

Issue 34

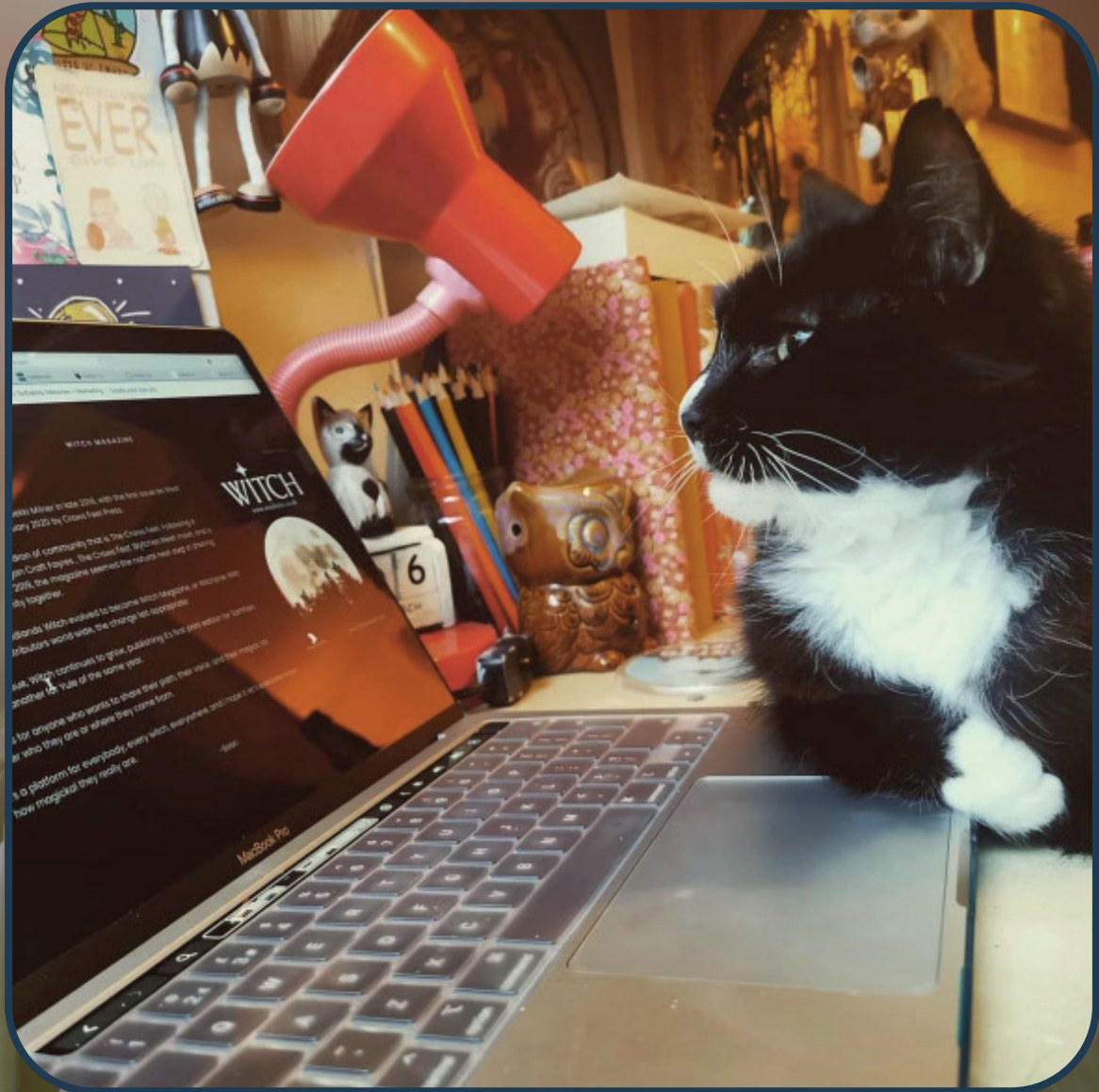


February 2023

WITCH



IMBOLC



In memory of
Spike
2011-2023



WITCH

Magazine

Dearest Witches,

Welcome to Imbolc! I hope this issue finds you well,

I would like to thank you for your patience whilst I finished this issue. Sadly, we lost one of our beloved cats last week, and it has been very difficult to move through this period.

I appreciate the time given to be gentle with myself.

Be blessed,

Bekki
Editor

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WITCH

FEATURED ARTICLES

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Protest Magic - Helen J.R. Bruce

Ishtar - A Witches Queen? - Scott Irvine

The Witch and the Wheel

Divining with Reiki - Carrie Anderson

Imbolc Inspiration from the Gods - Mark NeCamp Jr.

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Wise Words from the Old Crone - Imbolc

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★
WITCH
OSTARA

*Submissions due 21st
March*

WITCH is an independently published magazine featuring writers across the globe, from all paths. We feature anything from witchcraft to the occult, pagan and druid practices and anything in between.

Even if you've never written before, we welcome new voices, previously published works and artist features of all kinds.

We'd love to hear from you!

*Send your submissions to:
submissions@witchzine.co.uk*



Imbolc
Blessings

★
WITCH
Magazine

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"This story is gripping and compelling and soon makes us familiar with ritual and witchcraft as normal and essential to awaken and maintain a healthy soulful lifestyle..."

Maureen Walton O'Brien
Visual Artist, Canada

O'LAN RUADH & SARAH BERTI

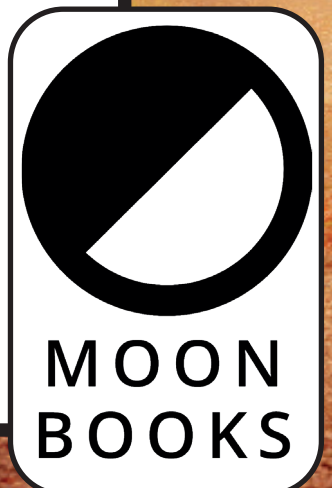
The Aos Sidhe and Witches

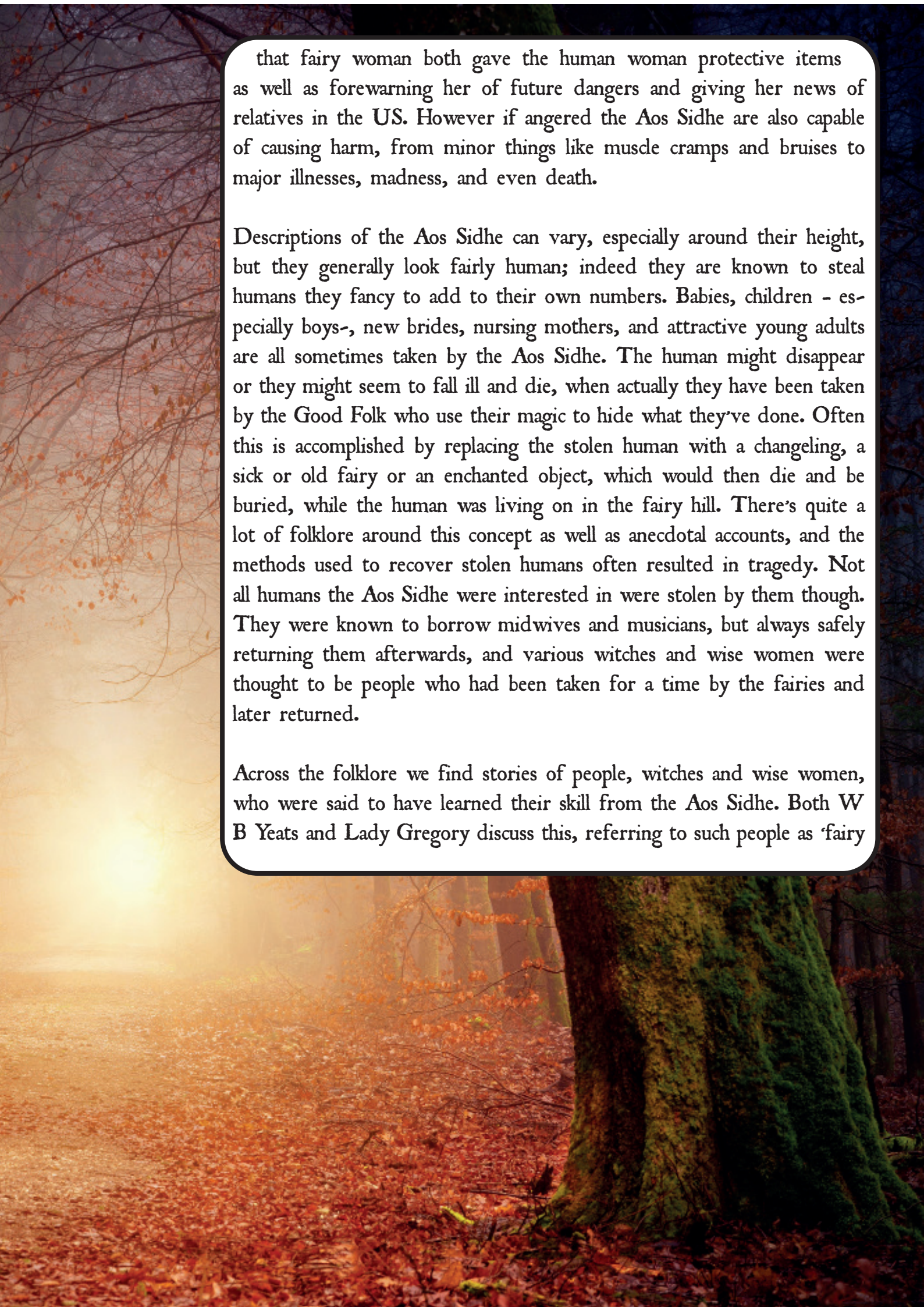
Morgan Daimler

When many people hear the word fairies they picture twee winged sprites that live in the garden, but taking a wider view we find that there are many types of beings who may be called fairies and they are quite diverse. A good example of this is the Irish Aos Sidhe, beings who are often called fairies in English, and who are nothing like the small butterfly winged creatures of movies and kids' books. The Aos Sidhe are powerful beings with complex folklore who have a long connection with witches and witchcraft across the centuries. Digging into folklore around the Aos Sidhe are and how they connect to witches is both fascinating and enlightening.

A common question for those who don't know much about Irish folklore is, who are the Aos Sidhe? The term, in Irish, means 'people of the fairy hills' which is often translated into English as fairies. This name arose from the idea that the Aos Sidhe live in fairy hills, places that act as entranceways into the Otherworld, the place these beings call home. They are also known by a variety of euphemisms including: the Shining Ones, the Gentry, and the Good People. These terms don't describe who these beings are, per se, but are meant to be positive terms that avoid offending them. There are also some other names for them, like Othercrowd or People of the Hills, that are more descriptive. It's important to always speak politely about these beings and to avoid names they find offensive, which in folk belief includes both fairies and sidhe, because it is believed that they can be invisible if they choose to and might be around a person without that person being aware of them. Several stories are based on this idea, usually featuring a human who speaks rudely of the Aos Sidhe and is then punished by them, for example by being transformed into a horse and ridden all night to be left exhausted in the morning.

The Aos Sidhe are powerful beings who can influence a human for good or ill. When pleased with someone they are known to give that person great luck, healing, or even wealth, and for some people they also offer knowledge, both teaching them skills and telling them things that the human couldn't otherwise know. W B Yeats relates a story of a woman who had a friend among the Irish fairies, and tells of how

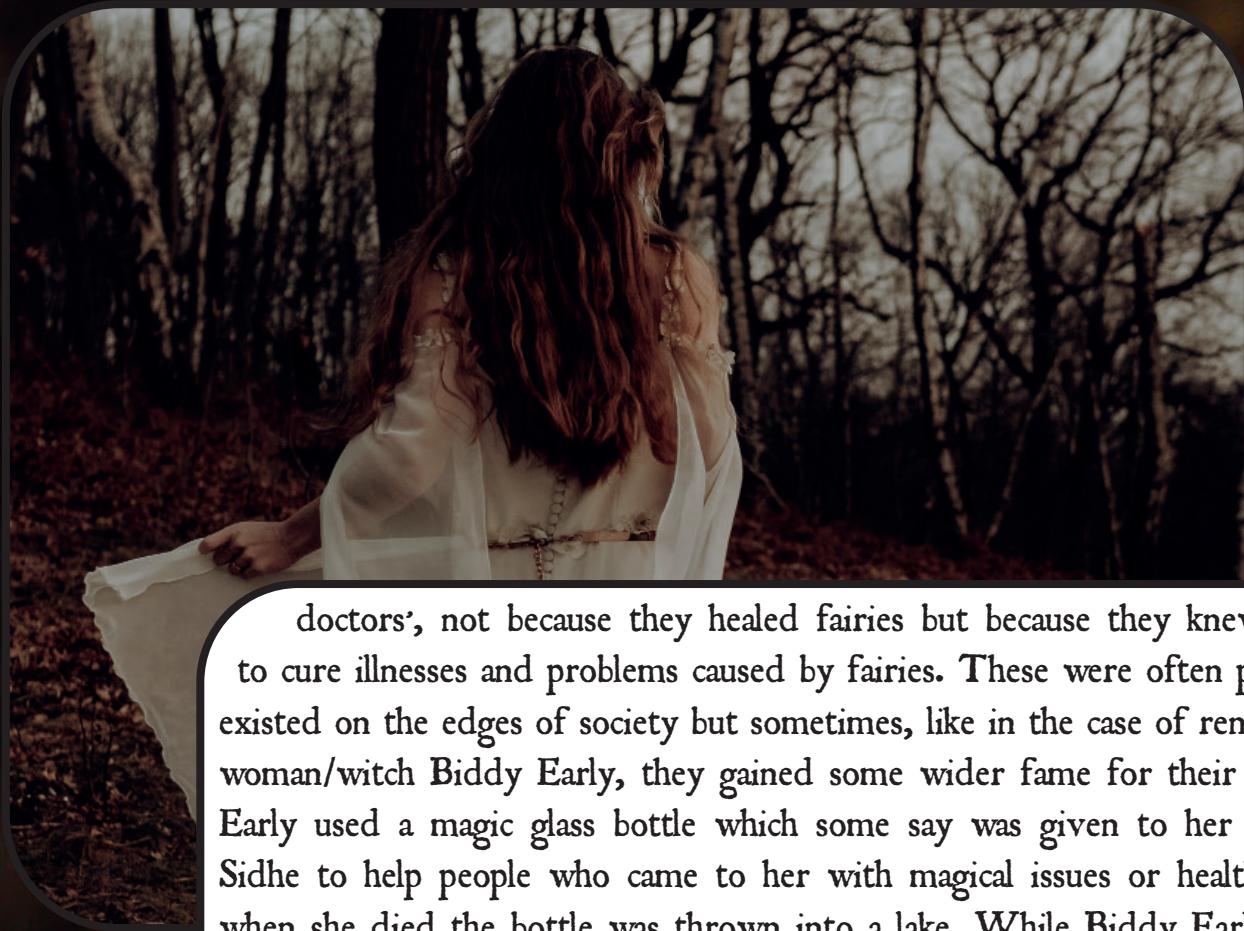


The background of the page is a photograph of a forest during autumn. The ground is covered in fallen orange and red leaves. A large, moss-covered tree trunk is prominent on the right side. The air is misty, and the lighting is soft and golden, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The text is contained within a white rounded rectangle in the upper half of the image.

that fairy woman both gave the human woman protective items as well as forewarning her of future dangers and giving her news of relatives in the US. However if angered the Aos Sidhe are also capable of causing harm, from minor things like muscle cramps and bruises to major illnesses, madness, and even death.

Descriptions of the Aos Sidhe can vary, especially around their height, but they generally look fairly human; indeed they are known to steal humans they fancy to add to their own numbers. Babies, children - especially boys-, new brides, nursing mothers, and attractive young adults are all sometimes taken by the Aos Sidhe. The human might disappear or they might seem to fall ill and die, when actually they have been taken by the Good Folk who use their magic to hide what they've done. Often this is accomplished by replacing the stolen human with a changeling, a sick or old fairy or an enchanted object, which would then die and be buried, while the human was living on in the fairy hill. There's quite a lot of folklore around this concept as well as anecdotal accounts, and the methods used to recover stolen humans often resulted in tragedy. Not all humans the Aos Sidhe were interested in were stolen by them though. They were known to borrow midwives and musicians, but always safely returning them afterwards, and various witches and wise women were thought to be people who had been taken for a time by the fairies and later returned.

Across the folklore we find stories of people, witches and wise women, who were said to have learned their skill from the Aos Sidhe. Both W B Yeats and Lady Gregory discuss this, referring to such people as 'fairy



doctors', not because they healed fairies but because they knew how to cure illnesses and problems caused by fairies. These were often people who existed on the edges of society but sometimes, like in the case of renowned wise woman/witch Biddy Early, they gained some wider fame for their skill. Biddy Early used a magic glass bottle which some say was given to her by the Aos Sidhe to help people who came to her with magical issues or health problems; when she died the bottle was thrown into a lake. While Biddy Early was quite successful in her work and well known, many other witches and wise women lived in obscurity. The belief was that these people were either taken by the fairies - sometimes manifest as an illness or trance which lasted for years - while others were thought to be in regular contact with them. This connection to the Aos Sidhe allowed these witches to both have knowledge of events that they shouldn't possibly be able to know about and also to have knowledge of herbal cures and medicines that they had no way to learn.

The Aos Sidhe and witches in Ireland share a lot of common folklore, and sometimes the two subjects seem to overlap. Both witches and fairies are said to take the form of hares, for example, and to sneak into fields with cows in order to steal the milk. The Good Folk are widely known to have an interest in dairy products and to steal milk from cows as well as the entire cow when it suits them. Witches are also said to have an interest in stealing either milk or butter, and this type of witch in Ireland is referred to as a 'butter witch' for that reason. Similarly iron was thought to protect against the Good Folk and to break harmful magic by witches. Both fairies and the humans associated with them had an ambiguous reputation, able to both help humans and cause harm depending on their mood. Biddy Early cured many people but one story talks about her enmity with a local priest who tried to have her arrested for witchcraft (she was charged and cleared of the charges); in retaliation its said

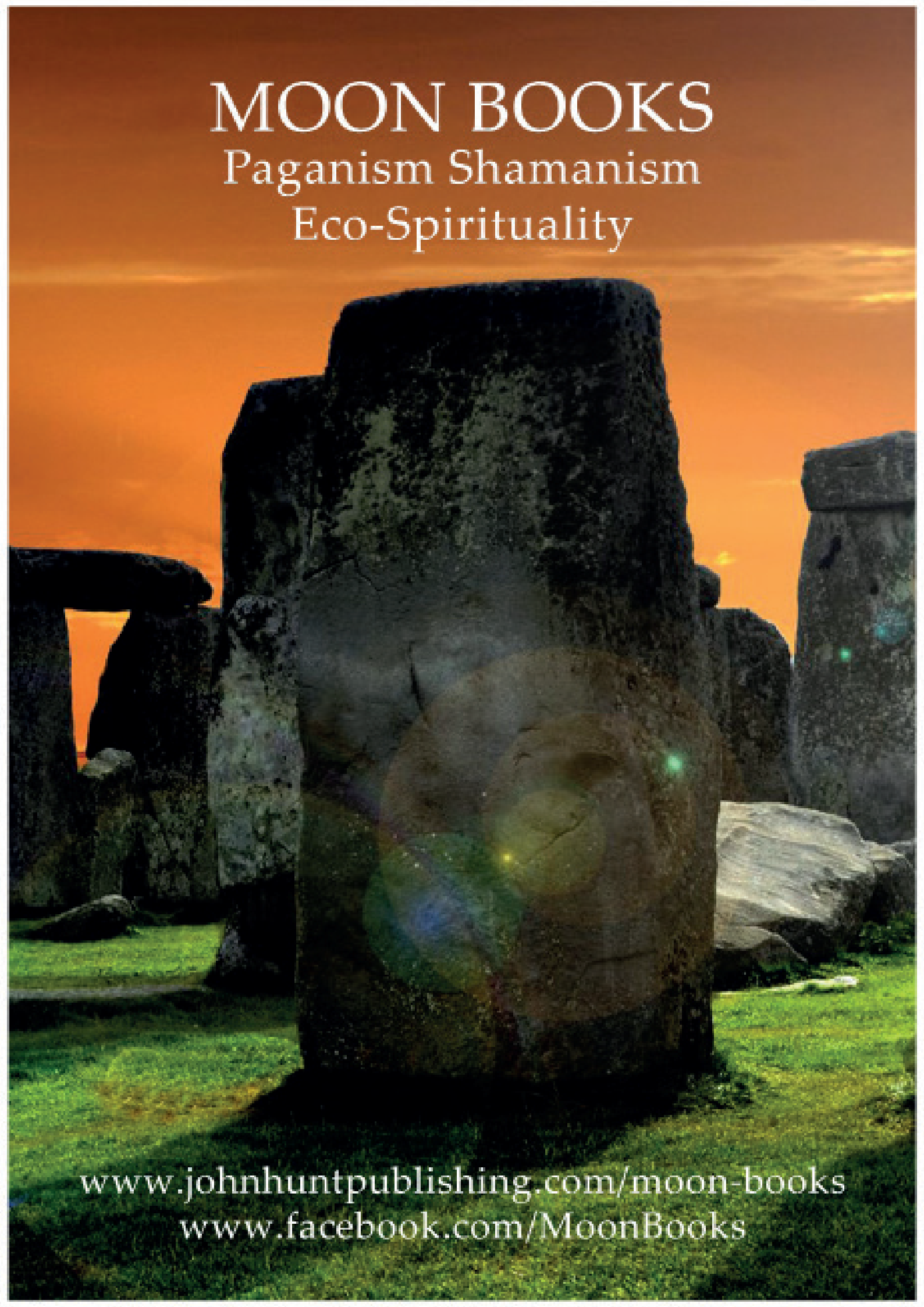
that Biddy caused both himself and the horse he was riding to freeze in place on the road. He remained stuck there until he recanted all of his nasty words against her. This is similar to the fairies' reputation for both helping and harming people based on how they are treated.

The folklore around the Aos Sidhe is diverse and rich, as is the folklore about witches. The two groups have many themes in common but that comes in part from the way that some witches are thought to have learned from the Aos Sidhe or to have lived among them for a time, creating a strong connection between them. This isn't a concept limited to older belief either; there are witches today who rely on a connection to Irish fairies, even say they have learned from them, and who nurture this connection as an aspect of their witchcraft. The Aos Sidhe are still a powerful presence

in the world, both in Ireland and internationally, and witchcraft continues to appeal to many people who see beauty and power in it. And as long as the stories of the fairies persist, as long as people continue to have encounters with them and weave new stories about them, as long as witchcraft persists as a practice and spirituality, this will always be true.

Morgan Daimler is the author of Aos Sidhe, published by Moon Books



A photograph of Stonehenge at sunset. The large, dark grey stone structures are silhouetted against a bright orange and yellow sky. The foreground is a green grassy field. The overall mood is ancient and mystical.

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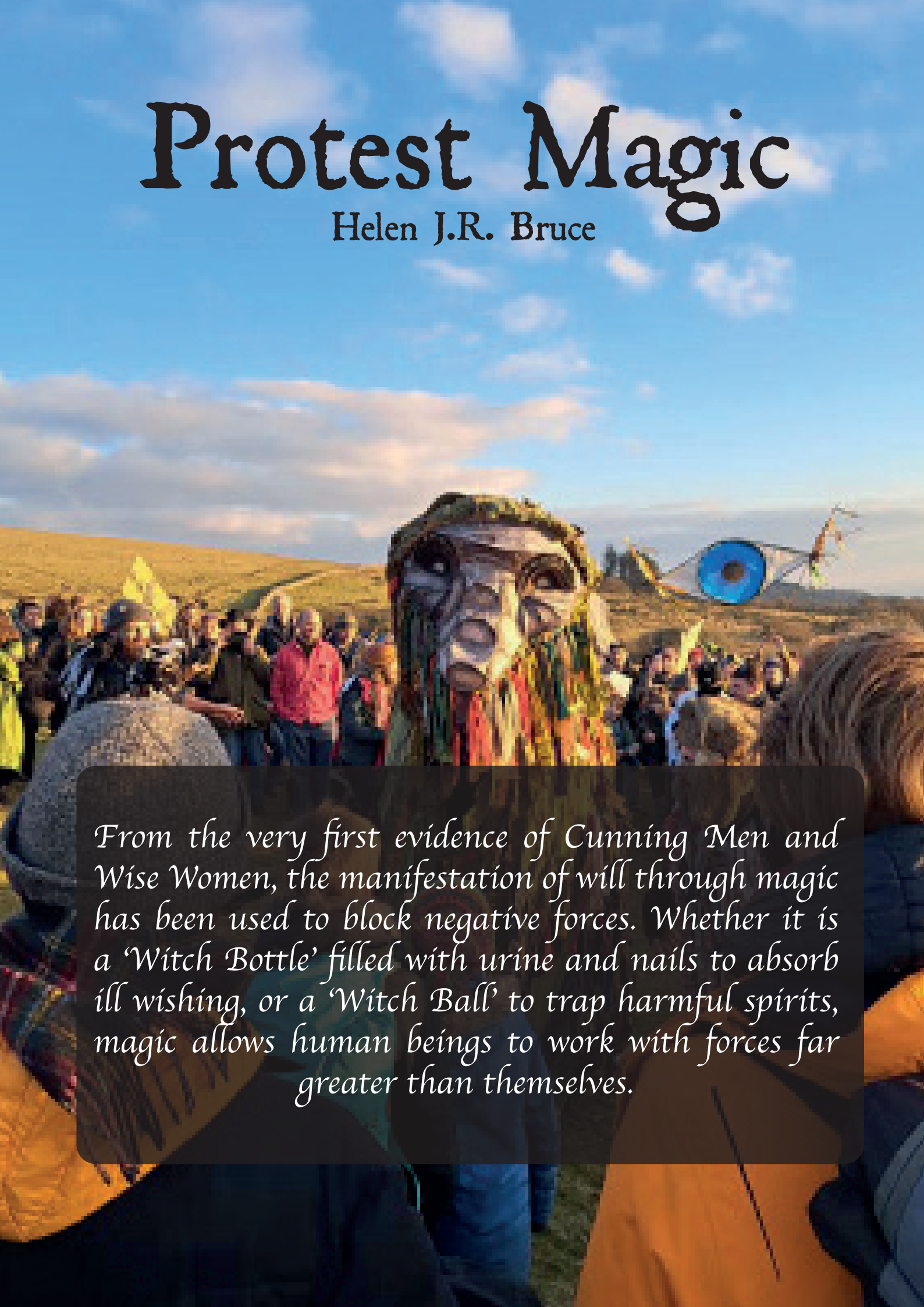
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**DUE TO PERSONAL
CIRCUMSTANCES THIS
WILL NOW BEGIN IN
OUR NEXT ISSUE**

Protest Magic

Helen J.R. Bruce



From the very first evidence of Cunning Men and Wise Women, the manifestation of will through magic has been used to block negative forces. Whether it is a 'Witch Bottle' filled with urine and nails to absorb ill wishing, or a 'Witch Ball' to trap harmful spirits, magic allows human beings to work with forces far greater than themselves.

A powerful modern example of this was the raising of Old Crockern as part of the Right to Roam protest, which called for a swift return of the right to roam and Wild Camp across Dartmoor.

The protest was held on Saturday 21st January, in response to a wealthy landowner winning a court case which permitted him to limit public access to large swathes of moorland that he owns. Alexander Darwall won the case against Dartmoor National Park, after arguing that the right to Wild Camp did not actually exist, despite having been long accepted as an assumed right under the Dartmoor Commons Act 1985. The court decision overturned this assumed right, allowing Mr. Darwall to move Wild Campers off his land, even if they are strictly observing the 'leave no trace' rule.

Land lost to Wild Campers is estimated to include up to 12,000 acres, with a fifth of the previous area where Wild Camping was permitted lost completely. Moorland where this activity is not banned outright may now be used with the landowner's permission, although this can be revoked at any time. The public currently have the right to roam on only 8% of England, with the other 92% being off limits.

The attempted severance of connection between people and the land has the potential for deadly impact. Spending time in wild nature is not only a spiritual act in itself, but it is essential for the maintenance of many people's mental health. Blocking the public from using traditionally common land, such as the moor, is threatening their link to both their ancestors and deity. For many residents of Dartmoor, the land holds the physical bones of their forbears. For visitors, the landscape remains the abode of their mythic inheritance, a conduit through which story can pass from granite to flesh.





This makes the act of waking Old Crockern a form of sacred rebellion; a magical act, channelling the will of over three thousand people. The sheer number of participants speaks of a country wide shift towards a deeper communication with the landscape and an acceptance of the sovereignty of spirits of place. As one of the Dartmoor leaders of the Wild Hunt, Old Crockern has both protective and fearsome aspects. Capable of calling the Wisht hounds from their kennels in Wistman's Wood, Crockern is concerned with the protection of the moor rather than the desires of people. Unless they align with his cause, of course.

In folklore, Old Crockern appears in a dream to a Dartmoor man, requesting he warn a wealthy landowner against his greed. If he 'so much as scratches my back with a plough share, I'll tear his pockets out', Crockern says, but the landowner ignores the message. The parallels between this story and current events are striking, making this guardian of the moor an obvious ally to call upon in protest. In the original tale the greedy landowner is defeated in his attempts to cultivate the moor, eventually leaving after losing his fortune. Old Crockern's warning comes true.

Folklore informs the rebellious spirit of those rising up to protect their right to enjoy the land. If Crockern has acted before, then might he not act again? Even in this age of technology and science, might he defy disbelief and gather up his old bones, riding to the aid of Dartmoor on his skeletal steed? Those engaged in peaceful protest magic surely hope so.

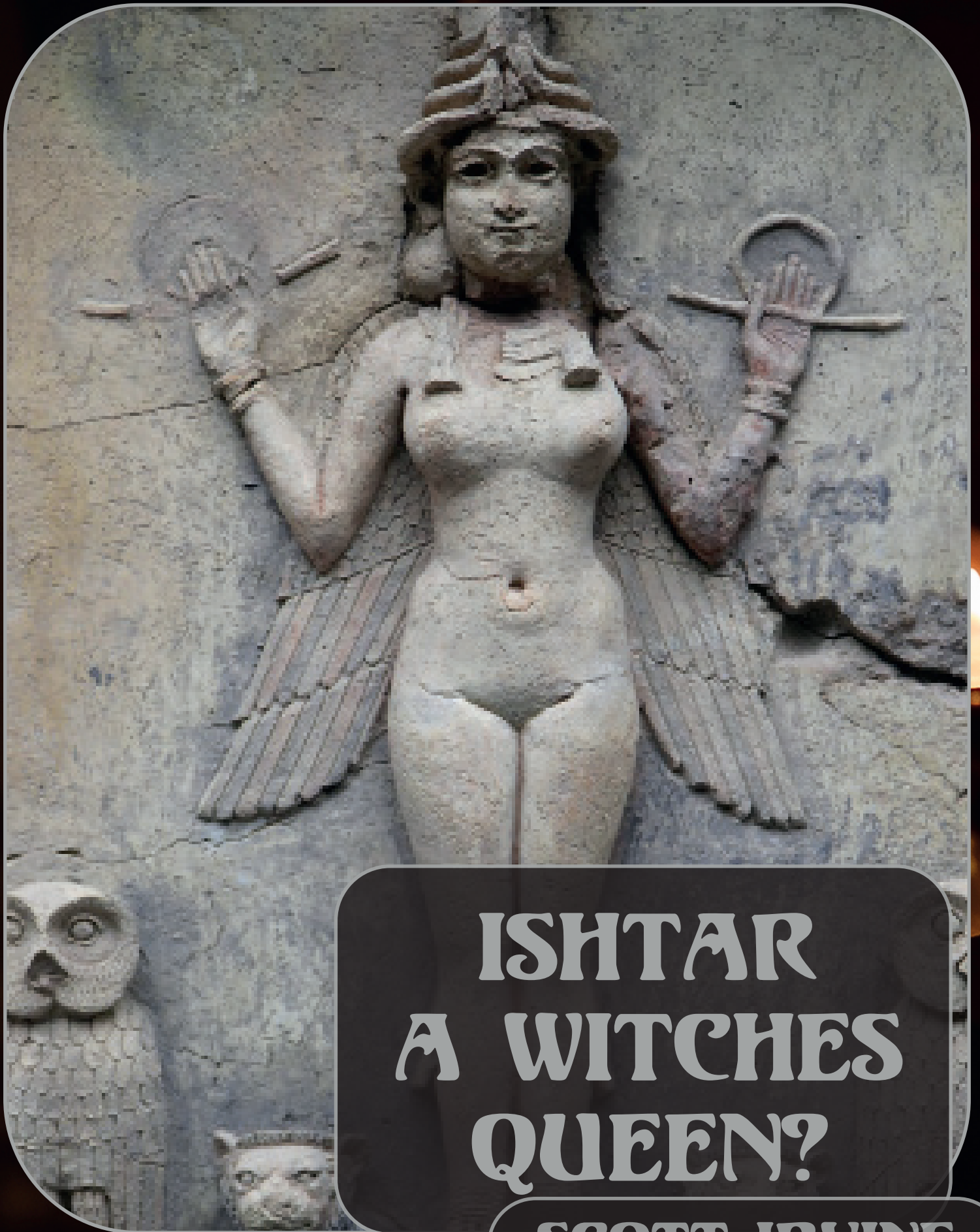
If you feel inspired to join this cause then the following groups provide useful information:

Right to Roam

The Stars are for Everyone @everyonesstars

Dartmoor Preservation Association





**ISHTAR
A WITCHES
QUEEN?**

SCOTT IRVINE

What does the Babylonian goddess of love have to do with witchcraft you might wonder? We are all familiar with the Wheel of the Year and Imbolc representing the beginning of spring when the triple goddess Briget instigates the resurrection of the earth. Briget is a Celtic goddess who was a member of the Tuatha de Danann, the fairy folk of the goddess Danu who arrived in Ireland many moons ago in a mysterious cloud of mist. Briget is the Queen of Heaven, a title that was also taken by an earlier spring goddess called Ishtar.

The ancient goddess was popular in Babylon around 4,000 years ago, succeeding the earliest goddess of love (and war) Inanna of Sumer 1,000 years earlier. Inanna means 'Lady of Heaven and was the first goddess to be connected with the coming of spring. The Sumerians gave the world the first written language called cuneiform on baked clay tablets that were only discovered at the end of the 19th Century.

One set of tablets tells the story of Inanna's journey into the underworld in an attempt to add the realm of the dead to her already considerable portfolio. She was already the Queen of heaven and Earth and desired the kingdom of her sister Irkalla's world too. There are seven great walls separating our world of the living and that of the dead, each passable through guarded gates at which the goddess had to remove a piece of her earthly attire to pass through to arrive at the underworld completely naked. Unfortunately for Inanna she underestimated her sister's power and before she could make her demands, Irkalla struck her down dead and hung her body unceremoniously on a meat hook in the kitchen.

One of the main duties of Inanna in the world of the living was ensuring the continued fertility of the earth and with her absence, the world began to wither and die. Vegetation stopped blooming, animals refuse to mate and humans became sterile. It was left to the great wizard Ea (pronounced Ay-ah), a water god and Inanna's father's uncle to create two golems from the dirt under his fingernails who Irkalla had no power over to rescue the goddess of love.

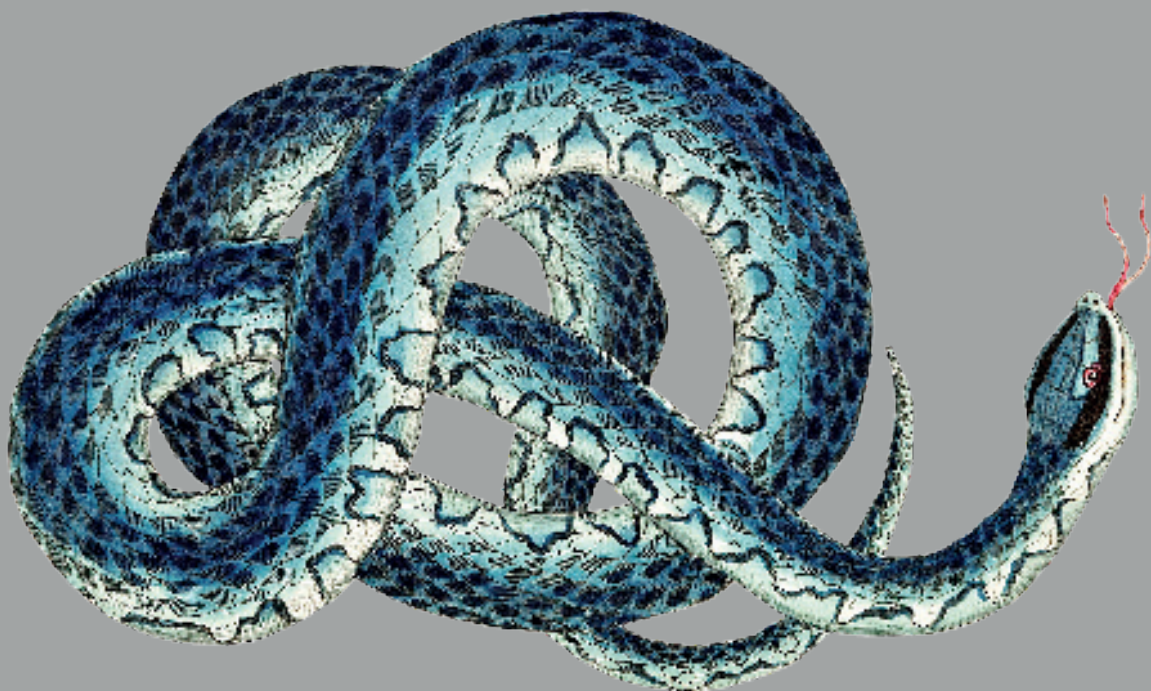
The Queen of the Dead allows them to revive the Lady of Heaven and allows her to leave on condition she finds someone on the surface to replace her. When Inanna arrives home, she finds her husband Dumuzi, the shepherd king,

having a party in her absence, seemingly not missing her at all and chooses him to replace her. Two demon hounds that had accompanied Inanna to the surface drag the protesting fertility god screaming into the gates of Hell. Unfortunately, despite Inanna's freedom, things on Earth do not improve because Inanna needed Dumuzi to fertilize the earth with and as the planet continues to die, Ea has to step in to save the world again.

A deal was made between the wizard and Irkalla that at the midway point between the longest night and when night and day are balanced, Dumuzi is released to unite with Inanna to fertilize nature each year so that the world can bloom with new life. Once his duties were done and the harvests complete, Dumuzi would return to the dark sterile realm of Irkalla.

The Akkadians conquered Sumer around 2,300BC and moved the administrative headquarters from Ur in the south to Babylon in the north. They brought with them an advanced form of written language that allowed articulate sentences that could portray emotions and deep thought. Inanna became known as Ishtar, symbolised by the dove, Irkalla became Ereshkigal symbolised by the crow and Ea became the Serpent King Enki, the Lord of the Earth.

A thousand years later, climate change forced the nobility of Babylon into a warming fertile Europe. A group called the Cimmerians, or the Noble Ones



ventured into Greece to colonise the shores of the northern Mediterranean Sea where Ishtar became Aphrodite, Ereshkigal was demoted for her husband Nergal who became Hades and Enki became Poseidon. They transformed again with the rise of the Roman Empire to become Venus, Pluto and Neptune. Another group left Babylon called the Scythians, the Shining Ones, who migrated to the rest of Europe north of the Alps. The Scythians were the masters of stone temple building and left their mark across continental Europe and into Britain. They eventually became known as the Celts that we know today. They brought with them the Queen of Heaven they called Briget and the Queen of Death was Morrigan. Their priests were known as Druids and the priestesses were what we understand as witches today.



Sisters of the Moon Lunar Temple

<https://seekingblissonline.com/courses/1465/about>

Sister, are you feeling the call to be part of a global lunar sisterhood? Would you like to deepen your connection to the moon, the seasons, Goddess and your own internal rhythms? The Lunar Temple is an online monthly membership giving you the opportunity to receive lunar and seasonal guidance and be part of a global community of like minded women.

As part of the membership we gather live once a month via zoom to honour the New Moon. These are beautiful online circles where we gather in the Lunar Temple to set powerful intentions for the month ahead and to connect in sacred sisterhood. Michelle combines her knowledge and passion for all things divine feminine to bring you these beautifully crafted circles.

Our theme for 2022 is 'The Inspired Feminine' - we are going to be exploring badass women throughout history and weaving their magic into our own lives. There will be some really juicy journaling prompts each month as well as creative invitations as we explore pirate queens, warrior women, artists, writers, revolutionaries, poets, truth seekers and much more. Dive deeper into astrology and lunar self care and learn how each of the zodiac signs can take you on a journey of self discovery & empowerment.

Awaken the wild woman within, gather round the collective fire of our ancestors and howl at the moon!



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THE WITCH AND THE WHEEL

Witch and the Wheel® is a unique collection of soy candles honouring the eight Sabbats in the Wheel of the Year. Each one has been lovingly hand poured in the South West of England, blended with gentle and positive intentions by founder and fellow witch, Melanie Gillespie.

The collection has been carefully crafted so that each scent is linked to the nature of the Sabbat it represents and can be used alongside journaling, intention setting and rituals.

As we currently approach the end of our winter stretch, the next upcoming candles in the collection are Imbolc, Ostara and Beltane.

Imbolc is grounding and earthy, with aromas of wood and moss, to anchor our focus to the seeds of new intentions taking place in the shadows, before slowly sprouting signs of new life.

Ostara is floral and uplifting, contrasted by a hint of pink pepper. Perfect for Spring Equinox and the beautiful balance of light and dark.

While Beltane holds exquisite notes of Oak and Tobacco leaf, encapsulating the potency of fire, fertility and abundance.

All candles are made from 100% soy wax, hand blended with the highest quality fragrance oils. Ingredients are vegan friendly, cruelty free and paraben free and each 30cl candle burns for approximately 40 hours.



Orders over £50 automatically apply for free delivery and as a special offer readers can enjoy a 15% discount on all orders by applying discount code Melanie15 at the checkout online, applicable until the end of Feb '23.



WITCH Review

We were delighted to try the IMBOLC candle from The Witch and the Wheel. This year our Imbolc celebrations took a back seat due to life.

This candle was the perfect small way of acknowledging Imbolc in a quiet way, and the scent is divine! It burns beautifully, and came safely and beautifully packaged.

The scent is not overpowering - it is delicate and beautifully layered, and gently fills a room quite quickly, without being too cloying.

I think having one of these candles for each turn of the wheel would ensure i have a way to keep my practice even when life gets in the way - but would also be a beautiful addition to more complex rituals or practices - or even just to enjoy on the coffee table whilst you read!



DIVINING WITH REIKI

CARRIE ANDERSON

I absolutely love to use Reiki with my Divination practices. I use Reiki in several different ways during a divination session. First, for grounding myself. Then, I do a short Reiki session with the querent's approval. Third, I use Reiki energy to cleanse the different divination sets between each use.

The forms of divination that I regularly practice are varied. First, is wax scrying. This is where a candle is lit, the querent's question is asked. The candle is then extinguished and the melted wax is poured into a bowl of water. The symbol that is created is then interpreted. My second favorite form of divination is black mirror scrying. I used a vintage metal frame, painted the glass black to create a reflective surface like a mirror. This is another form of scrying where images, sounds, or messages are received through the mirror. I also use a system called StoneSpeaks that uses twenty two crystals that represent the Major Arcana from Tarot. Playing cards, dice, pendulum, intuitive readings, and psychic readings are also part of my divination practice.

Prior to the beginning of the divination session, I do a self-reiki session. This cleanses my aura, grounds me, and also helps create a state of mind that helps me to enter a trance like state. This is a time for quieting my mind, centering myself, and focusing on opening up my third eye chakra. I never start a divination reading without first doing a self-reiki session.

If the client is interested in a reiki session for themselves then I incorporate that into the divination too. This is a shortened version of a regular session. It usually lasts about 15 minutes. I use this time to cleanse their aura and balance their chakras. At this time, I open their third eye chakra and this creates a stronger psychic connection between the two of us. I then meditate upon their question.

Depending on the type of divination reading it is then completed after the client's reiki session. A final step before actually doing the reading also





involves Reiki. It's at this time that I use the energy to create a link between our third eye chakra. This is excellent for psychic intuitive readings. Once I feel a firm, stable connection I then begin the reading.

I close out my divination sessions by thanking the Reiki energy for allowing me to channel it for such a specific purpose. I cleanse the room using reiki space clearing techniques to make sure no unwanted energies remain in the room. A cord cutting is also part of my regimen. As is, the dry brushing technique where I brush clean my etheric layers.

My final step is to use Reiki energy to cleanse and protect my divination tools. This allows them to be stored without any issues. They are ready for use for another reading. I can't think of my divination practice without Reiki being an integral part. It creates a stronger connection, more accurate readings, and keeps me grounded.

IMBOLC INSPIRATION FROM THE GODS

MARK NECAMP, JR.

Of all the holidays, Imbolc is the one I associate most with a specific deity. For me Imbolc, is about the goddess Brigid. While she is known as a deity of smith craft, poetry, and healing- I have always also associated her with specifically with imbas- the ancient Celtic term for inspiration. Imbas is something I have sought through many ways, and one way that works for me is invoking deities directly.

Invocation for me is calling deity directly through me and in me. Meditation and prayer are wonderful ways to connect with the gods, and sometimes I like something more direct and hands on. It fills me with awe and wonder to connect with a deity. We are all conduits of energy between Spirit and Matter- Heaven and Earth. Since we are naturally conduits for such, it is natural to use this knowledge for magick and explore how we are conduits for deities (or any other spirits in a responsible nature). There is no need for faith since I am having a direct spiritual experience. Depending on how deep you go, when you call a deity into you, you see how the world through their point of view and theoretically can bestow the energy of that deity or even be their oracle. I put invocation into four distinct stages: Inspiration, Orading, Channeling, and Possession. They involve varying levels of control of the deity and control that the practitioner gives up, as well as different degrees that the deity is present in the body. Inspiration is the lightest of invocation where the practitioner has the most control.



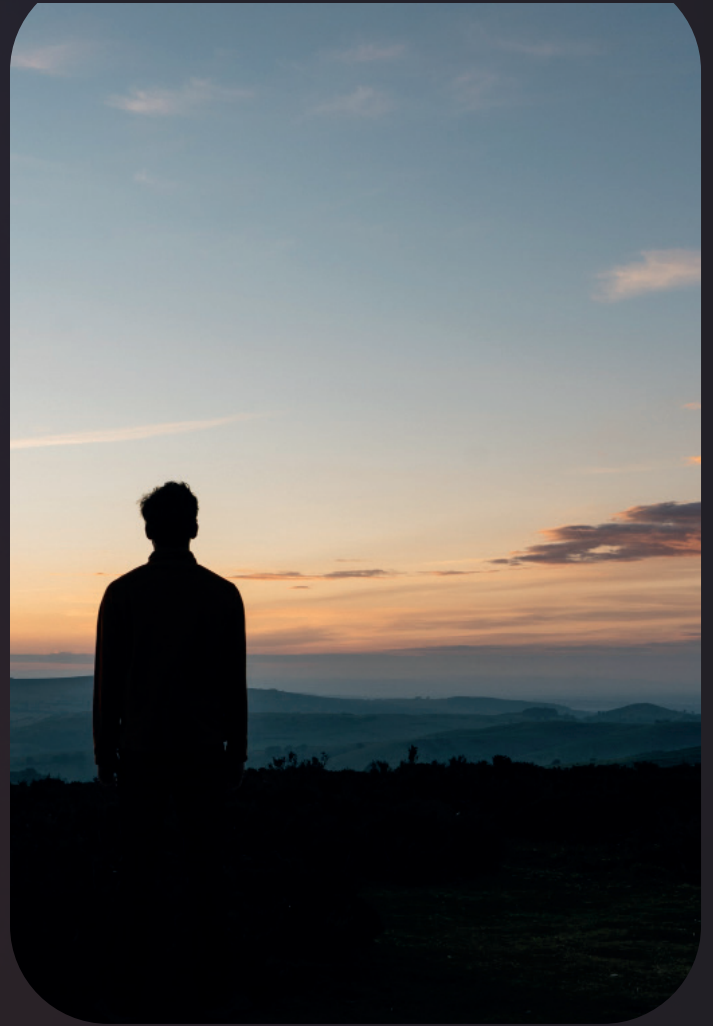
Inspiration is where the deity is called to you, and their energy is barely entering you, or just entering you to the 3rd eye level. This contrasts with orading, where the deity is given control to your throat and you can give messages from the gods, or channeling- where the deity is in your body, but you share control- and versus possession where the deity is as close to total control as possible. I find

it useful in situations such as needing literal inspiration for a project- like invoking the goddess Brigid when you need help writing a poem or needing guidance on love from Aphrodite. It is possible to do divination while under the spiritual guidance that comes from this stage of invocation. I would caution that the inspiration you receive will be influenced by who or what you invoke, so please choose appropriately. I would probably not invoke a deity like Ares, the Greek god of War, if I was trying to get inspiration on how to have peaceful relations with a neighbor I was having a disagreement with.

The vehicle for invocation to happen is trance. The deeper you go into trance, the deeper the magick. For every type of invocation, you need to at least be at alpha state, the brain wave pattern of relaxation and mediation. The art of invocation is fairly simple: get into a trance, call the entity you want to come into you, go as deep a trance as you want the entity to take over, have that spiritual experience, and come back.

For a trance state, I would go as far into meditation as possible, in whatever form that works best for you. You could also try trance dancing. Here is a sample method:

1. Stand comfortably with some space between your feet.
2. Pay attention to your breath as you breathe in and out.
3. Start to sway back and forth. As you breathe in and out, and the more you relax and get deeper into trance, let your movements become rhythmic. You can start with the extremities such as the hands, arms, feet, shoulders, and head.
4. As you breathe in and out and your movements become more and more rhythmic, let your thoughts flow in and out of your mind- focusing more on your movements and breathing.
5. Stop thinking about your breathing and focus on your movements- letting them get more and more rhythmic and intense.
6. Let your thoughts and movements flow spon-



taneously until they reach a climax.

7. Let your movements and breathing relax and get slower and slower.
8. Ground and center

In the above exercise you may have noticed that your breathing and movements almost took on a life of their own. Your breathing and movements became a way for your conscious mind to let go. It is in letting go that deeper magick can occur.

Once you are in the middle of trance, or just after it even, imagine that the deity is above the top of your head and visualize and feel your head opening up to receive that energy. For Inspiration, invoke the deity just above you, or barely into your crown chakra, to all the way to your third eye. Once I have the energy is drawn into you, it can be used for anything from divination to poetic inspiration, or anything where it is useful to connect to something greater than yourself.



The exercise below is specifically geared towards being hands on with the medium or divination tool of your choice.

This exercise can also be used for Inspiration on the project of your choosing. Replace your divination method with whatever your medium is.

1. Choose your divination method (for example tarot, runes, etc.) and the deity, or spirits, you would like help from.
2. Meditate and sit quietly. Slowly open your crown chakra.
3. Pray to the deity of your choosing. Thank them for their help. Give offerings if applicable.
4. Place your hands in your crown chakra briefly to charge them, then start the shuffling, casting, etc., of your chosen divination method.
5. Open your crown chakra as much as possible.
6. Do the reading.
7. Afterwards, thank the deity or spirits. Close your crown chakra slowly.
8. Ground and center.

I encourage you to make notes of the effects of whatever you do with your Inspiration. For experimentation, you can try doing various activities such as automatic writing or creating artwork. I would also experience what methods of trance work best. Trance dancing or meditation might not be the best way for you to get into the prerequisite depth of trance state, so feel free to experiment with other methods such as listening to brain wave recordings for alpha or theta (deep trance as opposed to the light trance of alpha) brain states.

Use good judgement and have fun. Magick should be fun, and it is that sense of joy and wonder at the Universe that makes your work most effective and helps evolve the practitioner to being the best person possible. May the gods bless you and your work.

Mark NeCamp, Jr. is a tarot reader, healer, writer, teacher, spiritual alchemist, devoted family man, and a modern-day student and practitioner of the Art. He teaches classes using magic as a tool for personal growth. He is passionate for how we each can, through the alchemical process, turn our spiritual lead into gold as individuals and as a global community. He has led many community groups in the Midwest; and taught at events such as Pagan Unity Festival, ConVocation, Starwood, Paganicon and many others. Currently he sits on the Board of Directors for Wolf Run Wildlife and Spiritual Sanctuary located in Remus, Michigan. He can be found on Twitter and Instagram @marknecampjr. He is the author of the upcoming work *Energy Magick*, by Moon Books Publishing.



FIONA DOWSON

THE MAGIC OF THE TAROT

Tarot is, of-course, hugely popular with witches as a form of divination. What we, as serious magical people accept, is that divination isn't really about predicting the future as such.

Tarot (or runes, or i-ching, whichever form of divination practice works for you) simply enables you to connect with your higher self and take a look at your life (or your querant's life if reading for someone else) and the possibilities that are in the future.

In *Spinstress Craft*, Leslie J Linder suggests working with a tarot deck during ritual. Linder works with a Rider-Waite inspired deck. For a ritual to bring the necessary energy into your life for a new project place *The Wheel of Fortune* on your altar during the ritual. Naturally, you will also need suitable candles and essential oils to draw in abundance energy. (1)

I love the idea of meditating with the *Wheel of Fortune*.

On the one hand *The Wheel* suggests that we have less control over our lives than we would like to believe. We are all at the mercy of fate to some degree. On the other hand, *The Wheel* is always turning, luck, that most elusive of energies, is always waiting in the wings of our lives.

When the *Wheel* appears in a reading it's tempting to tell a querant that good luck is

coming their way. Probably not a great idea though. As witches we do not work with tarot as 'fortune telling'. We connect with universal energy and we listen.

Fortune can only ever give an opportunity. It is up to us to accept an opportunity as a gift.

Linder set me thinking about other ways in which tarot could be incorporated into ritual. If you are transforming your life and seeking to make changes perhaps *The Magician* would be a good card to work with. He (or possibly she) has all the tools that we need, all four of the suits of the minor arcana. We all have a great deal of potential that we have yet to access. When we feel the need for a little clarity as to how to tap into our own latent resources we can meditate with *The Magician* and ask ourselves how to manifest that little bit of magic we all need.

It is there, within us all.

One of the challenges of working with tarot is accepting the darker side. As witches we accept night and we accept winter. The dark side of tarot appears, ironically, in the Christian concept of *The Devil*. He is a human made persona. The devil is something we all create for ourselves. I'm not suggesting that somehow you managed to make an evil being, I am saying that we all create an issue in our lives that we bind ourselves to. Most books will tell you that the devil represents addiction, most usually alcohol.

It's possible to be addicted to all kinds of things. Wounded healers are addicted to constantly giving their own energy to others as a way of suppressing their own issues or avoiding doing the self work that they really need to do. Self nurturing isn't self indulgence, it is as essential for all of us as eating. We feed our physical forms, we also need to feed our spirit.

This is where ritual comes into it's own.

Ritual goes beyond that oft repeated prayer of 'please bring me luck'. Ritual is about manifesting the turning of the Wheel of Fortune and making the necessary payment (or sacrifice if you prefer) and performing the work that you need to do in order to achieve change and growth.

The card of Death (card thirteen) is the card which people usually panic about when it appears in a reading. In some decks death has been re-named Transformation or even Rebirth.

Death very seldom indicates passing into spirit. More often death means the ending of something. Divorce, the ending of a relationship, being fired from a job, being forced to move home. Change can be unexpected and unasked for but without change there can be no growth.

Death is a great card to work with if you are seeking change in your life (perhaps looking for a new job) or finding change difficult to adjust to. The white horse that the reaper is riding in the Rider-Waite deck is the same white horse that the child is riding in the card of The Sun.

From the ending of one thing we embrace the new beginning which this necessitates.

The natural order of life is change and growth.

If you work with magic and ritual as a way of guiding your life you may like to incorporate tarot into your work. Take a little time to meditate with each card. Your feelings and concepts of each card is just as valid as anyone else's.

Tarot is a frequently misunderstood form of magical practice. Behind the popular veneer of 'fortune telling' is an incredible story which can enable you to connect with spirit and manifest the changes you are seeking in your own life.

Enjoy!

(1) Spinstress Craft, magick for the independent witch. Leslie J Linder. Llewellyn Publications 2021.

Fiona Dowson is a tarot reader and story teller. Links to her YouTube channel can be found on the Learn To Read Tarot Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/597579161454617>



STEFFIE DE VAAN

SPRING CLEANING

About the author: Steffie de Vaan (she/her) is a Dutch chaos-adjacent witch. She loves cheap and easy witchcraft without cultural appropriation. Follow her on instagram as muse_of_midnight

Spring is the perfect time to clean house. Use the energy of Imbolc to sweep out old, stagnant energy and bring in a fresh vibe. This article examines the four ways of energetic cleansing—sweeping, washing, smoke cleansing, and cleansing sprays—and addresses the question of whether you should clean and tidy the physical house too (spoiler: sorry, but yes). We then look at bringing it new energy, and setting up wards to keep your house clean. This way you're all set up for the new year!

Sweeping and Washing

Sweeping and washing rely on the same principle: You're physically cleaning the floors to energetically clean them. Sprinkle salt or rosemary on your floors and sweep it outside—start at the far corners of your home and then continue until you've swept the salt or rosemary outside. Be careful with salt if you have wooden floorboards, as it may leave fine scratches.

You can create a wash by adding salt and rosemary to water and physically washing the floor. This may leave a film, so if you're particular about that you should follow up with the product you usually use for your floorboards.

Repeat as you cleanse (sweeping, smoke cleansing, or spraying). "All entities that wish me

well may stay, all that wish me harm are banished." This ensures you don't sweep out any welcome guests like ancestors of helper spirits.

Smoke Cleansing

I personally prefer smoke cleansing over sweeping and washing. As the name implies, you're cleansing with smoke. Any smoke works—you could light some shrubbery in theory, and if it produces smoke you're good. However, I personally found rosemary and lavender—especially combined—are amazing for this.

Rosemary cleanses while creating protective and positive energy, all at the same time. Lavender has no cleansing properties beyond the smoke itself, but it creates a harmonious atmosphere. I usually use rosemary sprigs for smoke cleansing, or intertwine them with lavender springs.

Make sure you do the corners, and have a window open so the smoke can take the negative energy outside.

If you're low on spoons: Just burn incense. Put it in the semi-center of the room, crack open a window, and let it do its thing.

Spray

If smoke isn't your (or your landlord's) thing, you can use a cleansing spray. The recipe is simple: water, herbs or essential oils, and maybe a crystal.

The herbs and oils should have a cleansing ef-

fect. I use rosemary here too, and citrus works well. You can get a cleansing oil from your favourite witch shop and dilute it to make a spray. I sometimes boil the water (and let it cool before I use it) to really get the herb extract in there. Some herbs release toxins when heated, so check beforehand. The ratio of herb/oil to water is easy: just sniff until you like how it smells. Essential oils that must be diluted have a ratio on the bottle.

You can add a crystal into your spray, but beware some crystals dissolve in water and others release toxic substances. Know what you're doing, or check with a reliable source. I stick to clear quartz simply because it's a good energy source and gives the spray more oomph.

Tip: Add herbs that cleanse and herbs that bring in joyous energy. This way you're cleansing and uplifting in one go.

Cleaning

My least favorite part of cleansing: actual cleaning. Negative energy gets stuck in places we can't reach, and in places where we leave a lot of ourselves. Which means, sorry, you do need to tidy up.

Change your sheets, and clean the room corners. Energy likes to get stuck in hair tangles, so clean your brush, the shower drain, and those weird hair balls in your washing machine.

If you have the spoons, do one more thing: Pick a messy drawer, box, or pile and clean it. That's good for the energy—like I said, it gets stuck in places we don't go—but also for you.

The most important step, however, is cleaning yourself. If you do not have the spoon for any physical cleaning, wash your own hands and call it a day.



In with the New

Unless you use a cleansing method that cleans and uplifts at the same time, you create a vacuum by tossing out all that old energy. You want to control what fills it. This is especially important if you're a magnet to supernal entities so make sure your home doesn't have a vacancy sign. It's time to bring in uplifting energies.

You can use smoke again—lavender, thyme, and wild marjoram are all excellent for bringing in good and joyous energy. Lighting your favourite incense works. If you like separate sprays for cleansing and uplifting, create a second spray for this.

Vibrations work wonders. You can toll a bell, play a chime sound on your phone, or play your favourite song. Dancing is excellent.

If you work with ancestors, deities, or other spirits: Make an offering and ask them to bless your space.

If you're low on energy, go with incense again (maybe a different blend this time), or play your favourite song aloud.

Wards and plants

Now your home is thoroughly cleansed and uplifted, you want to make sure the good energy stays for a while. That's where wards and plants come in.

Be aware that energy wards do not create a perfect seal. You carry energy from the outside with you every time you enter. You don't want them perfect either, or the energy inside grows stale and bad energy inside can't get out. Replenish your wards, connect them to an energy source like clear quartz, and do another cleansing when you need it.

Here's my favourite ward. Bring water to a boil, stir in rosemary and/or black salt, let cool and strain. Now use the water to draw a protective sigil (make your own or use a pentagram) on all outside doors and any windows you feel need it (like in the direction of that neighbour) and say "I deny all negative energy, intentions, and influences from entering my home."

Plants also make great wards. If you take care of them, they'll take care of you. Plants are great at keeping bad energy out or even absorbing it (if your plants die for no reason, you want to check that). If you lack green thumbs, or are prone to times where you can't take care of anything—consider getting an aloe vera as they're incredibly resilient and forgiving.



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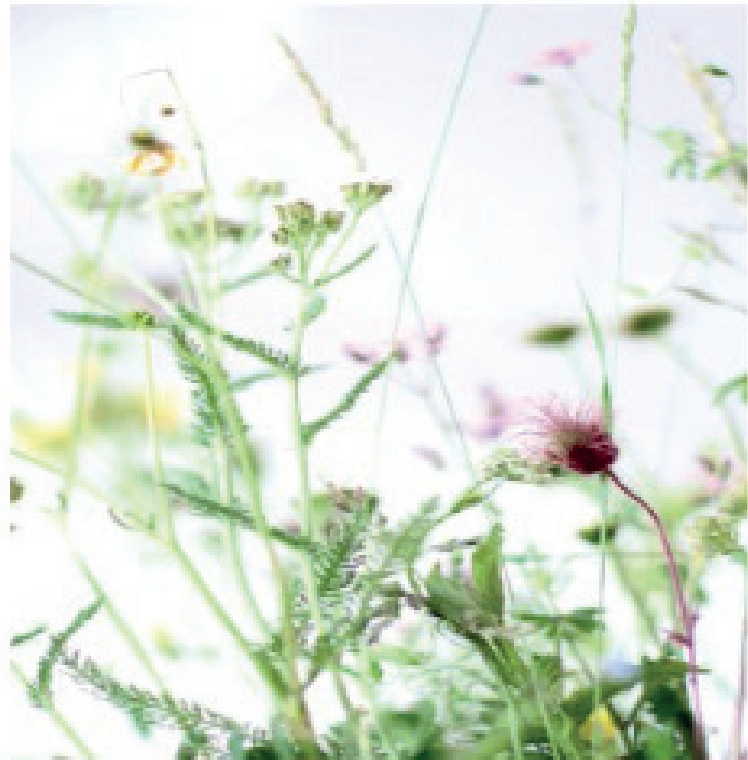
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Wise Words from the Old Crone

IMBOLC

January is always a funny month. It is often a bit of a let down after the excesses of Yuletide. It is named after the god Janus who had two faces, one looking backwards to what has gone before and one looking forwards with hope and dreams. I think we all do this especially when we try.... and I use that term advisedly....try... to make our New Year's resolutions. They are based on what we did not manage to achieve last year and what we hope to achieve this year.

When I was teaching in Primary schools I loved January because it was a quiet month. Not a lot was going on and it was a blessed relief after the craziness and celebrations of the previous half term. Yes the weather was cold and the children seldom got to play outside, but it was a month when as a teacher I could introduce a bit of magic in the classroom usually in some kind of science-based project.

I like to continue this in my Imbolc Circle Casting as it adds interest and is a bit of fun.

Imbolc is a great time for Candle Magic. Now I use candles in ALL my formal rituals so this is why I have chosen this year's Imbolc gathering of the Circle of the Crystal Moon to anoint candles, which you can then use all year if the candle is a tall one. You can take it with you into the shower room or bathroom or when you want some time to yourself or light it when you want to reaffirm your hopes and dreams for the year.

It is also a time to look to the future, clearing out the old. A great time to cleanse your emotions as well as re-affirm your wishes and hopes along with the Spring cleaning of the home. To this end we will be making a ritual broom of feathers or twigs or anything you can gather.

February is named after the latin word Februarius meaning "To purify" so this has always been a traditional time for cleansing and purifying. We all have heard about Spring cleaning and this stems from the old ways. People checked their livestock and began to turn them out once more into the open fields and clean the places the animals had been held, which was usually attached to or very close to the homestead itself, especially thorough the hardest part of the winter.

Imbolc stands at the gateway to Spring and better weather, when seeds are stirring. My magnolia is already heavy with buds and my tulips are poking green shoots up from the soil. It is a Cross Quarter Sabbat, a Fire festival, between Yule and Ostara. It is ruled by the Goddess Bridget who is the Goddess of the home and hearth. She was so strong a presence in Celtic times the Catholic



Wafting the smoke with your mini broom to spiritually brush away your fears. I then put my broom in my front porch. You can lay it on your altar or anywhere you feel is right.


I hope you enjoy these two rituals as much as I do and my Circle do. We will be meeting just before Imbolc on Friday 27th January.

If you would like any further information please email me.

theoldcrone5@gmail.com

Blessed Be





*Brigid, Goddess, lady of spring,
New life in the earth you bring*

*With every step a flower forms,
Bringing hope through winter storms*

*Your sacred wells run clear and true,
Healing ribbons in honour of you*

*Wise patron of home and fire,
Your sacred light will never tire,*

*You are the spark within my hearth,
Bring inspiration to my heart.*

Jo Barry



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