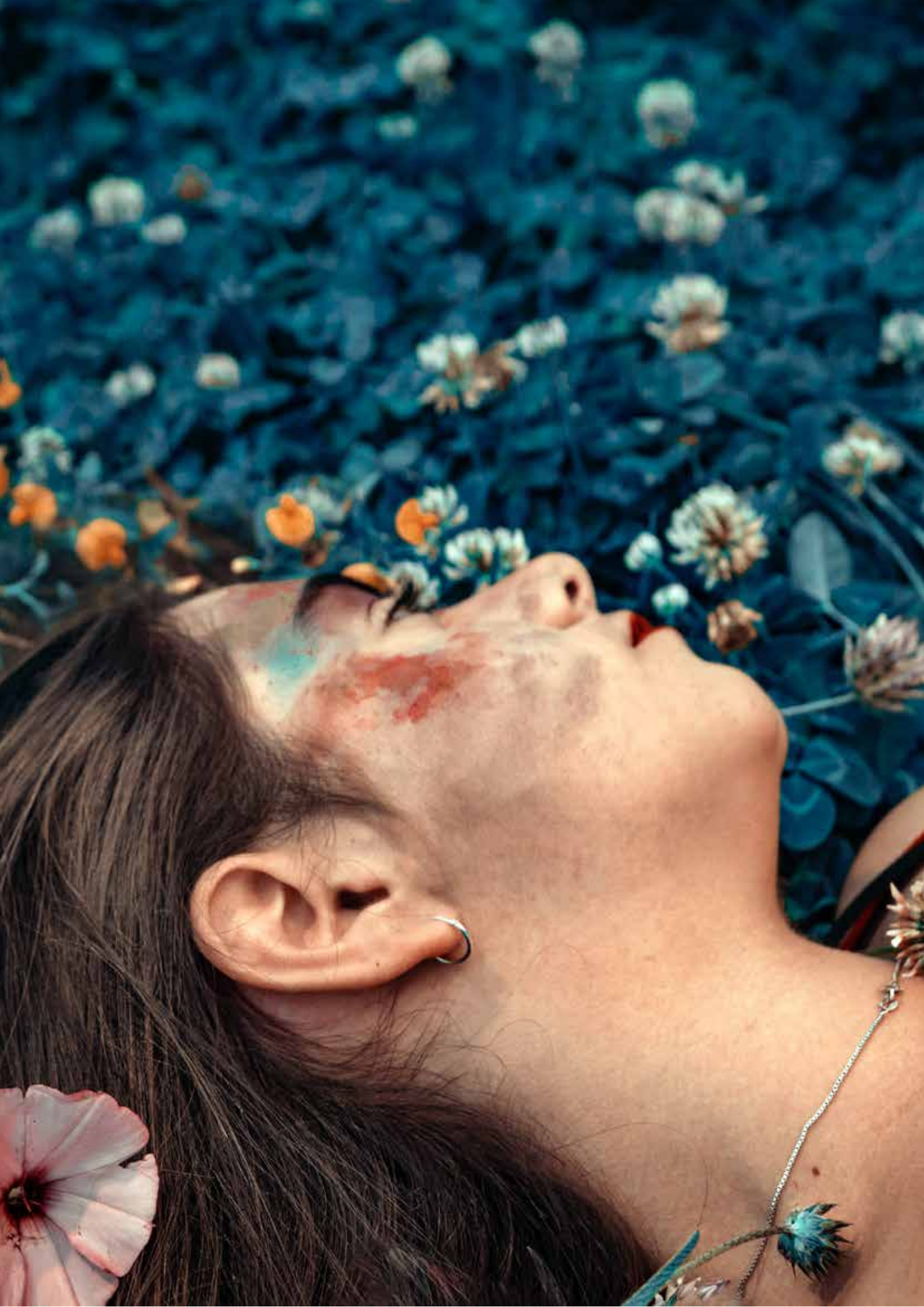
Very briefly, other useful methods to enter trance are swaying or rocking techniques, ecstatic dance and the use of certain psychoactive substances, the latter of which is most often illegal and not advisable if you do not know what you are doing or have a trusted mentor specifically for this.

From following this guidance, you should over a short time get to a point of guiding yourself on, figuring out where you want to go and what to do.

Journeying is an amazing spiritual practice that has the potential to open up various spiritual avenues of exploration as well as increase your magical knowledge and ability in many ways.









# MOONBLOOD & MAGICK

Jazz Meyer

As I write this, I am bleeding. My body is in its last day of breaking down and expelling the blood and tissue that it spent the previous month creating. I am releasing what was once intended as the nourishment of life, and is now spilling out of me like an offering, in splashes of red verging on purple.

There is much to be said about the power of blood. Just the word carries weight in it, bringing up images ripe with meaning. When I think of it, my mind is filled with swirls of vermilion and burgundy that spill forth weighty thoughts of life, death, birth, pain, strength and fragility.

Menstrual blood, in particular, is rich with meaning. For many it is profane - something to be shunned as dirty, as debased, as uncouth. It is hushed up and hidden away, talked about in whispers and euphemisms. To me, this is evidence of its power. Menstrual blood is a visceral confrontation of our animal natures. It flies in the face of humankind's attempt to separate ourselves from the earth, to declare ourselves civilised and sanitised. Every month, the blood of the womb presents itself afresh, reminding us of our true natures.

And, for me, it is a symbol of the power I hold in my womb. This blood represents my potential for creating life, which is a type of magick in and of itself. As a cis woman, it pulls me into vivid, unavoidable contact with my own femininity. And, like so much of my magick, it blurs the line between the sacred and the profane.

Every month, my body cycles through birth and death, creation and destruction, and at the death phase of my cycle, it releases the bright vermilion blood and deep red tissue that signifies all the potential that this body carries. These cycles of growth and decay are an expression of the same cycles that occur in the rest of nature. All life, all energy, all of existence flows constantly between these two states of being and non-being, life and



death, creation and destruction. As a hedgewitch, I am drawn to understanding, celebrating, and riding those cycles. As the universe expresses this pattern, so too does my womb.

This has been a journey and there is a long path still ahead of me, but the more I attune myself to these cycles in my body, the more I see them present elsewhere, and nowhere is that cycle more evident to me than in the moon.



*Jazz Meyer is a burgeoning hedgewitch and green witch, tapping back into her magical roots by way of communion with nature, personal rituals, and entheogenic plants. She channels much of this journey into her jewellery craft, creating ethical jewellery for magical folk from her home studio in Portugal. You can find her work on instagram at @halfmooncraft*

The cycles of menstrual blood and the cycles of the moon have long been compared and connected. That glowing orb in the heavens draws me in, showing me her own cycles, her changes that are subtle and quiet, while also strong. She literally moves oceans with her incremental shifts, and she reminds me daily of the waxing and waning of all things.

When I look up at the full moon, I am shown a picture of my own fullness - the warm glow and potent energy of ovulation. When I see her place in the sky dark and quiet, I recognise the reflection and rest that comes from my body's new moon during menses. And in my new moon phase, as my body begins again, I take my blood as an offering - to and from myself, to and from the earth. The potency of that blood I channel into spells, offering this symbol of life and death in a ritual that nourishes me and nourishes the earth of which I am a part.

The details of this ritual I will keep as a secret between the moon and I, but I encourage you who bleed to explore the power of your own menstrual blood. There is potential for great power there, the power of knowledge and of offering. The power inherent in your own gloriously bloody and animalistic body.



# What is a Witch?

## A Channelled Message

*When thinking about writing an article, the question, what is a witch? came to my head. After centuries of history, that word has been the target of devotion and hate, equally. So as a channeler, I decided to ask the Divine: What is a witch, from spirit?*

*Here is their answer.*

Andrea  
For Fortuna Living

*"We, the Divine, would like to start to say that the word witch, is filled with magic and power.*

*It's a word that brings golden codes of wisdom through women, through a channel of love, in communion with nature, with the Elementals, with the ether, all the elements of Earth.*

*In older times, witches could talk to the plants, and the plants could talk back to them and say what they were good for. Those were the times before the schism when the realms were very close to each other before the veil was put between peoples and nature and everything related to their higher knowledge of the Divine.*

*The witches of those times of light, enlightenment, and synergy with nature, passed all this magic knowledge to other generations of women in different ways.*

*This knowledge and wisdom were passed in stories, tales, art, potions, recipes, rituals around the family, land, or seasons, sometimes smell to infuse a house or space or a person. They all carry the vibration and the wisdom of those elements that Earth expresses in such a magical way for your benefit. Back then, Mother Earth was the goddess. Nature was revered as a divine force full of wisdom and creativity. With character to create or destroy at its will in a way that even if we don't understand, will always bring renewal.*

*Since the fall of the veil between the light and you, there have been twisted practices, and obscured intellect and knowledge. There are different types of witches. Some work with darkness, which is a misunderstood, misplaced, and mispractice of the original wisdom. Some work with the light of the Divine knowledge expressed through Earth's energy, nature, and its elements.*



*Because you live in a 3D reality, putting your attention in light or dark can bring any of them into existence.*

*But in truth, all come from the light.*

*A real witch is a strong woman. A woman that, when she feels sad, weak, or that she can't, drives and draws power from Earth and the elements. She uses crystals and stones, plants, smoke, and oils to manifest well-being. She creates symbolic acts to manifest a better reality.*

*A true witch draws this energy and brings it to the world for the good of all and the harm of none. And that is the principle of the light. That is the principle of bringing goodness and magic into the world.*

*A witch today might have electronics, recorded songs, and printed paper. But will always use the energy of intention, focus, attention, and ultimately, love. Love draws everything together and makes everything stick and grow coherently. Love brings about the best, optimum creation possible at that moment in time, for the good of all and the harm of none.*

*A witch loves creating symbolic acts as a lending of hand to someone troubled. Always, like a mother advising that the best outcome will be the one to manifest. Lovingly, with knowledge and wisdom.*

*A witch owes herself to the sky above and the Earth below. Brings the energy from the Universe, the energy from the Earth, and becomes a messenger, translator of these magic codes.*

*From time immemorial, witches have been at the heart of communities. Real witches, wise women from*

*the heart, connected with Father Sky and Mother Earth. Bringing magic, healing, and knowledge to the world.*

*Honor the witches and the female lineage of light that has come before you, and connect with the Earth's crystal core. The crystal heart full of love and compassion and power, to hold you, protect you, and empower you.*

*Connect with the heavens, so they rain blessings on you and the world. Creating a never-ending loop of abundance.*

*Connect with the Divinity inside you. Look for it as if you are looking for the brightest light you have ever seen. Be grateful for the divine light to shine. Mother Earth, with her unconditional love and Father Sky with its enlightenment, will bring about the path that will lead to your discovery, your greatness, your love, your light.*

*Bless your path, honor it.*

*Fill yourself with unconditional love. You are the child of the Universe and the child of Earth.*

*You can always decide. Which energies would you like to use? Remember that your legacy is a legacy of light and unconditional love from all the elements known and unknown. You are representative of a legacy of unconditional love. You are cared for, you are very loved".*

About the author:

My name is Andrea, and I am a channeler, tarot specialist, Reiki practitioner, color therapist and NLP practitioner.

I am the founder of Fortuna Living and you can follow me on Instagram: @fortunalivingspirit and my web: fortunalive.org

THE GLAM WITCH IS BACK WITH THEIR THIRD BOOK

# WITCHCRAFT FOR DAILY SELF-CARE

A review by Bekki Jo Milner  
Witch Editor



Following on from Michael Herkes' previous books, *The Glam Witch* and *The Complete Book of Moon Spells*, *Witchcraft for Daily Self Care* has arrived at a time when we all need to give ourselves a little more love.

The first part of the book helpfully introduces witchcraft, how it works and provides some essential information, so that even the newest of witches can indulge in some witchy self-care.

It sets a beginner up to expand their practice and research. In my opinion, this book would be a wonderfully empowering way into the world of Witchcraft.

That isn't to say this book is only for beginners - not at all. Even as a witch of 20 years, I found the first part of the book a really useful reminder of just how much the practices of witchcraft and self-care are entwined.



## **MAKING MAGICK**

The second part of the book gives you all you need for 90 days of self-care witchcraft - from meditation to rituals, recipes, astrology, divination and so much more!

This is a complete self-care grimoire that is helpfully divided in to categories - Mind, Body, Spirit, Environment, Relationships and Community, and Prosperity and Success. Easy to follow and nothing but beneficial, this is a book you can dip in to again and again to find what you need to take care of yourself at any time.

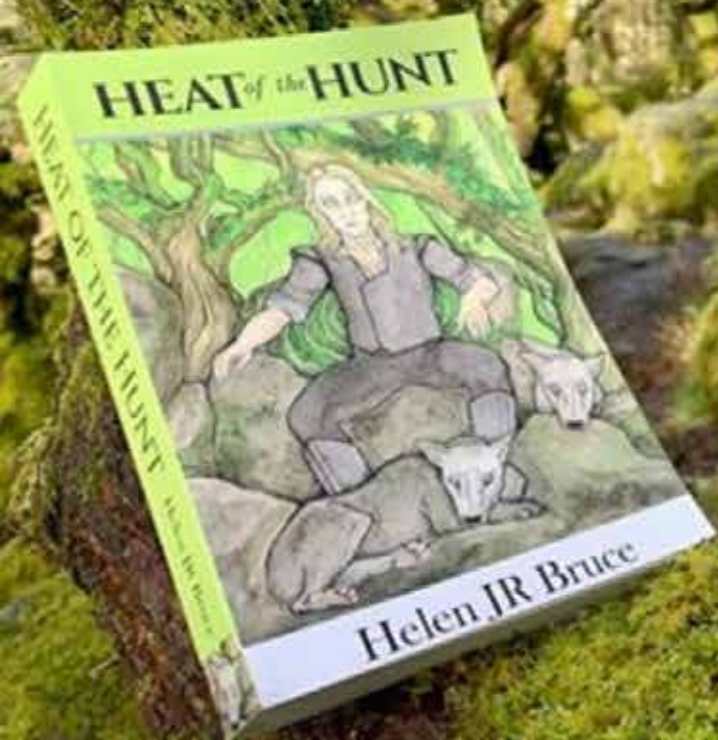
Michael's book makes self care easy - from simple tasks, to full rituals - and they're all easily adaptable and accessible.

Some of my favourites include A Candle Spell to Release Fear, Ritual of Gratitude and the Personal Power Sigil - but I found something useful on every page. Everything here will help nurture you, help you be your witchy best, and help you honour yourself - mind, spirit and body.

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Choose the fae.  
Or dare to  
choose both...*

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# CEREMONIAL MAGICK

## A PREPARATORY GUIDE TO THE INEFFABLE

For as long as I can remember, the question “But why though?” has been teetering on the tip of my tongue. Throughout my childhood, I felt the deepest dissatisfaction at the answers given to my ponderings. Scientific or morally correct answers just couldn’t scratch the itch of unknowing I felt gnawing at my brain. As a little girl, I could drift in and out of the astral at my own liberty. I’d always assumed that everyone could see the strange ebb and flow of creation that seemed to impede on my every waking moment. Shivers of density shuddered across my bedroom at night as spongy dark forms played shadows on the ceiling. I would close my eyes and drift into a land where I could sail across the sky, manifesting my own dimensions to explore. I drew the energy to do so directly from the source, seeing the unfurling patterns of reality unfold in perfect unrelenting fractals.

It’s unclear why, at such a young age, my mind’s eye was open enough to loosely understand the clicking together of esoteric concepts. I faintly grasped the interlocking structure of the hidden world without having the language to communicate it to anyone, even myself. In the latter years of my development, psychedelic trips and manic episodes of love, obsession and heart-break have granted me great epiphanies and life lessons. But all of those experiences have only ever led to more existential questions, and it wasn’t until I found some of the authors, I have listed below that my mish mash of intuitive inner ramblings came into some sort of semblance. At first, I (of course) dove in at the deep end, buying some very hardcore and coded grimoires on Enochian magick. They were

**KELLY BUCHAN**

**WITCH RESIDENCY WRITER**



daunting, unapproachable, and not at all for beginners. I wasted so much time trying to skip ahead of the fundamental knowledge which I'd panned off as boring, and swiftly arrived at one roadblock after another. Eventually though, through trial and error, I found a few systems which fit with both my philosophical and spiritual belief systems and I took to studying them slowly and deliberately. And I would perhaps advise you, dear reader, to do the same.

Finding ceremonial magick has truly been a game changer in regard to my spiritual growth. Natural magick has served me incredibly well in life and it's something I'm extremely grateful for. But the allure of the great knowledge found within these ancient mystery schools has always been too strong for me to ignore. No longer is this type of magick only for stiff and bored aristocrats playing at being wizards. Anyone with a bit of drive and courage can access the information needed for the ultimate process of self-mastery. Remember, ceremonial magick doesn't change the environment, it changes you. So, before you start the process of inner alchemy, it's incredibly important to know oneself intimately so as your own personal demons don't pop up when you least expect them.

So, for those of you who are standing outside of the gargantuan and seemingly endless vault of pathways that is the occult and esoterism, here is my personal study guide to understanding some of the core concepts and structures of ceremonial magick. Viewed from the outside, it can seem an unfathomable area of study to approach. Not for the faint hearted, this art form truly is transformative. So, if this introductory study guide sets even one person off on their own spiritual quest to find their Holy Guardian Angel, I'll be a bless'd witch indeed.

## **THE HERMETIC ORDER OF THE GOLDEN DAWN**

After the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn's implosion and subsequent disbandment, Israel Regardie set out to publish the secret texts and manuscripts which were, at the time, littered across many continents and secret societies, It is said that when he died, he was the last surviving person who had been initiated into the order, Thanks to his painstaking work, the rituals and study materials of The Golden Dawn are readily available for us to use today, This is by no means the only magickal system which produces results, however having the infamous and hefty "Black Brick" in your personal library is a must for anyone considering this art form.

Personally, I would recommend reading Regardie's "The Garden of Pomegranates" and "The Middle Pillar". I found them to be very helpful in explaining the concepts of Qabalah and The Tree of Life. These are a huge part of the process of inner alchemy in Hermeticism, and I would recommend studying them thoroughly right at the beginning of your journey.

## **ALEISTER CROWLEY**

Now, I know what you are thinking. And lest you think me a fool for even considering his work in any way revelatory, allow me just a sliver of your time to discuss this most controversial of men. Whether you find him abhorrent or god-like, there's no denying the impact that Crowley's life has had on the accessibility to this kind of Magick. In Collaboration with Lady Frieda Harris, Crowley unleashed one of the most powerful divinatory tools available to us: Thoth Tarot. I implore you to purchase this deck, even just to marvel at the intensely esoteric artwork it emanates. Thoth can give



powerful readings but using them requires many hours of research in order to decipher the messages, but by golly, it's worth it.

Although much of his written work can seem illegible and impossible to understand, having a basic knowledge of this man and his legacy is helpful when following this path. Crowley was obsessed with communicating with his Holy Guardian Angel. This is a concept that is seen across many facets of Hermeticism and Esoterism, and also Crowley's own religion Thelema.

## **LON MILO DUQUETTE AND MODERN MAGICIANS**

It's a genuine struggle to express just how integral I've found the author Lon Milo Duquette's body of work to my studies. At every hurdle and bump in the road, I've been able to turn to him for advice and a top up of self-confidence. He beams his wisdom so generously across textbooks, podcasts and autobiographical works that are educational but with a much-needed tongue-in-cheek tone. If I'm stuck on a particular area of focus, turning to Lon feels like having a grandfather figure in the room, guiding me through a ritual and reminding me not to be afraid. I would even go so far as to recommend his books to people who have no background knowledge of the Occult, His storytelling is that special...

Donald Michael Kraig's textbook *Modern Magick* would be an excellent start for those of you looking to get started doing daily rituals, with illustrated instructions for how to perform the Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram, the Qabalistic Cross, etc. I've found it a wonderful resource. It goes into generous detail surrounding the astrological correspondences with the tarot, and the Tree of Life and the Sephirot.

Damien Echols is a magician whose work I find dynamic and tangible. His book *Angels and Archangels* is the perfect introduction to the idea of working with the intelligences that are the Archangels, *High Magick* also gives a fabulous step-by-step guide to the introductory rituals.

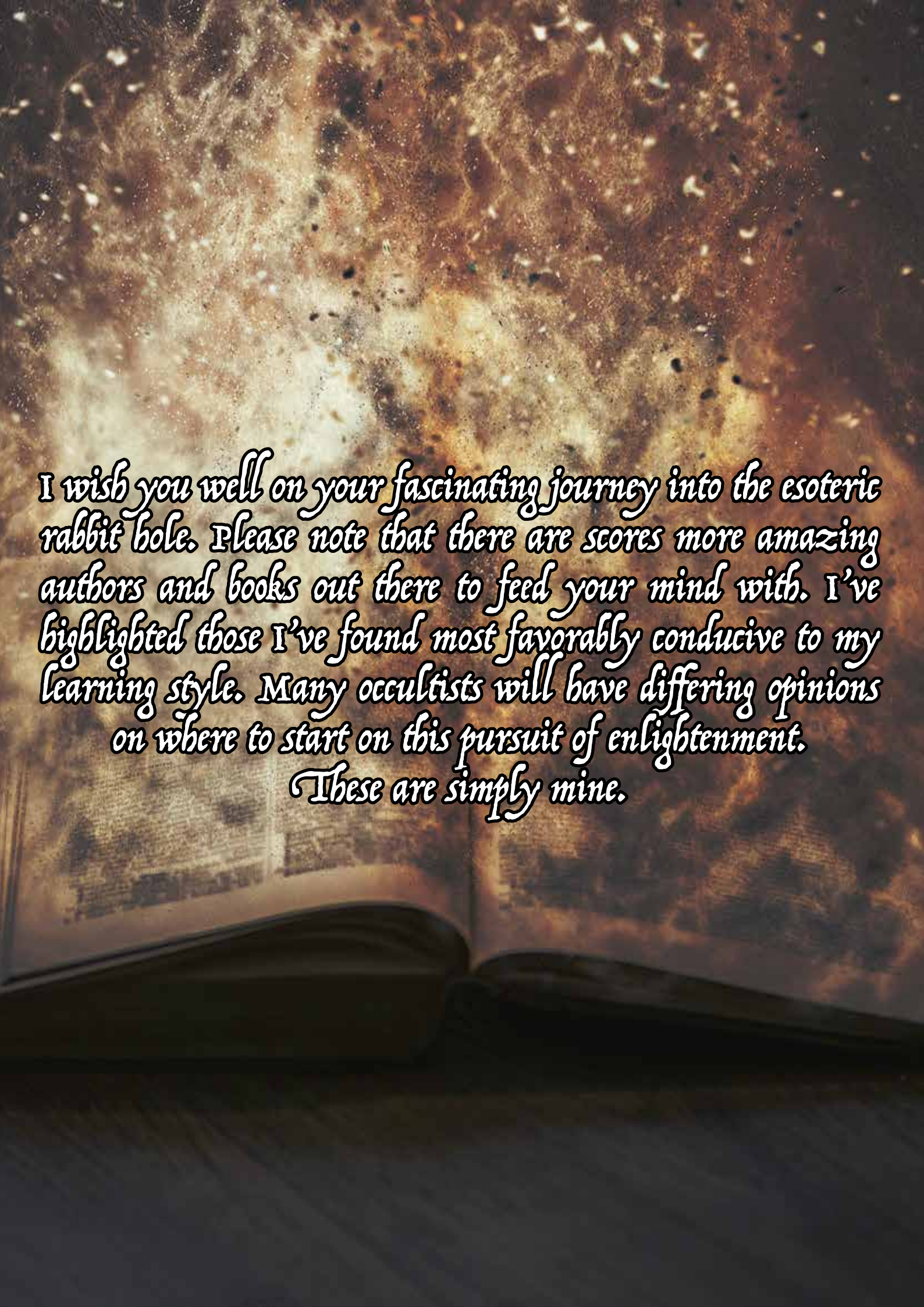
## **DEMONOLATRY AND CARL JUNG**

Although these branches of occultism are not for beginners, I personally believe that to understand the **WHYS** of ceremonial magick, it's important to learn about the hierarchies of energy which govern our higher and hidden realms. Whether or not you subscribe to Carl Jung's theories of the shadow self, with the demons we wish to evoke residing internally. Or you believe demons to be external entities to be invoked and bound to our will, demonolatry is a truly fascinating subject. Many of you will have heard of the Lesser Keys of Solomon, a catalogue of each demon and how to summon them. And the *Book of Abramelin*, a work synonymous with ritual mythology and a step-by-step guide to summoning your HGA (Crowley is said to have attempted the 18 month long version of this ritual, abandoning it half way through. The house caught fire several times since with the residual energy not having been dissipated properly).

These two books were quite obviously written for audiences living hundreds of years ago. The modern author Gordon Winterfield's book *Demon Magick* gives an impressively concise guide to how to work with the 72 Goetian demons in the current era.

Now before you go off buying scrying tools and Triangles of Art.... please look at Jung's psychology of the shadow self. One of the most debated questions in the occult world is whether everything is within us, or if the external reality is a mirror of the self. I can guarantee that your views will change as your magickal proficiency grows, but what remains important is always remaining courageous when faced with these entities. Your sanity could very well depend on it.





I wish you well on your fascinating journey into the esoteric rabbit hole. Please note that there are scores more amazing authors and books out there to feed your mind with. I've highlighted those I've found most favorably conducive to my learning style. Many occultists will have differing opinions on where to start on this pursuit of enlightenment. These are simply mine.



# Words from the Witches Journal

*I have a large wooden cupboard in the alcove off my living room where I keep my 'witchy' stuff ~ wand, jars of dried herbs, the talking stick decorated with ribbons and tinkly bells. It also houses my journals, scribblings of my personal feelings, my coven history, things we have done together, things I would like to share.*

I turned the pages of my journals to see what I was doing this time in previous years. 2016 is the year I have chosen to share.

Although just five years ago, it seems a lifetime away.

In 2017 I had a stroke that changed my life - neither for better nor worse but definitely different to what it was. In 2019 I lost my husband, changing the way I had thought of myself for the previous forty years. I am not the person I was then, and yet I am still that person. Everything I was then is still part of me, just reconstructed into a new me. I digress.

*'24th May 2016 - planning started.'*  
What were we planning, my coven and me? The summer solstice. For many years, there has been a ritual at Stonehenge not on the actual solstice, when the Stones are taken over by a mass of people eager to see the rising sun, but a few days after. It is organised by Samantha Kent, a brave and determined young woman, who takes a group of pagans to the Stones to lead them in a ritual to restore tranquillity. We had been fortunate enough to have been invited and to take part in the planning. Also invited to take part were Beorma Morris, Birmingham's only border morris side who, when not in lockdown, can be found entertaining bemused inhabitants of the city and beyond.

Portland Jones  
Witch Writer



## *'31.05.16 planning summer solstice at Stonehenge.'*

Working with Sam, we had an outline for the ritual:

- On arrival, walk around the outside of the Stones, three times to the beat of a drum.
- Sam to anoint people as they enter the circle of the Stones.
- Call the quarters and remember the ancestors.
- Sam to welcome people to the ritual and tell us the story of solstice.
- The morris to tell the story of the battle of the Oak King and the Holly King
- Raise energy in circle accompanied by drum beat.
- Singing bowls to welcome sunrise
- Cakes and ale followed by merry making

## *'26th June 2016'*

The day of the ritual. Getting up in the chill of the night, we made our way in the dark to the Stones, excitement pushing the sleep from our heads. We drove to the Stones, parked the cars and left the world we live in - the walk in the hush and the dim light unearthly, a breeze fluttering hair and cloaks.

The call of the drum lead us round the Stones, giving us time to focus our thoughts on what we were about to do. We passed into the circle surrounded by the Stones that have witnessed so much in the years since they were raised.

I called South. Here is my quarter call.



*Samantha Kent looking lovely*



*In the south, spirit of fire,  
sparking, pulsing, raging fire,  
power to warm, to heal, inspire.*

*The power to destroy,  
to raze the ground clean.*

*The power to cleanse,  
create new beginnings,  
bring forth life anew.*

*Come join us for this summer dawn.*

*Hail and welcome*

The Morris didn't just tell the story of the Oak King and the Holly King. They danced it vigorously, legs festooned with bells, top hats decorated with oak and holly leaves. They battled with the trade mark sticks of border morris, ending in the symbolic death of the Oak King as they collapsed to the ground.

We raised energy, stood in a circle, passing apples round the assembled group - 'In a circle we all stand, pass the power hand to hand'. The energy surged, joyful. Singing bowls echoed round the Stones to greet the sun.



After cakes and ale, the morris entertained us with more dancing. We watched as the land around rose from the mist, watched the jack daws at play. And then we left with memories to lift us in times to come.

### *'28th June 2016 review of solstice ritual.'*

We try to take a look back at what we have done, to see what lessons can be learned:

- Going round the Stones three times works but can we make it a little slower so we don't end up out of breath.
- Raising energy worked well.
- Can we stay longer? Can we build in time for photos that people wanted to take
- Working with morris dancers went well

East quarter call was recovering from evening before, if not still under influence!  
(Possibly not to be recommended, but it was a great night the night.)

So starting our planning a month before Solstice paid off, with a ritual that worked on several levels, ending with a review that gave insight into what we had achieved.

Currently pondering what solstice will look like this year, in very different circumstances.







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Be the first to see new track "Legion of Angels" with a video on Saturday, 20th March, ON STREAM! (Crows Feet Ostara Market)

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# Wise Words from the Old Crone When We Need a Factory Reset

How often have we needed to reset a computer, laptop, phone or other device? I know I do it often especially after an update but how often do we press our own reset button or factory reset? I guess the answer is never or at most not very often. Are we able to recognise that point where intervention is required? I would guess not. In all our busy lives when others depend on us, we, ourselves, our own personage is generally the last in a long line of needy.

Think about the last time you have felt unwell. Not ill enough to have a duvet day but just a little off colour, one degree under, or just a bit 'off'.

Whilst this is a physical manifestation of unwellness, it could be that you not only need to reboot physically but spiritually and mentally too. This is a good time to consider a reset, or at least look at why you have that feeling of general demise before things can spiral downwards and manifest in to something a lot worse. Sadly it is usually only when someone has gone way over this line, and come back to normality, that they understand the point at which intervention can halt the decline.

When someone is at a such a low ebb, suggesting meditation to find a calm place, is not an option. If a person is already at such a depleted state, there is too much going on in their brain, a 'brain fog', to be able to calm their thoughts enough to meditate. Something else is required.

Many years ago I was extremely unwell, so much so that I had to give up work. I had a highly stressful and demanding job which was taking more and more of my time and I was working ten to fourteen hours and sometimes more, each day and on a regular basis.

I had not heeded the warnings that I needed to look after myself at all. I drove too fast, I either ate too much or nothing at all and I was not able to sleep. My skin and hair were dull and I ached from head to foot a lot of the time. After a complete collapse I spent weeks in my pyjamas doing very mundane things which still sapped any strength I had left. I was physically exhausted but also mentally and spiritually exhausted. I had not listened to my inner self early enough to slow down or reset my body and ended up in a distressing state.

I did have medication initially to give me a boost towards wellness, but the most important things I did to get to a place where I could press that factory reset was physical in a lot of horse riding and then spiritual in attending a Yoga class.

The horse riding and all that went with it addresses my physical state, made me fitter and more able to cope with all that life threw at me and also enabled me to take part in the Yoga and meditations which addresses my spiritual wellbeing and assisted a return to mental and soul fitness.

Physical and spiritual activity certainly helped me to cleanse and reconstruct my life. After six months of gradual, gentle redress I was ready to retrain and found a new, better and interesting employment in a less stressful environment. I also had the time to continue horse riding and yoga.

We are not always able to find that fine line between coping and not coping, but a little self-love will always help and we need to keep on pressing that little reset button and ensure that we are always on an even keel to cope with all that life throws at us.

Regular tapping into the energies of the Universe can help not only the soul but the physical body too.

Blessed Be

*The Old Crone*

*Header photo by @Magiaziemi*

## Please join us in welcoming The Old Crone to our tribe of Witch Writers!

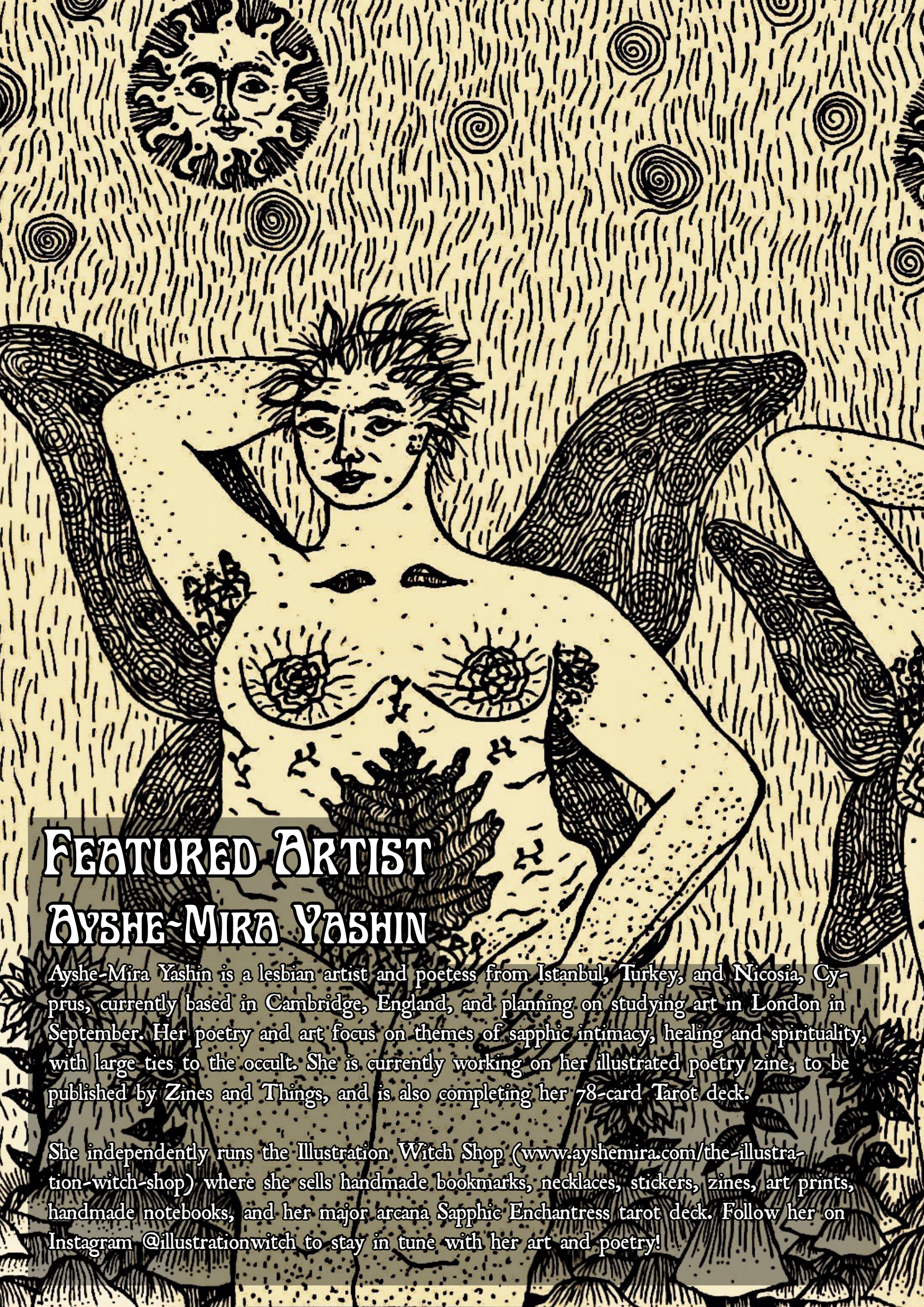
*After almost 60 years reading cards, starting when I was a child, and showing others how to interpret them, I still enjoy reading for anyone who wishes it. I have a large collection of divination artefacts, mainly cards, including runes and pendulums.*

*I am a circle caster, (Circle of the Crystal Moon) and a wand maker.*

*I also set spells and potions for those in need. I follow the wheel of the year and the phases of the moon, grow my own herbs and wand woods. I enjoy following pagan ways and assisting others to find their own special spiritual pathway. Apart from the above I write both pagan and non-pagan stories and poetry and submit regularly to other magazines.*







## FEATURED ARTIST

### AYSHE-MIRA YASHIN

Ayshe-Mira Yashin is a lesbian artist and poetess from Istanbul, Turkey, and Nicosia, Cyprus, currently based in Cambridge, England, and planning on studying art in London in September. Her poetry and art focus on themes of sapphic intimacy, healing and spirituality, with large ties to the occult. She is currently working on her illustrated poetry zine, to be published by Zines and Things, and is also completing her 78-card Tarot deck.

She independently runs the Illustration Witch Shop ([www.ayshemira.com/the-illustration-witch-shop](http://www.ayshemira.com/the-illustration-witch-shop)) where she sells handmade bookmarks, necklaces, stickers, zines, art prints, handmade notebooks, and her major arcana Sapphic Enchantress tarot deck. Follow her on Instagram @illustrationwitch to stay in tune with her art and poetry!







*In Conversation with...*

Anya Lukover

Witch Residency Writer

# The Rose

*What does the Rose have to say about manifesting?*

Love from the centre of your heart. Not the bottom.

From the centre you send love out in all directions from the deepest level of existence itself... the very centre of the heart. The very centre of love.

And it is from this very centre of love that you create into physical existence the thing that you desire most to experience.

The power from this centre point creates the magnetic pull of what you desire into your energy field.

So why are the humans not all consciously manifesting everything they desire?

Because they forgot HOW!

They've been so conditioned and programmed to the core of their DNA that the majority of the population of Mother Earth go through life not even knowing they have the power to consciously manifest anything and everything in this lifetime.

And these old programs and limiting beliefs that are embedded in their cells are the very things that they allow to block themselves from experiencing their heart's desires. Instead they are manifesting from these programs so the experience may not be what they consciously desire to experience.

Love is the highest and most powerful frequency.

There is no frequency more powerful than love.

And that is the frequency that you will vibrate with in its entirety when you simply find stillness and connect with it, allowing all the other noise to fall away; the limiting beliefs, the programs, the conditioning, the conflicts.

And the humans ask 'how do we allow the noise to fall away? What is it we have to DO???'

Nothing, my loves.

Absolutely nothing.

Simply be in each moment.

Love each moment for the simple reason of your existence.

Now is here right now. You don't have to look back for it, and you do not have to chase ahead for it.

It's happening now.

The very thing you came for. Existing in whatever experience you want to exist in.

And it is the love that creates the experience into existence, not the other way round. This is where humans get tripped up, expecting to feel love and joy etc. when they eventually experience the thing they are chasing.

They are missing it.

This is one of the programs that requires to be deleted from the system.





*The experience does not create the  
vibration of love.*

*It is the vibration of love that creates  
the experience.*





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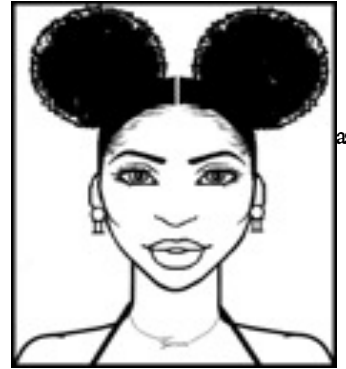


# Raven & Luna's Tarotscopes Forecasts For Your Sun Sign

## GEMINI

*The Lovers, Temperance, The Sun*

There's a need for equality and balance in your close relationships. Watch out for sunflowers and someone with blonde hair with the face of an Angel! There's a very sunny energy we approach Midsummer, you could meet someone where it will turn into something more or things may improve with the person you're already with. You could move in with someone or decide the next steps for the relationship but make sure it's really what you want. Make time for yourself, your family and friends as well as this person, as it could become quite intense and all consuming.



## CANCER

*9 of Pentacles, 4 of Swords*

You're close to achieving what you want. There's nothing else you can do, let go and allow things to unfold how they're supposed to. Rest, recharge and listen to your body- you've been working too hard. By trying to do too much you may actually cause stagnancy. Stay focused and precise in deciding what you want but don't try to control every aspect of it.



## VIRGO

*Judgement, Ace of Swords*

Look at your past with an objective eye to make the best judgement on what happens next. A truth is being revealed. Do only what you're passionate about and this will help revive your enthusiasm. You may have been going through a spiritual transformation over the last few months, you'll start to feel more invigorated and hopeful. Creative and sexual blocks are being removed.



## LEO



*Ace of Cups, Page of Cups*

A new love may arrive, take a chance on romance and open your heart. There will be a rejuvenation of your current relationship if you're already with someone.

You may be feeling emotional and overwhelmed so find a healthy outlet and step away from drama. We know you love them but you need to do what makes you happy too.

## LIBRA



*10 of Wands, Knight of Swords*

You're running around doing everything, taking on others' problems, because you want to be everyone's saviour but who's helping you? You've committed yourself to something but you can change your mind if you want to, don't be left with regrets or unwanted consequences. A swift decision has left you feeling out of balance, regain your equilibrium and do what you feel is right.



## SCORPIO

8 of Swords, 5 of Pentacles

You feel restricted. There's not enough time in the day or money may be tight, you're stretching yourself too thin. You could feel that your lifestyle or job is holding you back, making you feel emotionally stunted and drained. You can set yourself free, change your circumstances, but you feel stuck. Solutions are there, reach out to others for help if need be and learn when to say no!



## SAGITTARIUS

8 of Cups, The Magician

Turn to magic to rid yourself of something/one that's no good for you, such as through a cord cutting spell or burning bowl ritual. This may be nostalgia for an old relationship or way of being

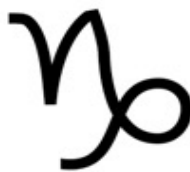
but you're best leaving that in the past where it belongs, or you can't appreciate what you have now. Emotional healing can be found in daily spiritual practises.



## CAPRICORN

The Moon, 5 of Wands

It's likely you're being very hard on yourself with negative self talk, worry and not allowing yourself to rest. You could be faced with having to accept you can't do something by yourself and you need help. You're not weak, in fact with all you've been through it makes you extremely strong. You are good enough, don't allow anyone to tell you any different.



## AQUARIUS

The Sun, 8 of Wands

Some long awaited, good news is likely. It could be about a child or pregnancy. If you're going for a health check it seems like a positive outcome, if it's a pregnancy scan this points to it being a boy! There's

a stirring up of energy after a stagnant period, it may take for you to try something different to help this along.



## PISCES

The Fool, The High Priestess

A giant leap is needed to be open to an opportunity and embrace a new beginning that may come out of the blue. You could be finally embracing who you are, your gifts. You've turned a corner, keep going. Listen to your intuition, don't allow your voice of fear to hold you back as things aren't always too good to be true.



## ARIES

Knight of Wands, Queen of Cups

You may be confronted about your reaction to a situation, perhaps you should listen. Finding better ways to channel your emotions will be beneficial so that you don't come across in a bad light. If you're struggling with your studies or workload you need to be honest. Someone may reach out to you for help, don't dismiss them.



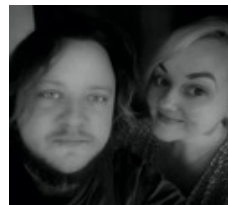
## TAURUS

The Devil, 3 of Swords

Your habits or lifestyle may be having a negative impact on your health, particularly your heart or blood pressure. Look at potentially toxic situations and relationships, how can you reduce stress in your life? Someone/thing is draining your energy and soul, it's time to make some changes. You're not powerless, break those chains and exert yourself.



*Raven and Luna are High Priest and Priestess for  
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# Grimoire

## Let's talk about... The Lunar Eclipse

The hot debate this month was whether or not you should perform magick during this mornings Lunar Eclipse.

Social Media means that everyone can have their say, and I have seen posts - from everyone including published authors - warning against magick due to the chaos the eclipse can bring, and others encouraging us to tap in to the moons super powered eclipse cycle and take advantage of it.

So who is right? What is the definitive answer on working magick during the Lunar Eclipse? Does what you believe on your individual path affect the answer? Different books provide different answers, too. So how do we decide?

The truth is...none of us know the beyond our own beliefs. What we have read or learnt is equally as right as the next persons experience. Some Witches may have performed magick at the eclipse to find their world tossed in to chaos, others may have found them to be an extremely powerful experience.

Whatever you chose to do in the early hours of this morning, I hope it was of use to you!

## Guidance from the High Priestess

For the Lunar Eclipse, I take guidance from the High Priestess. The eclipse is a time of mystery, intuition and stillness.

Ideal practices for me this Lunar Eclipse were

-Divination - I find full moons - and in particular lunar eclipses at this time are ideal for receiving messages from the divine. My preferred method is tarot or scrying.

Meditation - taking time to be still and quiet is important to me at Lunar Eclipse times. Scented candles or incense and connecting with myself in meditation, followed by journaling.

Rest - Rest and self-care, including grounding practices, really help me manage full moon times. Reading and disconnecting from social media is a big part of this restful practice!

This Lunar Eclipse took place with the moon in Sagittarius, so along side messages and intuition some questions I chose to focus on are:

- What brings me closer to my practice in my every day?
- How can I enhance my daily practices or rituals?
- What can I let go of that doesn't feed my own needs?

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Pagan Poetry  
&  
Fiction

This month we have a bumper section of fiction for you from our  
Witch Residency Writers and author Ron George.

Grab a cuppa, settle down and enjoy!

photo by Klaire Dawn Ader





# ALL OF THEM

NYA HOUSE - WITCH RESIDENCY WRITER

Exhausted from a morning without coffee to save the delicate state of my stomach as well as an hour in a hot sauna to try and ease the itch out of my lungs, I curled up under my new black bedspread and laid my most prized possessions about in front of me. A floor fan provides a soft distraction of white noise away from the bustling of mid morning outside; Lawn mowers roaring to life before the heat of the day, garbage trucks banging down the street and the neighbor kids emerging in their bare feet and pajamas to scream and laugh through their yard.

Dreary Monday has arrived again with an incredulous look upon its face, demanding I find order and purpose and direction. I am an artist and I have no patience or discipline for ambitious endeavors like starting a real career in marketing, like I keep telling myself I should do. I open my Mac to a half written page of a new version of the story that I have written six times and sigh at the blank part of the page. I consider picking up my current read, *The Alchemist* by Paula Coelho, but know that the rhythm of typed pages will lull me to sleep and I am desperate to squeeze all that I can out of this day. I'm also desperate for answers and for sleep. The internal struggle continues.

I grab for my tarot deck, spread out the cloth and shuffle madly, asking my guides aloud for some direction. I flip over the four of cups and grab my *Tarot Handbook* by Rachel Pollock. When I read for others, I read strictly intuitively, but when I read for myself, I use only one deck and refer to the traditions of the cards for my message. This way, I can't interfere with my own reading. This card speaks to opportunities missed or ignored...great. I pull out my *Emanations Oracle* deck, pull a card...Chesed. The hand that embraces, healing tears brought on by the forgiveness of sins. Gulp. Frustrated I close my eyes and lie back on a mountain of dark grey pillows and turn my face into the fan for comfort. I close my eyes, telling myself to meditate-not sleep. As I feel my body sink into the physical comforts of home, I whisper for my guides to speak with me.

Orbs of purple and gold and green ebb and flow behind my eyelids. My breath softens and becomes more calm and shallow as I search through the colors and follow them in every direction. Flashes of lights come from behind them, lingering in sight a little longer each time. Then a sky full of stars above a city full of lights stands like a painting before me. There's a cool crisp in the air as it grabs my hair and whips it behind me. I'm far above all of it, eye to eye with a low hanging cliff of wispy night clouds. It's silent until I hear the pulse of what holds me in place, my tattered wings. I can feel a presence approach me at my right shoulder and I close my eyes in gratitude for the visit. A





Goddess I know very well, but who rarely visits in times of calm upset.

“Why have you called me?” She echoes through my mind.

“I mean no disrespect, I did not call your name.” I whisper into the air.

“I am here. You called. I haven’t the time for this.” She speaks of irritation but her voice is calm and soothing.

“I feel lost. Unmotivated. Unsure of what my purpose is or what I should focus my efforts into.” I say in disgust as I realize this is the problem most of us have. We want clear answers and direction but that is not the way of the world.

“You ask the same questions. What is the answer you seek?” She moves around me, unable to be still, looking in all directions, pausing only long enough for me to see the moon light capture her skin and reveal its midnight blue hue.

“I don’t know.” I hang my head.

“Bullshit.” She snaps.

“Goddess...”

“No. You are not this weak and I grow tired of you thinking that you are. You can do any of it-all of it-you’re supposed to, but you must decide! You must choose and then you must never abandon it. Do you understand?” Her face is before mine now. Ebony locks flow over her shoulders down to her waist and eyes black as the night peer into my heart. I nod and feel a sense of wickedness rush through me as she places her right hand between my eyes.

“I must go. You are not alone, ever. Find your power and fucking own it. Do you understand?” She said turning away from me.

“Yes, I do. Thank you.” I begin to weep as she disappeared into the clouds.

“Oh and one more thing...” Her voice echos through my head again.

“Yes?”

“Write your book.” She said.

“Which one?” I wonder as a breeze comes swiftly from behind me, throwing me from the stillness I had sunk into. A warmth creeps in around my right ear and I hear the faintest whisper say,

“All of them.”

“Baby?” A soft touch moves across my cheek. I blink open my eyes to see the smiling face of my wife. Suddenly aware of the coolness on my face as the fan hits tears that she was wiping away, I sit up in bed.



“Oh I must have fallen asleep.” I say.

“No. You didn’t.” She grins and motions for me to look behind me towards the window. The 75 and sunny day that was predicted was now dark and gloomy, rain hitting against the window and the trees swaying violently in the wind.

“What the hell?” I said.

“You called a storm. Again. Someone must want you to rest.” She smiled. “No.” I said. “Someone wants me to wake up.”





# SECOND CHANCE

## A NOVEL

K. D. Phillips  
Witch Residency Writer

*This is an excerpt from my upcoming novel 'Second Chance'. A couple's life is manipulated through time and space by a supernatural entity, the night sky personified, known as The Void.*

*The structure is broken in chronology, jumping from the end to the beginning and back again. Making the story move towards a pivotal point in the middle.*

### CHAPTER 25 NIGHTFALL

She has to make her wish, I might never know love if she doesn't. I've watched her endlessly, and it's always the same. It's always too late.

The red thread of fate connects her to a man. The fate-thread between them is a tangled mess, and this thread trails from their fingers to somewhere deep within me. All three of us are tethered by destiny. Unravelling this jumbled predestined thread is the only way. So here I am, watching over them, pulling strings so that one day they might watch over me in return, to feel the love I give to them is given back.

They look so insignificant, if only they knew the truth.

They move through a small garden surrounded by a forest of tall clinical buildings. The night is saturated with celestial brilliance. Cool air reaches for openings in their clothing, raising braille across their skin.

"Wrap me up in the night sky," she says to him. "I want to be shrouded in the velvet-dark of night." He smiles. She doesn't see him, all she sees are the stars.

"Are you cold? You look like a little steam-train puffing along," he says.

"I'm fine. I hear smoking is hazardous to health; steaming? - not so much," she says.

She hides, curled-up within his jacket and slouchy woolly hat. A kid in adult clothing. So small and light, she's attached to a large metal cylinder that stops her floating off.

She breathes the night. Eyes as wide as the sky, all she sees are the stars and the moon. "Aren't they beautiful?" she says.

"Yes, you are," he says.

"Not me, silly. The stars," she says.

"You are the stars. You light up my endless darkness," he says.

"Don't be silly, you can't have one without the other. The stars and the dark are the same thing. They're one," she says.

"I hope so," he says.

A planetary alignment of hope dicks into place, mine and his. If they don't become one, this was all for nothing.

"My favourite thing on earth is the moon," she says. "It's not on earth," he says.

"No, but it wouldn't look so beautiful from any other view. What secrets the night has. All its mystery in plain sight, but we just can't see it," she says.

"I see you," he says.

"I love you," he says.

"Stop it, you'll make me cry again," she says. "Will you think of me often when I'm gone?"

"I'll never not think of you," he says.

She adjusts the nozzles that are tube-looped around her ears into a broken infinity symbol across her face, and wipes her eyes and nose.

He turns the wheelchair back towards the ward. Somewhere within a tree a raven panics its wings into a flutter, afraid to stay, and afraid to take flight into the night.



Turning her head to meet the man's eyes, "Wait. Just a little while longer," she says.

He looks into her shiny-wet eyes, but all he sees are stars and the moon.

"Ok, just a little longer," he says.

Her voice is projected purely by whisper. A kind of Marilyn Monroe talk, but just a semitone too low to be husky. She sighs.

"Never a shooting star when you want one," she says.

"They say it's never long until one flashes past," he says.

"Well then, we'll wait just a little while longer for one. I hope final wishes are the ones that come true," she says.

"What would you wish for?" he says.

"Everybody knows that if you tell a wish it doesn't come true," she says.

She begins talking less, and breathing shallow gasps more. Then the night goes silent as a falling star streaks straight down. A fallen dream, a wish too late, a teardrop shed by the night.

Moving to the front of the wheelchair, the man kneels, eye-level, holding her now uninhabited hands to his cheeks.

"Wait, just a little while longer," he says.

He's still kneeling at her feet when it starts to happen. The scent of impending rain embraces the air, something in the sky is about to happen, like before a storm. I know what's coming, so I ready myself, preparing to cast a star across the endless night.

"I wish we could relive our life together." He says. A compendium of love and tragedy pours down his face. A collection of teardrops, each unique with the signature of her heart. "There's so many regrets from what I put you through, I wish I could take that pain away."

A snap of my fingers and time freezes, the stars and moon stop moving west. No wind. Nothing.

I extend the slow, creaking shadow of an arm to the man's shoulder. "Your wish is my command."

Everything in existence begins to grind and glitch, like watching an old-time movie in the middle of an earthquake. Flickering and rumbling, time itself begins to unravel until the stars move from west to east. The growling cosmos slides and folds until there's a snap, and the stars click back into position.

## CHAPTER 1 IN THE BEGINNING

The past and future meet, but not always in the present. In order to make a change you have to meet in the middle. It's like this charity shop, bits of a past that were never yours become your future. A place for rehoming abandoned dreams. A place where everything gets a second chance to be loved.

Here the man looks around the shop, she has an eye on him

as he handles some of the items. They look so young. She sits at the counter with no customers to serve except for the man. He keeps doing strange things, holding items to his eye as if to look for ships at sea, then holds the items to his mouth. Taking something away from his face, he turns to her.

"Scuse me, how much is this old lamp?" he says.

"Nice isn't it?" she says. "It's going cheap because it don't matter how much you rub it, there's no genie in it."

"Maybe you're rubbing it the wrong way," he says.

She reveals a suggestion of a smile that makes my eyes twinkle. As she makes eye contact with the man, her pupils expand into an eclipse of iris. It was nothing really, but it was the beginning of everything.

"So what d'you want for it?" he says.

"What I wanted was to drill a hole in it and—"

"Oh my god! That's what I want it for," he says. "Make a great bong."

"I meant to make a flute," she says.

"Oh, Sorry," he says. "Didn't mean to...You must think I'm a right—"

She laughs through a smile that exposes her top set of teeth.

"Chill-out, idiot. Really tripped and fell for that, didn't you?" she says. "Of course I meant to make a bong, moron."

"Yeah yeah, you had me then," he says "So, how much is it?"

"Not sure I can let it go," she says.

I'm not sure if she means the lamp, or this conversation.

Something to her eyes, a playful seriousness.

"I promise to take good care of it," he says.

"Yeah, well, you'd better make a good job of the—err—conversion," she says.

"Let you have a blast of it if you want?" he says.

"Sold!" she says.

"Great, but how much?" he says.

"Whatcha give for it?" she says.

Now he has that same smudge of a smile, and his eyes reflect the twinkle of her own. "Give you my number if you want?" he says.

"Pff! Wrong kinda digits" she says. "I ain't that easy."

"Yeah, I'm kinda getting that," he says. He looks somewhere into her familiar, warm eyes. "Tell you what, there's a meteor shower later tonight, wanna have a drink and a smoke and watch the night literally fall?"

"What. Did. You. Say?" she says.

"There's a meteor shower tonight, d'ya wanna watch it?" he says. "Wait!," she says. "Have we met before?"

"Don't think so," he says.

"I'm having really bad déjà vu," she says. "You sure we haven't met?"

"I think I'd remember, you don't seem easily forgettable,"

## CHAPTER 2 DATE-NIGHT

he says. "You wanna watch the night or not?"

"You seem really familiar all of a sudden," she says. "This all feels..."

She's sensing the change, our connection grows stronger. The fate-thread is loosening a knot or two.

"It happens every year. The meteor shower," he says. "I like that sort of stuff. Better than TV."

"I love the night. I've always... always... Wait! Is this some kind of trick?" she says. "We've done this before, this conversation."

"Maybe it's—ahem—written in the stars," he says.

"Right! That's it! I've had enough of this," she says, "Pick me up at eight."

"I promise to be a perfect gentleman," he says. "Well maybe not perfect, but a gentleman at least." "Maybe I don't wanna go then," she says. "Maybe you seemed interesting before you got all boring." He touches his hair and shuffles his frame to the left.

"I'll see you at eight," he says. "Wait, where do I pick you up?"

"Here is where," she says.

"I'll see you here then," he says. "See you later."

"Wait, what's your name?" she says.

"Oh, erm, Adrian," he says. "What's yours?"

"Laney," she says.

"See you at eight, Laney. It's a nice name," he says. "See ya."

"Adrian, wait," she says.

"Yeah?" he says.

"Didn't you forget something?" she says.

"What?" he says.

"Your lamp," she says.

"Ah. Yeah, sorry. I must look a right idiot," he says. "How much was it again?"

This isn't love, not yet. It's the conception of love. Much as a baby isn't a baby until it is fully formed. Let me put that into perspective; the odds of being born are 1 in 400 trillion, and then factor in the people who find love. Love and life are impossible miracles. I worship at the altar of these mortals.

I dick my fingers, the walls and roof of the charity shop fall away into oblivion, revealing a field and small woodland shaded by nighttime-grey. The air is clear. No clouds haunt the sky. Only stars and moon hang everywhere. All the grey tones make the marijuana-scented smoke fade into the night as Adrian and Laney breathe both smoke and stars. How they are sitting, on that blanket, is how you might have a gothic séance picnic. Even looking from all of eternity, it's still kind of cute.

"So do you normally whisk girls off into the night?" she says. "Only those worthy or willing," he says.

"Oh really!" she says. "Which am I?"

"Both," he says.

"Sure of yourself aren't you?" she says.

"Don't get me wrong, it's just those that're worth a shot in the dark don't usually want to sit in the open watching the sky," he says. "And generally those willing end up not being worth it."

"Worth?" she says.

"Worth the time," he says. "Time is the most precious thing we have to give." "So long as you don't expect anything," she says.

"Only time spent, and experiences and moments shared," he says.

Her ribcage rises and falls a little as she lets out a small resolute breath. He gets up from the blanket and rummages through his jacket, and then he finds it. He reveals, much as you would a cheap magic bunch of flowers, another ready-rolled joint. He drops to one knee, offering her the joint in a sort-of romantic display. She lights up and turns her eyes to the sky.

"Tell me about this meteor thing," she says.

"Not much to tell. Happens every year," he says. "There's actually several events every year."

"So when do we see the shooting stars?" she says.

"Actually, while technically the same thing, a meteor shower is different to a shooting star," he says. "You can't make wishes on a meteor shower."

"Why not?" she says.

"That'd be cheating. Too easy," he says. "It's the singular rarity that has the magic." "You believe in that stuff, wishes and magic?" she says.

"Nah, but it's fun to think about," he says. "You said you like the night before, what do you like about it?"

"Makes me feel safe. And I love the stars and the moon," she says. "They've been the only thing of beauty and wonderment that have been a constant in my life."

"Makes you feel safe?!" he says. "You are an unusual one, aren't you? Most are afraid of the dark." "It's the stars and the moon I like, not the dark," she says.

"Without the dark there would be no stars," he says.

"True," she says. "Very true, in fact. I never thought of it like that."

"It's a common quote," he says.

"Yeah, but I never thought about it in terms of why I like the night," she says.

"What d'ya mean?" he says.

"Nevermind. I'm just loose-tongued from that joint," she says. "Switch of tactics, why do you like the night so much?"



“Erm... I find comfort in the organisation of the night sky,” he says. “It’s like clockwork, and I like the way you can count on it. Feels like—”

“Wait,” she says. “You paused before you spoke. What were you gonna say, but didn’t?”

“That’s not first-date approved subject matter,” he says. “Hey, look. The stars are moving.”

The night streaks spectral-white line after line across the sky. It’s nothing new to me, but I’ve never experienced it from a human perspective. There’s no meaning to it, except the one they give to it.

“Oh my God!” she says. “That’s amazing. I can’t believe I’ve never seen this for real before.”

Adrian looks at Laney with the same longing gaze that she gives the stars. The same gaze I give them both.

“What are you looking at?!” she says.

“You,” he says.

“Why?!” she says.

“I just like the beauty of this night,” he says. “What am I, some kind of object?!” she says. “No. Not at all. I just—”

“Yeah I know exactly what,” she says. “Scuse me, but I’m going home.”

“Wait, what?” he says. “Can I walk you home?”

“Great! Sexist ideology like that is very outdated,” she says. “I’ve been walking home alone all my life in this city and been fine without a Big, Strong, Man to take care of me.”

She begins slamming random possessions into her bag.

“Look, I’m sorry if I’m coming off sexist. I just wanted to walk with you to carry on talking, you’re the most interesting person I know,” he says. “And I was only looking at you because of the way you were amazed by the meteors.”

“So you weren’t looking at me like... that?” she says.

“Honestly?” he says. “I was looking at you a little bit like that, but not totally like that.”

“So you’re not expecting anything?” she says.

“Nope. Hoping rather than expecting... that you’ll see me again. But that’s the extent of it,” he says. “Not even expecting a kiss.”

“Oh really!” she says. “And what if I want a kiss?”

“I said not expecting,” he says, “Didn’t say unwilling.”

Adrian, all doey-eyed, moves in all slow, the muscles in his face relax, his lips open ever so slightly. Laney backs off.

“Wait,” she says. “Stay there.”

He stops, a puzzled face replaces his previous expression.

“Close your eyes,” she says.

“Is this where you run away before I open ‘em?” he says.

“Shhh,” she says. “Are they closed?”

“Yeah,” he says.

Laney moves in to kiss, but with hesitancy, then kisses him. She pushes back away from him when he starts to hold her.

“You can walk me home if you like,” she says.

“Dunno, seems a bit of a sexist stereotype to think I’d walk you home,” he says. “Maybe you should walk me home instead.”

Laney grabs his hand, to hold hands, but in a playful, demanding grasp to tug him in her direction.

“Shut up, moron. We’ll find a halfway point, and go from there,” she says. “You got any more joint left?”

Adrian taps his pocket, and cracks a half-smile. “Sure do,” he says.

“Then let’s vanish in a puff of smoke,” she says.

He takes out a joint and lights up, his face glows a moment of orange-yellow. The first drag is always wasted, just to get the smoldering to take hold. His second drag of smoke hits his lungs, his blood-flow changes, cannabinoid receptors fire-up, and he slow-blows the smoke into the night.

Snapping my fingers, time comes to a standstill, the smoke plume coming from Adrian frozen into a grey nebula. I push time and space to get it to wrinkle, and when I flatten and press-out the wrinkle we are, all three, in the same Hospital.

Back at the ending where all this began...

*This excerpt is taken from my upcoming novel 'Second Chance'. As the story unfolds we learn more about Adrian and Laney, we learn about the folly of love, we learn how sometimes our dysfunctional parts make us who we are... and we learn the the supernatural entity, The Void, that is acting as a guardian angel to the couple of lovers had a deeper connection to who they are, and who they will become.*

*Thanks for reading.*

# BLADE OF THE SISTERHOOD

## RON GEORGE

### PART 1

Dark clouds fell upon the small village of Canons Ashby, stealing the sunlight from Eleanor's face as she held her daughter's baby in her arms next to the only window her small cottage afforded. It had only been a week since her daughter died whilst giving birth. She had barely been in the ground before the King's men payed her a visit. They would most assuredly return after informing their Lord that his mistress had failed to bear him a son. Of course, her daughter wasn't the only fifteen year old girl the King had satisfied his thirst for lust with. There were many. Most of them who also failed, lost their heads to the sharp edge of a sword. Eleanor's daughter's death would prevent them from having that opportunity, but the fate of her child was another matter.

Eleanor placed the baby gently across the bed and lit a candle just as the roof above her began to drum to the beat of the pouring rain. Had it not been for the almost deafening sound, she might have heard the thunderous roar of hooves beating the ground and approaching. Instead she was oblivious to it. Moments later, the wooden frame of her door shook from the pounding of a fist on the other side. Looking over to the baby, still sound asleep, she hesitantly opened it.

"Eleanor Ashby?" a cloaked woman asked, barding in, followed by what she assumed were two of the King's men.

"Yes," she answered with a shaking voice.

"We don't have much time," the woman said, lowering her hood to reveal herself.

"Your Grace, Ma'am," Eleanor gasped at the sight of her and bending a knee.

"Please," Queen Anne said, dismissing the formality of her respects. "The King's men are right behind us. They will kill both you and the child."

"You are taking her?" Eleanor asked.

"If you want her to live, yes," the Queen replied.

Why the Queen wanted to intervene had Eleanor completely dumbfounded.

"You are betraying your own King," she said at a loss for words. "Why are you doing this?"

"My Lady," one of the men said to remind her time was of the essence.

"Grab her," she ordered as he quickly went to the bed and wrapped the baby in the small blanket beneath her. "You are a witch, correct?" the Queen asked. "The same as your daughter was?"

"I... I don't," she hesitated to confess while watching her granddaughter be carried away.

"Your secret is safe with me," the Queen assured her, walking to the door and raising the cloaked hood back over her head before turning around. "I wouldn't be helping you if I thought otherwise," she added.

"Yes," Eleanor finally answered.

"She will be raised as such," the Queen replied with a nod before closing the door behind her. "Take her to the Foothills, Witches Valley," she yelled over the downpour, handing one of the men a note. "You are to give this to my sister, Katherine," she added as a crack of lightning shook the ground beneath them,

"And how will I find her?" he yelled back, stuffing the note in his trousers.

"Don't worry," she replied as the rain pelted her face. "She will find you."

...a day's ride later...

William had already cursed the trail he was following deep into Witches Valley, more times than he cared to count, swatting at his neck from the bugs that seemed to have had a particular taste for his blood. He pulled the blanket away from the baby's makeshift canvas bag. "You're the lucky one," he said, looking down to her bright blue eyes that seemed to him as if she were enjoying his displeasure. "Yeah, well one day you will thank me for this," he smirked, throwing the cover back over her and pulling on the reins of his horse to stop. "Right now," he noted, jumping off his horse. "Your knight in shining armor needs to relieve himself."

Taking a look around, not expecting to see anyone regardless, he walked to the edge of the woods to do his business.

"You are either very brave or very stupid to come here," he heard the voice of a woman pronounce. "Which one might that be?" she asked as he suddenly felt the tip of her sword pressed against the nape of his neck.



"I was sent by the Queen," he quickly said, surrendering his hands to the air as his manhood was left exposed.

"For what reason?" she asked sternly.

"I... I have a letter from her," he stammered. "It's in my pocket."

"Search him," she said as another woman's hands dug into his opened trousers to retrieve it.

"Can I at least make myself decent?" he asked, hearing the crinkling sound of paper unfolding.

"Quiet!" the woman replied with a raised voice. "I must read this."

"It was to be given only to Katherine of Yorkshire," he growled after a moment had passed, becoming irritated of the situation.

"And that it has," she returned, running the blade through him and withdrawing it as he crumpled to the ground.

"So, he spoke the truth?" Mary asked, looking down to him with little regard. "The letter is from your sister?"

"Yes," Katherine answered, walking over to his horse. "And the last thing she wrote was to kill him so that he speaks no more of it."

"May I ask what the note pertained to?" Mary questioned, following her and suddenly hearing a baby cry.

"There is your answer," Katherine smiled.

Fifteen years had passed since that day. Katherine, upon her sister's wishes, took the baby and raised her as her own child. No name had been given so she chose to call her Esmeralda after her own mother who had passed away years ago.

"Back so soon from Esmeralda's lesson?" she asked, looking up from her stitching work as Mary entered the room.

"She doesn't need any more lessons," she replied, taking a seat next to her at the small but efficient kitchen table. "It's hard to find anyone other than myself that is even willing to meet blades with her," she added, reaching for an apple. "And after today, I concede, I would rather not as well."

"So, you are afraid of her," Katherine smiled proudly, going back to hemming her dress.

"Not afraid," Mary said to differentiate. "I just prefer to keep my arm."

"Hmm," Katherine acknowledged.

"She fights with so much animosity inside of her and for the likes of me, I can't understand why," Mary continued, eyeing the apple's appearance and deciding not to eat it. "And she takes it out with her sword."

"She is gifted," Katherine said, looking up to her. "She has become very strong with regards to dark magic. You are mistaking one for the other."

"That doesn't explain her anger, Sister," Mary rebutted. "Are you certain she knows nothing of her past?"

"You do have a way of bringing a cloud to a sunny day," Katherine sighed, setting the needle and thread down. "Speak. What is it exactly that is on your mind?"

"I think she knows she's been lied to," Mary blurted out.

"Impossible," Katherine laughed at her suggestion. "She knows nothing about it."

"And spoken from the lips of a High Priestess," Mary sneered. "You know I am right. You're just protecting her."

"It is a mother's call to protect her child!" Katherine erupted. "Especially against absurdities such as yours!"

But they weren't even absurdities. In fact, they were quite true. Esmeralda hugged the wall to the entrance of the kitchen, listening in on the conversation. The answers to her dreams that had haunted her for so many years had been answered to her in the span of less than a minute. Katherine was not her true mother. Leaving the room, her blackened eyes met the painted portraits hanging on the wall of her supposed relatives. They all seemed to look at her with the same purpose she had in mind. Kill the King.

...the following morning...

"Good morning," Esmeralda said walking over to the only true friend she had ever made in her young life, stooping down onto her knees next to her as she plucked weeds from the garden.

"Good morning to you, too," Joan said, turning her head to smile before going back to work with her busy fingers.

"Let's do something fun today," Esmeralda suggested, picking a few weeds herself for the sake of it.

"Okay," Joan said curiously. "And what might that be?"

"Let's go to Canons Ashby," she answered.

"Shh!" Joan hushed her. "Why would you even propose that?! It is forbidden for us to go there!"

"Precisely," Esmeralda said. "That's what makes it fun."

"There is nothing fun about being burned at the stake," Joan disagreed, tossing a weed aside. "Canons Ashby is a province of the King. It is a stone's throw away from his castle. Surely you have lost your mind."

"They have a market there and I have heard that it is amazing," Esmeralda said. "Full of more fruits than you could possibly imagine."

"I don't know," Joan hesitated, her lips salivating for the taste of a fresh orange.

"You could pick the most always rotten apples from our trees instead," Esmeralda enticed her.

"If they catch us, we will be doing chores for the next year," Joan informed her.

"We will take my mother's horse," Esmeralda said. "I will say we are taking a nature's trip with a picnic basket and won't be back until

sunset.”

“Your mother is that gullible?” Joan asked.

“More so than you could imagine,” Esmeralda replied with a devious smile.

Moments later, they had left Witches Valley behind, galloping hard on a trail that would lead them to the only village on its path, Canons Ashby.

...later that day...

“Don’t look, but that boy across the way has been staring at me since we arrived here,” Esmeralda leaned into Joan’s ear to whisper, pretending to be interested in the fruit cart in front of her.

“Where?” she questioned, dropping an orange and turning her neck to see for herself.

“Damnit, I said don’t look!” Esmeralda exclaimed. It was too late, of course, as all of their eyes met at once. “Just put your head down and mind your own business,” Esmeralda said doing exactly that.

“I told you it was a bad idea coming here,” Joan scolded her and seeing him approaching out of the corner of her eye.

“Beg your pardon,” the boy said, now standing directly in front of them. “You are not from this village I presume.”

“No,” Esmeralda mustered the courage to say, looking up to him and noticing his same unnerving eyes upon her. “I’m sorry, do I know you?” she asked.

“I would think not,” he replied smiling. “But I must say, you are the spitting image of the Queen.”

“I have never seen her so I can’t say I would know,” Esmeralda returned, grateful for the compliment, but not interested.

“She doesn’t have children though, this I do know,” the boy noted. “However, there is a rumor that actually says otherwise,”

“Rumors often do,” Esmeralda said. “And most of the time, they are just that.”

“Would you care to hear it?” he asked.

“I don’t really care about...” Esmeralda began to say.

“I would like to hear it,” Joan interrupted.

“Well,” he began, lowering his voice and drawing closer to them. “Some say the Queen is a witch and that she had a child named Esmeralda and...”

“Wait, what did you say?” Esmeralda asked, not giving him her full attention.

“Which part?” he asked. “The witch part or...?”

“Did you say ‘Esmeralda?’” she questioned.

“Yeah, that’s right,” he confirmed as Joan and her exchanged glances to one another. “Anyway,” he continued. “Supposedly she hid her when she was born here in Canons Ashby.”

“Why would she do such a thing?” Esmeralda asked.

“Well supposedly, the King was so infuriated that she didn’t bring him a boy, he was going to have the baby executed.”

“That’s awful,” Joan interjected.

“Canons Ashby wouldn’t be the smartest place to hide her,” Esmeralda said.

“Exactly,” the boy agreed. “So the Queen moved her to Witches Valley.”

“Shit,” Esmeralda said. Joan could see the rage building up in her eyes.

“Like I said, it’s just a rumor,” the boy emphasized. “I never really believed it until I saw you.”

“So they did lie to me!” Esmeralda hissed.

“Who?” Joan asked.

“We have to go,” she said storming off to her horse.

“Wait, I didn’t get your name,” the boy called out to her.

“Esmeralda,” she turned around to say.

“It could just be a coincidence,” Joan said as Esmeralda mounted her horse.

“It’s not a damned coincidence!” she huffed reaching out with her hand to pull her up.

“So, what are you going to do?” Joan asked, straddling her legs around the horse.

“I need to meet the Queen,” she said, tilting her head back to her.

“You don’t just ask to meet the Queen,” Joan laughed.

“Joan, I have had visions of the King raping and beating my mother nearly to death in my dreams,” Esmeralda said. “And it has placed so much hate in me that I have wanted to kill him. No I know those dreams are a lie and someone skilled in the power of dark magic created them.”

“The Queen,” Joan assumed. “Why would she do that?”

“That is what I need to find out,” Esmeralda answered.



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shall live once more

## Pole Shift

Underground  
Waiting  
Keeper of swords  
Sleeping  
Points North still the broken stone  
Pole shift pending  
She will waken still  
When the beasts of the air circle to new ways  
When the beasts of the sea signal end of days  
When man and the beasts of the land lose their way  
She will guide again  
From underground to over  
North to South  
One becomes the other  
The other praised  
The one for mercury raised  
Made perfect parent to the skies  
Keeper of swords  
Dreaming  
Moving closer  
As times align  
The distances chime  
The bell to call us  
The bell that shakes the ground  
An age forgotten soon  
Taken fully by her power  
Taken fully by our praise  
She will rise.

*Richard Handyside*





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