



WITCH

Summer Solstice



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WITCH



Welcome to the
Midsummer
issue of Witch!

Additional art and photos
by:

Klaire Dawn Ader

I hope this issue finds you enjoying
the height of summer, with many
festivals and gatherings taking
place in the coming weeks!

We'd love to hear your reviews or
experiences - if you'd like to share
with our readers, you can email us
at submissions@witchzine.co.uk

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Be blessed,

Bekki
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WITCH

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Solstice Blessings



A full-page background image of a sunset over the ocean. The sky is a deep orange and yellow, with a bright sun on the left side. The ocean is visible in the lower half, and a dark silhouette of a hill or dune is at the bottom. Several small silhouettes of people are standing on the ridge of the hill. The text 'WITCH Magazine' is centered in the upper half, with a white star above the word 'WITCH'.

WITCH
Magazine

MIDSUMMER MAGICKAL MADNESS

By Faith Barnes

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WELCOME TO THE MAGICKAL MADNESS OF MIDSUMMER! WHERE FAIRIES THRIVE AND MAGICK STRIVES! THE ENERGY OF MIDSUMMER IS FULL OF ABUNDANCE, LOVE AND JOY. BECOME INSPIRED AND DISCOVER YOUR CREATIVITY DURING THIS LESSER KNOWN SABBATH CALLED LITHA.

MIDSUMMER IS A GOOD TIME TO PERFORM SPELLS TO DO WITH: PROTECTION, GROWTH, SOLAR MAGICK, DIVINATION, MASCULINE ENERGY, RENEWAL, REACHING YOUR PEAK, CONFIDENCE, POWER, PASSION, ENTHUSIASM AND HONOURING YOUR INNER LIGHT.

Midsummer Eve Magick

Let's kick this festival off with midsummer eve! Water is as much a part of midsummer as fire is: Bless a watering can to sprinkle water magick onto your plants! As the days are hotter this is best done on midsummer eve. Offering growth and renewal vibrations to your garden.

Alluring Fertility Blast!

Midsummer eve is when the magick of Litha is beginning. Making it perfect for fertility blessings!

Cast your spell and circle in a different way with mandala magick! To contain and boost that fertile energy you desire. You can leave this mandala set up on your bedside table to bring fertility!

Fill a shallow bowl with sand to create your mandala on top. Use: pheasant feathers, hag stones, green aventurine crystals, chalk and dirt collected from a leyline to make your desired pattern. Once completed, activate it by holding your hands over the mandala and ask:

"POWERS THAT BE, HELP ME SEE,
THE GIFT I DESIRE,
COME TO ME,
BLESSING FERTILITY SURROUNDS ME,
CREATING LIFE THAT'S MEANT TO BE,
WITH THIS BLAST OF WATER, I SET THIS MAGICK FREE"

End the spell by sprinkling on the mandala either seawater collected when the tide is coming in. Or from a stream which is running towards you.

Welcoming The Midnight Sun

Use this special energy to perform a tarot reading. First, burn three bay leaves for love, happiness and good health. Stretch and relax before shuffling the cards. Perform yoga salutations to greet this fresh energy. Then ask the cards to reveal the next six months, to show what lessons you need to learn about yourself and your upcoming life.

Ask the cards to teach you any useful tips you need to know for the future. You have the power in you to thrive and grow over the next six months, find strength in love and enjoy! This unique dawning energy of midsummer can support and encourage your future if you listen to the messages revealed.

Midsummer Day Magick

It's time for a party, a tea party! To celebrate good health for the year and to honour the spirits of the day.

Spirit Bake

It's all about honey flapjacks! These easy-to-make healthy treats make great snacks. As well as offerings to share with local spirits, in celebration of life springing from mother earth after the cold winter. When making the flapjacks chant:

"BUTTER, SUGAR, HONEY AND OATS,
MAKE THIS MIXTURE TO APPEASE THE GHOSTS,
TOGETHER WE JOIN, TO PARTY TONIGHT,
FOR GREETING THE SUN AND SAYING FAREWELL TO THE NIGHT"

Simply line a baking tin with butter, and melt in a saucepan on a low heat:

225g butter
75g brown sugar
4 tbsp of honey

Mix 350g of rolled oats into the pan, so they are completely covered. Add some cinnamon for flavour and chopped nuts for a crunchy kick. Press the mixture into the tin, and bake on 180c for 10-15 minutes. Cool before slicing these delights! A sweet treat first for the spirits! Sing as you place your offering on the ground:

"WITH THIS BAKE I OFFER THEE,
A GIFT TO EAT AND TO DANCE WITH ME,
FROM THE GROUND, THE ENERGY GROWS,
LET'S CELEBRATE NEW LIFE AS IT SHOWS,
VINES, ROOTS AND EVEN TREES,
THESE ARE THE MAGICKAL SOURCES PROTECTED BY BEES,
DANCE WE WILL AND DANCE TOGETHER,
LET'S CELEBRATE IN ANY WEATHER!"

Sunshine Boosted Tea

Every good tea party needs tea! Using a big mason jar, make sun tea! Just add fresh orange slices, natural orange juice and honey.

Place the jar in a sunny spot at midday and leave for a few hours to steep with plenty of water. I like to add citrine crystals around the jar to add that extra kick of sun energy to it.

Midsummer Night Magick

Witching Hour Feasting!

Feast!! This is a night to be shared! Invite friends family or neighbours to enjoy it too! Using the midsummer element of fire to cook food using a bbq! Enrich that smokey goodness into the food whilst saying:

"LIGHT AND MAGICK ENTER HERE,
DINE, WE WILL AND MAKE THIS CLEAR,
PROSPERITY AND HAPPINESS WILL APPEAR,
BLESSINGS OF THE NIGHT, GRANT THIS TRADITIONAL RITE,
TO ENTER INTO OUR SPHERE"




Shrimp or salmon make for an indulgent bbq addition! As well as the usual burgers in a bun and potato salads! Whatever your treat, enjoy it together and spoil your senses.

Harvest The Night: Harness it Right
Vibrationally, it's said to be a time of masculine energy and the root and sacral chakras. All of which relate to encouraging revitalization, healing, and empowerment.

Making abundance and growth the themes of midsummer, as the earth flourishes with life. Which is perfect timing for harvesting herbs and magickal ingredients at night!

When collecting items, give something in return. Be it planting more seeds, water or gifting energy for continual growth. To do this, have contact with the ground through bare feet, sitting down or placing a hand on the soil.

Ground yourself, feel the connection and life. Extend your other hand over the herb you are harvesting. Feel the warm orange energy flowing down into it. Visualise your intention for this plant. Thriving, growing big and strong, spreading its roots out to expand. Freely give your energy as an exchange to the plant, to protect, support and sustain it.



"MAGICK DIVINE OF MIDSUMMER TIME,
BLESSING BESTOWED AND ENERGY FREELY FLOWED,
ABSORB THIS GIFT AS I PROTECT THEE,
HARNESS MY THOUGHTS AND EVERYTHING I'VE BROUGHT,
STRIVE AND GROW,
UPON THE CALL OF THE CROW,
IT IS SO"

After collecting your items, light a yellow candle to give thanks:

"BOUNTIFUL EARTH AND GIFTS BESTOWED,
COLLECTED IN LOVE AND ENERGY EXCHANGE FLOWED,
SACRED NIGHT FOR REPLENISHING OUR STORE,
THANK YOU FOR SUPPLYING MORE"

Have fun with these midsummer magick madness ideas! They can be as extravagant or simple as you make them. Personally, I think the bigger the better! A time to celebrate and let loose with friends! Embrace the magick of the night, and the power of the day to create things your own way.

Midsummer Blessings to All,
Faithy xx



Everyday Ritual

Helen J Bruce

In a culture dominated by demand for everything to happen faster, it can be a bold move to slow down. Allowing space around our daily tasks while the clamour flows on and past us may feel disorientating at first. But, as we surrender into a slowing of pace, a whole host of soft rhythms begin to make themselves heard.

There is no need for the sacred aspects of our lives to be separate from the mundane. The physical and spiritual worlds exist in unity, each one present in the other, just as both are present in all living things. Of course there are many spots in the landscape where we may find it easier to drop into sacred awareness, such as stone circles, ancient forests and holy waters, but in reality we can practice doing this absolutely anywhere. As with any other skill, it is a process which takes practice and becomes easier with time and repetition. It may assist to visualise our crossing into sacred space with set landscape features, such as a cave opening or a path through woodland, which become familiar through use.

Sacred Crossing

This is a short exercise to help build a visual landscape that marks movement between realms. My example here is just one way to picture it, and I would encourage everyone to create the scene that most suits them. Begin by finding somewhere comfortable to sit where you will not be disturbed and close your eyes gently. The aim is to use this visualisation in day to day life, but the early process of building it requires time without distraction.

Using your breath, allow your mind and body to quieten, letting any pressing thoughts show themselves and then pass. Then picture yourself in a fragrant, fresh green woodland, filled with wild flowers and young trees amongst a few huge, ancient oaks. Take time to flesh out this scene and become familiar with what you can see, smell and hear all around you. Then follow the soft earthy path you find ahead towards the sound of running water. Very soon you find yourself at a sturdy wooden bridge which crosses a bright, tinkling stream. Examine the bridge in detail, appreciating how well it is built and noticing any symbols, images or words carved into the wood. Whatever you discover will be personal to you, and is worth remembering or noting down in a journal once you have finished the visualisation.

When you are ready, it is time to prepare to cross the bridge. There are ten planks of smooth, secure wood which make up the crossing, and you will step on each one as you cross. The intent you will be holding is that, once you have stepped across all ten planks, you will arrive safely on the other side of the bridge and find yourself in sacred time and space. Count each footstep from ten down to one, with zero bringing you onto the soft earth of the opposite bank. Once you are on this bank, take some time once again to absorb what your senses experience. What things are different? What feels the same? Then, when you are ready to leave, give thanks in whatever way seems fit, and reverse the crossing by taking each step while counting back up to ten, all of the while holding the intention that the tenth step will return you to the bank of the physical world.

Once you have performed this exercise a few times in this manner, and feel confident and at home in the landscape of your crossing, the aim is to move on to doing it amidst the distractions of everyday life. Picturing your bridge, count from ten down to zero and bring your cup of tea into sacred space for a few minutes to bless it while it brews. Take five minutes of sacred time to light a candle or burn some incense. Drop into sacred space in the forest, and walk for a while with your eyes open to a new array of wonders. Always remember to give thanks and complete your return crossing to ground yourself and return fully to the physical realm.

Natural Rhythms

Once we slow down just a little, we realise that time is perhaps not as rigid as we first thought. Relying on a clock conveys the idea that each minute, hour and day are sliced into sharply defined segments, but deep down we can sense that time flows more softly. Do we not say that 'time flies when we're having fun' and that 'the hours drag' if it's something we dread? When using the exercise above, we may find that time passes differently in sacred space, either moving slower or faster than in the physical

world. A short journey in spirit may take up hours in the physical realm, or a long period of sacred time may only use up physical minutes. An understanding of this fact allows us to work towards removing some of the stress and pressure caused by clock time, allowing us not only to make time for everyday ritual, but also to stretch out the minutes just a little when we really need to.

This is an invitation to step away from clock time for a period and work with more natural rhythms. This can be something simple which you set yourself, such as the period of time it takes for a certain shadow to cross your garden, or the space you need to complete a meditation without alarms or other enforced parameters. You may choose to set a full day aside without clock time, rising and going to sleep with the light as feels comfortable. Your life may even allow you the luxury of working up to a week or month of natural time, where you track passing days by the sun, the moon and your body. However small or large the portion of natural time you can find for yourself, the benefit of the process is invaluable. Understanding time as an element of nature, which flows more like water than it ticks like a machine, will assist you in creating that space around everyday responsibilities that can otherwise become stressful when piled back to back.

It is no coincidence that the crossing visualisation above included the element of running water. Just as the stream slows and quickens its paces as it trickles past boulders or races round bends, time flows differently through sacred and mundane spaces. As with all living thing, we have the innate power to move between these realms, and it is only a little practice required to tread down the grass and make the path easy.

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RITUALS TO CELEBRATE LITHA

Raquel Dionísio Abrantes

THE SUMMER SOLSTICE IS UPON US, AND WITH IT, ANOTHER CELEBRATION BEGINS.

Litha, also known as Midsummer, is seen in Celtic belief as a day where the eternal battle between dark and light occurs. The conflict is between the Holly King (who dominates the darker half of the year) and the Oak King (who governs the lighter half of the year). Litha honours the fire and the sun centring on themes of abundance, fertility, good fortune, joy, love, and prosperity. The energy of summer calls you to appreciate your own, singular brightness.

BURN CANDLES

Use an orange, red, or yellow one, and anoint them with charged waters or oils. You can, too, carve sigils to add other intentions if you wish to.

CONNECT WITH WATER

Is there a dam, lake, river, or sea near you? If so, spend mornings or evenings dipping your hands and feet in the waters. Let the flow guide you. Do not worry if you are far from these places. Utilise your bath to do a restorative, watery ritual.

COOK

Kitchen is a magical space to generate memories. Prepare meals using yellow aliments such as apricots, corn and cornmeal, lemons, pineapple, or turmeric.

GATHER HERBS

There are numerous herbs to channel the spirit of Litha. Grab your basket and gather some herbs like camomile, mugwort, or rose. Then, make a wreath and hang it on your door, or wear it during other rites you may have.

MAKE A SOLAR TEA

Select an aromatic plant that reminds you of the sun. Brew it and wait until it is cold. Drink it whilst you contemplate the rise of the day.

PLAYLIST CURATION

Songs help the body and the mind to diminish anxiety. Create a sunlit playlist to listen to when you dance barefoot or in your yoga sessions. Embrace your silhouette and voice and unleash your howl.

OFFERING TO THE FAE

Pay a visit to the forest and sit under the trees. Leave your offering to the fairies and rest in the shade of the grove.

WRITE A LETTER OR POETRY

Word witchery is a potent tool to lament, reclaim, reflect, and exult. Pen a missive or poem dedicated to this Sabbat. What flames do you want to extinguish? What warmth do you want to expand? Write about it.

Litha and the Summer Solstice can be an ideal time to dream more dreams and swim in new tides. Therefore, build a bonfire (literally or metaphorically), cast spells, sing, and star gaze.

LITHA LITHOMANCY

JESSICA HOWARD

There are a wide range of traditions surrounding Litha, or midsummer. Lighting bonfires, watching the sun rise, and decorating oak trees are all popular activities. Litha is also known as a great time to perform divination in matters of love, and so this Litha why not try creating your own love-themed lithomancy set?

Lithomancy is a form of divination using stones. These can be stones you've found in your garden, crystals, or you can incorporate other items like shells, charms, and coins into your set.



Each item (I'm going to refer to them all as 'stones' from here on in) in your set has a specific meaning - for example, love, career, opportunity, etc. We think of our question and then cast our stones, and interpret our reading based on how they fall. Lithomancy is often referred to as a 'visual and intuitive' practice - we interpret our reading based on the patterns our stones form when they fall (the visual), and the meanings between the stones (the intuitive).

So why lithomancy as opposed to, say, tarot? First off, making your own sets is fun! It allows us to be creative, and needing nothing more than some stones from your back garden, you don't need to break the bank to practice it. Building your own set allows you to work with your own symbology and create a set which is truly personal to you. It is also quite easy to pick up, but don't let that fool you - it is extremely effective.

In order to build the set below, all you need are some common stones. Or you can use crystals, or charms, or shells, or whatever you want. I personally use crystals for this set (I have listed the crystals I use), but I have other sets which are made up of stones I found in my garden and then decorated with sharpie. And honestly, the crystals I've listed below are ones chosen in large part because I already own them!



Below are the stones and their meanings in this special Litha-Love-Lithomancy Set:

BLUE OBSIDIAN: NEW BEGINNINGS:

If you're single, this could mean a new relationship. If you are in a relationship, this could signify a new phase within your relationship.

SMOKY QUARTZ: COMMUNICATION:

Communication is at the forefront. Reflect on the way in which you communicate - is it as open and honest as it should be?

FLUORITE: DECISION TIME:

You have a decision to make; is there anything in this relationship that no longer serves you? Is it worth clinging onto it, or is it time to let it go?

RED TIGERS EYE: CHALLENGES, OBSTACLES:

There is some sort of challenge or obstacle blocking your progress. Usually the other stones around it will indicate exactly where this challenge comes from.

ROSE QUARTZ: SELFLESSNESS:

Think about others; their wants, needs, insecurities, etc. For now, focus on supporting the other person in your relationship and make sure you are putting as much into the relationship as you are getting out of it.

RED JASPER: SELFISHNESS:

You are giving too much of yourself away, or focusing too much on the wants and needs of your partner to the detriment of your own wants and needs. Take some time to work out what it is you want and whether you are going to be able to get it considering your current situation.

GREEN AGATE: EXTERNAL PRESSURES:

External pressures are weighing on the relationship - this could be work, intruding family members, or money worries for example.

AMETRINE: SMOOTH SAILING:

You are on the right track, so enjoy it!

MALACHITE: UNEXPECTED NEWS:

Unexpected news will be coming your way! This doesn't specify whether this news is good or bad, so take a look at the stones that fall around it to see if they give any indication as to what this news could be.

OBSIDIAN: BE REALISTIC:

Are you asking for too much, or imagining unrealistic scenarios? Maybe you have built up an image of your partner or future partner which just isn't possible. Remember, we are all human and all have our flaws, so make sure you are being realistic with your expectations.

MOONSTONE: SELF-REFLECTION:

You need to take some time out for some inner reflection before you move forward. Think about your own wants, needs, biases, and insecurities, and how they affect your behaviour. Is this the person you want to be in a relationship?

PERSONAL STONE: YOU

In a lithomancy set, the personal stone represents 'you', and you interpret your reading based on where your stones fall in relation to your personal stone. Mine is a piece of lodestone, as its magnetic qualities make me think of 'attracting' the right stones to me in my reading

To perform your reading, hold the stones in your hands and think about your question. Maybe you want some insight into your love life or relationship in general, or maybe you have a specific question you would like an answer to? Roll the stones between your hands as you think on your question, arms out in front of you at roughly chest height. When you feel ready, release the stones* - this is your reading.

*I recommend doing this on carpeted floor so you don't damage your stones!



Look for where your personal stone has landed. You want to start by reading the stones closest to that, and then working outwards.

The first thing to look for is any patterns that the stones have formed. The basic patterns you may see are:

SQUARES: Foundations. The four stones that comprise of the square should be considered in building strong foundations before you can progress

TRIANGLES: Opportunity. Work on these three stones to create or make the most of an opportunity coming your way

CURVES: Energy flow. Read very linearly, from one stone to the next, as this is the order in which you should focus your efforts on - one will lead to the other

The second is to read the stones in relation to one another. Let's say for example that the green agate (external pressure) falls next to the red jasper (selfishness). This could mean that someone in the relationship is experiencing some sort of external pressure - such as money issues - which is causing them to be more selfish, perhaps more frugal, and not being willing to pay for anything in the relationship. Now let's say that the obsidian (be realistic) fell next to the red jasper. This could be asking you to consider if this is the way you want to continue the rest of the relationship - or maybe these external pressures aren't actually pressures at all and you or your partner are being unrealistic about their expectations in regards to money. Do you really need to go to expensive restaurants every week?

Let's say these three stones form a square shape with the smoky quartz (communication). With the square representing foundations, this tells us we need to have a very serious talk about this external pressure and how it is affecting the relationship before we can think about progressing one way or the other.

There is a lot more to lithomancy than that. There are more patterns, more ways of reading your stones (i.e., using shadow and light to determine whether the message is positive and negative), as well as other steps to take to help you attune to and use your lithomancy set. It is a very underrated form of divination, so this Litha, give lithomancy a go and see what your love life has in store!

In the Wilderness of Death

Carrie Anderson

Life and death are intertwined. Like the sun and the moon, life and death are inextricably linked. They're a dance in the stars, as old as time. Beauty in life. Cherishing moments and memories of our days and nights. Mourning when we lose someone that we love. We understand this ageless primitive dance.

People celebrate life with rituals, songs, myths, lore, and art. Death makes us quiet. It brings us to our knees and makes us ponder questions that might not ever be answered. We celebrate and grieve each other. We cherish and mourn our pets.

Yet, when some see a dead animal, not a pet kind of animal, words of disgust and derision are uttered. People separate themselves from this natural cycle if it involves the life of an unknown entity. How can we celebrate our interconnectedness, our oneness, if the sight of this cycle of life disgusts or repulses us?

Long ago, I decided that each death that I came across would be one that I noticed, witnessed, and mourned. How can I delight in seeing wild animals if I refuse to see them in death?

I believe everything has a soul. I believe everything is connected. When in nature and I see death I make sure to stop, acknowledge the animal, ask to speak to it, and mourn. Bearing witness to its death is one of the most important parts of my personal practice.



I look at the dead and I see a story longing to be told. I see a once vibrant life that has since passed and still deserves respect. I communicate with both the living and the dead. That's how I know the truth of nature and find my place in the local ecosystem.

I might not have met the animal when it was active and thriving. If I meet it when it's just bones and a bit of flesh then I will sit in silence and listen to its life story. I try to memorialize its soul in a photograph.

I leave the remains the way I find them. I don't pose them. I don't move them. Their story is written where they had their final waking moments.



One day, while walking up a monstrous hill, barely able to catch my breath, I stopped and saw a still turtle. She was shriveled and withered in her shell. I pointed her out to my husband. The hill was too steep to even allow the turtle to thrive. There was no water just barren land. Her shell was pointed towards the forest, but she died before being able to make her way to the cover of the trees. I stayed a few moments and thought of her final moments.

I photograph them. I sketch them, I listen to their spirit tell me of their life and their final moments. In recording the deaths and speaking to

their souls I bridge the gap between the living and the dead.

On the sandy beaches of Presque Isle, copious amounts of dead fish will wash ashore. Spotting a fish carcass means that I will also see the insects that devour the flesh. If I'm lucky, the fish will point me to the tracks of the coyote and I will be able to walk the same path, until, eventually I lose sight of the paw prints. For a few moments though, I can visualize the coyotes' nighttime travels. I can see where it scented its meal, the spot where it took a drink, and follow its path, partially back to its den.

I find beauty in their rotting flesh. I don't just talk to the living animals. It's too easy to only love the living, their warmth, fur, and sounds. The dead speak to the living. Communicating with both creates new dimensions in which to view the world.

I find decaying fish every single day of my time at the Isle. I ask the fish to grant me a favor. I want to find otoliths, the bone-stone-like structures in Sheephead fish that allow for navigation. I don't want to buy them in the store. I don't want them to be a part of the fishing industry. I want to find ear bones that are given freely as a part of the natural cycle of their lives in this Great Lake. Before the end of my stay, I discover a pair of otoliths, the L and the J. These are lucky stones a gift from the lake and its inhabitants. I don't just talk to the wild and living animals. I sit with them in their death. A body without a soul is still a part of this world. I am still connected to this being even if it's moved on.

Walking on a trail, I spot the remains of two crows. All that is left is their feet, beaks, a few bones from their wings, and feathers were strewn about in a circle. In between the crows' scattered remains is a bit of fur. It's brown ticked with gray. A coyote or a fox? Whatever killed them defeated two crows at once, losing clumps of hair in the process.

There's a loneliness that lingers over the decaying body of wildlife. There's wild activity and some find joy in the decaying body of an animal. In the absence of their soul, they become food, shelter, and give sustenance to others. The scavengers, the parasites, and the invertebrates all come to partake in the offerings that remain.



I go down to the bay, away from the beachgoers. I walk until all that surrounds me are boulders, bird droppings from the nests above, and dead fish. This is not where many venture, but this is the whole point of my visit. I find zebra swallowtails, by the dozen, feasting on the salt and minerals that come to the surface of the decomposing body.

If I come across an animal that has died then I acknowledge its death. I bear witness to the life that has vanquished. I mourn.

Walking in the forest I found parts of a deer. Just its jaw and teeth. The rest of the animal has long ago been harvested and scavenged.

Death is just another side of life. To only delight in an animal when it is alive denies the inherent oneness that comes with the cessation of life. This cycle binds all of the sentient beings. This is the balance that keeps me grounded.

I found a squirrel, frozen over winter. It's only fur, and tough hide now. It's beside a tombstone. Earlier in the year, I found a squirrel leg beside another tombstone. There's a Red-Tailed Hawk that lives in the trees. Sometimes, he drops part of his meal but doesn't seem bothered by his carelessness. He is honored as a caretaker.

I have wonderful encounters with wild animals. I communicate freely with them regularly. I share energy with them when I have their permission. I know the living animals are willing to connect with me because I speak to their dead. The souls of the dead tell the living that I will listen with an open heart and mind.

MEET ERIN WALMSLEY

Author of young adult supernatural novels

TELL US ABOUT YOUR DEBUT NOVEL,
BLOOD KNOT

Well, it's a supernatural thriller and it's the first in the Midnight Madigan series...

It began when Midnight Madigan turned sixteen. Fragmented memories, reaching for her like dead fingers through earth. A chill, right down in her marrow. And the awareness of something in the shadows. Something familiar.

All she wants is the truth about how her parents died. If she doesn't get some answers, she's going to lose her mind. Maybe she should heed the warning in the tarot cards, listen to the pleas from Celestine to leave it all alone. Or maybe she doesn't have a choice.

The Craft runs deep in Midnight's family and as she soon discovers, witches know better than anyone that every action has a consequence. Even if it isn't felt for generations to come.

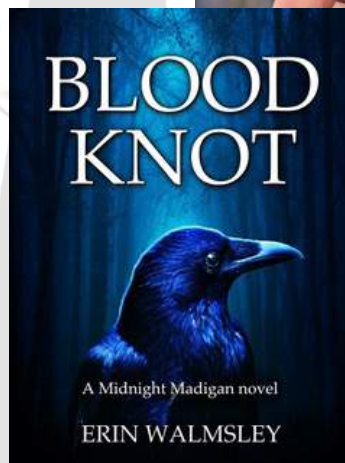
AND IT'S FOR YOUNG ADULTS?

It's primarily aimed at teens, but YA books have huge adult followings as well. Just look at the Twilight books! In our teen years we feel everything so acutely. Every emotion is heightened, which I think is what makes YA books so great to read, however old we are. I purposefully wrote the book in the present tense and from the main character's point of view so the reader experiences everything through her lens – you're living it along with Midnight, moment by moment.

And the themes in Blood Knot - truth, light vs darkness, being our authentic selves, having courage even when we're terrified - they're all pretty universal and relatable to all ages. It's a twisty, dark thriller and as a reviewer said, "If you like fantasy, witchcraft and the supernatural then I definitely recommend checking this book out."

SO WHO IS MIDNIGHT MADIGAN?

Midnight's a bit of an outcast. She's the only Wiccan among her peers and so she comes up against a lot of misunderstanding and fear. She's really beginning to explore what she believes and what she wants, regardless of what anyone else tells her she should do. Her relationships are complex and like all of us, she's flawed. As her one



true friend, Celestine says at one point in the story, “God, that girl needs some therapy.” But she’s also incredibly brave, smart and a total badass! I love her.

WHY DID YOU SET THE BOOK IN CORNWALL?

It’s my spiritual home. I’ve been tracing my family tree and I’ve got as far back as the mid 1700s. We originated from Luxulyan Valley, which might explain why, when I’m meditating, I instinctively imagine walking through a beautiful woodland – it must be in my DNA! Cornwall is the perfect setting for Blood Knot as it’s beautiful, mysterious and extremely haunted. The energy of the land is palpable, and witchcraft is definitely alive and well there.

WHAT’S YOUR INTEREST IN WITCHCRAFT?

A few years ago, my dad passed away from cancer. I was with him when he died, which was a real privilege, and the most profound experience of my life. But it left me feeling totally ungrounded and asking big questions about life and death. I’d been raised a Catholic but stopped going to church in my teens, and although I always had a belief in something, I suddenly felt like a tiny spec in a huge universe. I began reading about different belief systems, searching for some kind of meaning. It wasn’t until I discovered Wicca that it felt like I’d come home.

Everything I read about the principles of Wicca just resonated so strongly. It felt like I was remembering something I’d forgotten, rather than discovering it for the first time. And as I learned more about celebrating the sabbats and working with energy through rituals and spells, it all made perfect sense to me. The earth, the oceans, the moon – I’ve always felt that they’re all buzzing with beautiful power. Wicca kind of validated that for me and witchcraft is just the expression of those beliefs. It’s made my soul happy!

It’s a shame that there’s still so much misinterpretation and fear around witchcraft though. Just seeing a pentagram is enough to make some folks run for the hills, but for me, I don’t see the difference between practising the Craft and practising Christianity

for instance. Both involve being in a sacred space, using candles and incense, repeating words in rhyme, appealing to the divine... there’s really no difference. And the parallels don’t end there. There’s a really beautiful Christian prayer of St Francis called the Cantic of the Sun, which could easily be part of the Wiccan Rede!

Here’s an extract:

Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars; in the heavens you have made them, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the night. He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Blood Knot – A Midnight Madigan novel is available to buy from:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B09X38GB85>

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09X38GB85>

To find out more about Erin and sign up to her newsletter, visit <https://erinwalmsley.com/books>

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TURN TO OUR POETRY AND FICTION SECTION TO READ AN EXCERPT FROM BLOOD KNOT!

Words from the Witches Journal

I have a large wooden cupboard in the alcove off my living room where I keep my 'witchy' stuff ~ glass jars of herbs, scrolls of paper recording my thoughts and intentions bound with ribbon, dried flowers from a bouquet that meant much to me, a sleepy dragon, a set of runes hand painted on crystals. I took out the box containing loose printed pages and started to leaf through the pile.

2007

Midsummer's eve – procession up Waseley Hills. Length of ribbon to focus on connection to whole and to earth. How can we bring goodwill and generosity of spirit into world? Tie ribbon to wrist. These notes were brief, almost cryptic, just enough to acknowledge that we gathered to celebrate.

2009

Summer solstice ritual

After casting the circle and calling the quarters, we took time to consider the meaning of the solstice, so close to midsummer's day. We acknowledged that the sun rises high into the summer sky and lights our way even into the night. We acknowledged the role to be played by different people in our world, bringing together strength and tenderness, vigour and compassion.

We honoured the earth itself. We were surrounded by tall trees in the woods where we were gathered in ritual. There was a clear sky above us and cool dirt beneath our feet; we were connected to our space. We were gathered to celebrate the time of brightness, when the Oak king is at his height, yet we also acknowledged that it is the time of his death leading to his rebirth in the darkness of winter. His strength is waning and he is challenged by the Holly king. The king of the waxing year and the king of the waning year must do battle.

Our chosen actors stepped forward. And battle ensued. A lot of effort and grunting went into it but no person was harmed in the making of this ritual. We crowned the Holly king. We remembered that as it is with the Holly and Oak kings, so it is with us. Our year grows then falls, then grows again, renewed by the winter ice and storms to blossom in the warmth of summer which brings the fruits of autumn. We had our own chant; it was simple but we found it effective.

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AIR BLOWING
EARTH GROWING
FIRE FLAMING
WATER FLOWING
SPIRIT RISING

We draped ourselves in ribbons that bound us together, focussing on what we can give back to the earth, to the community, to our friends and family.

'MAY THE STRENGTH OF THE CIRCLE THAT IS CAST, NEVER BE UNBROKEN.
WE JOYFULLY UNCAST THE CIRCLE AND TAKE AWAY WITH US THE LOVE AND PEACE AND PROMISES WE FOUND TONIGHT.'

2008

That year we spent time considering ritual, the origin, the meaning and its place in our lives. We looked at common rituals in our society – New Year when we drink in the new year, sing Auld Lang Syne and open the doors. We celebrate birthdays with the ritual of cake, candles and song. We have scripted rituals for weddings and funerals.

A ritual can be a celebration or a remembrance; it can mark the passing of time, it can be solemn or festive. There are usually things in common – a gathering of family and friends often with food and drink. Some occasions have a similar format where people know what to expect. It helps people to feel included and part of the group.



How does this relate to our pagan rituals? We felt that our rituals had a basic format. Although the details changed from one to the next, we would all recognise that we were in ritual. We all had a role to play within ritual so we were fully included. Most rituals are a celebration, giving thanks for what has passed and what is to come.

To make sure we were meeting everyone's needs we asked some questions to explore what people liked – and didn't. Here is one set of answers:

QUESTION - All the rituals that we do have some things in common eg opening the circle, cakes and ale, calling the quarters. Which part of the ritual do I like the most and why?

ANSWER - Calling the quarters because it's the bit we know best! Cakes and ale.

QUESTION - Some of the rituals that we do have something a bit different eg the Crone ceremony at the Yule ritual. Which bits do I remember that I liked? Why?

ANSWER - Crone ceremony – very visual and symbolic.

QUESTION - Some rituals take place at different times of day, and in different places. Which time and place do I prefer? Why?

ANSWER - Night time – dramatic, out of safety of daylight

QUESTION - What makes the ritual special? What lets me leave with a happy heart? Why?

ANSWER - When everyone seems involved and you can feel contentment/excitement.

We created a ritual record sheet so that we could record individual rituals and see if any patterns developed. We used this information to shape the rituals to meet everyone's needs. Here is a record of an Imbolc ritual.

We recorded the type of ritual, the time of day - 7am - the length - 1 ½ hours - and the weather and location - beautiful, cold, in the woods.

We listed what we had used in the ritual. The sheet I am looking at said we'd used a welcome chant, a cast the circle chant, our own created anointing oil, assorted crystals and incense.

We raised energy to charge crystals for people to carry away with them. It was noted that this was a very hands-on ritual by everyone. There was a beautiful sunrise.



There was an interesting note at the end in the space for ‘outcome’. Three people present ‘had immediate result.’ One person’s crystal ‘went astray’ and one crystal was ‘confused’. It was far too long ago for me to remember the incident that led to these comments.

Overall we agreed on what works in ritual – performing as a group, everyone being involved, and simply being together and working towards change.

I miss those days when group rituals were a regular occurrence. Covid, health, people moving away, taking different paths in life: all these affect the group as a whole. Yet change is the one constant, and we are left with memories of good times.

Portland Jones
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Herblore of the Summer Solstice

Samantha Teves

Almost all the earth-focused celebrations honor plant lore and herbs, but the most plant-plentiful is the lore that dances in this summer celebration.

The celebration of the most sunshine-filled day of the year beckons an appreciation of the blooms, fertile and at their peak. The herbal lore of this special day is rich, woven with history and myth, stories from cultures that harvested specifically on this day, and lore of flowers used for decorative and spiritual purposes. In many parts of the world, this solstice was/is traditionally the perfect moment for harvesting herbs, in recognition that many medicinal plants are peaking around this time. The abundant sunlight encourages plants into a state of “optimum photosynthesis” making them potent and delightfully powerful.

In some herbalism traditions, this solstice is traditionally a time for gathering the “above ground” medicinal plants (medicinal roots are gathered later). Summer favorites gathered here include: St. John’s wort, chamomile, rosemary, basil, sage, calendula, lavender, fennel, thyme, verbena and elder. There are so many herbs that sing the song of summer, but we will focus on three specific herbs and their magical associations with this wondrous time of year.

St. John’s Wort, an herb of fire and Sun blooming in butter-yellow flowers. An herb with lore rich with protective and uplifting warrior spirit, one that was used to ward off illness, shield from stray lightening, and divine prophecies of future lovers. St. John’s Wort is an essential herb to connect to the Summer Solstice. This herb was believed to be at its peak healing power beneath the sun of midsummer, where it was gathered in ceremony (some swear by collecting it in the nude for peak magical purposes!) and hung to dry over the midsummer fires.



In some cultures, this flaxen flower was included in hand-woven crowns that would be worn in revelry all day and burned in the bonfires over the short night. This herb was said to source its great healing power directly from the sun, making it perfect to adorn hair, hang from windows and doors, or be placed under pillows, keeping the Sun close by to chase away any darkness on this special day. This beautiful herb is joy, dispelling the shadows and bringing warmth. If you harvest this cheery little flower this solstice, dry it and keep it close, the Sun’s power always tangible, warming the heart, even on the darkest of nights.

Mugwort, an herb of the Moon, that beautifully symbolizes the shift into watery Cancer season that accompanies this solstice. The lore associated with this plant during this solstice time are interwoven in its powerful magic. It was believed that over this short night, mugwort could be used to reveal what was once hidden. Mugwort was believed to increase dreams, sometimes sipped as a tea or burned in ritual to draw sight.

For the midsummer celebrations, this silver-leaved herb was added (in huge amounts as its very easy to harvest this time of year!) to batches of beer or mead, encouraging the psychic, lust-increasing and protective properties to flow through these ancient celebrations! Mugwort’s addition was also likely used to banish unwanted influences or shadowy beasts lurking at the edges of the Sun celebrations.

These distinctive leaves were also woven into the crowns of Midsummer, protecting from the spirits that are said to wander freely on this special night. If you gather mugwort this solstice, try placing a few leaves beneath the pillow for dreamworking, or even burning a small amount before bed.



Mullein, mighty and easy to spot stalk, interlaid with golden flowers, an herb of the fire that was often made into primitive candles for illuminating late night witchery. Also called throughout folklore: Shepard's torch, candlewick plant, velvet back, and Jupiter's Staff. This special herb is used for instilling courage, protection from wild beasts or unwanted entities, and love divinations. It was written that mullein was added to the bonfire on Midsummer's eve to ward evil away from the jovial celebration.

On Midsummer's Day, bundles of mullein were lit to make a fire and the smoke was shouted in and leaped through, to will protection over flocks and herds. Those Half-burnt stalks were then hung in the stables to keep that protection over the livestock. Dry mullein that has been harvested under the peak Sun to make "hags tapers" for the Samhain celebrations in the fall, as these herbs will carry the light of the longest day into the chilly months.

A day of powerful Earth connection, the Summer Solstice asks us to find our sense of joy. We walk with our inner power recharged, we move with love, we dance without fear or worry. The Sun will shine longer on this day, a moment of triumph, chins to the warming sky. A moment to lean into the illumination and harness that sense of fertility, ever potent and ever reborn. Magic is here, with the fae and other earthen spirits said to walk with us, it's a time of complete vibrancy and restoration; intoxicating and warm, honoring our Earth and our own cycles.

Whether you harvest, burn, or just enjoy the beauty of the herbal burst of this time of year, be sure take a moment to feel that earthen magic, there is a story woven within every blooming bud.

Use caution approaching/working with herbs you're unfamiliar with, not all herbs are suitable for consumption, and some may be ill advised for certain medicine-takers or people with medical conditions.

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A GHOST IN THE ATTIC? FAIRY BEC



I'm going to start with a personal experience. I used to live in York and it is thought of by many as the most haunted city in Britain. I saw many spiritual signs and apparitions in my time there but the one that stuck the most was this one:-

My friend and I were walking down the river-side to the pub. As we were walking, I saw a woman with what I thought was a hoody on with the hood up darting around looking scared and as if she was running, hiding, running, hiding. I turned to my friend and said "What is that woman doing?"

His response was "What woman?"

I looked back and she had gone. I thought nothing much of it until about ten years later when my Mum handed me a book and said "I thought you might like this as it is set in York."

Well, to cut a long story short (pardon the pun!) the book was about a character who moved into her deceased Aunt's house in York. The move triggered episodes of past life regression in which she was running by the river, escaping someone who was trying to kill her. Descriptions of what the character went through were exactly what I had seen!

WHAT ARE GHOSTS THOUGH?

I thought I would write this article as I seem to be having multiple conversations about ghosts at the minute. Each person I speak to has a different idea or slant on what we traditionally assume is someone who has passed on but whom is stuck in some sort of limbo.

I personally don't have a single fixed view on what a ghost is. I believe that some are spirits or 'life sparks' in limbo. Some are imprints of extreme emotional energy that have stayed behind in a particular place, like a trapped energy, and some are accidental glimpses of dimensional worlds beyond the 3D that we humans are able to see.

I believe in re-incarnation, but I also have a theory that there is a set amount of these 'life sparks' and they are constantly recycled in a birth, death, rebirth process. In my opinion, the 'life sparks' may transfer to any sentient being in the rebirth process.

I have been asked before why we don't see Stone Age ghosts or Dinosaur ghosts. My theory is that there are only so many 'life sparks' in the world and some of the 'ghosts' we see are those waiting to be placed. Therefore, there is only so long that they will be around for in limbo as no 'life spark' is wasted.

Other types of apparitions could even be glimpses of other dimensional worlds. Humans can only perceive a 3D world and there are times when we catch a brief sighting of things that we cannot explain. We may dismiss these episodes as UFOs or ghosts. I believe that there are moments when 4D or higher entities pop into our vision through some sort of glitch or moment of heightened perception beyond the 3D.

Are ghosts attachments? I believe that attachments are energy pockets rather than people who have passed on and are waiting to be assigned their new lives.

ATTACHMENTS TO BUILDINGS

I feel that the 'ghosts' we see in buildings or specific places that play out like a trapped movie clip on repeat are trapped pockets of energy. When these moments are traced back (e.g. the plague girl looking out of the window from her bricked up room in York) there has often been a severe level of trauma in the person's life at the moment that we see playing out.

ATTACHMENTS TO PEOPLE

I have been asked to cleanse and bless several houses and more often than not found that the energies within the house are actually attached to the inhabitants. Often, the inhabitant themselves have had an experience during which this type of energy has attached to them, or they have created it themselves in some way.

I regularly speak with people who have always had spiritual activity within their homes, and this is an indicator of attachments to people for me.

ATTACHMENTS TO OBJECTS

I believe that spirits can attach themselves to objects. Again, this could be due to trauma or other moments of extreme emotion.

This is where I think that we get the concept of ghosts in the attic. The items in there will be kept for one of two reasons: -

- 1) They will be of high financial value
- 2) They will be of high sentimental value

The items of sentimental value will have these strong emotional energy imprints on them.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN LIMBO?

My opinion on this is that it totally depends on the individual. Some are stronger or perhaps even stubborn such as my grandmother. She liked to know what was going on in life and I don't think that has changed in death. At the age of 2 my son named his toy dolly "Sheila" which was my grandmother's name. I have only referred to her as "Mummy's Nana" or "Nanna's Mummy" to him, so this was total confirmation that she decided to stick around for a bit to see what was going on before her rebirth.

WHY DO 'SPIRITUAL PEOPLE' SEE 'GHOSTS' MORE OFTEN?

My opinion is that those of us who live more spiritual lives are more adept at relaxing ourselves, raising our vibrations and accepting the nuances of what is around us. When we are open to things that we cannot identify with our human 5 senses, our 6th sense comes into play. This might simply be as an empath feeling the energies of another or it could be seeing the 'strings' of other dimensions popping briefly into our 'sight'.



I would be fascinated to hear your ghost stories if you are willing to share them with me:- rubek@outlook.com

Wise Words from the Old Crone

The Power of my Crystals

I have always loved crystals and rocks and even pebbles and stones. As a student I studied Geography and was fascinated by physical geography and geology.

As a youngster I trawled the beaches of my native Lancashire not for shells as many people do, but for pebbles and rocks.

My parents encouraged my love of stones and pebbles when they built their driveway with paving slabs. They laid two rows of slabs at least a slab width apart, perfect width for the wheels of a vehicle. All along the centre they set, in concrete, large pebbles picked up from the beaches at Fairhaven, Lytham, during family picnics.

Each pebble or stone had been carefully examined for unusual markings and colour and set with great care and thought. Although the family house was sold many years ago now, after the passing of my parents, the driveway is still there and still looking wonderful.

When I was in Australia I didn't buy lots of souvenirs but brought home a very small collections of stones.

A couple of pebbles from the Murrey River in South Australia, stones from a beach in Queensland, from Bondi Beach in New South Wales and Fremantle in Western Australia.

They are scattered about my house on various small altars. To me rocks and pebbles are just as interesting as my crystals even though they



may not carry the healing properties, they are still born of many years and pressures.

I have an even larger collection of crystals and prefer my crystals to be in the raw natural state. I find these hold more power and energy than tumbled stones, although once they are tumbled you can see the colours and striations to perfection. I do have several flatter oval and heart shaped tumbled crystals which I find are very soothing and grounding and lovely to carry around the house when I need to think or solve a problem.

I love rough crystals best of all and do believe that whilst they hold a stronger power than polished or tumbled stones, a strong vibration is not always a requirement. I do have a wide collection of tumbled and polished stones as well as there are times when a more gentle vibration is needed and polished stones certainly can offer this. I like to use tumbled and polished stones when mediating and spell weaving and do offer these more times than not to friends who need an uplift.

I keep clusters of raw crystals of different shapes and pointed crystals on my altar behind which is a huge amethyst geode I bought in Glastonbury a few years ago. I change the smaller crystals as often as I feel like it and change the rooms they are in. Somehow I feel this gives them extra energy or perhaps it is just different energies.

My favourite crystal and the one I call my 'homey' is Rose Quartz sometimes known as the 'Love Stone'. On my very first wedding anniversary, on holiday in Cornwall, my husband bought me a Rose Quartz ring set in silver. I treasured it and wore it every day for many years. Two years later, back in Cornwall, he bought me the matching rose quartz drop earrings as well. When wearing Rose Quartz I always felt, and still feel, safe and calm due to its perfect vibrations.

Rose Quartz is a light pink colour and represents love, harmony, calmness and compassion. It is a very feminine crystal which supports relationships and brings happiness and contentment. It is closely associated with the heart Chakra.

On a more scientific level Rose Quartz is of the quartz mineral which has a translucent quality and lustre with a crystalline hexagonal system.

In ancient Egypt and Rome, Rose Quartz was popular as funerary masks and has been found in many tombs. It was thought to clear the complexion and flatten wrinkles. (I must say that I have not found that as yet but perhaps I need to use it more.) It certainly has been well known for its healing properties





My second 'homey' crystal has to be Amethyst. It is one of the most valuable of the quartz group and the official birthstone of the month of February known in some circles as 'The Bishops Stone' as it is still worn by Catholic Bishops. In this instance it symbolises humility, sincerity and piety as well as wisdom.

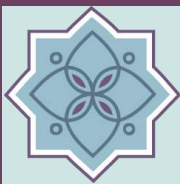
There are too many crystals to mention here and to find your own 'homeys' it is just a matter of seeing what you need and what works for you.

Do remember to cleanse your crystals every now and again to revitalise them. I tend to use a cycle of the moon to cleanse mine as I am loathe to soak them in water. Water can dissolve some crystals so you do need to be very careful indeed. I also use sound, such as a clear bell or small gong which works just as well.

Blessed Be

The Old Crone
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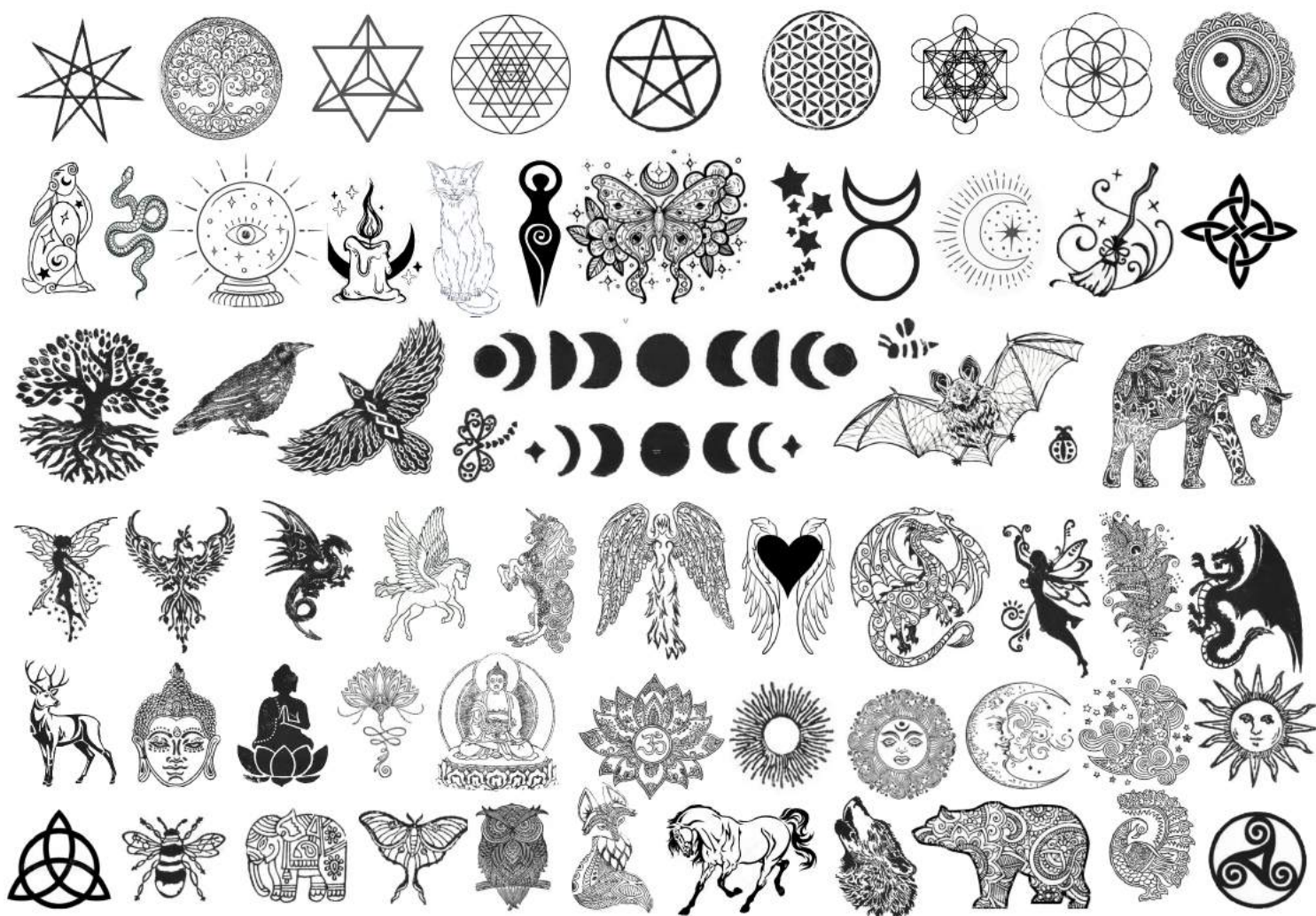


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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MAGIC WHAT MAKES US BELIEVE?

Elisa M Gray

Have you ever wondered why some people believe in magic? To some, magic is a thing of pure fantasy, while to others, a real way of being, where practicing witchcraft is seen to change peoples lives, with the ability to manifest desires and change the future: but is it actual magic or the belief in magic that affects this change?

In the field of Psychology, great importance has been placed on the notion of 'faith'. Sigmund Freud, the Austrian psychoanalyst, is considered to be the most influential in Psychological theories regarding faith.

Freud developed ideas on the 'underlying motives that shape human behaviour and states of mind, applying these to his study of faith.' Freud wanted to know what wishes, needs and conflicts were prevalent in what believers call faith. He was fascinated with the motives of individuals, which would of course differ from person to person, but he could see common ways of thinking across many individuals.

Freud's ideas regarding faith centre on the individual's wish to have a 'protective father figure' with whom he, or she, can feel identified. Freud here describes what people actually gain from faith, as follows:

'It gives them information about the origin and coming into existence of the universe, it assures them of its protection and of ultimate happiness in the ups and downs of life and it directs their thoughts and actions by precepts which it lays down with its whole authority. Thus it fulfils three functions. ... /...it satisfies the human thirst for knowledge; it soothes the fear that men feel of the dangers and vicissitudes of life, when it assures them of a happy ending and offers them comfort in unhappiness...[and] it issues precepts and lays down prohibitions and restrictions.'

Freud went on to explain that what unites these three aspects of religion, which are 'instruction, consolation and ethical demands,' is the fact that they are all tied to the child's view of his or her father. Freud wrote that the God, or creator whom believers call 'father', 'really is the father, with all the magnificence in which he once appeared to the small child'. He created us, he protected us and he taught us to restrict our desires.' Freud explains that when we grow up, in many ways we still remain helpless in the face of the worlds dangers, and we recognise that the 'father' cannot really protect us from these dangers. Thus, Freud explains, the believer,

'harks back to the mnemonic image of the father whom in his childhood he so greatly overvalued. He exalts the image into a deity and makes it into something contemporary and real. The effective strength of this mnemonic image and the persistence of his need for protection, jointly sustain his belief in God.'

In other words, as humans, we need to believe in something, in order to give us feelings of well being and make us feel less alone and afraid in an uncontrollable world.

Belief in organised religion per se, is changing. More people are turning away from traditional organised 'sky' religions and opting instead, for what are essentially 'earth' based magico-religions. So, the question is, why do a growing proportion of the Western population believe in magic, instead of God?

In the US from 1990 to 2008, Trinity College in Connecticut ran three large reorient surveys which have shown that belief in Wicca grew tremendously over this period. From an estimated 8,000 Wiccans in 1990 there were 34,000 practitioners by 2008. Witchcraft, the belief in a form of 'magic', is part of the Wiccan faith.

In the UK, the Neo-pagan movement is primarily represented by Wicca and Witchcraft religions, Druidry, and Heathenry. According to the 2011 UK Census, there are roughly 53,172 people who identify as Pagan in England, and 3,448 in Wales, as well as 11,026 Wiccans in England and 740 in Wales. Deity worship could be seen as essentially swapping one God for another, but in the West, the practice of witchcraft involving the use of magic is on the rise. Of course in poorer countries of the world, actual witch hunts are still taking place, with witchcraft still viewed as harmful.



Historian Wolfgang Behringer is an expert on the topic of witchcraft and recently stated,

'I am now convinced that more people have been killed for witchcraft in the 20th century than in the entire 300-year period of witch hunts in Europe. If you look at the figures in Tanzania, for example, which are now also being published by human rights organisations, the victims of these killings number in the tens of thousands. In Tanzania between 1960 and 2000, about 40,000 people accused of witchcraft were murdered. Witchcraft is not an offence in Tanzanian criminal law, but it is often village courts that decide that certain people should be killed. These are not just arbitrary decisions, there are also structures behind them. Therefore, I have concluded that the persecution of witches is not a historical problem, but a serious problem of today.'

In the West, notions of witchcraft have changed; rather than burning the evil magic users, witchcraft is celebrated as a form of feminism. As most of those executed for witchcraft during both the Spanish Inquisition and the European Witch Trials were women, often old and unattractive, the suggestion of 'gendercide' has been put forward, with some believing that the witch trials were a patriarchal way to control and 'cull' women, using them as scapegoats in times of war, famine and natural disaster.

This is all well and good, but taking out the feminist element, and the deaths occurring in other countries, we still have a large increase in numbers of people believing in magic.

Magic began in the ancient East as a divine gift from the Gods. Men used magic in the temples, the magi (the origin of the word Magic) using magic as a sacred gift. In Ancient Egypt, Magic was a normal part of everyday life with the God Heka being so much a part of the people's lives that they did not worship him in a temple, but merely by existing, as they owed their life to him. The principles of Magic and medicine walked hand in hand, people often preferring the magic user to the actual 'medical' doctor. Magic created life, walked beside you through life and was there to preside over your death and afterlife.

In Greece, men carried 'curse tablets' to protect their possessions, and in pre Christian Britain, the cunning folk, both men and women, were paid for their art and hexed and healed, without any repercussions.

'Black' magic was seemingly frowned upon in the East, but a difference was seen between magic to heal and to harm, unlike by the eyes of the Catholic Church, who, with the publication of the Malleus Malificarum which encouraged the clergy to change the act of witchcraft from an ancient practice to heresy, began to burn 'witches', wether a harmful magic user, or not.

With that said, why is witchcraft so appealing?

One possibility, could be the notion of power. Witches had to be burned to end their evil lives. Women who identify as witches now may see this as an indication of how powerful these women were thought to be; especially those women who have psychic abilities, or are in some way 'fay' or incredibly astute.

Also, where one does, more do – covens, magical gatherings, magical societies etc create a sense of belonging. This involves more than simply being acquainted with other people. It is instead centred on gaining acceptance, attention, and support from members of the group, as well as providing the same attention to other members.

According to Abraham Maslow, there are basic needs that we need to meet before we can move towards self actualisation, a sense of belonging and feeling loved, being one of them.



Of course there are those who still achieve this sense of community from organised religion,

but with negative attitudes from some members of society, in some cases there is a stigma attached to Christianity. The evil stigma once associated with witchcraft has, with the help of Wicca and Goddess worship, given way to an association of power, where as Christianity is, in some instances, moving from an image of power, to one associated with oppression and sometimes even ridicule.

So does this increasing belief in witchcraft mean that magic works? There are two ways of looking at this. Firstly. Does it matter? If it empowers women and is a sign post on the road to self help, then surely that is a good thing. Secondly, the more people that believe in magic, then by the power of numbers, the more the magic will work?

It has actually been scientifically proven that people who believe in luck tend to have better fortune than those who do not. In 2010 a professor at the University of Cologne indicated that those who accepted the idea of good luck actually performed better in a test setting. Psychologist Lynn Damisch gave test subjects a golf ball, and told half of them it was a 'lucky golf ball.' The other half of the participants were not told the ball was lucky, just that it was the same ball everyone else had been using.



The group which had been given a 'lucky golf ball' actually scored far higher on their putts than the group that had just a plain old golf ball. The groundbreaking study, which included several other similar experiments, concluded that 'Activating a superstition boosts participants' confidence in mastering upcoming tasks, which in turn improves performance.'

Some traditions will tell you that if an individual doesn't believe in a concept or idea, it has no power over them. That is why many people claim that they're not worried about being

cursed or hexed because they don't believe in the power of negative magic. There are other traditions that hold to the idea that magic is magic, and its efficacy has nothing to do at all with whether people believe in it or not.

Louisiana Voodoo and its cousin Hoodoo are prime examples of this. There is the theory that this magic relies on 'mind over matter' that the magic involves ways to frighten people to death, building up over time. Then there is the use of the Voodoo doll that is believed to work, via 'sympathetic magic', whether a person knows that they are being victimised, or not. In fact, curse magic is often believed to work better if the 'victim' doesn't know about it.

There are, of course, a lot of racist influences in western ideas regarding Voodoo, to the point where any magical 'poppet' whether for healing or harm, made by whatever culture, is now referred to as a 'Voodoo doll.'

Thinking back to Freud's theory of faith and the theory of belonging, does a belief in Magic or magical communities have the same effect on the believer as religion? I think so, yes. Witchcraft is not a religion, it is a set of beliefs and practices, but Wicca is. Wicca is a religion that is increasing in popularity and has changed many stereo types regarding witchcraft because of the Wiccan rede, Do what you will, so long as it harms none.

A belief in Magic over Christianity may seem unconventional but we must remember that Christianity itself was once considered a suspicio and was not the organised religion at the time of its birth, with Christians then persecuted by the Romans.

Faith in Magic and magico-religions gives the believer everything that Christianity once gave them; security, a sense of belonging and a support network and there is nothing at all wrong with that.

As to whether the modern witch is performing curse magic or causing harm, it is doubtful. A belief in witchcraft is something that practitioners are proud of, not ashamed of; but ultimately, that's a question that only the witch finder could answer...

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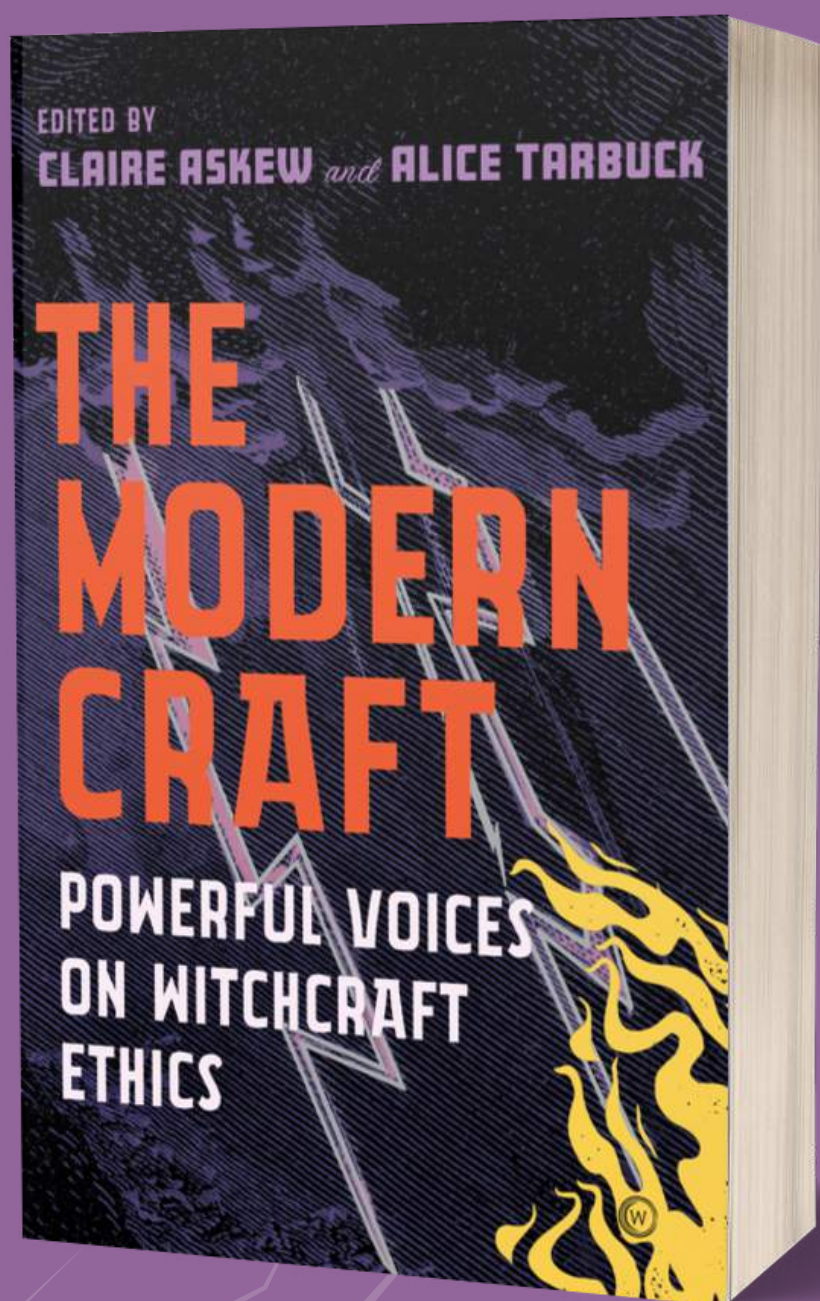
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The Summoning

Ella Low

Radna heard the call, and felt the compelling pull. He had to leave his lair and manifest himself in physical form (although it hurt a lot, and it wiped him out for days after). The girl was summoning him. Again. This was the third time this week, and it was only Thursday. **Dark Lord help me**, he muttered under his breath.

“I am here, mistress Emily, and Radna is my name, at your service”, again, he thought ruefully whilst he flamboyantly bowed to her, with feigned deference.

“Hm, what took you so long?”, the girl pursed her lips, without even looking at him - her thumbs were dancing on her mobile phone’s screen, tap-tapping. Emily was barely 15, had freckles, wore braces and had full control over a demon. Namely Radna. Him.

“I did come as soon as I heard your call, ...Mistress”, bowed again Radna. He still struggled to utter the word “Mistress” in front of her, even after all this time. He struggled, of course, because he had only so many gritted teeth, and only so much spite and anger to pronounce it with. (Count to ten, breathe... he thought) “What is it to be today, o the great one, another zit to be vanquished? Or is it Algebra homework?”

He was seething. Nobody could really blame him for being so furious. Him, the Fierce Radna, torturer of souls, great demon of the Lower Hell, older than the Universe, at the beck and call of a... snotty little girl. It was humiliating. It was excruciating. He knew the other demons were laughing behind his back. He was losing his reputation, bit by bit, chipped away by her each and every summoning, by her stupid little chores she had for him... And she wore braces. And she had freckles, for Darkness’ SAKE!

Alas, he couldn’t fight it. He was helpless. She had that wretched amulet, always around her neck on a chain – and for as long as that was the case, he belonged to her. At her beck and bloody call, he lamented. Yes, he tried (and failed) numerous times before to trick her into taking the amulet off. To no avail though: she became his owner when she found the damn old trinket, and decided to wear it. Previous owners were a lot kinder, Radna remembered bitterly – they usually had their simple and predictable wishes, like extreme riches, social status, romantic partners. Very... low-maintenance. Mind you, they were also a lot older than her, you could say even wiser, in a way... Perhaps less self-entitled, too? Masters – and indeed ...mistresses these days aren’t what they once were, Radna mused ruefully.

“Today I would like you to sort out my socks”, Emily’s prissy voice interrupted his reminiscing, as she was playing with the silver amulet hanging from her neck. “In colour order”, the girl blinked, flashing a sadistic little smile.

“Done”, Radna said, as a bit more of him died inside, after he used his mighty demonic powers to alter not only the space, but the very essence of the sock drawer. Because, after all, what’s a most powerful demon to do on a Thursday afternoon, for hell’s sake??? (Breathe, be patient, he told himself, breathe, count to ten).

“Would you like me to sort out your jewellery too now, Mistress? Perhaps to in-

clude the lovely amulet you currently wear, o great one?" he smiled, slyly. Well, no harm in trying, he thought.

"Ha ha ha, nice try, Demon", the girl chuckled in amusement. "You're too cute, always thinking that you can make me take it off... aww". There! That patronising tone. Radna felt his blood boiling. "Very well, Mistress" he bowed, doing his best to hide his seething anger, "In this case, may I be excused now?" Not that I usually sit with my feet up, waiting for your call, he silently added. He was busy. His workload in Hell was... well... diabolical. Nobody had time for going up and down, up and down, at this little girl's every whim.

"Hmmm... Let's see, what else..." Emily looked around the room, searching for other ways of destroying his pride. Of killing him slowly. And painfully. "Ah! I know!" she clapped her hands in victory. Uh-oh, I know that look, thought Radna. "How about Margot?! We haven't done anything to that little maggot turd for a while, have we?" Emily's eyes lit up with excitement. No, we haven't, poor Margot-Maggot. And you can't live with yourself, if you don't torment your poor little sister every other day, can you? Radna's heart sank.

"Well! What shall it be today for the Maggot? Mmmm how about..." Emily took a moment to think, scrunching her face, "How about... a big fat tripping down the stairs!" she exclaimed, excitedly. "At school! In view of all of her friends!! Flashing knickers, and everything!" The evil little chuckle gave Radna the chills.

"Of course, Mistress, but are you sure this is what you want? Maggot... err Margot IS your little sister, and she loves you, she..."

"Bup bup bup!" she interrupted him with her index finger in the air, which she brought slowly to her lips: "NO. ARGUING."

"Yes.... Mistress" Damn it! Damn YOU! Radna could scream with anger and frustration. "As you wish... Mistress".

This was Radna's least favourite type of job. Emily had a profound disdain for her little sister, and she used him now to cause Margot a plethora of accidents, misfortunes and humiliations on a regular basis. His soul died a bit each and every time he had to be the agent of Emily's sadism. Margot was... innocent. She was sweet. And she adored her big sister. And the more she loved Emily, the more Emily hated her. Poor thing, she definitely deserved better, Radna was sure of it. HE deserved better! Aaarghhhhh! He screamed inside. He felt so ...dirty. He didn't want to think about it. He most certainly didn't want to talk about it.

A couple of weeks passed, and Radna hadn't heard the summon. Not that he missed it, or Emily, for that matter. But this silence.... This silence is suspect, he couldn't shake the feeling that something was brewing. Emily still had the amulet, and she was well, as far as he could tell. She was working on something. She was planning and scheming... I wonder what she's got in store? But Radna didn't have the chance to finish his thought, and Emily summoned him. Aaarghh, damn it!

"I am here, mistress Emily, and Radna is my name, at your service. You called?" the fiery halo materialised in Emily's pink bedroom.

Emily had a serious look on her face. Uh-oh, Radna felt like a school boy in the headmaster's office, about to get a severe reprimand.

“Yes, I have. Duh. I call, you come”, said Emily matter of fact. “I had a thought” she continued. Here we go, I thought I could smell burning. “You are obligated to fulfil my every wish, correct?” Don’t I know it, he nodded bitterly. “Well, how about we do away with the middle man?”

“Sorry, the middle what? ...Mistress?” What the hell is she on about, are we doing riddles now?

Emily rolled her eyes with exaggerated impatience.

“I have power over you. YOU do everything I want.”

No kidding. As if I needed reminding.

“How about YOU give ME the power to do what YOU do for me ME?”

Huh?

“Mistress Emily... just to clarify... You want me to make you... someone like... Me??”

Semantics: very important.

“Yes, exactly that.” Emily nodded resolutely.

Oooh, interesting, verrrry interesting indeed, thought Radna for a moment. Oh, you clever little thing, oh yes, how didn’t I think about it?? It’s perfect, it’s genius, of course...

“Of course, Mistress Emily. Streamlining the process is undoubtedly the way to go” he said innocently. He could hardly contain his rising excitement. Keep it cool, keep it calm, don’t rejoice just yet...

“Exactly. So, chop-chop. Now, if you please.” Not that anything he had to do for her EVER pleased him. Only this time... Radna, you old sod, the wheel has finally turned for you! With a beaming smile, Radna bowed (for the last time – yes!!!) and snapped his fingers. And just like that, in an instant, his torment came to an end. Emily got pulled into the depths of Hell, a demon herself, just like Radna, with incontestable powers. (Because, you know – semantics: very important.) Radna was free. FREE!!! At last.

“Emily, I miss you” Margot’s little face was blotched from crying. Her fingers wrapped around her big sister’s old necklace she now wore. That’s all they found of Emily. Just her necklace. As if ...the ground had swallowed her.

Emily heard the call, and felt the compelling pull. She had to leave her lair and manifest herself in physical form (although it hurt a lot, and it wiped her out for days after). The girl was summoning her. Again. This was the third time this week, and it was only Thursday.

Dark Lord help me, she muttered under her breath.

Sex Magick.

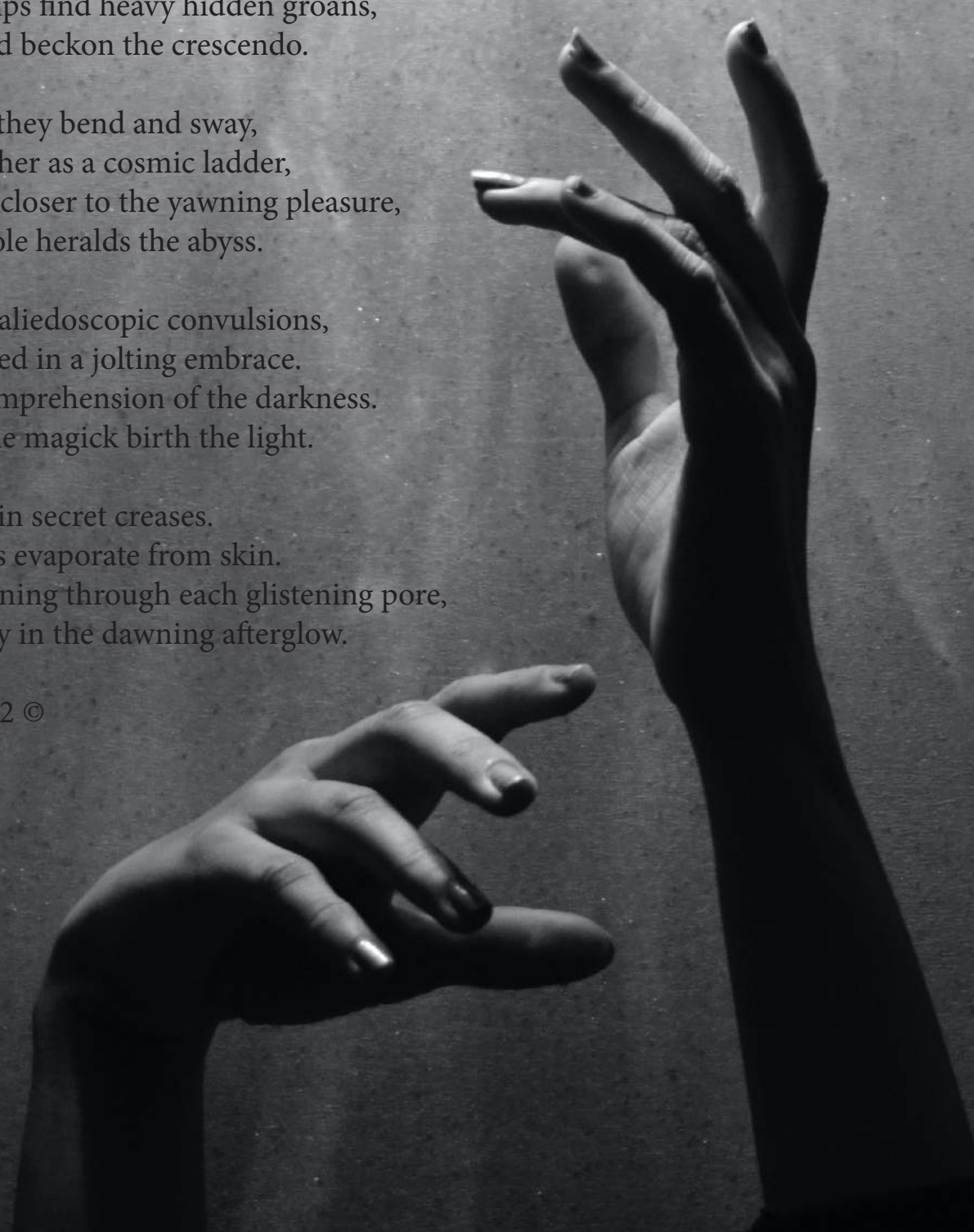
Waves begin to break in rhythmic swells,
With backs arching in tightened awe.
Searching fingertips find heavy hidden groans,
As ankles grip and beckon the crescendo.

Intertwined still, they bend and sway,
Each using the other as a cosmic ladder,
Climbing up and closer to the yawning pleasure,
A purple wormhole heralds the abyss.

Falling through kaliedoscopic convulsions,
An eternity cloaked in a jolting embrace.
There's a quiet comprehension of the darkness.
It's serves to let the magick birth the light.

Lovers folded up in secret creases.
Breathless prayers evaporate from skin.
With starlight shining through each glistening pore,
Twisted bodies lay in the dawning afterglow.

Kelly Buchan 2022 ©



An extract from

BLOOD KNOT

Erin Walmsley

Death.

I blink at the tarot card as I gnaw my thumbnail. So a transition's underway. Hardly a surprise, considering how I'm feeling. Like the earth's shifting under my feet.

The Moon.

Things aren't as they seem. No kidding. I bunch my fists, the familiar whoomph of anger igniting in my belly.

"Middy."

The Tower.

Again? That's not good.

"Hey, Middy."

That's not good at all.

"Midnight!"

I jolt and look up, blinking at Celestine. We're like bookends, sitting cross-legged on her bed.

"You ok?" she asks. "Something wrong?" Her eyes flick to the sequence of cards arranged on the duvet between us. It's a simple layout and one of the first I learned—The World Within, The World Without, and The Future.

I give her a tight smile and swallow down a lump of panic. "God, it's hot in here."

I already know the lead-paned window behind me is open as far as it'll go, but I make a show of twisting around to give it a hopeful shove. Our boarding school, Penglegate is only a couple of miles inland from the South West Cornwall coast, so there's often a tangy sea breeze. But today the air's still and heavy. Like all the molecules in the atmosphere are pressing in on me, stopping me from getting my breath. At the top of the East Tower, Celestine's dorm room has large windows on three walls so it's always flooded with light, but it's like a greenhouse on summer days like this.

Thankfully we're allowed to change out of our uniform after the official school day ends, and I always fling off the disgusting green blouse and matching tartan skirt like it's burning me. But this is one of those rare times that I wish all my clothes weren't black. I turn away from the window, plucking the fabric of my vest top away from my skin.

Celestine's shifted position, exposing golden brown knees beneath the hem of her flowery summer dress. "The Tower? That's the third time this week it's come out as a possible future," she says, picking up the card. "And it looks kind of..." she trails off, her throat moving as she swallows.

"Terrifying?" I ask lightly, clasping my hands together to hide how much they're shaking.

Thankfully Celestine's too preoccupied with the card to notice. A sharp line appears between her eyebrows as she takes in all the details—the lightning, the fire. The bodies. "So what does it mean?" Her eyes search mine.

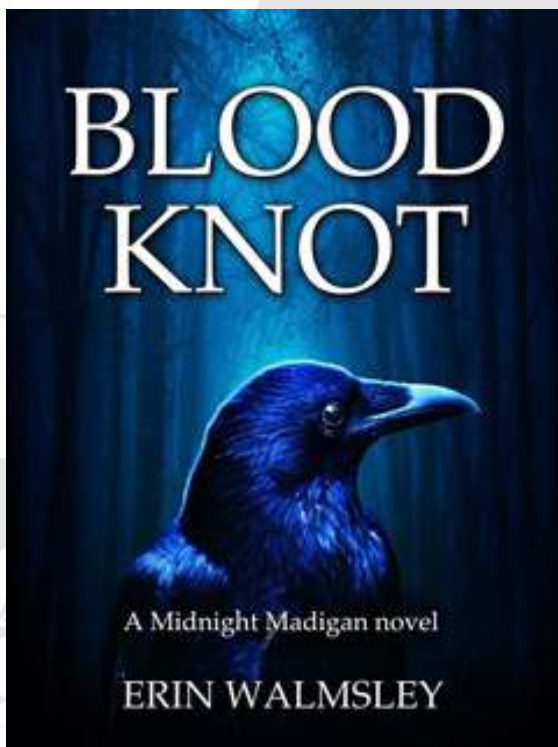
I hesitate. *Basically the destruction of your life as you know it.* I give a twitchy shrug.

"It's a bit like the Death card—it looks worse than it is."

She nods and her face relaxes.

As she reaches for her glass of water on the bedside table, I fidget to disguise the shiver crawling down my back. Only an idiot would ignore a warning like this. Our spirit guides share this kind of information for a reason. Yeah, well. Too bad. I have to know.

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