

Issue 32

October 2022



WITCH

SAMHAIN


Crow's Feet Press







WITCH

Magazine

Featured Artist:
Julie Dhemiah Meacham

Julie is a West Midlands based artist, crafter and creator of magic and mystery, who loves to tap into the unknown using her senses, imagination and wanderlust of the other world's.

www.dhemiah.com



Cover image

Model: @SadieCosplays

Photographer: @PoppyPattersonstudio

Additional art and photos:
Klaire Dawn Ader

All other images belong to the writer/artist, sourced from UnSplash, or are from the public domain.

Dearest Witches,

Welcome to the Samhain issue! I hope this finds you all in good health, and wish you a wonderful Samhain night.

As we turn towards the shadow of Winter, and a time to go inwards, I hope you find some wisdom or comfort within these pages, articles and stories.

Be blessed,

Bekki
Editor



Contact us

editor@witchzine.co.uk

ISSN 2635-2176

www.witchzine.co.uk



WITCH

FEATURED ARTICLES

SAMHAIN - The Time of Mortality and Beyond
- Frances Billinghamurst

Woman the Destroyer - Helen J.R. Bruce

How Do I Know If I'm a Witch? - Deb Robinson

Daily Tarot Journalling - Sadie Miller

A Churchyard Ritual for Samhain - Johnathan Argento

Hex Cat of Berks County PA - Carrie Anderson

Wise Words from the Old Crone

Facing our Mortality - Rebecca Beattie

Stepping Back into Your Power - Fairy Bec

The Witchcrafters Taort Deck Review - Kelly Buchan

What We're Reading - Bekki Milner

Pagan Poetry and Fiction



★
**WITCH
YULE**

Submissions due
16th DECEMBER

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

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

We'd love to hear from you!

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

Samhain Blessings



WITCH
Magazine



EMBERSONGS SERIES - BOOK ONE

EMBERSONG

Inspired by true events

A CHIEF'S DAUGHTER FIGHTS FOR HER CLAN WHO FACE A RELENTLESS FOE MOVING IN TO KILL THEM ALL AND CLAIM THEIR PRECIOUS ISLAND OF MULL. EMBERSONG TAKES US ON A WILD AND SAVAGE JOURNEY WITH A NEW ANGLE ON ROMANCE, HUMOUR AND SUPERNATURAL MYSTERY

WWW.EMBERSONGS.COM

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

Maureen Walton O'Brien
Visual Artist, Canada

O'LAN RUADH & SARAH BERTI

In
collaboration
with



MOON
BOOKS

SAMHAIN

The Time of Mortality and Beyond

Frances Billinghamurst

Amongst the shadows the flickering of lanterns led the way from the roadside, where the cars had been parked, through the woodland. Being an almost moonless night added to the anticipation of what the evening could bring. I found myself blindly following the person in front for I had no sense of direction which wasn't all that surprising since I had only arrived in the country four months earlier.

"And here I am in the forest on the witch's night," I thought to myself.

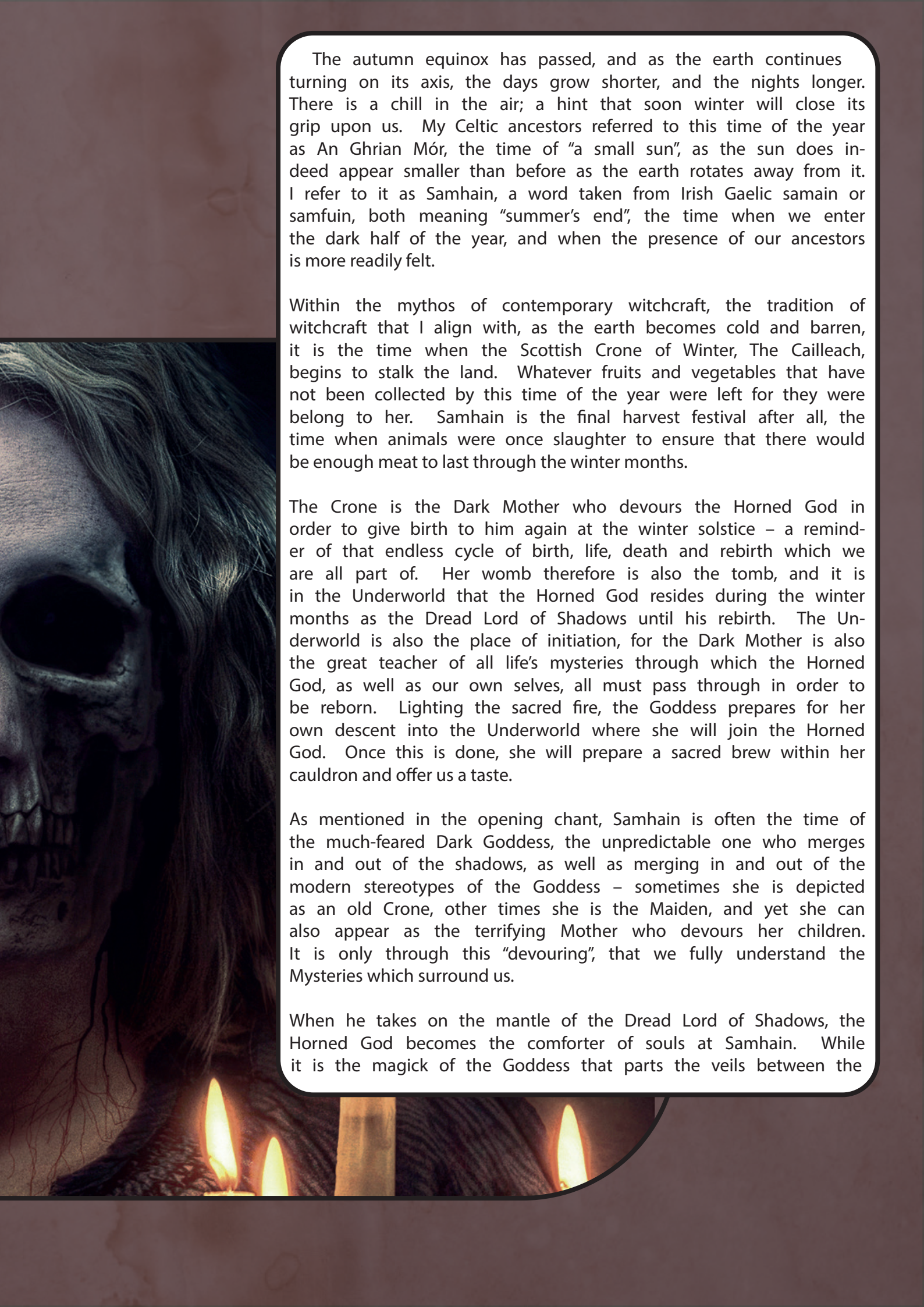
The scent of the fire mixed with frankincense drifted upon the breeze, alerting us that we were close. We were challenged before we could enter the clearing and once a circle was formed, the evening's ritual commenced.

The elemental quarters were called and the God and the Goddess invoked. An owl hooted in the distance as if cementing its approval. Words were spoken, reminding us that this time of the year was associated with death and the thinning of the veil, and then a solemn drumbeat was heard. A hand grabbed mine and the chant began:

*"Hekate, Cerridwen, Dark Mother let us in.
Hekate, Cerridwen, let us be reborn."*

Today, the association of Hekate with dark goddesses, especially crones, at Samhain may be debated. However, it was the early 1990s when I found myself in the middle of some Welsh wood with a group of relative strangers making the Celtic festival of the dead.






The autumn equinox has passed, and as the earth continues turning on its axis, the days grow shorter, and the nights longer. There is a chill in the air; a hint that soon winter will close its grip upon us. My Celtic ancestors referred to this time of the year as An Ghrian Mór, the time of “a small sun”, as the sun does indeed appear smaller than before as the earth rotates away from it. I refer to it as Samhain, a word taken from Irish Gaelic samain or samfuin, both meaning “summer’s end”, the time when we enter the dark half of the year, and when the presence of our ancestors is more readily felt.

Within the mythos of contemporary witchcraft, the tradition of witchcraft that I align with, as the earth becomes cold and barren, it is the time when the Scottish Crone of Winter, The Cailleach, begins to stalk the land. Whatever fruits and vegetables that have not been collected by this time of the year were left for they were belong to her. Samhain is the final harvest festival after all, the time when animals were once slaughter to ensure that there would be enough meat to last through the winter months.

The Crone is the Dark Mother who devours the Horned God in order to give birth to him again at the winter solstice – a reminder of that endless cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth which we are all part of. Her womb therefore is also the tomb, and it is in the Underworld that the Horned God resides during the winter months as the Dread Lord of Shadows until his rebirth. The Underworld is also the place of initiation, for the Dark Mother is also the great teacher of all life’s mysteries through which the Horned God, as well as our own selves, all must pass through in order to be reborn. Lighting the sacred fire, the Goddess prepares for her own descent into the Underworld where she will join the Horned God. Once this is done, she will prepare a sacred brew within her cauldron and offer us a taste.

As mentioned in the opening chant, Samhain is often the time of the much-feared Dark Goddess, the unpredictable one who merges in and out of the shadows, as well as merging in and out of the modern stereotypes of the Goddess – sometimes she is depicted as an old Crone, other times she is the Maiden, and yet she can also appear as the terrifying Mother who devours her children. It is only through this “devouring”, that we fully understand the Mysteries which surround us.

When he takes on the mantle of the Dread Lord of Shadows, the Horned God becomes the comforter of souls at Samhain. While it is the magick of the Goddess that parts the veils between the



worlds it is the Dread Lord of Shadows who connects us with our ancestors, the Mighty Dead, and all other beings who have passed through the veil between the worlds.

In various cultures, a particular spirit or deity can be found who is responsible for guiding the new deceased souls into the Afterlife. Originating from the Greek words *pompos* (meaning "conductor" or "guide") and *psyche* ("breath", "life" or "soul"), a psychopomp is associated with animals such as horses, ravens and crows, dogs, owls and harts.

Within Egyptian mythology it is the jackal headed God, Anpu (Anubis) who not only looked after the deceased's soul by escorting it into the Underworld where it would be weighed against Ma'at's feather of justice, but he also prepared the body, being the god associated with embalming. Other psychopomps include the Greek God Hermes and the Norse Valkyries, who determined what dead warriors would be taken to Valhalla.

A psychopomp also appears within Jungian psychology as a mediator between the conscious and the unconscious realms. In dreams, this being can appear as a totem animal or as some form of wise being that may have shamanistic qualities.

Samhain is a sombre time when we remember and honour those who have died. The veil is at its thinnest between our world of the living and that of the dead. This makes it easier to contact our deceased ancestors, as well as other spirits, during this time of the year. In many cultures, a place is set at the table for deceased ancestors to come and join the feast – the dumb supper, which is held in silence. Alternatively, a candle was lit in the window to ensure that passing spirits would find their way home.

Thoughts readily turn to our ancestors at this time of the year, not only those of our bloodline but also spiritual lineage as well. A simple ancestral altar can be set up that include photographs, fresh flowers, and candles (traditionally blue or white). A small plate or bowl into which offerings can be placed (i.e., if they had a favourite sweet, biscuit or cake, or even had smoked a particular brand of cigar), as well as a glass of fresh water so that your ancestor does not go thirsty, can be added.

Each year around Samhain, my coven specifically honours our ancestors with a special altar set up in the western quarter of the circle. In the centre of the circle is a candle that represents the sacred beacon which lights the way for all those who wish to join with us from the other side. The west was the direction from which, in numerous traditions and cultures, one entered the Underworld. Upon this altar, photographs and mementos of those passed are placed with candles lit to honour their memories, as well as the memories of the "forgotten ones", any ancestors whose names have been lost over time.

From this beacon candle, each person lights a smaller remembrance candle and places it on the ancestor altar in front of their photograph or memento of their ancestor. Taking turns, the following statement, originating from the New Orleans Voodoo Tarot by Louis Martinie and Sallie Ann Glassman, is recited:

To all those whose names are remembered

To all those whose names are forgotten

Lost in the seas of time

To all those whose bones are buried in and upon the Earth

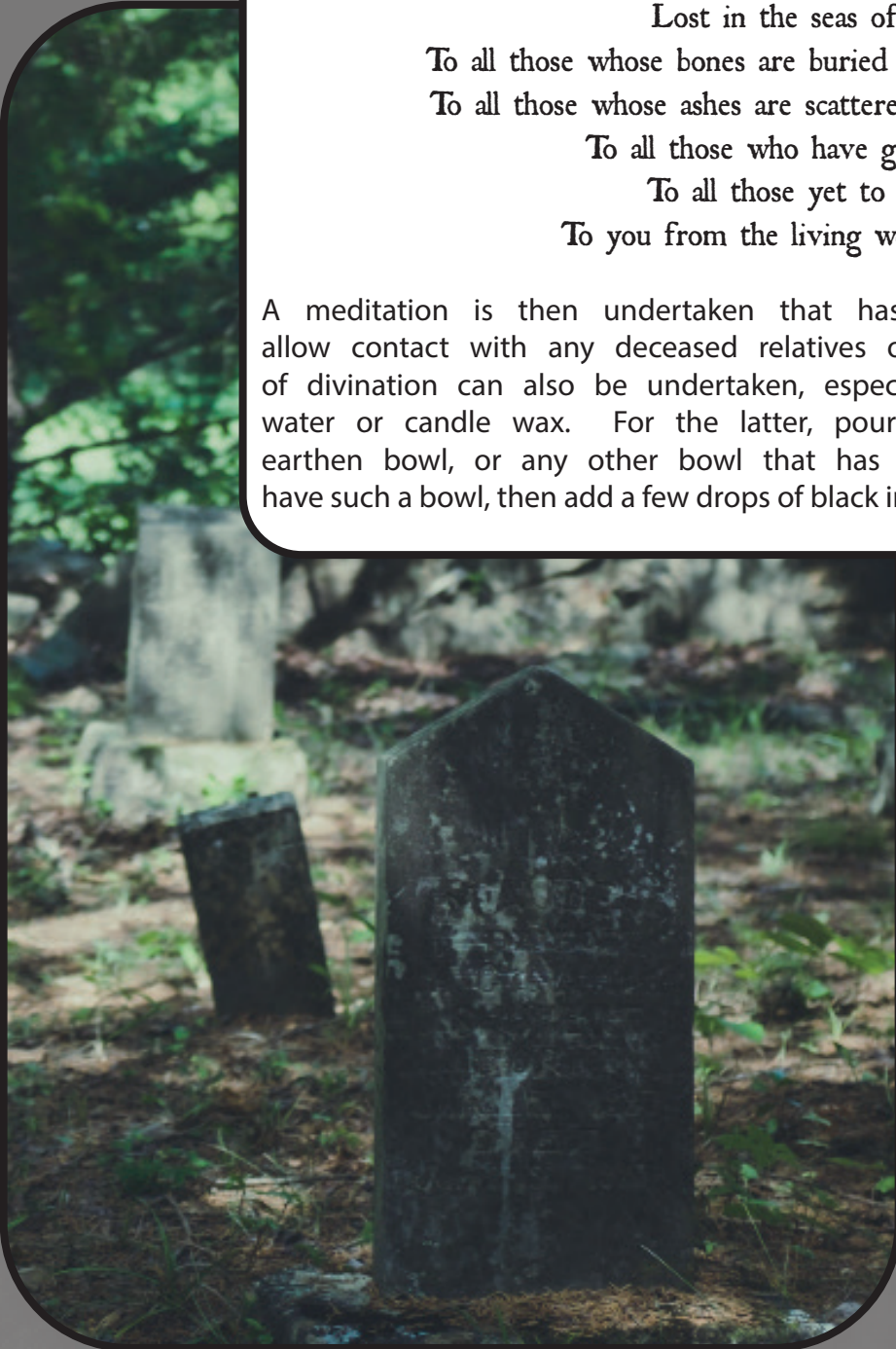
To all those whose ashes are scattered to the Four Winds.

To all those who have gone before

To all those yet to come.

To you from the living we remember.

A meditation is then undertaken that has been specifically designed to allow contact with any deceased relatives or guides. Alternatively, a form of divination can also be undertaken, especially pendulum or scrying using water or candle wax. For the latter, pour some water into a large dark earthen bowl, or any other bowl that has a dark interior. If you do not have such a bowl, then add a few drops of black ink to the water.



With your finger or a stick, swirl the water in a sunwise direction (clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere or anti-clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere). Think of a question that you are seeking an answer to, then stop stirring and pour melted wax from a candle into the water. Watch as the water slows and concentrate on the pattern that the wax forms. Meditate on the wax pattern to see what answers it holds for you.

On an inner, more personal level, as we turn inward at this time of the year, Samhain is a time for facing ourselves and often requires time alone. It is a good idea to light a candle and sit quietly in front of it for a while, reflecting on the past, and what has brought us to the position that we currently find ourselves in. This is not a high-activity time, but it is one appropriate for planting ideas. We may now plant the “bulbs” of ideas and let them lie dormant until the spring and as a result we feel clearer about the action we wish to take.

Sometimes, this action may be hard to face, and can be made scarier because we feel that if we face up to certain “facts” about ourselves, we should act on them immediately. This may not necessarily be so. It takes courage to meet head-on the fact that our relationship may be dead or unsuitable, that our job is frustrating and getting us nowhere or leading us where we do not want to go, or even that we have accomplished precious few of the things we dearly desire in life.

Facing up is one task and acting upon the knowledge is another. Now is the time to let go of the illusions that have been clouding our judgement and to plant the seeds of hope. You may also like to make a list of things in your life that you would like to change – making sure that they are achievable.

Keep this list somewhere safe and jot down ideas of creative changes as they come to you in the following weeks. Take careful note of your dreams and do not try to work out solutions with your intellect. Allow your “bulbs” to grow in their own time. Change will come.

For more information on Moon Books visit www.johnhuntpublishing.com/moon-books/

About Frances

Frances Billinghamurst is an initiated witch and magick maker living in South Australia who has an interest in folklore, mythology, and ancient cultures. She is a prolific writer, with her more recent offerings being *Encountering the Dark Goddess: A Journey into the Shadow Realms* and *Contemporary Witchcraft: Foundational Practices for a Magical Life*, both published through Moon Books, with a third, *On Her Silver Rays* due to be released next year. Frances can be found on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, and she can be contacted through the Temple of the Dark Moon (templedarkmoon.com).



EVENT

OTHERWORLDS - A GOTHIC PERFUMERY CLASS

SATURDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2022

10:00 AM 5:00 PM

Rudolf Steiner House

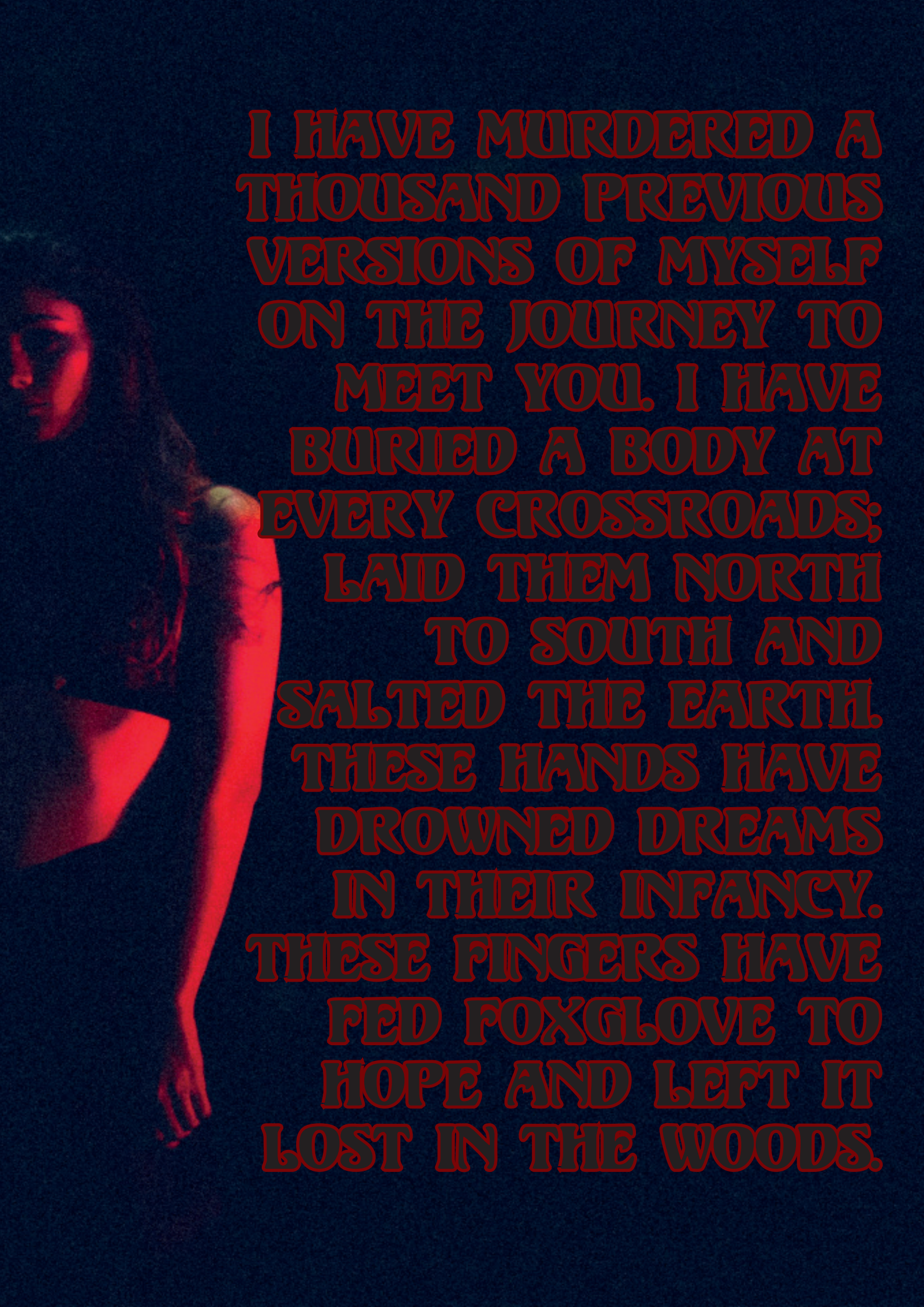
35 Park Road London, England, NW1 6XT United Kingdom

Take a sensory walk on the dark side and allow your imagination to run wild on this one-day adventure into gothic landscapes. Immerse yourself in a palette of unsettling and hypnotic aromatics to craft a bespoke gothic-inspired perfume to cloak yourself in a mysterious aura.

Find out more and book here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/otherworlds-a-gothic-inspired-perfume-workshop-tickets-417234528707>



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black dress, stands in a dark room. The scene is lit with a strong red light, creating a dramatic and somber atmosphere. She is looking slightly to the left of the camera.

I HAVE MURDERED A
THOUSAND PREVIOUS
VERSIONS OF MYSELF
ON THE JOURNEY TO
MEET YOU. I HAVE
BURIED A BODY AT
EVERY CROSSROADS;
LAID THEM NORTH
TO SOUTH AND
SALTED THE EARTH.
THESE HANDS HAVE
DROWNED DREAMS
IN THEIR INFANCY.
THESE FINGERS HAVE
FED FOXGLOVE TO
HOPE AND LEFT IT
LOST IN THE WOODS.

There are few things portrayed as more frightening than woman the destroyer. We find her over and over again in fairytale and folklore; the witch in 'Hansel and Gretel' who eats children, the mother who curses her stepchildren in the 'Children of Lir' and the murderous Morgana of Arthurian lore. In Welsh texts Rhiannon spends four years as a horse, carrying travellers on her back, after her maidservants accuse her of killing and eating her newborn son. But why does this archetype appear so often in stories? And what fuels the enduring fear of Woman the Destroyer?

'In the most famous stories, monsters in female shape outnumber the giants and hobgoblins' suggests Marina Warner, in her contextual exploration of fairytales and their tellers titled 'From the Beast to the Blonde'.

'Children are more thrilled than disgusted by the wolf who gobbles up Red Riding Hood, whereas they are repelled by the witch who fattens up Hansel to eat him' (Warner, 1994). The horror at a cruel or murderous woman is far deeper than at a man who carries out the same actions, especially when the behaviour is directed at a child. A body that can birth new life, but also take it away, becomes an object of abject terror; a liminal being that must be reclassified as inhuman, a witch or a sorceress. Even the title of step-mother denotes a separation, a woman set aside from the wholesome and non threatening title of 'mother'.

In 'The Uses of Enchantment' Bruno Bettelheim interrogates the relationship between woman the protector and woman the threat. Taking the example of 'Little Red Riding Hood' he suggests that a child could not view a woman who on one hand lavishes gifts, and on another punishes certain behaviour, as the same person. 'Unable to see any congruence between the two manifestations, the child truly experiences Grandma as two separate entities- the loving and the threatening' (Bettelheim, 1976). For Bettelheim, is through this separation that Grandma becomes the wolf, and through the splitting of the female into two separate entities that the image of the good Grandmother can be preserved. A deep trauma is expressed over and over through story;





the fear of a woman who is anything other than all-loving and all-giving. Desirable and undesirable qualities must somehow be separated.

Warner agrees that this theory provides a satisfying framework that 'not only preserves the good mother intact, it also prevents having to feel guilty about one's angry thoughts and wishes about her' (Warner, 1994). But she also urges us to remember that tales 'take on the colour of the actual circumstances in which they are or were told' (Warner, 1994). Where stories explain or excuse feelings of hatred towards women who display 'undesirable' traits, we must ask ourselves who the narrative serves. Who is

it that cannot bear to accept that the female can both create and destroy?

Rhiannon was shamed for four years for her supposed crimes, and the witch in 'Hansel and Gretel' is boiled alive. But the punishment of destructive women has not always been so prevalent. Welsh texts, compiled and translated in the nineteenth century 'Mabinogion', but believed to originate from eleventh and fourteenth century originals, portray the Goddess Cerridwen as both mother and murderer. In one tale she brews a potion for a year and a day, tasking her servant Gwion Bach with tending the cauldron. He spills three magical drops, intended for Cerridwen's son, and in revenge she pursues him in a magical chase which ends when she becomes a hen and consumes Gwion, who has disguised himself as a grain of corn. Notably, this act of cannibalism is not framed as either unnatural or monstrous, as in the case of the witch in 'Hansel and Gretel'. Instead, Cerridwen's dual nature allows for the alchemy of transformation, and it is through death and rebirth that Gwion becomes the Bard Taliesin and gains the gifts of inspiration and prophecy. It is through the cauldron of Cerridwen, which Hughes equates symbolically with the womb, that this Goddess fulfils her role as 'initiatrice' and 'demonstrates the vitality and function of the divine feminine in initiatory mythology' (Hughes, 2012). Death is acknowledged as necessary for new life. The balance of destructive and generative capabilities are key to her power.

Perhaps here we come to the source of fear. When a woman embraces her multi-faceted nature she is able to draw on a strength denied to those who shun parts of themselves. The jealous stepmother in the 'Children of Lir' has the power to transform children irreversibly into swans. In the earliest versions of Arthurian myth, Morgana is a healer as well as a sorceress, and it is she who watches over the wounded Arthur on the Isle of Avalon. Cerridwen embodies and enacts the cycle of life through death, symbolised by the cauldron-womb.

Woman the Destroyer has been demonised for being dangerous and undesirable, but she is arguably an essential facet of the complete feminine archetype. Consider Mother Nature, blessing her children with both earthquakes and life giving waters.

If we are to take Warner's advice and remember that stories 'take on the colour of the actual circumstances in which they are or were told' we must remember that the tellers always have an agenda. In times of shorter life expectancy, and less robust medical care, a second marriage was not uncommon and the children of the first wife were naturally a threat to those of the second. Also, in a far broader sense, the shift towards a patriarchal, capitalist society meant the need to define a new role for women. The healer-witch was too powerful; too much of a threat. So centuries of law and story set about dissecting her into manageable chunks. The sorceress was bad. The mother was good. The figure of the witch was maligned and twisted in tale after tale, until children were happy to rejoice that she had been killed. Grandma became bed-bound when she abandoned her wolf self. But what if these disparate halves could be reunited?

'A woman can certainly bring about the End of Days- the end of the world as we know it' (Dulsky, 2018)

Every woman has a place for Woman the Destroyer. She is part of our darker, winter selves; the necessary end and beginning of all cycles. It is she who finally screams enough to the figures and structures in our lives which seek to make us small. She is the sorceress who sets strong boundaries, and destroys repeated patterns of behaviour and belief that cage us. Perhaps she kills relationships, friendships and identities that no longer serve us. Perhaps these deaths hurt. But Ceridwen and Morgana can teach us that strength comes from embracing our darkness. We can refuse to be cut into manageable pieces, turn away from the extremism caused by that separation, and settle back into being both grandmother and the wolf.

This Samhain, I invite every woman to consider how she might bring about the End of Days for one habit or structure that harms them or the earth.

References

<https://ceridwencentre.co.uk/the-story-of-ceridwen/> accessed 26/06/22

<https://www.pookpress.co.uk/project/little-red-riding-hood-history/> accessed 26/06/22

<https://www.mabinogion.info/> accessed 26/06/22

Dulsky, D. (2018) *The Holy Wild*. California: New World Library.

Hughes, K. (2012) *From the Cauldron Born*. USA: Llewellyn Publications.

Bettelheim, B. (1976) *The Uses of Enchantment*. London: Penguin.

Warner, M. (1994) *From the Beast to the Blonde*. London: Vintage.



HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M A WITCH?



DEB ROBINSON
CO-FOUNDER OF WITCH CASKET
THE MAGICKAL MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION BOX

It can feel like a really big deal to start referring to yourself as 'a witch'. You may have been wondering when it is appropriate to start referring to yourself as a witch; or even wondering, how do you actually know if you are a witch?

How do I know if I'm a Witch?

Are witches born, or can you 'become' a witch?

The reality is that there is magick in all of us - some choose to follow that path, hone their magick, use their power, and call themselves a witch, and others do not.

There are several signs and characteristics which can suggest you are connected more deeply to your magick, and that being a witch is a natural path for you.

Feeling a close bond to nature and Mother Earth; do you feel at home, and 'more connected' and 'grounded' outdoors, in nature? Do you feel calmer and more at peace in the forest, or near the ocean, surrounded by the sights, scents, and sounds of nature?

Perhaps you have great intuition? You may have good or bad feelings about people with no real reason - just a gut instinct, and find you're always right - or you think about someone moments before they call - or you predict outcomes, and find your 'gut' always leads you down the right path. These are all signs of a heightened psychic awareness.

Witches often find they have a kinship with animals, and feel they can communicate with them on a spiritual level - they have a divine understanding of them; and often one or more special animals or pets feels like a soul-mate, or 'familiar'.

Maybe you are wise, and people often come to you for advice. You are known for your wisdom, insight, and problem-solving. You can understand people, often on a deeper level than they understand themselves.

Do you have empathy; can you pick up on people's emotions or energies?

Witches can feel 'charged' by, lightning, thunder, windstorms, or any other dramatic changes in weather.

Do you find yourself 'collecting' when out in nature? Maybe you are drawn to stones, or twigs, or leaves - you may be collecting witch's tools by instinct, not yet knowing how useful they can be!

But probably the most important thing of all is if you believe that the entire world and everything in it is made of 'energy', and that you can use your own energy to affect change in your life; that your own intent and belief, when coupled with practical hard work, can manifest any dream or goal you may have.



There's no right or wrong here - if you believe yourself to be a witch, if you share some of the traits above, chances are you are, or can become, a powerful witch; and you can proudly wear that title!



WITCH CASKET

THE MAGICKAL MONTHLY
SUBSCRIPTION BOX



ENHANCE YOUR CRAFT!
EXCLUSIVE ITEMS EACH MONTH

WWW.WITCHCASKET.CO.UK

Sisters of the Moon Lunar Temple

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

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

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

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

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



Tarot and Oracle Reading Services

Crooked Cross Crafts

My name is Simon and am based in the West
Country of the UK.

I specialise in Tarot and Oracle card readings.



I can offer the following readings:

Romantic Relationships

Career

Shadow Work

Friends and Family relations

Spiritual Growth

What you need to know right now

I can also offer bespoke readings outside of those offered above

Please don't hesitate to contact me at crookedcrosscrafts@gmail.com

Please visit my Crooked Cross Crafts page on Facebook to see reviews from previous clients

HOW DAILY TAROT JOURNALING TRANSFORMED MY LIFE AND WHY SAMHAIN IS THE PERFECT TIME TO START!

SADIE MILLER - GIRL ASCENDING

When I first started using Tarot, it was during a very difficult period in my life. I was existing, not living, trapped in a job and relationship I felt I could never get out of. I was scared to make a change and I turned to Tarot for advice. From day one, I couldn't believe how accurately the cards unveiled my subconscious thoughts back to me. The cards were telling me things that I already knew, but that I just wasn't ready to face up to in the real world.

I tried to ignore their advice, but eventually their whispers to me became a scream and suddenly my life transformed in ways I could never have imagined. I left my dead end job and manifested a career where I could feel creatively nourished. I escape an abusive relationship to find my true self on the other side. I honestly do not think any of that could have happened if I hadn't have picked up my first Tarot deck and really listened to what the cards had to say.

Part of the reason I created the Girl Ascending Tarot Journal was to be able to connect more deeply with my Tarot cards and to help other people who were struggling like I was. We all love to feel that the cards can tell us something about the future, about what could possibly happen - a never ending stream of exciting possibilities!

But what if we could go deeper than that? What if we can use Tarot Journaling as a form of divination therapy, to connect with ourselves and our subconscious on a whole new level? What if we could use who we were in the past to really understand how that informs our present? How can we reach our best future selves if we don't acknowledge the path and challenges it has taken to get there? This is where Tarot Journaling was truly transformative for me.

Tarot Journaling is such an amazing tool because it is available to anyone. It doesn't have to make sense, it doesn't have to be neat and tidy. It can be messy and chaotic, like all our thoughts - and our lives! - are sometimes. Tarot Journaling doesn't have to conform in any way and no one ever needs to see your journal unless you want them to. You can choose to journal however and whenever you please.

At the start of the day, to set your intentions and see what energy the cards are bringing forth, or in the evenings to aide meditation and guidance. You can do so at home or away and with so many beautiful travel decks to choose from, it is now easier than ever to Tarot Journal anytime, anywhere. There are no restrictions or rules.





I balance my craft with being a single parent to my two wonderfully wild boys, along with a career as a freelance creative. Tarot Journaling helps to give me that moment of much needed peace and clarity at the end or start of the day. It enables me to stay in alignment to continuing manifesting the life that I want. One of my favourite aspects of Tarot Journaling is that it's such a powerful way to take the time to reconnect with yourself and that it is a completely safe space to let the raw emotions flow.

I usually pull either just a daily card or do a three card Mind, Body and Soul spread as these are the two most effective spreads for me when it comes to Tarot Journaling. Just remember, there are no mistakes in journaling, just healing and the release of buried fears, emotions and sadness. Tarot Journaling is also a really useful way to spot and assess your triggers and learn how to re-frame them in order to heal from them too.

Samhain for me is always a time of deep reflection – in fact, I find all of Scorpio Season is, especially as we move into eclipse season and come face to face with the consequences of our Karmic cycles. I like to focus on my shadow self too during this time, asking how I can make better friends with her so that she doesn't disrupt me with self-doubt or intrusive thoughts. This is also where Tarot Journaling has helped me so much! I am now an ally to myself, appreciating how I can show up authentically for myself and others by accepting that I am both darkness and light.

Here are some of my favourite personal prompts for Samhain –

- What challenges and patterns keep repeating in my life?
- What areas of my life am I keeping myself stuck and stagnant?
- What is it about my comfort zone that I am so afraid to leave?
- How can I honour the lessons of my past?
- What future do I want to create and how does it feel to live there?

If you would like to try Tarot Journaling, you can pick up your copy here - <https://amzn.eu/d/gSxIK0U>

You can also connect with me on Instagram @girl_ascending and on the Girl Ascending YouTube Channel too.

Love and light
Sadie x

A CHURCHYARD RITUAL FOR SAMHAIN

JONATHAN ARGENTO



An old churchyard is a great place to experience the liminal nature of Samhain. This ritual is best performed alone, although you may wish to have someone waiting for you outside. Dusk is a particularly good time for this working, betwixt and between day and night, and you won't need a torch. Many churchyards are entered through gates with heavy latches, this will alert you to anyone entering.

Start at the North door, traditionally associated with those beyond the Church, and begin three sinistral (anti-clockwise) circuits around the Church.

On the first, be grateful for the life you have, a gift from your ancestors, their DNA is etched like runes within the palms of your hands. Sense their presence with you.

For the second, allow your mind to travel back in time. Many churches are hundreds of years old, sometimes built on much older sites, incorporating stones within their structure. Notice any changes you observe.

Finally, as you circuit the church, invite any of the departed buried there to join you in peace. They will have noticed you. It would be rude not to give them the option of joining you. Be aware of the thinning veil.

Sense the spirit tracks crisscrossing the churchyard, Samhain always leads to The Crossroads.

Walk slowly to a prominent tree (often a yew). Imagine tying a red thread around it - connecting you to the web of life.

Ring a tiny bell, state your intention to honour your ancestors. Make any small offerings of flowers, strong drink, or tobacco. Ask for help with challenges you face. Wait, listen, and notice what happens.

Ring the bell, give thanks, and slowly return, retracing your steps, walking three times clockwise around the church. As you do this, you could quietly intone 'gather in, gather in, all that's been done within'. As you close the gate latch say, 'it is done'.

Jonathan Argento is a regular speaker at Witchcraft events and facilitates the Wickham Coven & the Wild Witchcraft Conference.

HEX CAT OF BERKS COUNTY, PA

CARRIE ANDERSON

What follows is a story pieced together from various archived local newspapers. I have taken those accounts and tried to place them in the context of Powwow, the Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Magic Healing System. I hope to give a broader view that might show the underlying story behind what was a very sensationalized account.

This is a tale steeped in the cultural traditions of the Pennsylvania Dutch. The news ridiculed and smeared the beliefs of the PA Dutch; especially those related to Powwow. Instead of investigating and researching historical, cultural, and religious views, the news justified their one-sided accounts, by laying blame on the PA Dutch for having such “ignorant” and “superstitious” views. Many articles claimed that education was the only solution, that a focus on science would “cure”. Reading the local news, regarding Powwow, from the 19th century into the early 20th century, one can see how a cultural belief system was so belittled and smeared, that it almost disappeared.



Powwow is a blend of Palatine German Immigrants' beliefs mixed in with their experiences and lives in Pennsylvania. It is a grimoire-based practice using Long Lost Friend, the Sixth and Seventh Book of Moses, Albert Magnus, and most importantly, the Bible. Powwowers could heal using incantations and recitations from those various books. God worked through them and a belief in the Holy Trinity was a foundation of this folk magic.

Powwow Doctors were the ones that could help offer protection in the form of talismans or charms and diagnose the hex. In severe cases, breaking the hex and turning it back onto the Hexerei. On the opposite end of the spectrum were the Hexerei, witches, who practiced the darkest of black magic. It was said that, at midnight, standing on a pile of manure, they would pledge their souls to the devil.

Many stories of Hexerei surrounded the livestock of farmers. Hexerei could ruin milk production, ride the horses at night, cause illness, and death. Their understanding of witchcraft is vastly different from our modern views. Witches were blamed for various illnesses, catastrophes, and negative experiences.

In the rural farmlands of Tumbling Run, Berks County, Pennsylvania, in the year 1911, a family was divided over a ver-hexing. Mrs. Sarah Potts, of Orwigsburg, was accused of placing a curse on her family, their farmland, their livestock, and livelihood. Her elder sister, Mary, her father, Howell, and her Uncle Willam all believed that Sarah was guilty of being a Hexerei.

Sarah was the youngest daughter of Mr. Thomas. Sarah had come to her father, inquiring about gaining some financial assets from the farm. There is a passing reference to this in one news article. Yet, when searching for where the family members were buried, I did note Sarah had given birth to a son. At the time of her asking her father for some financial recompense, her son would have been four years old. She might have wanted her child to be named the heir and to inherit the farmland. It's not clear that this request was denied, but, shortly after, her family began experiencing misfortunes, strange occurrences, and outright evil, brought to their farm by a black hex cat.

Sarah was said to have sent a black hex cat in her stead to destroy the livelihood of her family. To the Thomas' this was a clear case of cause and effect. Also, there was a superstition in the Pennsylvania Dutch communities, that it was bad luck for a younger sibling to marry first. This was the case for Mary and Sarah, so this might have been another reason to suspect her of the ver-hexing.

The hex cat arrived every morning at four am, bringing with it a slow demise of the animals, land, and people. It was said to have caused the wasting away of livestock. By the year's end, eight cows and horses had perished. Hens were said to crow like roosters. Pigs barked like dogs. Sulfur fumes haunted the family. Despite sealed windows, and closed doors the family suffered from sudden onsets of sulfur creeping into their home.

At the start of their misfortunes, the family sought out a fortune-teller. A hex was diagnosed and they were told that it was being done by a close family member. One way that a hex can be diagnosed, in Powwow, is by taking a red string, using a precise formula for measuring the person's body length, head, chest, and length of arms. Knots are tied at each measurement. The string is then read by placing it in a bowl of water, if it sinks then the person was hexed. The cat would need to be killed, this would be the only way to end the ver-hexing.

Mary and her Uncle William took to carrying revolvers with lead bullets. They shot the cat many times. "Satan's Majesty" as they referred to the feline was never injured. Being shot at could make it grow to a terrifying four feet in length.

The hex brought with it a severe illness that attacked Mary. She was bed-bound and wasting away for almost eight weeks. When the illness broke, her uncle claimed that a tiny bit of the hex had been removed. Yet, the cows and horses are still perishing.

News of this ver-hexing spread. When one reporter visited the farm, he inquired as to why the apples in the orchard hadn't been harvested. Instead, all of the apples were rotten on the ground. William explained that they had been advised by the fortune-teller to not harvest the apples, doing so would only prolong the hex. Their animals were starving, and their cash flow drying up. Yet, the Thomas family would not use their homegrown crop to help their situation.

A few other local farmers also claimed to be suffering from the same hex. Mr. Wagner, a local farmer, blamed his ruined milk supply on the cat.



The Thomas family found an advertisement in a paper for a Powwow Doctor. They contacted him with their plight. He replied that to help remove the hex he would need a monthly retainer. Mary was given protective charms to carry. He also said that lead bullets could not kill this creature. He advised Mary to take 5 dollar gold coins, melt them, and then mold them into bullets. The family was unable to afford to make these bullets, so one was provided by the Powwower.

But, it was too late for Mr. Howell Thomas. He died in his home. Per the local doctor, it was a stroke that ended his life. Mary and William knew otherwise. The hex had dealt the harshest blow to them by taking away the patriarch. Thomas died on September 28, 1911, at the age of 61. In addition to owning the farm, he had served in the Civil War and worked as a miner.

The funeral was held a week later. Sarah arrived at the funeral, with her young son in tow. When Mary saw her, she went into a hysterical fit, tried clawing at her sister, screaming at her to leave. Mary became so hysterical that she fainted and had to be revived with smelling salts. Mary was removed from the room and escorted to bed.

Sarah was allowed to mourn in peace. She was overheard, speaking to her father's body, "My God, my God, father. I did not know I was accused of anything until I saw it in the papers. And they wouldn't let me see you while you were alive.". Mary had left her bedroom and overheard her sister. Yes," said the single sister, "he saw you all the time." She then went forth to attack her sister. The implication, made by Mary, was that Sarah had been shifting herself into the form of a cat.

Mary then pronounced to all the visitors that the next morning, at 3:45 am, she and her uncle would kill the hex cat. She invited all of the neighbors to come to witness this act. The next morning, the neighbors arrived carrying Bibles, charms, and talismans. Mary and William each held a revolver loaded with gold bullets. The only one that did not show that morning

was the hex cat.

For the first time in months, the hex cat did not make his daily appearance. Many took this as a sign that the curse had been broken. Yet, Mary and William were in total despair. The publicity grew to be too much of a burden. Mary received five marriage proposals from men reading the story throughout the US. She turned them all down.

<p>"HEX" CAT FAILS TO TURN UP TO BE SHOT WITH A GOLD BULLET</p> <p>POTTSVILLE, Pa., Oct. 6.—Failure of the celebrated "hex," or witch cat, to turn up at the home of Miss Mary Isabella Thomas delayed his execution by means of shooting with a golden bullet, the only simon-pure method, according to the credulous, of effectively dispatching a feline capable of expanding to a height of four feet and contracting to the normal at will.</p> <p>In the seriously expressed belief of the members of the Thomas family and of many of the superstitious dwellers in Tumbling Run valley, this "hex" cat caused the death of Howell Thomas, whose funeral occurred here today, and the fear engendered by the influence of the beast, which has probably become disgusted with the childishness of the Thomases and sought a home among more sensible people, has induced Miss Mary Thomas to</p>	<p>move from the "haunted" house in which her father died.</p> <p>A curious development today was the reconciliation of Miss Thomas with her sister, Mrs. Sarah Potts, of Orwigsburg, whom she at first charged with being the director of the operations of the "hex" cat. This return to the sisterly relations was ratified by an invitation from Mrs. Potts for Miss Thomas to become a member of her family circle. Miss Thomas declined, however, and is now at the home of a neighbor.</p> <p>Gives Aid to Strkers.</p> <p>Sometimes liver, kidneys and bowels seem to go on a strike and refuse to work right. Then you need those pleasant little strike-breakers—Dr. King's New Life Pills—to give them natural aid and gently compel proper action. Excellent health soon follows. Try them. 25c at all druggists.</p> <p>—Herald Want Ads Bring Quick Results.</p>
--	---

Newcastle Herald, 6 October 1911 - newspapers.com

Mary moved in with neighbors, while William moved to property that the family-owned in Pottsville. The farm was said to be haunted and fell into disrepair.

The townsfolk still wanted an end to this hex. A group of Powwowers convened. As they discussed the problem, one of them mentioned that they knew a farmer in Schuylkill Haven that had a special cat. This cat was born on the sixth day of the sixth month. Its eyes had opened on its sixth day of life; instead of the normal day nine. Using The Sixth Book of Moses to support their claims, they said this cat was a "hexahemeron". The Witch of Endor gave powers to a hexahemeron cat that allowed it to ward off evil spells. The farmer supplied further proof that the cat was an imp in disguise. He had never seen the cat eat anything other than lizards, toads, and snakes.

Hundreds of people arrived to see this hexahemeron cat be released on the farm. The news reported that as soon as the hexameron was released the few remaining pigs stopped barking and hens stopped crow-

ing like roosters. The hex was finally removed, Mary moved back onto the farm. Her Uncle William became a hermit. They refused to speak of a hex ever again.

Several years later the Thomas family made the news, making some wonder if the hex had ever truly been broken. William was arrested for trying to burn down houses in Pottsville, with the tenants still inside. His plot was discovered and the police laid in wait for him. He doused the houses in kerosene. At midnight, as he was getting ready to light the fire, the police arrested him. He was found with an incendiary device and a revolver, hidden in his clothes. He was arrested and sent to jail.

When Mary heard about what happened to her uncle that he had been arrested she tried to commit suicide and was hospitalized. Once released, she spent the rest of her life, alone, on the farm.

William Thomas was found, in 1916, frozen to death in a shack in the town of Tumbling Run, Pa. This was the last news report that I was able to find on the Thomas Family.

However, I believe the hex carried on for quite some time. As I was researching the burial places, I discovered that Mary Isabella Thomas died on May 13, 1944, at the age of 67.

Almost exactly one month later, her estranged sister, Sarah, listed as, Elizabeth Thomas Potts, died on June 8, 1944, at the age of 64. Did Sarah continue to hex Mary for the rest of her life? Was the hex finally destroyed when Mary died? Did Mary's death end Sarah's curse? The sisters are buried near each other, in Salem Evangelical Cemetery in Orwigsburg, PA.



Citations

"Death by 'Hex' Many Other Calamities" (September 22, 1911) Pottsville Republican "Hex Victim is Buried, Spirits after Daughter" (September 26, 1911) Pottsville Republican "Hex Cat Dodges Bullet of Gold" (September 18, 1911) Pottsville Republican
"After A Witch-Cat" (May 22, 1912) Indiana Weekly Messenger of Indiana, Pennsylvania "Thomas, Hex Cat Victim to Serve 90 Days in Jail" (June 28, 1916) Mount Carmel Item

WISE WORDS FROM THE OLD CRONE ANCESTORS

When we were children we all loved stories; well at least I did and so did my children and now my grandchildren too; whether read from books or just told, it didn't matter as long as we had a story. This is how it has been since time in memorial. This is also how we learned about our own history with stories told by word of mouth by our ancestors.

Boxing Day when I was little was a family day. Relatives all congregated in our home and it was a great time for story telling especially of Christmases and parties past. Aunty Win used to tell us about smoking cocktail cigarettes, which were all colours of the rainbow and my mother told of times when she and all her cousins (there were many) all slept together sideways in Grandmas' large bed. My own grandmother told of visiting the local theatre and one of her sisters on stage singing. A rich history.

I will bet my tin of biscuits that all of you have photos of family long gone somewhere on show in your homes. On my stairway I have parents, grandparents and even great grandparents. We do this as it is a great link to our past and our own ancestry. It hones us in to who we are. Many people nowadays are quite obsessed with genealogy as the internet has garnered more and more info for us to tap into. The past holds a mystery and an intrigue for us all. Some families still have a large book, often a bible, in which are written the names of each new family member.

At this time of year as the days become shorter and the nights longer, for our distant ancestors it was time to sit by the fire as this was the only light they had and due to the absence of any books, the older members of the community told stories. This is how myths, legends, tales, gods and goddesses have been passed down the generations, through these stories. When I was in Australia I learned that the Aboriginal peoples recited history from Dreamtime, the time before anyone was aware of community, up to the modern date. I do believe this would also have happened in any society where people came together. Perhaps this is how Bards began, by telling and retelling stories.

At this time of year too we can all feel unsettled. I am totally convinced that this is hard wired in our DNA. Our ancestors knew this time as the final harvest of the year, a time to take stock and make sure they garnered in all the things they would need to get them through safely unto the spring. It was a time of fear and foreboding as nobody knew how long or harsh the winter was going to be, of how long their provisions would last. In the last two years this has resurfaced for us all with Covid 19 and now inflation. We feel unsettled as the unknown creeps on, more so now as autumn slowly becomes winter.

Our ancestry is incredibly important and our DNA is the connection to our past. You may have heard of the Day of the Dead, 'Dia de los Muertos', on

November 1st. Certainly in Mexico families come together for picnics and to visit the graves to honour the memory of their lost ones. The Christian church took this on board and called it All Souls Day and was always a Holy Day of Obligation when Catholics were obliged to attend mass. In ancient Rome too they held a festival albeit in February and as the Christians took over the roman beliefs this was transferred to November and aligns with All Souls Day. This is where the term Halloween comes from.....'All Hallows Eve.'

We as Pagans and Witches honour our dead and our spirit family at the Sabbat of Samhain. I can already feel the lead up to this my favourite Sabbat. As soon as October emerges from the last vestiges of summer I feel it. This, as every year, my gathering of the Circle Of The Crystal Moon will come together to celebrate and honour the spirit world with our rituals. We recognise that October, leading up to Samhain and even a few days after into November is an excellent time to work protection spells, create amulets, charms and talismans to rid ourselves of negative thoughts and energies and bring positive energy back into our spirit. We will call the quarters, light our candles, follow a guided mediation, and after any spell work and affirmations, close our circle then eat apples, pumpkin pie and breads, drink mead and wine, make merry and tell stories of times past.

This is in honour of our own personal ancestry.

Blessed Be
The Old Crone
theoldcrone5@gmail.com



FACING OUR MORTALITY

An excerpt from *The Wheel of the Year*

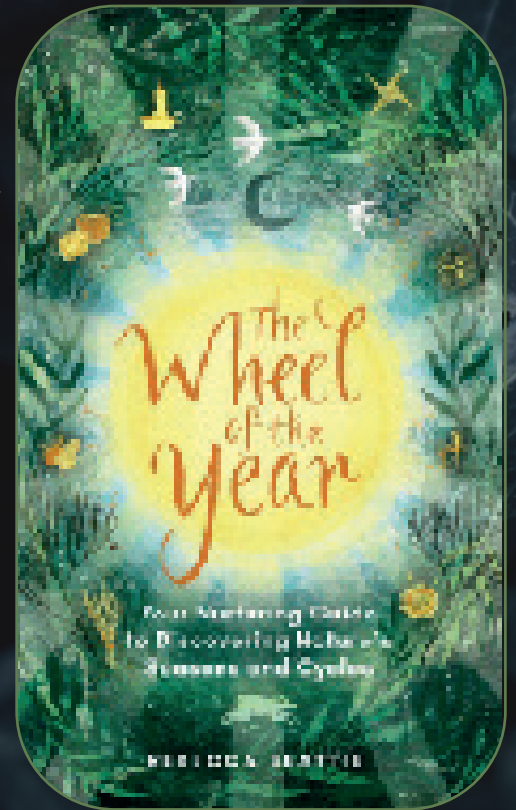
Rebecca Beattie

We are now firmly in the dark part of the *Wheel of the Year*, presided over by the male deity who is the god of death and resurrection: he meets us at the gates between the living and the dead. Our poetic and sacred writings for November Eve really hone in on that point, and speak of the gentle embrace of death that awaits us all.

Themes of death and resurrection are common in old myths and legends as people come to terms with the inevitable onset of winter before new life emerges in spring. In Ancient Egypt, we have the story of the goddess Isis and her consort, Osiris, who is murdered by his brother, Set, in a jealous rage. Osiris is transformed into the god of the underworld and recognised as the god of death and resurrection - his green skin representing his ability to bring fertility to the land. Meanwhile, in the Greek world view, we encounter the story of Demeter and Persephone. While out in the meadows painting the flowers, Persephone is abducted by Hades, Osiris' Greek counterpart, and taken to the underworld. This sends Demeter, her mother and the goddess of nature, into deep mourning. Through a twist of the story, Demeter is able to rescue her beloved daughter, but because Persephone was tricked into eating six pomegranate seeds while in Hades, she must return there for half the year, thereby throwing the world into winter as Demeter mourns afresh.

This sabbat was once a time when people would inevitably have to face their own mortality, as not everyone in the community would make it through the coming winter alive. While - some might say - we have grown used to creating an unhealthy distance from thoughts such as these, the presence of death is still always all around us as it is a natural part of life. If you have experienced the loss of a loved one, or if you have worked in a setting where loss of life is commonplace (such as healthcare) you will understand this. Coming face to face with death is a necessary and transformative experience in life, and one that will change you forever.

This is also the time of the blood harvest. As we've seen, traditionally there were always three harvests in preparation for winter: the grain harvest we saw in Lammas, the fruit harvest at autumn equinox; and now the blood harvest, when livestock would have been slaughtered. While the blood harvest might sound like something you would encounter in a horror film, it stems from a practical and logical approach for rural communities to take when facing the prospect of the cold season. The meat would be salted down to preserve it through the winter, to provide much needed food but



also so that poorer owners did not have to feed and shelter the animals through the spartan season. Samhain would, therefore, be the last point of the year where you could eat fresh meat.

A popular phrase at Samhain describes it as the time 'when the veils are thin', a night during which the souls who have left the physical world can return and wander the earth, where they can see and be seen. You might find lots of online references to this speaking with apparent authority about it being an ancient Celtic tradition. While I really love the image this conjures up, I am afraid this is another of those scenarios when I am about to place a spanner carefully in the works. Although the concept of the dead visiting us is an ancient one, the idea of 'veils' is probably another modern invention.

Adrian Bott, who writes about the historical origins of pagan ideas and rituals, suggests that there are no pre-Victorian references to the veils being thin at Samhain: rather, it is an idea that was born of the world view of the Spiritualist movement. The earliest reference he has detected comes from Ralph Whitlock's *In Search of Lost Gods: A Guide to British Folklore*, published in 1979. Bott argues that the Ancient Celts would not have seen a distinction between the worlds of the living and spirits, as the divinities did not so much exist on planes as in physical places. This makes the idea of there being veils between them nonsensical. As Bott writes:

The less magical the world was believed to be, the more it became necessary to posit a division between us and the realms of wonder . . .

In summary, Samhain is not a time when the Veil grows thin, because there never was a Veil in the old tales, and magic was everywhere.

As Bott goes on to say, this is not a criticism of such ideas. If you are particularly attached to a bit of lore, if you are aware of its probable origins, it doesn't have to stop you enjoying it.



Dr Rebecca Beattie is a Wiccan Priestess with a PhD in Creative Writing. Rebecca grew up on Dartmoor, which gave her an early appreciation of the power and joys of nature. She has been practising solitary witchcraft for twenty years and an initiate of the Gardnerian Wiccan tradition for fifteen. She is acclaimed for her highly informed teaching of witchcraft subjects at Treadwell's Books in Bloomsbury. By day she is a professional in a major charity, with advanced degrees in Literature and Creative writing.

For more information visit www.rebeccabeattie.co.uk

STEPPING BACK INTO YOUR POWER

FAIRY BEC

I am part of a coven - Circle of the Crystal Moon - and it is a beautiful space where we wholeheartedly support each other without any hesitation or judgement. Recently, a member of the coven posed the following question on our WhatsApp group:

“When you are faced with a new path to take but it petrifies you, what do you do?”

The answers were varied but all very powerful. It made me think about how we can step back into our power and become the sovereign of our own journey.

What do I mean by this? I mean those moments when we feel vulnerable and weak, moments when we are taking a risk, standing on the edge of something life changing. We have a choice. We can choose to power up and do it or we can choose to step away.



When we power up, we are stepping into our power, we are taking accountability for ourselves.

These moments are often tough but ultimately, when we step up to the challenge, they make things better in the long run. These are the moments that start transitions and change to new and improved adventures in life. The Caterpillar making the cocoon is the butterfly stepping into its power ready to emerge into something different the other side.

In my opinion, we have to first stop and look at what is going on. We have to accept that there is a level of dissatisfaction, a level of disappointment. It is at this point that we choose whether or not to step into our power. I believe that this is more frightening than the journey.

If we choose to step into our power then I believe that we need to find ways to feel strong, independent, capable and brave. These are moments when we are doing things for ourselves and ourselves alone. We cannot step into our power if we are doing things to strengthen ourselves to help others or doing things to incite a response or reaction from others.

Stepping into your power is what you need to do just after you get a call to adventure in order to ready yourself for the adventure. It is a bit like packing your bags for a holiday.

The person from my coven asking the question was also worried about the reactions of others to their new path. Here are some of the answers that were given:

“Wear big boots, take a deep breath and move forward with your chin up.”

“Try to remember to centre yourself before you do anything.”

“Other people’s reactions are nothing if you follow your dream honey. Go for it.”

“Shut yourself in a little zen space.”

“When you raise your vibration, all that is not in alignment will naturally leave your life.”

Everyone’s little moment of grounding and recharging their power is different. I like to call upon

Archangel Michael for a quick ‘boost’ of this. I ask him to step in. Tall, strong, masculine and protective. A true gentleman. I feel him standing behind me and he often wraps his wings around me. It is an instant feeling of strength and energy.

This recent full moon was a Hunter’s Moon. The Hunter’s Moon is all about cutting the cords of the things that do not serve you well in order to step back into your power. We can’t just embrace our power when there are weights holding us down. Our power needs to make us feel like we are the Phoenix rising from the flames, like we can fly.

If you imagine that the cords to things, people, behaviours that keep you from moving forwards are like guy ropes holding a tent down, you can imagine how that tethering might be holding you back.

I also like to use Michael to help me cut cords. I will either ask him to use his sword to cut the cord for me or lend it to me so I can cut it myself.

How do you step into your power?

Fairy Bec

www.rubek.co.uk





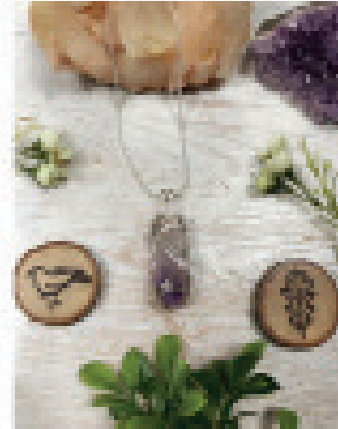
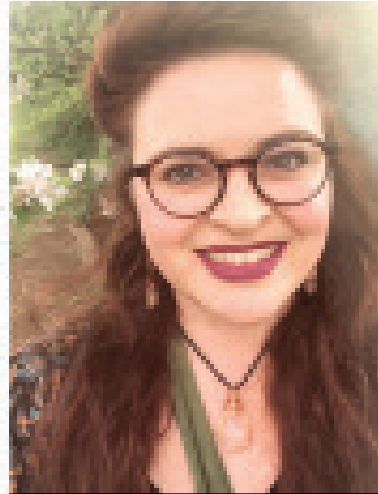
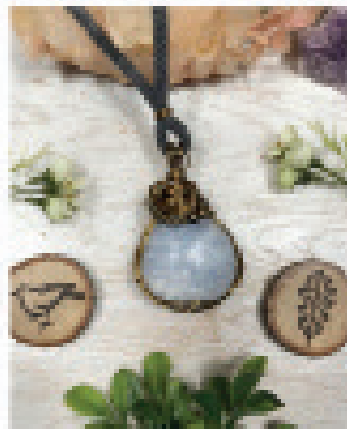


BLACKBIRD OAK

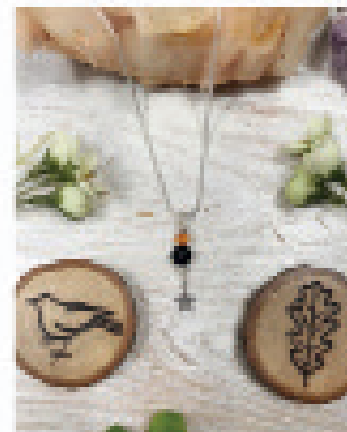
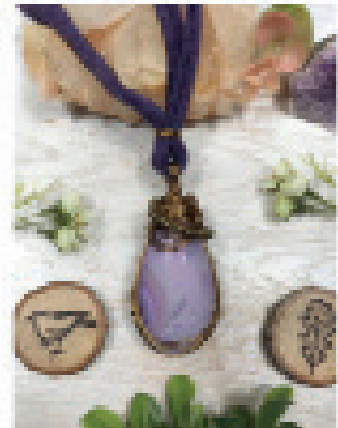
Hand Crafted Keepers



www.blackbirdoak.co.uk



Handcrafted
Keepers at purse
friendly prices



Free

Delivery



Commissions
Welcome



Find Me on Social
@BlackbirdOak



THE WITCHCRAFTER'S TAROT DECK REVIEWS

THE BONES ARCANA A TAROT DECK FROM ARTIST JUNAID MORTIMER

KELLY BUCHAN



Overview:

The Bones Arcana Tarot Deck holds an atmosphere of foreboding and beauty in equal measures. Expressionless skeletons poised in meaning sing from every single card that this deck has to offer. Artist Junaid Mortimer has crafted these images with such skill and mastery that it's very hard to find any fault with them. The monochromatic style is pierced with red, making the meanings and symbolism pop with ease.

Pro's: A firm favourite with my clients, The Bones Arcana really is a deck to behold. With beautifully manufactured cardstock and print, there is an eeriness to them which is hard to pinpoint. I've seen people get lost within the imagery, which draws you in to its detail. Mortimer manages to convey such depth and emotion with his skeletal creations, a feat that could not have been easy.

My favourite image by far, is The Lovers of the major arcana. The way the skeletons are staring into each others eye sockets evokes a longing that is difficult to verbalise. Mortimer's dark style marries so well with the tarot, and everyone who has seen this deck on my alter has fallen in love with it immediately.

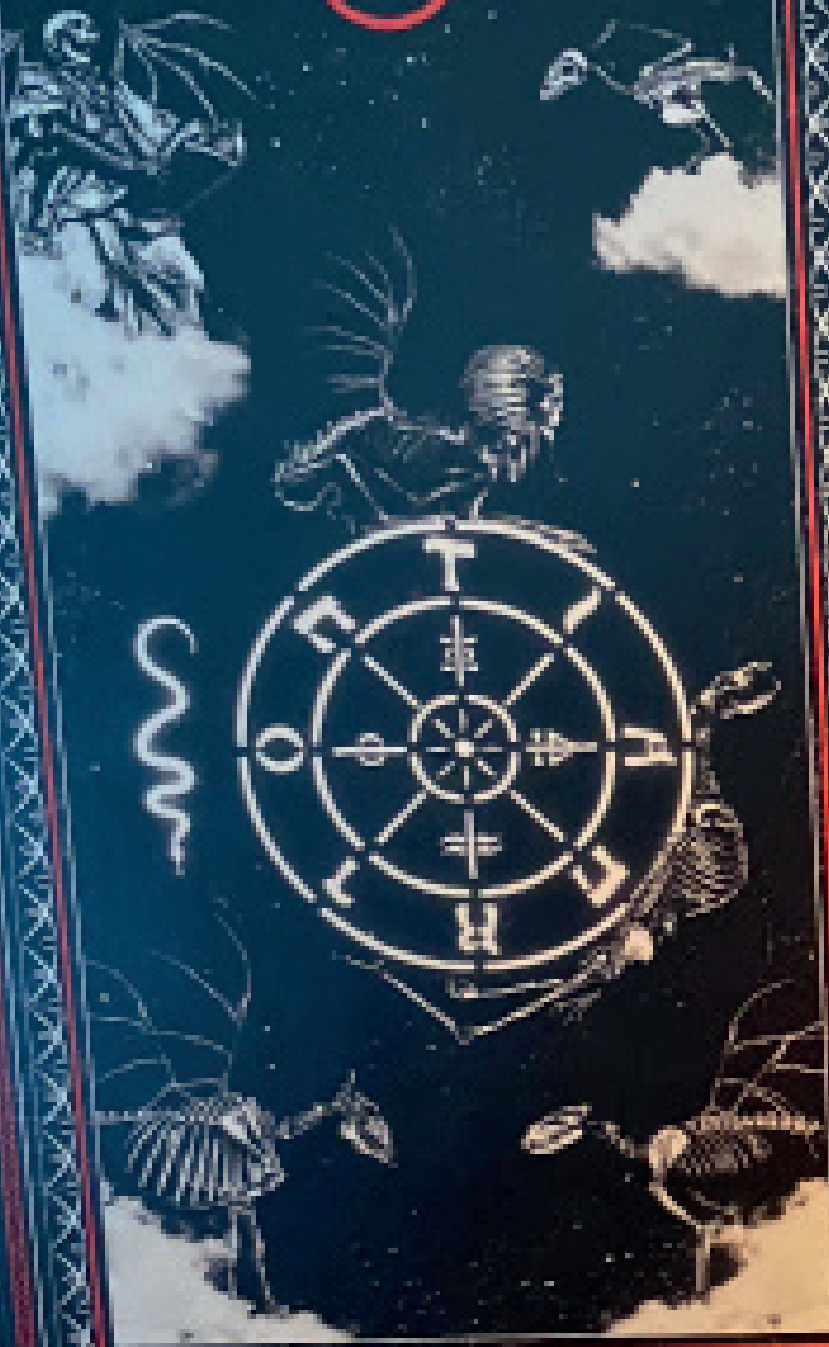


Con's: The only qualm i have with this deck is that it took a good few months of shuffling for the cards to limber up. However this isn't anything to moan about, as it's clear that this deck is hardwearing enough to last even the most enthusiastic of readers for many years.

The Bones Arcana would be the perfect Samhain gift for any witch. I couldn't recommend it more. To see more of Junaid Mortimer's work, find him on Instagram: @jumo.art

5 out of 5 stars
Available at £30 from Etsy.

X



WHEEL OF FORTUNE.





WHAT WE'RE READING

THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

Your Nurturing Guide to Discovering Nature's Seasons and Cycles

Rebecca Beattie

The Wheel of the Year is the perfect guide to connecting with nature, the seasons and the cycles of the year - and in turn, connecting to yourself.

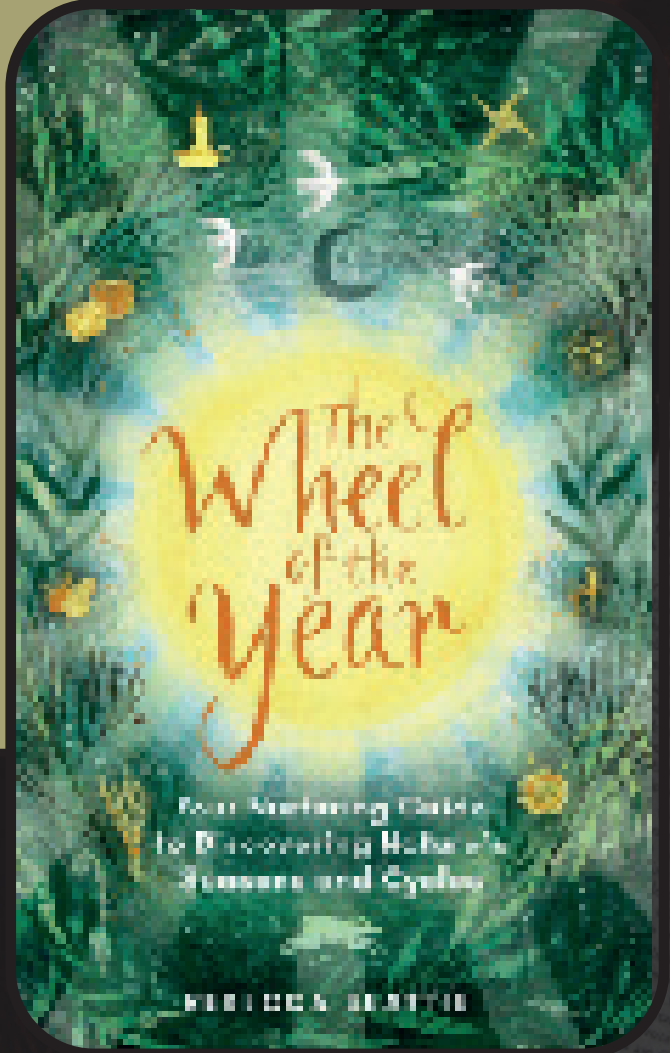
Rebecca Beattie provides just enough history for us to understand our modern day pagan practices and where they came from, debunking some of the myths around authenticity and accurate historical practices. Even a seasoned pagan or witch might find something they didn't know about the Wheel of the Year or the eight sabbats we celebrate here. Rebecca also explores these celebrations in other cultures and religions, bringing a world-wide view of how, in the past, we have always lived in tune with the earth and seasons.

If you are new to living with the cycles of the year, this would be an ideal place to start - and the suggestions of things to try are a wonderful addition and a great place to start your physical journey with the seasons. Rebecca's friendly style of writing feels nurturing and encouraging, and the personal stories of her journey add to the wisdom without taking away from your own journey.

Working through each

You will find the magic in nature through the and knowledge shared in The Wheel of the Year, and I feel it is one

I will return to often as we continue the cycle in years to come.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Rebecca Beattie is a Wiccan Priestess with a PhD in Creative Writing. Rebecca grew up on Dartmoor, which gave her an early appreciation of the power and joys of nature. She has been practising solitary witchcraft for twenty years and an initiate of the Gardnerian Wiccan tradition for fifteen. She is acclaimed for her highly informed teaching of witchcraft subjects at Treadwell's Books in Bloomsbury. By day she is a professional in a major charity, with advanced degrees in Literature and Creative writing. www.rebeccabeattie.co.uk

Embersong

Book One

O'Ran Ruadh & Sarah Berti

EMBERSONGS SERIES - BOOK ONE

EMBERSONG

Inspired by true events



O'RAN RUADH & SARAH BERTI

Embersong takes you on a deep dive through ancient Scottish history and mythology and brings a story like no other and an apt message for our continuously changing modern world.

Full of vivid landscapes and characters, and wonderful historic detail, Embersong is a gripping tale of high adventure, magic, myth and romance.

It's definitely a get-comfy-page-turner - and I eagerly await the next book in the series!

Available from Amazon

£15.41 paperback

£6.51 Kindle (prices correct at time of publishing)

For more information visit:

www.embersongs.com

Turn to our Poetry and Fiction section to read a Samhain excerpt from Embersong!





Pagan Poetry
&
Fiction

Photo by Klaire Dawn Ader

Vagrant Heart

It's bold of you
To assume that I care
About your rampant,
Vagrant heart.
Red flags were fluttering eerily,
From before the very start.
You cast my love asunder,
In the most narcissistic way,
With nihilism brooding on words,
You didn't care to say.

You had laid to rest our carcass,
Before I realised we'd died.
I was too busy stoking
The fire we had lit,
To notice you roaming outside.
Now all that is left is the ashes,
Of a love that tore me apart.
And all that there is left of you,
Is a rampant vagrant heart.

Kelly Buchan 2022



An excerpt from



...After the keening ritual, the crowd swung into the field and arranged themselves around a steep slope of the hill serving as a natural amphitheatre. It circled another fire pit — the main Samhain fire — ringed by seven shadows with flashing eyes, each masked with leather and wood, bark and bone, each adorned with a swan feather cloak.

They were the Dòideagen Muileach, the Starfire Priestesses.

They lived in a temple near Dòideag's roundhouse and had come to celebrate Samhain with the clan. One of the figures fluttered a black raven's feather over an ember smouldering in a chalice. She added tinder and with a lick at the air, a single flame rose bright and true. She removed her mask and held the chalice high. It was Beth.

Diego's heart skipped a beat.

Accuse her of witchcraft, Padre Franco had demanded.

Like the priestesses, Beth was crowned with a helm of antlers that pierced the sky. The flame she held illuminated a forest-like gown. She was the proud deer goddess, the daughter of the Monarchs of the Glen, both of whom stood still by the Oak to witness this ancient rite. Watching Beth hold the flame high, something happened to Diego he could not explain. The sheer spectacle of it was too much. He was on his knees again, twice in one night, struck down by beauty and darkness and how they intertwined, and by the disorientation this terrible beauty caused. Like lightning rearranging his brain. Like a scorpion secret stinging him. The death of his old self.

Something was humbling him, shedding his snakeskin.

Above him a murder of ghost crows silently shrieked, invisible to everyone else.

Die, Love, they screamed. Love, die!

It was as though his heart had broken and Diego was realising something important yet he had no idea what it was. The electric feeling took him over, animal-like, god-like, sudden, abrupt, overwhelming, perfect, nauseating, both light and dark. The feeling went on and on in his chest and indeed ignored the boundaries of his chest and collided with infinity, cracking all that he was, and it spoke the language of longing and loss and love, the ache of an infinity he could not name.

The summons of the invisible heart. He was kneeling to the goddess and the goddess was Beth. He had dreamed it. He had not died, for she had healed him. She was the light leading him home. She was the dark he feared.

The priestesses began to dance.

The starlight and moonlight bathed them. Venus rose in the south.

To the east, Sirius, as if pulled up by Orion's belt, stretched out through Taurus towards the Pleiades, as if the seven sisters were the body of a great bird leading the dance of constellations across the night sky. Beneath the wild night, like sinuous creatures of the otherworld the priestesses spun and whirled, singing, crooning, their robes falling open to reveal the secret of the garter's wound around the top of their left thighs. A disclosure of their power.

"The Order of the Garter," he heard someone near him say.

Diego took a shuddering breath, mesmerised. Did Beth wear the garter too?

A cloud of bees seemed to rise from the priestesses as they danced, though when Diego blinked, they were gone. By the oak tree the Stag God lifted his silver torc in his right hand and a live wriggling copper adder in his left. "All Hail, Guardian of the Ring," sang the priestesses. "We are the Dòideagen Muileach, we are the Starfire Priestesses, we have brought you the Grail." One of the priestesses knelt to the Lord, holding up a skull cap with a serpent and swastika carved upon it. As Cernunnos drank the thick red nectar, Diego could see the supernatural red wine flowing through Lachlan's veins, so potent that the Stag God seemed to come alive as though before he had merely been sleeping.

But was it wine?

Sacramental venom, the secret fire of the arcanum, the secret secretion of star fire, the yin ambrosia, the priestesses chanted. Fertility, the mysteries of blood, stag-seed and womb.

Diego could not decide whether they were chanting these words, or if he was imagining them. The Stag God drank the seed-womb elixir and the women of the star fire danced circles, the garters upon their thighs concealed then revealed, all of them chanting a song that seemed to wind around Cernunnos, nourishing him, a song that seemed to spark the potency of his blood. They hummed in infinite tongues, a dream sound like bees, crooning creation words Diego could not understand. The star fire in the blood, drink our star fire, remember the Holy Grail, they hummed. The womb, the seed, the love.

Beside Diego, the Padre crossed himself and shook with disgust. "Their garter is the witch's belt, the devil's badge! Scarlet women! Sirens! And Beth their ringleader! What more proof do you need?"

Accuse her, the Padre said. Or you will be excommunicated.

Fuck her then kill her, the Snake said.

Love, the ghost birds screamed. Love despite the trick that is the world!

I will forgive you when the Padre is dead, Matias said.

I am dead, said José. I died on the ship. You have just been pretending I was alive, you colossally stupid bear.

The embers in Beth's chalice flared and the dancing priestesses came and lit their torches from it. Blue flames steady, red quivering, orange tonguing the night. The priestesses spun into a ring around the fire pit, simultaneously lighting it from seven sides. The crowd went quiet as the fire was lit. The first snap of flame on fuel crackled through the air, the fire swung slowly underneath the kindling, whirled with a gust of wind, then leapt and sparked, drawing their eyes upwards.

Samhain fire!

It rose quickly now: an entity unto itself.

Coiling and snarling like a beast, gyrating to the sky, hungry and passionate, the element of fire was within all who watched: the dormant fires in their own hearts were ignited. In the MacLeans and Spaniards and gypsies and in all the Highlanders of Mull, both the dead and the living.

It was the purpose of Samhain.

To relight their fires like the rebirth of the celestial king. To regain the power of the sun. Soul fires within them that would need to last the whole of autumn and the long stretch of winter. To keep fighting. For all of them were weary. Whitemane who had changed after he had returned without Fiona. Anna who no longer slept, and who wept in mornings, or noons, or midnights, and scratched her skin in dread and paced. Lachlan barren of options save to sacrifice one who was the sun to him. Lady Margaret prouder than them all, a mountain of responsibility on her shoulders at what she must enact. Brock one-armed, the noble warrior forever maimed. Fiona's mother Éilis staring blankly at the night.

Yet in the teeth of whatever anyone had endured, the goddess had lit the Samhain fire to re-light the hearts of her clan, and this fire glowed across the moor of Mull beside a castle of humans under a sky of hauntings, clouds and gods. Diego stepped up to the fire in front of Beth and opened his mouth to accuse her of witchcraft, not so he could be redeemed by a mad old friend who was ill and he loved, but in the hope, it would redeem his mad old friend. That it might bring him peace.

Diego felt Marcos' hand on his forearm. Not just his hand, his nails. Marcos was scratching him, then yanking him back. "What are you doing?" he hissed.

"Whatever you were about to do, don't," Marcos hissed back.

Padre Franco stood on Diego's other side. "Quemarla en la hoguera," he whispered.

Beth's antlers reached skyward. Her eyes pierced them.
Her beauty frightened them.

Her words rang out through time and space as she stood before the Samhain fire, as it crackled and spat, expressing its hunger in light and heat and motion.

"The Sun King is the God, and tonight, he dies. Autumn has come, our year is over," the Goddess said. "In winter the Sun King travels the underworld, learning the wisdom of the dead."

The crowd leaned forward for the ritual as the star fire priestesses performed and expressed the Goddess' words

in a wordless dance around the fire. “Now, the Goddess becomes the Crone, the Cailleach Bhéara. She mourns the Sun King’s death. She covers the lands with a blanket of ice, for she is the Queen of Death.” Marcos’ hand was on his arm, holding Diego back from what he did not

want to do. What he must.

“We too, descend into darkness,” the Goddess continued. “We too, mourn our dead, and tonight they walk among us. Make peace with them. Grieve them. Gather their wisdom. And then — let them go.”

Ghosts darted around Diego. Matias, José, his crew, and hundreds of spectral forms he did not know — the dead of the Highlanders. Diego’s chest was a shipwreck. The fire cast a dancing play of light and shadow on the Goddess’ deer antlers. Marcos was still gripping him hard enough to bruise along Diego’s scale-marked forearm. He took a step forward, Marcos jerked him back yet again. “Stop it.”

“As the year’s fertile cycle ends, we thank the Earth Mother for all we received. We relinquish that which does not serve. We make peace with the past year, with all who died, with all we have done or failed to do. Samhain is reconciliation.

For now we enter the dark season.

To take our inner journey.

Where there is no light but the one we bring with us.

The Goddess’s face was stark. The crowd was transfixed. The ghosts near Diego had stilled. The dancers stopped.

At the end of the night, take a fire seed from our Samhain fire. Carry the ember with you through the winter. When it seems black and cold, you must hold the flame.

Hold it until Spring.

Hold it until the Sun returns.

Hold it, in the darkness of the world.

The darkness is the season of gestation and in spring, may Light grow again.

In the dark, it is you who will be the light.

The ritual shivered across the crowd.

“Dios mio,” Diego muttered. “Quemarla en la hoguera.” It was the words

the Padre had said: Burn her at the stake.

“Stop it.” Marcos shook him angrily.

“No, my son?” The Padre said quietly. Face white, a ghost himself, possessed by pain, altered. “I must, then.”

Diego clenched his fists.

“Wherefore in the name of God the All-powerful, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, of the Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and of all the saints, I hereby list your sins and failures,” began the Padre, “and deprive you of the Communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord, to excommunicate you from —

“Padre, no.” Diego seized his friend’s shoulders, and the Padre’s words stumbled to a halt. “Stop. Please do not do this. Give me a chance. I will do what you want.”

In the dark, it is you who will be the light.

“I will do it,” Diego told the Padre. “I will do what you ask.”

But the formal ceremony had ended and the crowd burst suddenly to life. Beth was gone. The gypsies struck up jaunty tunes set to the rhythm of the bodhran played by Douglas MacFayden, who was beaming one of his rare smiles. Blackskull joined, his one eye gleaming in the firelight, Stephan sang ballads as if he was in the Mead-Hall of the Gods, young Neil came in on the flutes and John Faw on the penny whistle. Rebecca strummed her harp, her husband Liam joined in with his bodhran, and Sorcha’s soprano voice harmonised them all. Dancers spun to the beats, stamping, leaping, shaking, shouting and the crowd shifted quicksilver from solemn to festive and wild. Games, drinking and revelry began in earnest. The Samhain bonfire licked the sky as the men and women celebrated the end of the year.

To Diego, they were all just in his way.

Where had Beth gone?

He plunged into the crowd, lost the Padre, and got tangled. Some of the dancers had unrolled a red and blue yarn and were passing the threads to one another as they danced, weaving the strands into a web of which Diego was now an accidental part. He struggled out of the yarn and almost tripped on Anna, who was holding the red thread. She was singing.

Three great ages:

The age of the Mother Tree;

The age of the Eagle bold;

The age of Cailleach Bhéara

Who spins the threads of gold,

Fastening them under the Hall of the Moon Her knot will forever hold —

Anna broke off without finishing, for Beth had started to approach her and she had frozen with rage. Then quickly, she vanished into the crowd. Beth stared first at the sky, then at the ground, then towards Diego caught in the red thread, and as their gazes met, the universe spun off-axis.

A raven cawed. Was it white, or black?

Neither of them looked away.

A corridor of eye contact opened a secret world between them. They were silent yet Diego knew exactly what the silence was saying, what the birds were saying, what his heart was saying and he knew Beth knew it too. It was a moment of perfect communication, despite — or because — it was wordless.

He knew.

Everything.



INTERESTED IN ADVERTISING WITH US?



WITCH

Magazine

VISIT
WWW.WITCHZINE.CO.UK

OR EMAIL
ADVERTISE@WITCHZINE.CO.UK

CONTACT US ABOUT
ARTIST SHOWCASES
SMALL BUSINESS FEATURES
PRODUCT REVIEWS
INTERVIEWS
BOOK AND CD REVIEWS

AND SO MUCH MORE!



WITCH
Magazine

For previous issues & information on submissions visit

WWW.WITCHZINE.CO.UK