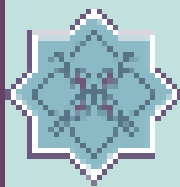
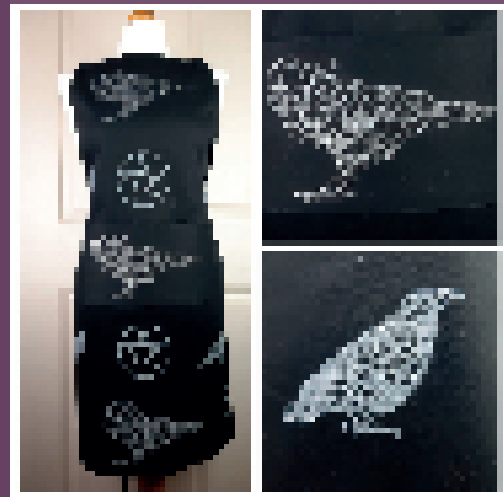
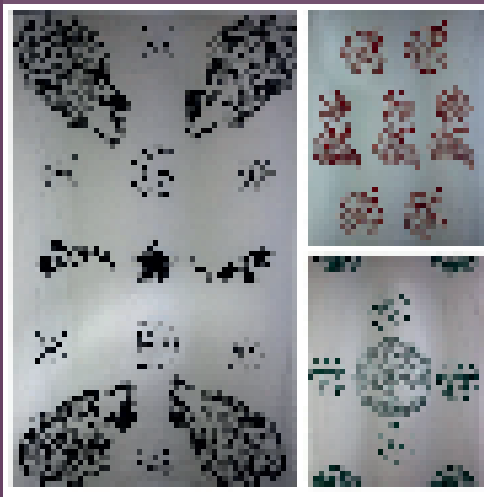




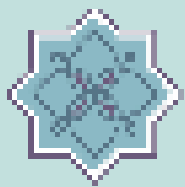
# WITCH

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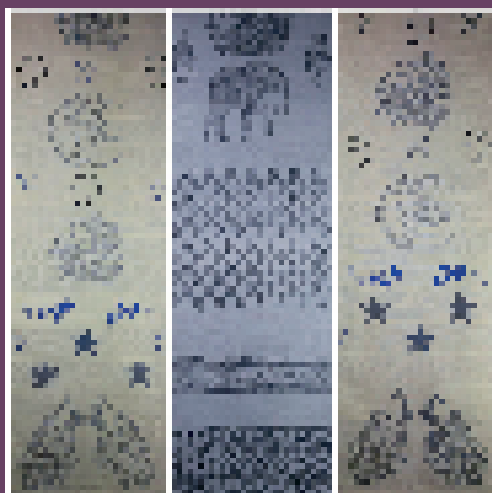
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# WITCH



Welcome to the  
August issue of  
Witch!

The wheel is turning  
quickly now, heading  
towards the Autumn Equinox faster and  
faster, as we cling to the last sunbeams of  
summer.

Autumn is my favourite time of the year, as  
we turn towards the darkness and bask in the  
last golden rays, it's time for thinking about  
Winter, and how we can restore ourselves  
for the return of the Sun King at Solstice.

I hope you will join me and our writers  
through the darker months, but for now, lets  
enjoy this golden time of reaping rewards  
and abundance!

Bekki

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# WITCH

FEATURED ARTICLES

SISTERS OF THE MOON BY MICHELLE ROSE BOXLEY

MONEY MAGIC BY FAIRY BEC

MAGICKAL FOLKLORE LENORMAND  
BY HEX TAROT AND ROMA MAY DESIGN

BLUE LOTUS TINCTURE BY KELLY BUCHAN

WORDS ON THE ANCIENT RITUAL OF THE RED HOODED PRIESTESS  
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THE VEILED MARKET BY CHILDREN OF ARTEMIS

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RAVEN AND LUNA'S TAROTSCOPES BY BLACK MOON COVE

POEM BY BEKKI JO MILNER

AVONMOUTH - PART II BY HELEN J.R. BRUCE



MICHELLE ROSE BOXLEY

HELEN J.R. BRUCE

THE OLD CRONE

FAIRY BEC

KELLY BUCHAN

PORTLAND JONES

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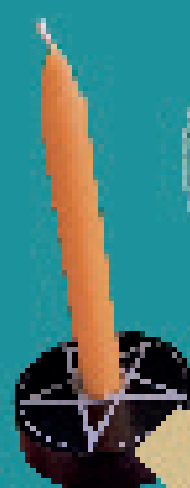


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# Sisters of the Moon

Michelle Rose Boxley



Happy full blue moon in  
Aquarius dear ones!

This is our second full moon in Aquarius this year which feels particularly apt as it's a sign that invites us to work for the greater good, to be loving and compassionate and work to tear down oppressive structures

Never could this be more relevant than right now. In my video teaching for this full moon over in the Lunar Temple I talk about how Aquarius asks us to not turn away from the suffering of the world (which can be tempting when we feel overwhelmed) but instead to find ways we can help and contribute in ways that we have the capacity for. Sometimes that might just be lighting a candle and saying a prayer and other times we might be campaigning for social change, speaking up for those who aren't being heard and protesting for human rights. The Aquarius full moon works beautifully with the themes we explored at the Leo new moon of generosity of spirit, joy as medicine and letting love lead

THE FULL  
MOON IN  
AQUARIUS  
BLUE MOON



Our guiding goddess for this full moon is Gaia - mother earth and there's a beautiful loving kindness meditation with Gaia over on the Lunar Temple. Our animal guide is the Bee - teaching us the power of interconnectedness and asking us to think about our role in the eco system of life.

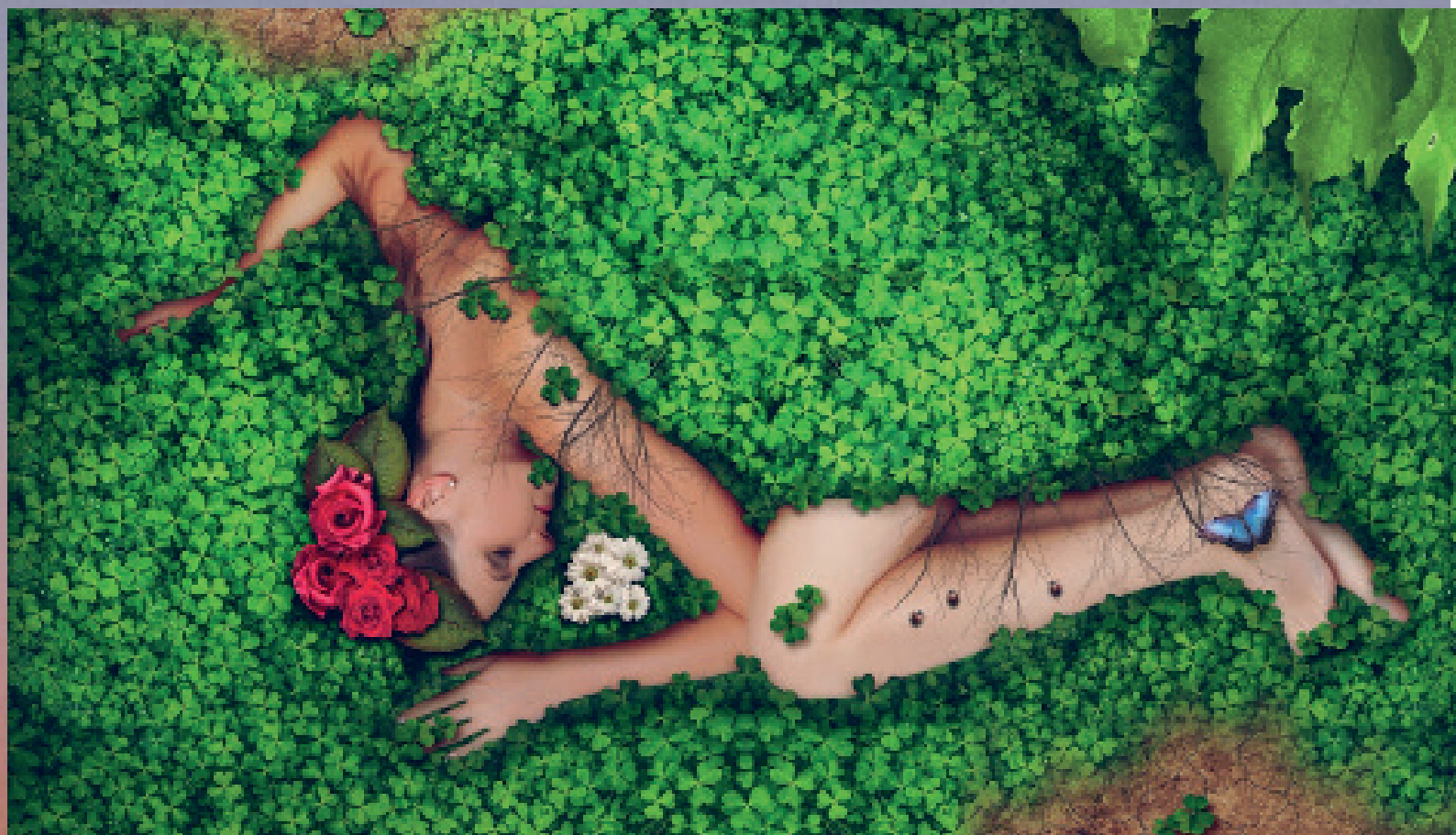
Today the sun also moves into the grounded earth sign of Virgo so happy Virgo season everyone. One of Virgo's key themes is sacred service and this ties in really well to this Aquarius full moon so enjoy connecting to that beautiful priestess energy

Full moon blessings to you !

Join online for monthly live new moon circles, Lunar Living e-book meditations and more!

## Sisters of the Moon Lunar Temple

<http://mysteryschoolofthegoddess.net/2021/08/15/the-lunar-temple-monthly-moon-membership-with-michelle-boxley/>



# MONEY MAGIC



FAIRY BEC  
WITCH WRITER

*What is money really? Does it make the world go round? Is it the root of all evil? Is time more valuable? Is it funny in the rich man's world? We all have different opinions.*

*Me? I see it simply as energy. Energy that has to shift and change on a daily basis or it becomes stuck and potentially obsolete.*

I have gone from living in a bedsit literally counting my pennies to frittering money and driving around in the latest sports car to sacrificing my career for time with my son and then not being sure how to pay bills when I was made redundant. The main thing I have learnt is that when you are conscientious, it does not matter how much money you have, you will always find what you need (although sometimes it might be somewhat last minute and a bit stressful!). Being able to separate need from want is key. Being appreciative is very important too.

I could look back and reflect on the fact my mortgage could have been virtually paid off by now but I choose to look back at all the fun I have had instead. One of my favorite quotes is: "It is better to regret the things you have done than the things you have not."

## *Spending money to make money*

This is the vicious circle for some but it depends how you look at it. If you hoard your money, what are you doing that for? Does it feel stagnant? Does it feel like you are at a standstill with your money flow? If you spend too much then why do you do that? What do you value? Could you be more mindful? Which direction does your energy shift? Is there a balance between what you hold on to and what you release?

Money usually initially comes out of need. As independent adults, we need to sustain our living and our lifestyle. When we have a genuine need then our creative brain kicks in and we put our energy to the acquisition of the thing we require. How many success stories do we know where the person started off with nothing?

That void leaves space for energy to flow in. A focus area for manifestation.

When I was in my bedsit I saw some amazing boots in a local shop. I kept going back to the shop and staring at them. Knee high faux patent leather, chunky foam platform heel of about 5 inches and rubber spikes all down the front. Spice Girl gone bad! I tried them on a few times too.

Money was so tight that I used to go round York city centre (where I lived at the time) eating from the free samples around the tourist areas. I also knew at what time the local Tesco reduced items of food and would often have to weigh up between my £1.99 pack of Amber Leaf (with free rizlas) or something a bit more exciting in the supermarket. Yet these boots needed to be bought . . . and worn out! I boldly made my decision. I released my hold on the remaining cash in my bank and spent nearly half my monthly income at the time on them. A monthly income that two thirds was used to pay for my bedsit alone! Very quickly, my money energy shifted and shortly after I secured a job that gave





me a decent wage and a better standard of living.

I have many fond memories attached to those boots and do not regret their purchase at all.

## *Charging Clients*

It is very easy in the spiritual world to feel (or be made to feel) that our gifts are free and therefore we should hand them out for nothing. Let's look at it a different way. If your neighbour is excellent at ironing and you can't iron to save your life (like me!) then should your neighbour do your ironing for you for free? I doubt the answer is yes. Therefore, if you have worked exceptionally hard at your craft (like many of us have) and honed your skills for decades (like many of us have), studied your craft for decades (like many of us have) and networked like mad (like many of us have) then what value will someone hold for what you do if you then give your time, skill and talents away for free?

"Cross my palm with silver" is a phrase synonymous with old school fortune tellers and a philosophy we all should consider adopting more.

Dr Usui started his Reiki practice off for free.

Then he saw that people relied on coming to him to help them and that they were not helping themselves. He started charging for his craft and soon people saw the value not only in what he could do for them but what they could do for themselves.

What is your true worth?

## *Trading*

If money is energy then a trade off is just as good as charging a set price. I love a good trade. An avoidance of finances for a fair match of talent and creation.

Just be careful that each party is happy with the trade and that the gifting on each side is done with wholeheartedness.

My favorite trades are things like a bottle of mead or some crystals for a reading. I also love exchanging healing and readings like for like.

Trade offs can also lead to friendships and big 'wins'. Recently, my Mum (The Old Crone) traded a tarot reading for an ear piercing at a local tattoo parlor and has secured herself an evening of readings there.

## *Bringing regular money into your home*

For most of us, the home and our lifestyles are the biggest drain of our income. In the last eighteen months, many of us have had to learn how to monitor those outgoing and become more mindful. One tip I read about during the first lockdown when money was tight in my household was to place a note under the doormat. Every time someone steps on the doormat it charges the money and brings more money energy into the home. Our home finances have now recovered and since escalated.

**Money Plants:-** Basil is my go to plant for abundance. I also love the taste. I have several basil plants and cook with it often. When you stir it clockwise into your food, imagine that it is building abundance within your life. You can also keep it by your front door to attract abundance.

Additionally, mint is an excellent money magnet. I love to pick fresh sprigs, pour hot water over the leaves and sip it whilst manifesting and being creative at work.

If your fortune is failing, then grab some thyme. Cook with it, dry it & use it in pouches, make infusions from it. When you do so, imagine your fortunes changing for the better.

**Money Crystals:-** It is said that if you place citrine in the furthest left corner from your front door then you will always have enough money. I also swear by keeping a piece of citrine in my purse. Other crystals for attracting money, prosperity and abundance are pyrite, green aventurine and basically anything gold or green!

**Money Colours:-** What type of money do you want to attract? Gold, silver, green, blue, brown, purple? At Chinese new year, red envelopes with gold decoration are given with money in for good luck and prosperity. Focus on what you are aiming for and start manifesting for yourself.

So my friends, go forth and take control of your money balance (both bank and flow). Follow your need not your greed and the rest should fall into place. Trust the Universe.

Blessed be.



# Magickal Folklore Lenormand

Words by Hex Tarot

Design by Roma May Design



My dream for producing my own deck of cards began in 2011, when I became interested in designing my own tarot deck. A decade on I work under the name hex\_tarot and I have now been reading tarot for 20 years. I am a professional tarot and palm reader, freelance writer, writing and running regular workshops about the occult, witchcraft and divination, along with a growing instagram presence. I came to know The Lenormand system relatively recently I was enthralled. The Lenormand is not poetic like the tarot. It is matter of fact, literal and straight to the point. I have found it an incredibly accurate tool for divination.

It was when last year during lockdown I became more focused on producing a working deck, in collaboration with an artist. Finding Roma May Design's beautiful illustration work was the push I needed to kickstart the project and create the magical folklore Lenormand deck.

Roma understood my vision immediately. We both wanted to create a timeless world of folklore and enchantment. A place you could get to know and somewhere you could dream about, even travel to through meditation or on the astral. Our own imagined universe. Although it was important to me that the deck wasn't too fantastical or symbolically magickal, instead I wanted the images to retain the traditional meanings of the Lenormand and that the images and deck had a real world practical energy. Functionality of the deck has to be a priority.

Our aim is to have created a timeless deck which can be used for many years to come. While the style of Roma May's illustrations are very much of this age, they have a human and timeless quality which we hope will hold up to the test of time and make the Magickal Folklore Lenormand a modern classic. Much in the way the Ryder waite tarot shows practical scenes from everyday life.

Roma and I both love folklore and folk magic. It's a connection we share and is expressed beautifully in the deck. Originally the deck was called the enchanted forest Lenormand. I changed the name after the initial eight cards. We have included hints from our European ancestry as well as hints from global tribal and pagan cultures we honour.

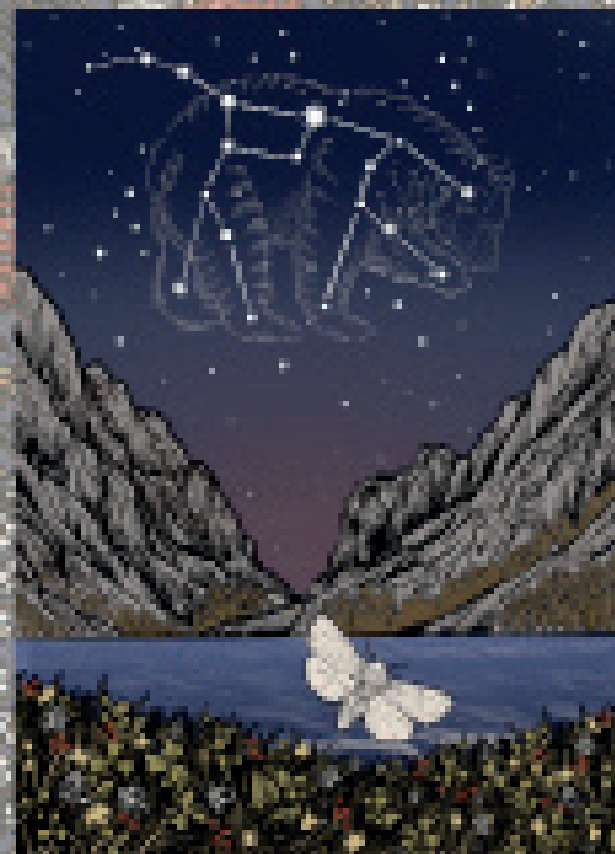


We have taken inspiration from our lives, fellow crafts people, witches and our children. This has given the deck a unique energy of being simultaneously mystical and real. Each card could be a real scene from this enchanted forest land. I chose a warm inviting autumnal palette. Roma really took this to the next level creating beautiful skies and depth to each image. I am particularly proud of our collaborations with the human characters in this deck. They seem to have so much to say. Each card as an element from the last card and a hint of continuity to the world we have created. The whole deck is a folk tale, each card a chapter in the story feeding seamlessly into the next. I wanted the cards to feel abundant with life and feature elements from my own moorland where I live, like the silver birch and fly agaric mushrooms, deer and crows all of which are regular fixtures in my garden.

I have decided to crowdfunding the first limited edition of 200 of The Magical Folklore Lenormand. We both have small children and the funding allows investors to benefit from our VIP bundles or simply pre order the first signed limited edition of the deck, without us taking a big risk in production costs. As an artist myself it was incredibly important that Roma is paid properly for the commission. The deck is 38 cards of quality black core stock cards. We decided to have gold gold edging on each card, for the first edition making them a little more bespoke. I am currently writing the 44 page booklet to accompany the deck of cards. Its a joyful process, where I can really explain both the traditional meaning and our interpretation of each magical card.

One of the funnest things to design was the back of the cards and the cotton tarot scarves we have produced for our VIP bundles. We took inspiration from floral eastern European lace and embroidery work as well as 1960's psychedelic floral patterns. Roma was able to create an incredible mandala using aspects included in the deck. If you are interested in viewing more of the deck, supporting us or learn more about hex\_tarot or Roma May Design please then checkout our instagram pages @magical.folklore.lenormand @hex\_tarot and @romamaydesign. You can also preorder a deck and VIP bundles via the link in our bio.

Hazel from Hex\_tarot



Illustrations by  
Roma May Design

# BLUE LOTUS TINCTURE



KELLY BUCHAN - WITCH WRITER

As described by the wonderful Witch Writer Anya Lukover in issue 19, the Blue Lotus flower has been used for centuries to promote relaxation, and to help those who use it to enter the astral realm more easily.

Since early 2021, I've been tinkering with a recipe I hope you will find useful and easy to follow. I began with a basic recipe within an old grimoire, but couldn't stand the pungent taste it produced. It was vile enough for me to heave at the thought of putting just one drop under my tongue.

Several months (and many wasted bottles of alcohol later), I can finally reap the benefits of this most sacred plant without compromising my gag reflex.

When experimenting with alcohols I was shocked by how vastly different the results were. Using tequila, the tincture was oddly thick and musky. Vodka made it much too bitter for my taste and when I tried whisky, it tasted unbearably strong.

This recipe was a labour of love for sure, may those who use it be successful in their travels through the astral. And so mote it be.





### *What You Will Need:*

- A reliably airtight jar
- 10 dried heads of the Blue Lotus Flower
- 500ml of Blue Sapphire Gin
- A tincture bottle with stopper

### *Method*

1. Break the flowers apart by hand as much as possible. The hard internal kernels of the flowers can be cut up or ground down with a pestle and mortar.
2. Add the flowers to an airtight jar, and fill to the neckline with gin.
3. Label and date the jar accordingly, and



place in a warm dark place for 4 weeks (mine spent the time nestled under the boiler).

4. Everyday, give the jar a vigorous shake.
5. After 4 weeks, open the jar and separate the plant matter from the alcohol. Keep the alcohol to one side.
6. In a large pan, add the plant matter to a litre of boiling water, and boil down the contents until there is hardly any water left.
7. Let the plant matter cool and place within the freezer in a suitable container for 24hours.  
(Freezing the plant matter helps break down the plant matter even further.)



8. Repeat steps 6 and 7.
9. On the final round of boiling, keep the remaining 100mls of liquid, draining off and finally disposing of the plant matter.
10. Add the liquid to the pickling alcohol we set aside earlier and mix well.

And voila! Use your homemade Blue Lotus Tincture before any ritual to help connect you to the astral realm. Using 1-2 drops under the tongue, this tincture should last roughly 6 months with daily use.

# WHAT I'M READING

## AFTER THE ANGEL • MARCUS KATZ

A REVIEW BY KELLY BUCHAN • WITCH WRITER

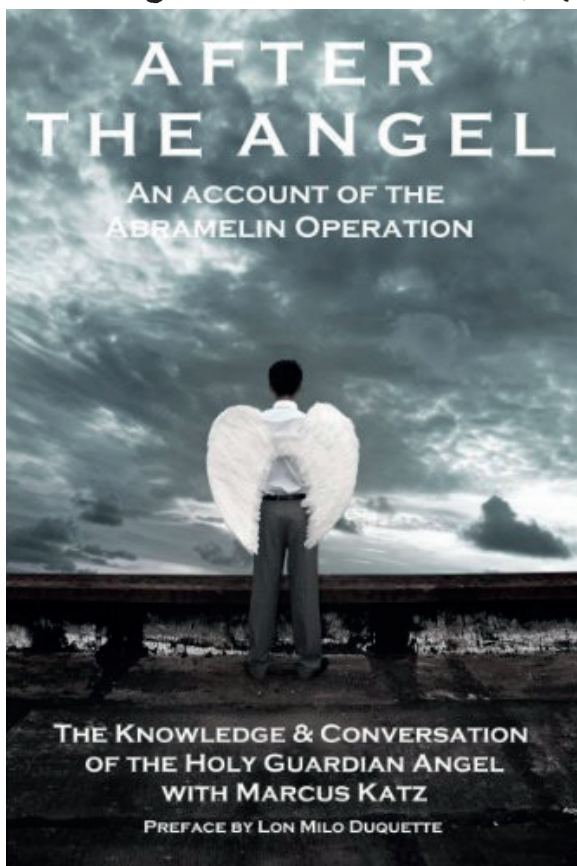
It was within my first few tentative steps into the occult where I found the book of Abramelin. Since then I've been utterly obsessed with the ritual and its history, as well as the idea of having the Knowledge and Conversation with my own Holy Guardian Angel, and discovering for certain my life's true will.

Marcus Katz has truly blessed us with this compilation of journal entries of his progression through his own Abramelin ritual, providing great insight into the most personal operation of a Ceremonial Magician's life.

His honesty beams from the pages, and it allows us to watch in fascination (and sometimes horror) as his mind bends and almost snaps under the psychic strain he was enthrallingly enduring. Not many blogs and genuine accounts exist regarding the Abramelin, making Marcus' work all the more exciting for both modern occultists, and those interested in Western Esotericism.

You won't find any information about the intricacies of the ritual itself in this book. Instead Katz focuses on the harsh reality of living through such an intensive and all consuming experience.

Traditionally, the Abramelin is undertaken in complete isolation, hidden from the view of wider society. The full version takes around 18 months of dedication, with a supercharged 6 month version available to those who wish to condense it down. Katz chose the 6 month ritual, all the while living at home with his family (who also profoundly felt the effects of the thinning of the veil surrounding them), and also while he maintained a full time job.



As an occultist, it's a privilege to be allowed to read another person's grimoire or magickal journal, which is why *After the Angel* is such an incredibly rare gem. The Abramelin Operation can seem a gargantuan and risky ritual, a magician must have nerves of steel and unshakable faith in oneself in order to truly transcend to Christ consciousness, and bind the demons that come before it appropriately. I would encourage anyone who is considering performing the Operation to read this book during the preparatory phase. It might just be the guiding light you've been searching for.

May this book find its way to those who would benefit from its wisdom.

And so mote it be.

*There's no going back on a  
faerie bargain...*

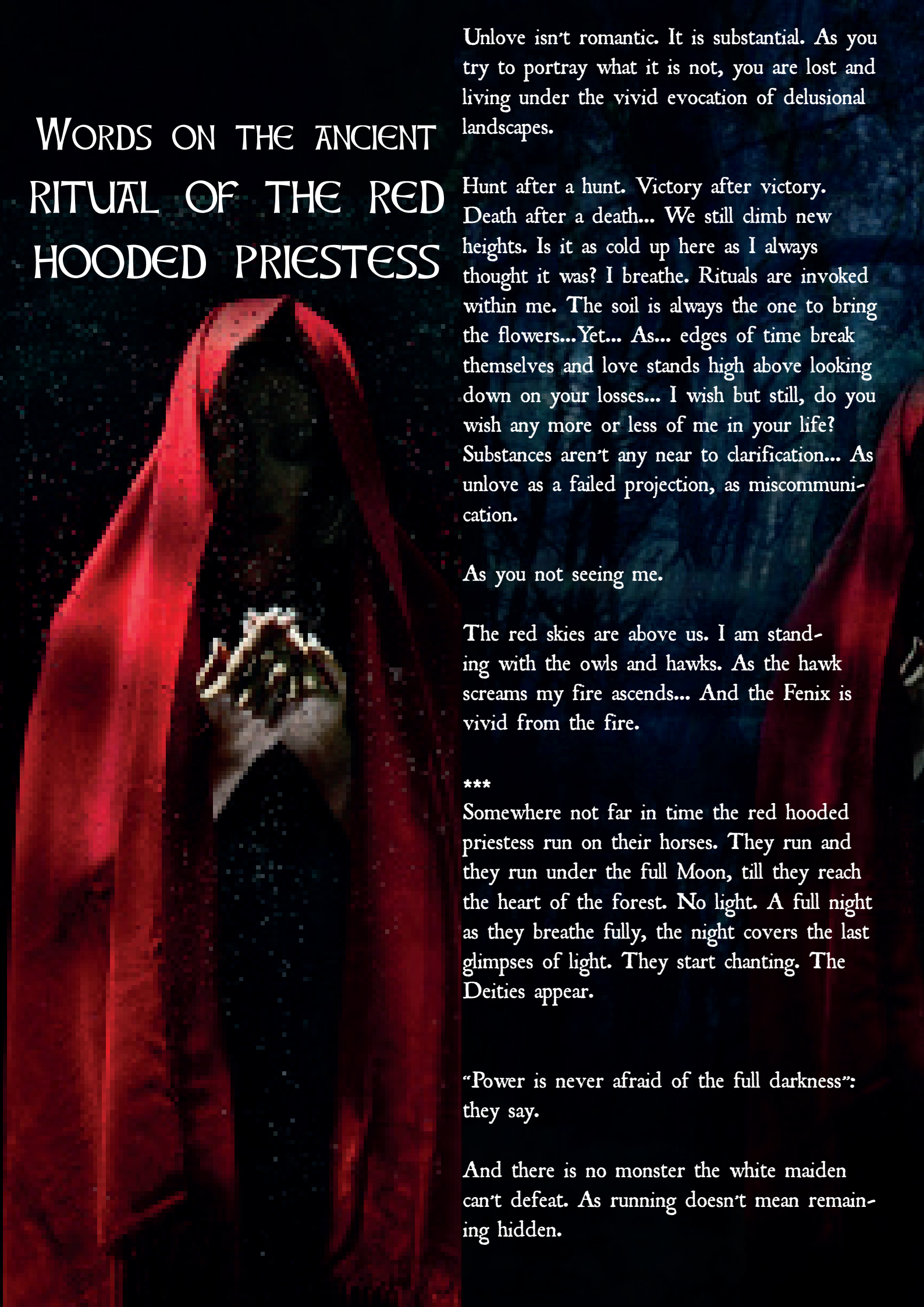
Gemma's learning fast. So far, she's learned that being consort to the Huntmaster is socially awkward, and that sacrifices really ruin your dinner.

But there's also Adrian's weird powers, the local witch with an agenda and a string of gruesome murders across the moor. Oh, and there's always that one person who wants the end of the world.

'A modern faerie tale unlike any others'



Available in paperback from [facebook/heatofthehunt](https://www.facebook.com/heatofthehunt), the Dancing Goat Bookshop and as an ebook on Amazon

A person wearing a red hooded cloak is shown from the chest up, with their hands clasped in a prayerful or ritualistic gesture. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a night sky. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the red fabric and the person's hands.

# WORDS ON THE ANCIENT RITUAL OF THE RED HOODED PRIESTESS

Unlove isn't romantic. It is substantial. As you try to portray what it is not, you are lost and living under the vivid evocation of delusional landscapes.

Hunt after a hunt. Victory after victory. Death after a death... We still climb new heights. Is it as cold up here as I always thought it was? I breathe. Rituals are invoked within me. The soil is always the one to bring the flowers... Yet... As... edges of time break themselves and love stands high above looking down on your losses... I wish but still, do you wish any more or less of me in your life? Substances aren't any near to clarification... As unlove as a failed projection, as miscommunication.

As you not seeing me.

The red skies are above us. I am standing with the owls and hawks. As the hawk screams my fire ascends... And the Fenix is vivid from the fire.

\*\*\*

Somewhere not far in time the red hooded priestess run on their horses. They run and they run under the full Moon, till they reach the heart of the forest. No light. A full night as they breathe fully, the night covers the last glimpses of light. They start chanting. The Deities appear.

"Power is never afraid of the full darkness": they say.

And there is no monster the white maiden can't defeat. As running doesn't mean remaining hidden.

The red hooded priestess chant.

They sing to the remaining pieces of souls walking the ground. The void absorbs what's left of them.

They sing to all the spirits. The dead... the cursed..... the traveling ones.....

The coupled ones. Out and inside the vessels... Each substance, each a story, reaches an ending.

Memories are full. Full as Death. Absolute as Love.

The Deities have decided to return.

They don't mind the curses the soil still breathes on, on this Earth. They want to hear the drums of true love. Red and passionate as the cry for blood, the oracle beat their drums.

There are still so many thorns.

A candle is not all there is anymore. It is not all the light. Or maybe it is. Maybe I shall still Invoke a great prayer. A great prayer under the Full Moon. If tonight you decide to hold me and leave back all the dead times all the songs within me, I shall meet your very essence and invoke a momentum where no mortal or mortality can reach us, as they never could. They never did and they never could.

The Wolverine time is finally here. Wolverine after wolverine we shall hold our crown dear. Howl after Howl we surround and take back all of our territories.

You see, the whole Universe is made of substances. Each of them colliding and creating, states of emotions, habits, of being even being themselves. So according to this rule, we creatures of this world are also made of the collision of substances.

What would those be?

Of what substances are our realities made of? Suburbanism is made of its own substances .. dried out of colors and life.

We built these structures... They got out of our own psyches. Is this fault or failure?

The red hooded priestess belongs to no time, no foreign structure but the one built within our very bones and blood.

Do you think they didn't know about substances and the Universe?

Didn't they know what's beneath the soil, its power, and its foundations?

Do you think the red hooded priestess run in vain as some foreign princess abandoning the castle for the woods?

They don't.

They walk beside the edge and they have the power to control the edge..no matter its multiple dimensions.

They pass by the Hydra's lifeless but opened eyes and consumed dead body from above the edge. They walk by feeling all that's happened.

They see her story. They see how the Hydra projected herself as strong and unbeatable, by being miserable still, by living in misery as all the ones who surround her and fight beside her. Their skin screams of misery, that's why the Gods have reduced their existence to that, that is. Without meaning.

Crazily, somebody I really care about once asked me: "What is the predator"? Given the circumstances, I couldn't give the proper answer.

Yet again what is the "predator"? I may think I have hunted down many, but the nature of the predator it's immense and changeable.

The predator is the one who reminds us of the reality we are in. The one who awakens you from the state of sleep, by trying to hunt you down. As in nature, every creature gets to live by hunting.

The ones wanting to abuse you, possess you, or even have their control in your life are the predator.

The one in need. The predator is not the existence of evil always... Sometimes we become the predator of the predator by hunting him down... Isn't it ironic?

The essence of evil gets out of our subconscious to divide. To divide where each creature stands.

The red skies are finally here. Because finally, this world is coming to comprehension. What has been, what has never been,

what it still is, what it always is, and what it is not.

It is.

The chorus of the Deities is here and playing. I pray it never abandons me as you always did.

I know it won't. I know. I finally know.

Death has differential states and shapes. The Church speaks broadly of it... Highlighting the afterlife and its reaping fruits.  
.....

Who still expects the reaping fruits of the afterlife in the midst of absolute absurdity? Guess what? You don't get to taste them. On the Moon nights, I walk within her cycles. Waiting for it to come in its fullest shape, to show to everyone that She, is there, that She shines brightest of them all. What does the Moon feel, while she is misconceived, unseen, not honored, forgotten? I will tell you; The Moon leaves and becomes darker, not on herself, but on the ones who forgot her... and it becomes so dark that the fullest field of roses turns to ashes.

The dead grow instead of the roses and blood and bone are no longer sacred. They flow under the moonlight and while the wolves Howl midnight poems to the Moon Goddess, men write their own verses on forgetfulness. The red Hooded Priestess sing under this Full Moon. They grow in circles and lit their candles. Honoring Hecate, Brighid, Artemis... And all the wolverines. Sacred Blood by Sacred Blood,

Sacred Fire by Sacred Fire Sacred verse after Sacred Verse They sing to bring the Deities back on this forgotten creation. On this forgotten vessel where the wicked and the sacred rely on the same body. Where the Queen of the dead is becoming Queen of men.

And where the ones who forgot don't get to taste the mystical fruit. What is sinful more than unlove?

Strength too comes in stages. As lies, as malignant structures, as the sound of the blade, as the songs of the red hooded priestess. The music of the wine in the vessel is awakening Truth. The truth of the blade, the truth of the night, truth on Beauty and on the hurt. The red hooded priestess sing. I can't feel yet your remembrance of me. Maybe it is meant to stay dead.

I need to undress. Undress of all that's not mine. Of a time and identity which do not belong to me. Of memories that have betrayed me. And of course unlove. Will you undress me from unlove? As the priestess sing, we run again to the forbidden fruit...

Whose heart is it this time? Is it my heart or your heart? Cards burn. Enemies fall and die. We walk over corpses... Can you undress me from your unlove? As the Sun burns what no longer is and the wheel spins, time meets the forbidden fruit, it meets you and me across the wheel. The glass between us breaks, but memory has taken my love for you.

In circles the priestess move. I move with them holding my red clothes tighter. I will let the red clothes fall and honor the Moon. With your or without you, nor your absence. Let me release all the cursed manuscripts and spell away emotions of the unlove and blindness. As the eyes of my enemies burn, each and every time, during all times.

*Ina Gjata is a moon-lover, art critic, journalist, painter, and life-lover, who's been published on "The House of Twigs" "The Urban Howl" "Rebelle Society" "4 Seasons" amongst many others. She is passionate about the wild feminine and wild creatures and doesn't do well with system rules, regulations, and lies. A born rebel being, she believes real truth is inside us all and that writing is a piece of the great truth, meant to be told, and manifested.*



# the *veiled* Market

CHILDREN OF ARTEMIS

**VEILEDMARKET.COM**  
IS A NEW AFFORDABLE ONLINE  
PAGAN/ALTERNATIVE MARKETPLACE  
FOR UK BASED ARTISAN TRADERS.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of almost any alternative event is wandering around the traders' stalls. The creations these traders offer, are often made by people that share the same ideals, beliefs and understanding as their customers, so offer something that mass market options cannot. If you have been to almost any spiritual or alternative event such as Witchfest International and walked around the vast trader's hall you will understand. The diversity, quality, innovation and workmanship of the goods on offer are truly superb, offering a unique magical shopping experience that could disappear forever if nothing is done.



There have been many victims of both the pandemic and the resulting restrictions, but few think of a group that lost both their way of life and income the instant restrictions started.

Alternative creators and traders, normally found at the numerous events held every year, have had nowhere to trade since the first lockdown. Many usually travel from event to event for most of the year, living a nomadic life that while it can be fun is often



very “hand to mouth”. The profits from the last show pay for the pitch fee, stock and raw materials needed for the next. While it is an enjoyable and varied life, it is not the path to great riches and the pandemic has been financially devastating to them. As self-employed they have had little or no help from the government pandemic support programs either. In a double blow to the traders, the majority have little to no online presence at all. The result is that for a large number there have been no online or offline sales since the start of the pandemic.

At the beginning of the lockdown Children of Artemis supported many online markets held on social media. While the social media markets help, they are not the perfect answer and do not provide a lasting shop window for an alternative creative. Existing online marketplaces like Etsy or eBay are not overly alternative friendly and charge significant fees on almost everything a trader does, making it a costly option. Creating and running your own website can be expensive, usually at least three times more than the Veiled Market subscription. It takes time and technical skills to complete an ecommerce web site, and even then, it could be months or years before there is enough traffic to break even.

How sad it would be if when the world returns to normality, and those events that have survived the storm begin to re-emerge, that there are very few traders left. With the creators gone, the almost limitless magical handmade items would vanish and become things of the past. The concept of ordering a custom item where you can choose from different options and talk directly to the crafter themselves, to create a unique item, would be lost. Some items would inevitably resurface on the second-hand market at vastly inflated prices. While this depressing scenario has not happened yet, it very easily could, as the skilled crafters of our communities' traders could be forced to move into other markets to survive, or give up entirely and take up different careers. Would we really want a world where alternative markets at events in the UK only sold mass produced items made in China?

## NEW VEILED MARKET ([VEILEDMARKET.COM](http://VEILEDMARKET.COM))

Children of Artemis has created VeiledMarket.com as an affordable online alternative marketplace, to address the lack of sales opportunities for UK based creative/artisan pagan/alternative traders. While the situation has been made far worse by the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns, even before that many traders had either no online sales, or had to pay high commissions or subscriptions to one of the mainstream outlets. When the world returns to some form of normality, having a



fixed low cost online shop gives a creator valuable extra income, and permits buyers who do not regularly attend physical shows an opportunity to buy the trader's unique products.

Veiled Market is a new online Pagan/Alternative marketplace that gives artisan traders, who create their own products, an affordable way of selling online. Offering instant sign up, an extended subscription free trial period, with absolutely no commission on sales or shipping and no listing fees. The ease of setup and low cost of selling encourages lower prices that also benefit potential buyers of the wide variety of items the market showcases.

Any UK based alternative creative can open a shop on Veiled Market and have their first product available for sale within 5 minutes, it really can be that quick and simple. Over fifty shops have already opened within the Veiled Market and early adopters benefit from a special extended free trial to help them establish their new online business. There are already over 1,000 items on sale, making many unusual items normally only available at specialist alternative markets and events available online.



The objective of Veiled Market was to create an online equivalent to the physical markets, often attached to larger alternative events. At most markets, the trader pays a table/pitch fee, and is then free from any other charges apart from the unavoidable credit card fees. This encourages traders to offer their handmade products to buyers at better prices than they usually can online. The Veiled Market offers a similar model by only charging a monthly fee of just £5, and even that is waived during a vendor's generous initial free trial.

The Veiled Market allows creative traders based in the UK to create their own shop within the market, complete with their own home page address, logo, banner, and space to write about themselves and their products. It also adds the benefit of being on a marketplace where their wares can be found by casual visitors to the market itself, much like at the shows they normally attend.

To make it easy for a newcomer to create an online shop, there is extensive help on every as-

pect of the process. These are illustrated step by step easy guides that make it simple to follow. Reading through the guides is recommended as it helps a new online trader get everything perfect first time.

For traders that already sell through traditional mainstream marketplaces, such as eBay, Amazon or Etsy, it is worth considering the option of opening a Veiled Market shop and directing their customers there whenever possible. This allows them to benefit from the absence of commission or listing fees on Veiled Market. This can either be used to improve the slim profit margins on handmade items, or reduce prices to attract more buyers, the choice is entirely the vendors.

What we as a community can do to help?

If we as a community want to retain our creative traders at future events, they need our support now. If you can afford to buy something however small from any of the traders on Veiled Market, it would mean a lot to the person you buy from. Their businesses are at a tipping point and every sale, no matter how tiny, gives them hope, so if you can support them by buying from them, rather than the huge monolithic corporations of Amazon, eBay and Etsy.

Even if you can't afford to make a purchase, making your friends aware of the platform and the amazing products on offer, helps a lot. Remember that on Veiled Market traders only pay credit card fees on a sale, there are no re-listing fees or commissions, so your money goes directly to the shop owner themselves alone.

HERE ARE SOME INTERNET SITES AND GROUPS YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN JOINING:

- The Sellers Facebook Group for owners of Veiled Market shops and those that are considering opening one. This is to allow traders to ask for help or advice from both admins and each other. This replicates the similar unofficial support networks that exists at real world markets.  
[facebook.com/groups/veiledmarketsellers](https://facebook.com/groups/veiledmarketsellers)

- The Buyers Facebook Group is for those interested in buying items from the market, where you can keep up to date with new shops opening, new products, sales, and special events.  
[facebook.com/groups/veiledmarket](https://facebook.com/groups/veiledmarket)

- You can also find us on Twitter and Instagram by searching for @veiledmarket where we share the great talent available on our platform.

If you are interested in browsing through the many amazing items already on sale, or are a UK based creator interested in opening your own shop on the marketplace, come and have a look at [WWW.VEILEDMARKET.COM](http://WWW.VEILEDMARKET.COM) and help us spread the word about the platform and the amazing talent already on display.

# CITRINE

MONTHLY CRYSTAL GUIDE

CHERYL BECKWORTH

GROUNDING GODDESS

*August is the month of Lamma, the first harvest, a time to gather from those seeds we planted earlier in the year. A time for abundance and prosperity!*

*So what better stone to share with you this month than Citrine?*

Citrine has such a sunny bright energy, and whenever I hold it I feel this beautiful energy pass over me filling me up with happiness. It imparts joy and enthusiasm.

Natural citrine as pictured above originates from Brazil. It is quite rare to come across and most citrine available on the market currently is actually heat-treated amethyst (as pictured below), so make sure you ask the seller if it's not clear to you if it's natural or heat-treated. I personally stock both, the heat treated variety is still very beautiful and I enjoy working with its energies too.

It tends to be coloured anywhere from a translucent smokey gold colour to amber.

Citrine is most famous for its ability to attract abundance, prosperity, success and wealth - it is often referred to as the 'Merchants' Stone as it brings success to businesses.

Many people, including myself, carry one of these in their purse or bags to welcome in that flow of money.

You could place a piece in the money corner of your home or office (the furthest left corner from the door- I also have a money plant here!) on your desk, your altar space, in the till if you have a shop, with your accounts paperwork. I could keep going but be creative and think of all those areas of your life you need more abundance and success! I also like to wear mine, so a bracelet or necklace is perfect too so you feel lucky and abundant everywhere you go!

Simple hold with you whilst visualising or meditating on your desired goal.

There are so many options, do what feels right to you, you could pick one or two, or implement



all of the above- the choice is yours!

It is a good stone to use when working with the Solar Plexus Chakra Point, as it helps to raise self-confidence and self-esteem.

It will encourage you to be the best version of yourself with belief and remove any negativity, self-sabotaging thought patterns and doubt. Helping you to be the best, bright version of you!

As it works with the 3rd chakra on a physical level it is also great to aid healing throughout the digestive system, so for any stomach issues you may be experiencing.

I love Citrine and totally believe everyone needs a chunk of it in their lives!

Wishing you all much abundance, confidence and success,

Much love,  
Cheryl xxx

## CHERYL BECKWORTH - GROUNDED GODDESS

I am mum to 3 littles, obsessed with crystals, moon magic and manifesting.

I run Grounded Goddess, where I sell crystals, herbs, candles, incense and witchy items and am passionate about helping you to add some magic to your lives too!

I have been a practicing Witch for over 20 years and I'm super passionate about the power of crystals.

I have been obsessed with their beauty since being a small child, use them in my everyday life to help with so many things; to calm and ground me, to help me sleep, to welcome love and abundance, during meditation to open my physic abilities, the list is endless!

If you are looking for help and advice, please do not hesitate to get in touch,

Much love and many blessings Cheryl x

[www.grounded-goddess.com](http://www.grounded-goddess.com)

Facebook: Groundedgoddess

# Words from the Witches Journal

*I have a large wooden cupboard  
in the alcove off my living  
room where I keep my 'witchy'  
stuff*

*~ anointing oils blended from  
a selection of essential oils,  
candles, drying leaves from the  
eucalyptus tree.*

*It also houses my journals,  
records of things I've attempt-  
ed, things I've learned. There  
are scribbles of my personal  
feelings, and my coven history,  
things we have done together.*

PORTLAND JONES  
WITCH WRITER

I started my first official book of shadows in November 2005. It was a large square book with a dark blue cover, and plain pages. The first entry was my witch name that I would know by to others. (I have a personal witch name for spell work and private matters that no-one knows but me.)

I chose the name Moonstoane. I followed Raymond Buckland's recommendations in his Complete Book of Witchcraft to find a witch name. I've made a note in my journal that my name added up to 5 which matched my birth number. The name worked for me as I am deeply attracted to the moon. Scarcely a night passes when I don't peer out into the dark night sky to follow the moon's progress on her journey. The typical cloudy UK weather often leads to disappointment.

The name also sounds like Moonstone the crystal, a stone of new beginnings. It is strongly connected to the moon and to the intuition. Like the moon, the stone is reflective and reminds us that as the moon waxes and wanes, so everything is part of a cycle of change. Moonstone calms the emotions, makes conscious the unconscious and promotes intuition and empathy. It encourages acceptance of your psychic gifts. All these details were carefully recorded - it was after all my first journal.

The next page discussed Selene, the Greek Goddess of the moon, especially the full moon. Her face is very white and she travels in a silver chariot drawn by two white horses as she makes her way across the night sky. Selene represents womanhood, and brings forth new life. She is the goddess of solutions and gives logical answers. She is the radiant, the mother and brings forth the fullness of life.

*Hail to thee, our  
lady of the night  
Who holds us in the  
pale moonlight  
When we gather to do  
you honour.*

*Lady of shadows,  
lady of bright  
Be with us this hour  
This night when the  
Moon is full and  
bright.*

Selenite is a wonderful crystal whose name comes from the goddess Selene. It shines like the moon. In times of darkness, it provides a light, just like the moon at night. You can use moonlight to recharge this crystal. I have several pieces of selenite in my collection - an oval palm stone and a wand wrapped in silver wire are my favourites.

We held a full moon ritual which I recorded in detail, my first ritual with my new coven. Although the moon is something that draws me, we do not often hold full moon rituals. There are records of a few scattered amidst the notes in my journals, but not many. My introduction to the full moon ritual was the very first ritual my daughter and I attempted, before we had joined a coven, before we had any idea of what we were doing, before we had really told people where our interests were leaning.

We didn't feel comfortable going out into the wilderness in the dark. We don't live in the safest of areas. We didn't want to do it in our back garden. It was not the nature of the space that was the problem - we have since used it for many rituals, complete with our coven and family and friends.

The problem was our lack of confidence, and the fear that other people - my husband if I'm honest - would tease us. We found out later that this was far from the truth but we were taking baby steps.

My mother stepped in.

'You can use my garden,' she said. This was very last minute, so we hurriedly donned our robes, picked up what we thought we would need and rushed round. We had forgotten an important part! We had nothing for cake and ale.

Mom welcomed us to search her cupboards to find something suitable.

She was on her perennial diet so the pickings were slim. We found some fairly stale rice crackers and a long forgotten bottle of vodka right at the back of the cupboard. They would have to do.

Mom's garden was dark apart from the light of the moon which joyfully shone down on our poor attempt. Mom asked if we would mind if she watched. Of course not, so she stood close to the back door, watching from the step. We cast the circle, marking the quarters with candles. Incense perfumed the air. We shared our delight with the moon, and felt its blessings. In the shadows darkening the bushes, we heard whispering. Surprised, we listened but we could not make out the words. The scarcely audible whisper continued for a while. Perhaps it was Mom talking quietly to herself, perhaps a commentary on what we were doing. The ritual came to an end; the circle was closed but not broken.

'Mom, did you hear anyone talking? Were you talking to anyone?' She shook her head, puzzled.

'Not even yourself?'

'Definitely not,' she said laughing. 'I'm quite alright in the head, you know.' We don't know who joined us that night, but we knew we were doing the right thing. It gave us the boost that we needed. Rituals became, and still are, a regular and much looked-forward to event in our lives.

Portland Jones

[www.portlandjones.com](http://www.portlandjones.com)





# Wise Words from the Old Crone

## Looking After Number One and Learning to say NO!

Being Pagan no matter how much or how little we embrace the craft, usually means we spend a lot of time supporting others and nurturing others, listening to their troubles and offering support.

Who do we so often forget? Yes indeed.....ourselves.

Now let's be really honest here, who is the person who is the most important to us? Yes it really is US, ourselves the person we are and the one we so often forget.

In my circle castings, I always ask the universe for assistance to help other people, I very rarely ask for myself and I am sure I am not alone in this. We are all helpful and positive people, outward looking and supportive. We do need to remember to look after Number One. If we don't then who is able to look after others? If you can't love yourself then how on earth can you expect to love others?

There are many ways we can look after ourselves not just the odd one and each little step can be very effective in all aspects of our lives, the Physical, Spiritual, Economical, Emotional and Social.

Firstly we can look after our physical selves. Not always easy I know and I am sure you have all heard this before but drinking more water, eating a healthier diet and also some form of physical exercise will help. It does not have to be all consuming. Fill a water bottle at breakfast time and make sure you consume it by lunch time at least. Put on your favourite music and dance around the kitchen while you cook, clean, wash up etc. You'd be amazed how many more steps you do without really thinking about it. Even simple stretching in a chair. Lifting your arms above your head, lifting your feet off the floor, all done while watching TV. You don't even need to find a specific time to exercise.

Do find a small amount of time, be it a coffee break or a lunch break and don't let anyone interrupt you. This is your time and your time only. Even if it is a mere five minutes each day, it is perhaps five minutes more than you are doing now. It all mounts up in a good and positive way.

We can help our spiritual wellbeing by finding those few minutes alone, completely alone. Even if you just go and have a bath or a shower and lock the door to prevent the children disturbing you... or in my case the dog, who loves to be splashed. (yes the crazy hound loves to eat bubble bath suds.)

Light an aromatic candle, use good quality soaps and body lotions and warm your towel on the radiator or towel rail ready when you need to dry off.

A little cosseting goes a very long way.

Connect with nature even simply going outside and listen to the birdsong, five minutes gardening or just watering plants. It does not have to be a massive step, little and often is so much more beneficial.

Work and money issues is perhaps the most difficult to find support and assistance especially when things are not going to plan as very often we have little control over this area. Making the most of your time and organising your time better will make sure that each day you have a break even if it is just a few moments. Try to ensure you keep strict boundaries between work and home, especially if you do work from home at times or all of the time. It is very important to make those boundaries sharp and consistent and keep your work space separate if at all possible.

Emotional and stress management is also a difficult one to control. Do make sure you show forgiveness and compassion to yourself and for yourself. The most important lesson I ever learned was to say the word **NO**. I was, and still am, one of those people who always says **YES** to help or assist someone or even an organisation. I have always been a volunteer at something my entire life and whilst it is enjoyable, take care that you are not put upon. I did learn, finally that when you do say **NO**, just on occasion, that you actually earn much more respect.

Also do try to stop making excuses for yourself and for others. We all are able to make excuses for others and for ourselves but excuses are just that. Excuses. Clouding the issues. Not facing demons. Asking for help is never a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength that you know yourself and know when you need support or help from someone else

Social and Active life is another important part of

this jigsaw of self-help and self-love. I know when I had a young family to support, copious amounts of animals to look after, doing the admin and filing etc for my husband who was setting up and running his own business from home and on top of that holding down a very stressful full time job myself, I had no ME time at all. Every single moment of every day was filled. I used to lie in bed at night unable to sleep as I would constantly go through my tick list of things I needed to have done. It took its toll eventually and it is often when it is too late that we realise just what a toll it has taken.

Take a tip from the Girl Guides and **BE PREPARED**. Having a plan B is always a good idea and remember there are times when, without any guilt, we can say that word **NO!**

Love and Light

Blessed Be



# Raven & Luna's Tarotscopes

## Forecasts For Your Sun Sign

### VIRGO

*3 of Wands, The Chariot, Queen of Swords*

Look to be assertive and go for what you want, not compromising on what you know will make you happy and refusing to take no for an answer when needed. You may be feeling reflective about your past, using it to make plans for your future. Your ships are coming in! There's movement, possibly in something you've been waiting for or that has felt stagnant for some time. This will bring you stability and balance in your health and home. You may also be planning a trip of a lifetime! There's Angelic energy around you, watch out for Angel numbers.



### LIBRA

*The Sun, 7 of Pentacles*

Something you've been waiting for or working on may finally produce some wanted results, especially regarding work or money. You may have to wait a little longer to really see the harvested fruits of your labour but it's coming! You'll really be enjoying the cross over of the late Summer - early Autumn energy, basking in the best of both worlds.



### SAGITTARIUS

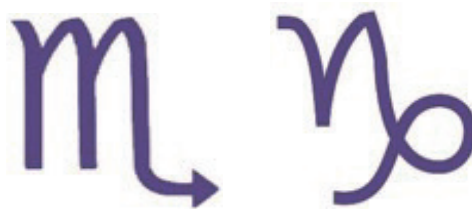
*Ace of Cups, 6 of Pentacles*

You, or someone around you, may be feeling very loving, giving and generous. This feels like quite an equal and healthy dynamic with how you're interacting with other - a fair exchange. All the energy you're putting into something/one will be returned or there may be a revival in a difficult partnership. A loved one may ask for (or give) help when it's needed.

### SCORPIO

*4 of Cups, The High Priestess*

Someone is being very secretive or there's an aspect of a situation you're not yet seeing. Something may be bothering you and if you're not sure what, take a moment to discover and accept what it is instead of ignoring those niggling feelings of discontent. You know the answer to something intuitively but just don't want to except the truth.



### CAPRICORN

*8 of Cups, 4 of Wands*

You, or someone around you, could back out of a commitment or even a wedding. A celebration, or get together, may not go ahead as planned. You might not feel up to sticking to something you've committed to, either because you didn't want to do it in the first place or you've changed your mind. There may be some sort of separation, a need to walk away from something that once meant a lot to you. It's hard but it's time to let go and move on.

## AQUARIUS

*Ace of Pentacles, The Fool*

You may start a new course or job, invest your money in an idea or decide to tick some items off your "bucket list." There's a feeling of anticipation which may lead you to feeling anxious about taking the plunge into this new adventure. However if you're presented with an opportunity we urge you to go for it without worrying about where it will lead you.



## GEMINI

*The Tower, King of Swords*

Someone could do or say something that will really impact you or your life. Don't allow them to bully or intimidate you. There could be a shake up at work which you may find difficult such as a new boss, contract, responsibilities or policies. Be careful of what you say because you can't take it back - words have power, don't be left with regret.

## PISCES

*The Hierophant, King of Wands*

Turn to someone for the support, wisdom or help that you need. You'll find this in a financial or medical professional, in a study group or club, or indeed it could be you who is heading a meeting or embarking on a teaching or spiritual job. You may be entering a big step in your formal learning / work or become aware of a major spiritual lesson that you've learnt.



## CANCER

*The Magician (twice!)*

This is likely a very powerful manifesting month. Things may be produced quickly and easily but this means you also need to be careful about your thoughts and how you speak about yourself. Put the right energy into your words to ensure you get what you really want not what you don't want. You may finally get what you've been waiting for!

## ARIES

*Queen of Pentacles, Knight of Swords*

There's something you've been growing or trying to manifest, that you've been putting a lot of effort or care into. The energy around it will ramp up a bit, causing you to feel that you need to prove yourself or fight the corner of someone who means a lot to you. You're feeling defensive but before reacting, take time to see if it's worth your energy.



## LEO

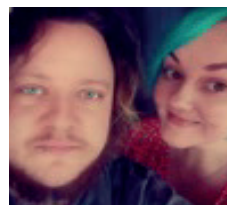
*2 of Pentacles, Strength*

There's a decision to make in your need to balance things such as your finances or where you put yourself. Are you spreading yourself too thin? There may be more than one option in regards to a job or relationship, about where it's taking you. Dig into your past to inform your future decisions, using what you've learnt from similar experiences, so that you don't enter into a repeated cycle or difficult lessons.

## TAURUS

*6 of Wands, The Moon*

You may receive troubling news but it isn't as bad as it first seems. Your moods are caused by unhealthy sleeping routines. It's hard when you're struggling and those around you seem to have everything going for them but you only see what's on the surface. It's difficult being the person people look up to or lean on, is it what you really want? - be honestly.



*Raven and Luna are High Priest and Priestess for Black Moon Coven.*

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## CONNACH FIRST ALBUM COMING SOON!

The Uk Goth band **CONNACH**, introduced in our earlier magazine, is currently working hard towards the release of their first album.

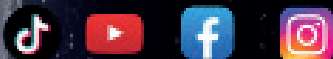
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Be the first to see new track "Legion of Angels" with a video on Saturday, 20th March, **ON STREAM!** (Crows Feet, Ostara Market)

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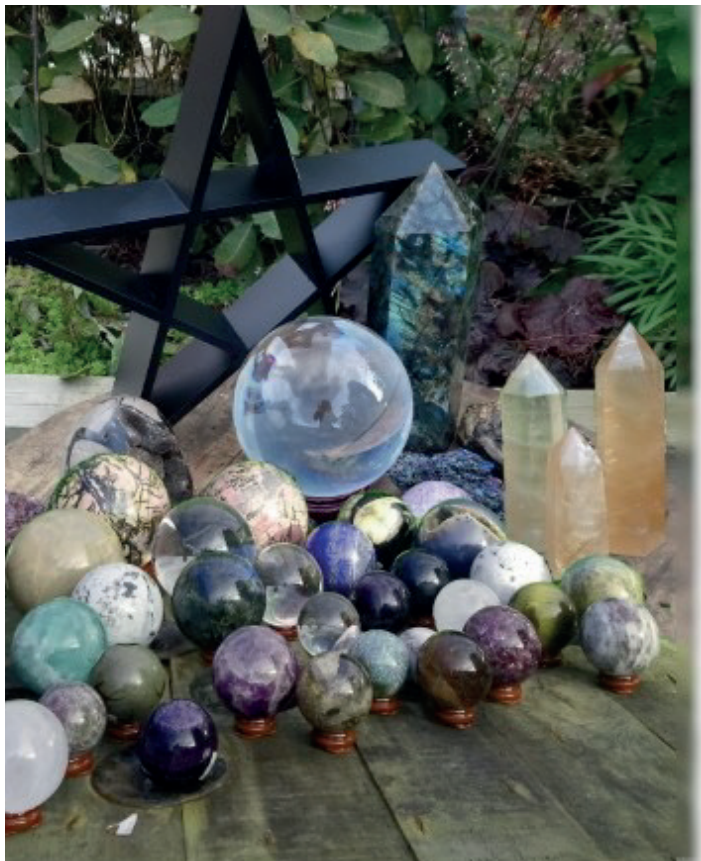
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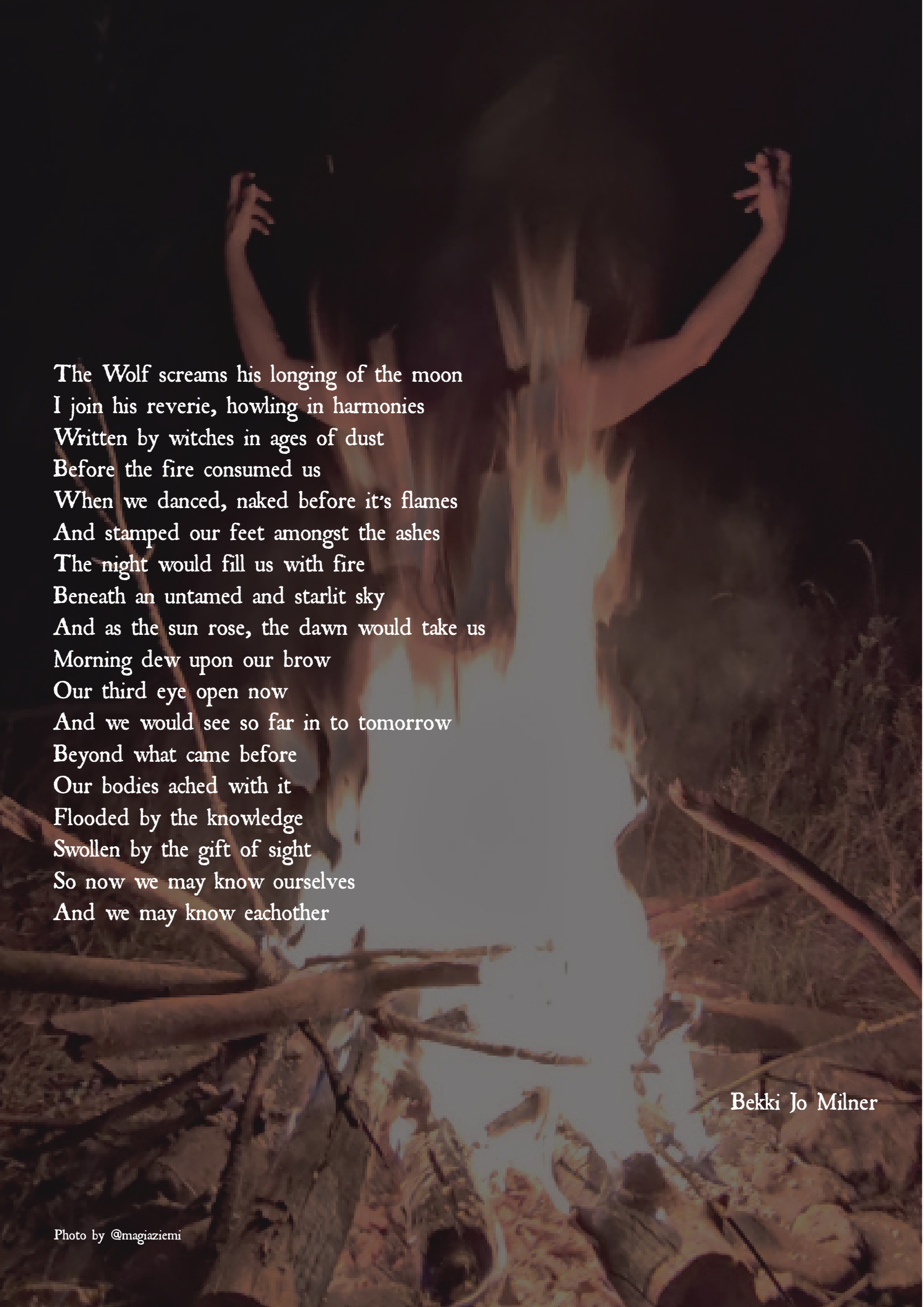
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Pagan Poetry  
&  
Fiction

Photo by Klaire Dawn Ader



The Wolf screams his longing of the moon  
I join his reverie, howling in harmonies  
Written by witches in ages of dust  
Before the fire consumed us  
When we danced, naked before it's flames  
And stamped our feet amongst the ashes  
The night would fill us with fire  
Beneath an untamed and starlit sky  
And as the sun rose, the dawn would take us  
Morning dew upon our brow  
Our third eye open now  
And we would see so far in to tomorrow  
Beyond what came before  
Our bodies ached with it  
Flooded by the knowledge  
Swollen by the gift of sight  
So now we may know ourselves  
And we may know eachother

Bekki Jo Milner

# Avonmouth

## Part II

Helen J.R. Bruce

Witch Writer

“Kelpie, a kelpie,” she murmured, tasting the name from storybooks on her tongue. She recalled what they ate with a shudder. But why was a creature from myth turning up in her forest? And why now, when there enough to worry about already? She felt the familiar rage bubbling up in her stomach, pressing towards her chest and burning through her lungs. This was how she felt when the villagers crossed the street.

This was how she felt when they looked at the ground, shaking their heads in pity. But she wasn't their spectacle. And she was nobody's meal! Her lips drew back in a snarl. One hand was stuck to the neck of the kelpie, but the other hand was free and still holding the rope. She twisted the rope skilfully with one hand, pulling knot after knot tight with her teeth. The creature plunged on, head down, heading for the river.

At the bank it slowed, sidestepping eagerly as it sized up the ice. There was an opening where the sheet had cracked, pushing a sharp fragment towards the heavens. But the opening was too small for both predator and prey. The monster stepped forward and struck at the ice with one hoof.

Iris raised her arm, appraising the makeshift bridle. There wasn't much time. She knew that the creature was planning to drown her, but it was frustrated for now by the strength of the ice. The kelpie struck again with its hoof, and where the sharp tip touched a thin crack appeared. It neighed with delight, rearing to its full height to strike with both forefeet. Iris spotted her chance as the great head rose up, and she swung the bridle in an arc by the reins, willing the nose loop towards the beast's steaming muzzle. It caught on one ear, and the kelpie flicked it off like a fly.

Beneath the onslaught, the ice near the small opening began to splinter. It was already weakened, and the weight of the kelpie began to spread cracks like veins. A fragment sheared off and was sucked away by the current. Hot tears stung Iris's cheeks. Once the kelpie had her in the water, then her fate would be sealed. She would drown within minutes, icy water shocking the air from her lungs, and then the creature would feast. The liver first, she had read. Shuddering, she imagined a pink tinge to the ice.

Another section of ice splintered away. The kelpie lowered its nose to the water and tore at the edge of the opening with its teeth. There was no chance of reaching it in this position. The bridle was Iris's only hope, and beneath her the barrier between her and death was falling away faster and faster. She had to make the creature rear up again. It was the only way.

Taking a steadying breath of spray laced air, Iris dragged the anger and fear into the core of her body. She held it like a burning coal, glowing red hot with the promise of fire. With the rage and the terror of three winters without parents, she drove the heels of her boots into the ribs of the kelpie. They were good boots; well oiled and with hard soles that has been kept in thick tread. The animal squealed in pain, pulling backwards and tossing its mane. Iris held the pressure, forcing her feet together as if she would make them

touch. Screaming with fury, the kelpie reared up, seaglass green eyes rolling wildly in their sockets. Iris swung the bridle. When it stopped falling she pulled the reins tight.

For a few long moments there was only the sound of the river. It sucked and swirled around the enlarged hole in the ice and bubbled up through a latticework of cracks. Iris dared to ease open one eye. She wasn't pressed to the riverbed with her organs being torn out. In fact, the kelpie stood without stirring beneath her. She pulled the right hand rein experimentally and felt the great muscles shift into motion beneath her. The monster took a slow step to the right, like a docile old nag. Iris could have hollered with pride, but she didn't want to wake any more mythology lurking in the woods. So, instead, she lifted her left hand from the animal's neck and gave it a firm pat of approval. Her thighs tingled gently as the strange hold dissolved. Elated, she turned her eyes towards home.

The two younger sisters jumped up at the shout from outside. They could hear Iris calling through the whistling wind. Was she hurt? Was she freezing? They flung open the door, bracing themselves against the ice on the air.

"Come help!" Iris called.

Jane raised a hand to her mouth. For a moment she was frozen, and not by the weather. Next to Iris stood the most magnificent horse she had ever seen. Its coat was black as tar, and its eyes caught the light like still, midnight water. On the ground lay father's old cloak, filled with a stack of dry wood.

Martha had pulled on her boots, and she ran to her sister with arms open wide. They hugged briefly, then Iris placed a small log in her hands. Martha looked wistfully at the horse, but dutifully began to ferry wood inside.

"What is this?" asked Jane, dragging branches into her arms. Her face was upturned, watching the slow breathing of the animal as it waited obediently.

"I promise I'll tell you. Take this wood inside while I fix up a stable."

Jane nodded in reluctant agreement. She had never seen a horse like that in the village. She would have remembered it, harrowing the fields like some prince brought low by a curse. It was too magnificent to belong around here.

At last the girls gathered by the fire. A pot of stew was hung above the merrily dancing flames and Iris was red cheeked and red fingered from clearing Father's Workshop to make an animal shelter.

"Tell us the story," pressed Martha, sitting cross legged on the floor.

Iris smiled, reaching into her pocket for the carved wooden horse. The younger girl took her toy back with delight, cradling it close and running her finger down the dark stripe on its back. "I think it brought me luck," Iris told her softly.

"This is more than luck," countered Jane, "this is unbelievable. People will talk."

Iris shrugged. "Let them talk. They talk anyway." Her fear and her rage had been left with the river.

"Story!" demanded Martha.

"Alright, alright," Iris cried, waving her hands in front of her face. She was almost laughing, but something caught the humour in her throat. She recalled the scream of the kelpie as it turned for the water; the hunger and the teeth that were not made for grass. Her laughter turned sour. She swallowed it, almost gagging, as she remembered the strange, stinging static that had stuck her to the predator. She realised then, that she couldn't tell the story. She looked at her two sisters, their eyes wide with curiosity, and their lips thin from three years of hardship. "I found it wandering," she invented. In the woods there was the wreckage of a fine carriage. I think the owner was caught in the snow."

Martha hung her head in sorrow. "Poor man."

"Strange to travel in weather this bad," replied Jane, her head to one side.

Iris shrugged, easing stiffly to her feet. "These are desperate times." She buttoned the coat back up around her.

"Where are you going?" squeaked Martha, "you've only just got back."

"Just to check on the horse. I won't be a minute," Iris reassured her.

Jane was sat with her arms crossed, eyes narrowed in suspicion. She was cynical and clever, and a fine horse wandering the wilds was a gift to be questioned. "How will we feed it?" she muttered, half to herself.

"Listen," said Iris sharply, turning suddenly as she reached the front door, "promise me one thing. Promise it on our parents who loved us. Never, ever, take off the bridle."

\*\*\*

The story concludes in the next edition of Witch Magazine.



RON GEORGE

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