

# LUGHNASADH

✿ THE HARVEST BEGINS ✿



✿  
WITCH

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# WITCH



Welcome to the  
Lughnasadh issue of  
Witch!

We've been on our  
travels - and visited

Fantasy Forest, one of our first events since  
March 2020.

It's still summer outside, but the wheel is still  
turning - and we head now towards the harvest  
and the darker side of the year. Anyone else  
longing for the months ending '-ber'? I know I  
am!

Until then, take time to pause and rest in the  
golden days of summer - there's still plenty of  
longer days left yet.

As always, thank you for your readership and  
your support!

**Bekki**  
Editor

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# WITCH

FEATURED ARTICLES

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RAVEN & LUNA'S TAROTSCOPES - BLACK MOON COVE

AVONMOUTH - HELEN J.R. BRUCE

## PLUS MORE FROM OUR GUEST WRITERS!

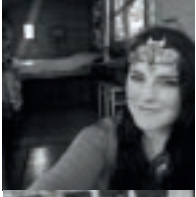
RON GEORGE  
PETER NASH  
SAMANTHA TEVES

# Fantasy Forest

Find our review and visitor photos on pages 20-27



MICHELLE ROSE BOXLEY



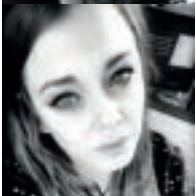
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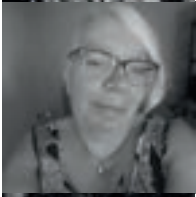
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Photo: Evangaline Mayor



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OPEN NOW

# Sisters of the Moon

Michelle Rose Boxley

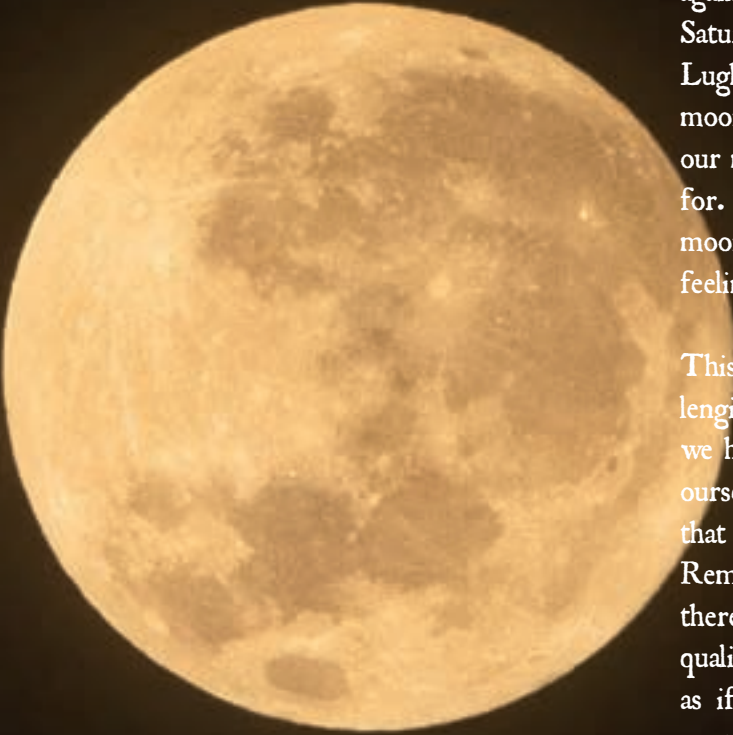
Dear ones,

Mama moon has reached the peak of her cycle once again, turning full in the sign of Aquarius in the early hours of Saturday morning at 3:36am(bst). This full moon is also Lunar Lughnasadh and so we get to combine the abundance of the full moon with Lughnasadh's theme of abundance and really allow our minds and hearts to turn to all the things that we are grateful for. The sun moved into Leo on Thursday and so with this full moon's placement in Leo season, we can open ourselves up to a feeling of lightness, play and expansion.

This year has continued to be heavy, scary and incredibly challenging. Aquarius asks us to look for the teachings and blessings we have received during this time. What have we learned about ourselves and others? How has this time revealed the systems that need to be broken down in order for new ones to be built? Remember, Aquarius is the Zodiac's revolutionary. Where is there a revolution brewing in you? Aquarius has this expansive quality of being able to zoom out and see the big picture, almost as if you're looking down on earth from amongst the stars. If you've been feeling stuck, trapped, heavy - how could you zoom out and connect to this idea of a bigger picture?

Aquarius is an air sign ruled by the planets Uranus and Saturn. Uranus is associated with revolution, social change and awakening and Saturn is associated with structure, time and boundaries. Add these together with the transformational element of air and you get this powerful energy of change - the breaking down of structures that no longer serve us and no longer serve the collective. The archetypes of Aquarius are the protester, the inventor, the rebel, the revolutionary and the visionary. They are never scared to use their voice to inspire change and to dismantle oppressive structures. This full moon we get to balance Aquarius's outspoken, rebellious energy with the loving mother energy that we focussed on at the New Moon in cancer. Dropping from head to heart!

During this full moon, ask yourself what are the oppressive structures in your life at the moment, perhaps placed upon you by society, others or even yourself? How could you use the pow-



THE FULL  
MOON IN  
AQUARIUS  
LUNAR LUGHNASADH



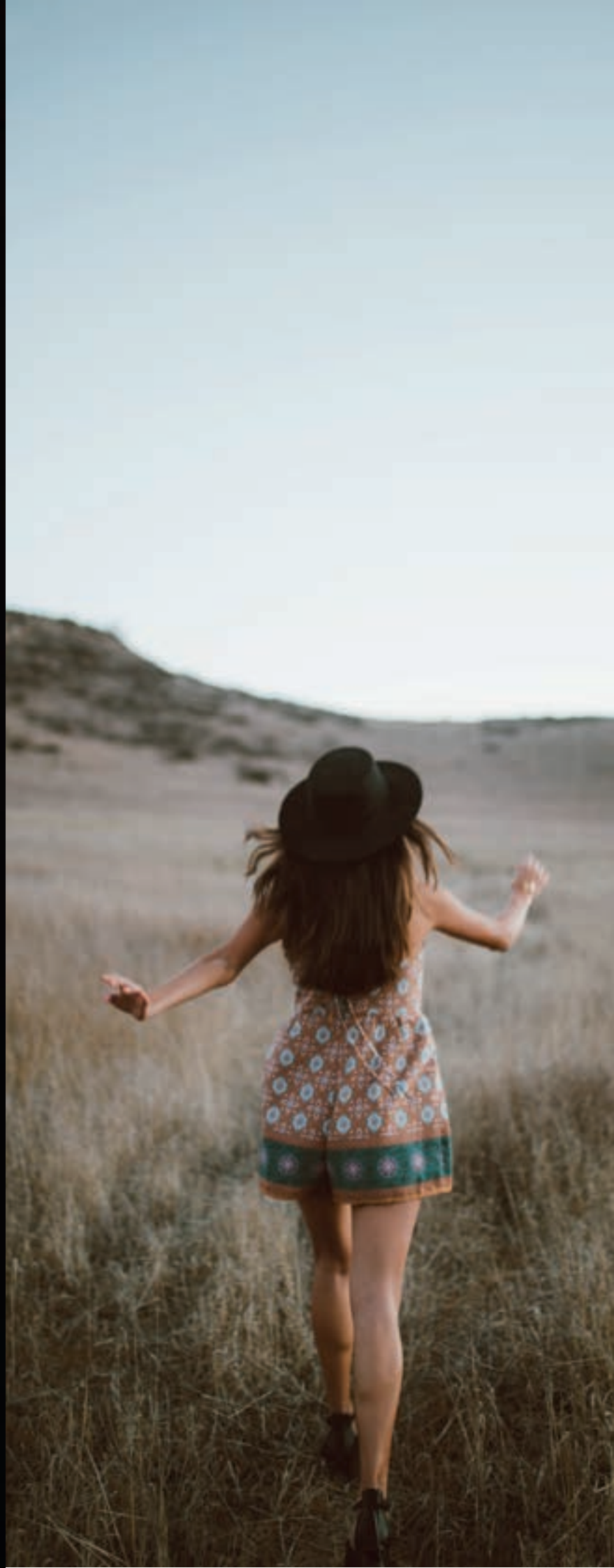
er of this Full Moon to begin to break these down? Saturn also governs boundaries, so it's another opportunity to check-in with your boundaries, this time particularly in relation to people/situations/places that are draining you and preventing you from serving the collective. If one person is always draining our energy and time and it's preventing us from doing the work we want to do in our community or family then this is out of balance. What could we put in place to protect our energy and time?

#### LEARNING INTO CHANGE

Aquarius as well as being an Air sign is also the water bearer and pours the refreshing waters of change over our life. Sometimes we resist change so much or we simply fail to acknowledge the changes that have already taken place. With this full moon being lunar Lughnasadh, a turning point on the wheel of the year, we have the chance to take a pause and reflect on who we are right now and if that person wants and needs different things to the person we were at the start of the year. Maybe we don't want the things we longed for at the winter solstice anymore, or maybe we achieved certain things but they've turned out to be different to what we thought. I say this so often, but never be afraid to let life change you. Allow life and all its lessons, blessings, hardships and sorrows to flow through you.

#### AQUARIUS THEMES:

New perspectives, social justice, social change, activism, enlightenment, awakening, new ideas, upgrading, truth, the greater good, the collective, the big picture, creativity, rebellion, community, trailblazing, innovation, human potential.



# *Join Sisters of the Moon*

This is an excerpt from **The Wild Moon Series Lunar Workbook for June.**  
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*There's no going back on a  
faerie bargain...*

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# MY FRIEND GANESH



FAIRY BEC  
WITCH WRITER

I was watching a recording of one of Rachel Patterson's online chats recently (When the Gods abandon you . . .) which led me to writing this article. During the chat she was saying how she had worked for many years with the Cailleach but recently, the connection had not been the same.

This really resonated with me because I have recently been having a bit of a 'return' and 'revelation' to things I loved when I was a teenager when my Pagan pathway began in my consciousness. Things that I now realise were there at the start of my journey, but which stepped away before making a return within my spiritual life. It made me realise those spiritual connections change and develop as well as having stronger and weaker moments just like mortal relationships.

There is often an assumption that our spiritual connections, once made, remain strong but this does not seem to be the case for many. Think about life in general - we pull away and draw closer to people, interests, hobbies, our inner selves etc. like the sea meets the land and retracts again. It is never a static element but an organic flow.

One of these 'return' and 'revelations' I have been experiencing recently has been to do with my relationship with Ganesh.

Ganesh was the first deity I ever bought a statue of. The first incense I ever bought bore his image and he was the first spiritual being I ever called in to help me. I did not question my obsession with him as an early teen, I just liked him and felt comfort every time he popped up. Over the years I have learnt more and more about him and have been working with him with consciousness and purpose.

In the last couple of decades, I have been on a wider journey discovering more and more of my spirit guides and as I have done so, Ganesh has stepped back. He has always been present in my

life with multiple Ganesh figures around my home as well as on my clothing but his use as a spiritual 'tool' had not been present in my life for quite a while.

About a year ago, I was drawn to a tiny Ganesh pendant carved into Tiger Eye. As soon as I put it on, it was like a major revelation and re-connection. I also bought a pink danburite pendant at the same time and wearing them both together has a very powerful effect when I am in my 'manifesting and achieving' mode.

This mode can be exhausting so I regularly take them off, charge them on my selenite plate or in my quartz bowl and put them back on again when I need things to go in the direction I am focused on at a greater speed. Ganesh returned to me with such a full force that I could not ignore him. I have undergone huge changes in the last fifteen months - for the better - and Ganesh has been a driving force in helping me cope and move forwards.

So what can I tell you about Ganesh? Well, firstly, if you have a statue of him, he likes to face a window. He likes to know that he has freedom and he likes to observe the world.

Ganesh helps you remove obstacles . . .but be warned! You need to be happy that they are removed for good as Ganesh's power is strong. He brings good luck by clearing stuck spaces which then allow for the good luck and different energies to

flow in.

Ganesh loves sweets. He is often depicted with a bowl of them - hard boiled and gold wrapped seem to be a favorite. I can feel him smiling when I put a wrapped Werthers in front of one of his figurines.

Ganesh likes to support you in being intellectual and making decisions. He thrives off supporting you with goal setting and achieving. His key words are 'Intelligence', 'success' and 'prosperity'. He enjoys supporting those who embrace and/or ready for change. Ganesh can help you let go and move forwards.

Although Ganesh was my first spirit guide connection, he is not in charge of the others nor does he behave as if he is superior. I feel like I have a little 'team' of spiritual guides to help me along my way and like any team, some have greater use and importance at certain times and others at different times.

Not having any expectation that they are there when I need them but trusting that those who step forwards are who I need at the time helps me to accept and be grateful for each moment they are with me.







# WAITING FOR MAGICAL MANIFESTATION



*Stephanie Ulpb*  
Witch Writer

*Photo @magiaziemi*

The time between spell-casting or visualisation work and then (hopeful) manifestation of our desired outcome, can be (dependant on the importance of the outcome to us, our current circumstance, patience levels, perspective, and other factors) extremely frustrating, even anxiety inducing, and if we allow it to, can consume much of our daily thoughts and energy.

This then of course becomes counteractive to the energies we put out during our spells or visualisations. If we don't somehow learn to keep our angst in check, we can end up essentially sending out energies that match a lack of having what we hope for - thus keeping this our reality. Spell work is not just mastering preparation and completion of our magic but also learning to trust our work and letting go of the need for the outcome, knowing that this will help us to not undo or stall the positive energies we are waiting to be returned to us. And also, knowing that whatever does or doesn't happen will be at very least a learning curve and will be much more enjoyable if we can change our waiting perspective from one of angst to one of curiosity.

That said, it is of course completely natural to want to know and very practical to make some level of assessment of whether we may see our intended results materialise, and so is perfectly reasonable to take conscious note of any occurrences which seem out of the ordinary, coincidental or without too great of a leap can be linked to our requests. But generally, its ideal not to overthink it past this. It is often those times that we notice interesting coincidences without looking for them that when we look back, we can see them as initial indications or movements towards our wishes.

As far as placing timings on our spell-work, different cultures, paths and people do (or don't)



do this to varying degrees - the most common consensus being the general rule of thumb that you should begin to notice some kind of evidence of manifestation forming within a month. I don't disagree with this but I feel it's worth being aware that this is very generalised, (just as a sun sign horoscope is very generalised compared to the whole scope of astrological readings).

There are many more factors to consider but it is a good and reasonable initial basis. With that in mind, one major factor that will affect magical timing is of course what the spell is for and how easily obtainable it is. For example, finding of an item is likely to be much quicker than a finance or love spell, with the latter most often needing a few elements to fall into place in synch. How much/how deeply we want for something also has a bearing on whether we get it at all and how quickly, as do our belief systems - often subconscious blocks are the biggest stalling of manifestation. How much do we believe what we want to be possible?

An often-overlooked factor is that of whether we have petitioned for otherworldly help - and to which realm - as well as how close our relationship is with them. For example, the angelic realms will likely aid your magic even with no close relationship but provided what you are asking for is in line with divine will. As they tend to come from a bigger picture perspective, if what you hope for will allow you to help yourself and others, there is a good chance of assistance and quite perfect results, however timing wise, expect to learn many lessons as you are guided towards your requests (depending on the request this can literally take years for an overall outcome).

On the other hand, The Faery realm are only likely to assist those they have a relationship


with, but they are able to bring things to physical form very quickly (generally I would expect some materialisation within days, or weeks at the most - again depending upon the request). To be clear this does not mean to always utilise quicker magic - it must be fit for purpose. And best to not only build relationship with the Faery realm for this reason.

This is far from every aspect that could affect timing of our magic and all in all, while we can make relatively educated estimations at timing, there is much more value in putting our requests out and allowing things to unfold as they will while getting on with our lives as usual in the interim. In traditional crafts, upon completion of a rite, one must walk away without looking back. There are folk tales that speak of the repercussions of not doing so, but I can't help but wonder if it is more a symbolic thing that there is no more energy you can add to it that will help - the energies of trust and allowing what has been done to take form is what will help. And this in itself is a real gift - at the risk of sounding very cliché - patience really is a virtue, as is trust.

And as someone who can be passionate to the point of impatience and for others who can get caught up in this way, I find very helpful the following quote

IT IS GOOD TO  
LET OUR PASSIONS  
DRIVE US BUT  
NOT CONSUME US

# WICCA AND INITIATION IS THE END IN SIGHT?



The craft and indeed the entire contemporary pagan tradition is in a constant state of evolution. This process is accelerating and the craft now experiences more change in five years than it did in 10 ; 30 - 40 years ago. This is not necessarily to be decried ; progress is a good thing and indeed any religion or spiritual pathway will quickly find itself in trouble if it does not move forward, otherwise stagnation is sure to set in. The number of empty pews and closed down/derelict churches bears witness to this.

Not that long ago in wicca and certain other pagan pathways , formal initiation was the only way to become involved. After training the aspirant could be raised in due course to the second and third degrees. (Although in some traditions there is only one initiation , in others particularly on the continent there may be many more than three degrees.

These days however , formal initiation and indeed training seem top be going out of fashion, people seem no longer want to go through organised rites of passage , preferring to do their own thing or simply to practice wicca or other pagan path from their own personal experiences. "Only the gods can initiate you" say some. I have even read in the past that you can become initiated simply by sitting under a tree!

There is certainly nothing wrong from learning from ones own visions or experiences - these can be very powerful and lead to a greater understanding and relationship with our gods. Personal experience is indeed a very important part of the journey of the pagan pathway. This is one of its strengths .

So does then the move towards a more free and liberal approach to the craft also have a negative side? Unfortunately I believe the answer to this question to be yes.

Greater diversity particularly within wicca has led to indiscipline; and the whole movement is now pulling in too many directions , and too many emphases to the point where it is moving towards at best losing its identity, and at worst complete fragmentation.

*Peter Nash*

It could even be argued that the entire concept of the coven is in fact disappearing. Solitaries have always outnumbered their covenant counterparts anyway and this ratio seems to be increasing more and more toward the lone worker. Over the last 20 years or so this state of affairs has been further influenced by the rise (or reappearance) of the so-called "hedge witch".

The hedge witch may or may not be wiccan in approach. They tend to keep ritual to a bare minimum although few omit it altogether. They are most likely to be found in the kitchen rather than in a magic circle brewing up healing teas or soups. In other words the kitchen knife and saucepan are more likely to be their tools rather than the athame or pentacle. The plus side to this kind of working is that much of the old herbal / nature / weather lore is being rediscovered and just as importantly kept alive. I have in the past come across more than one individual calling themselves "third-degree hedgewitches" (?), to my mind however this is a contradiction in terms and quite simply doesn't make sense. Surely the degree system was formulated and developed by the Gardner/alexandrian traditions of wicca, in other words the revivalist craft - how can you therefore be a "third-degree hedge witch"?

Nevertheless there does seem to be a place or this more of working, and some hedge witches are undoubtedly carrying out some important research into herbal lore and the mysteries of the natural world in general.

The problem is however at the other end of the scale, if the coven /formal initiation / intensive training methods of working disappear then a great deal of wisdom, experience, lore and understanding of ritual will be lost, possibly for good. This will leave wicca with no effective kernel or nucleus, it will be a pagan free for all religion with no heart or soul.

So what then is the solution? I believe that the answer lies in a compromise between the two different approaches. We can see examples of this in the past where less rigid and democratic traditions - such as Raymond Buckland's Seax wica, and wicca-based

paganism - a non-initiatory form of goddess oriented and less committed form of wicca were founded to provide an alternative to the more prevalent though hierarchical Gardner / alexandrian craft.

One thing is certain - the intensive training programmes of yester year seem to be a thing of the past, and this approach doesn't seem to work or carry into the present day. Covens are at least in my own tradition autonomous and the method/amount of training pretty much at the behest of the High Priestess. The way forward seems to be a programme whereby the initiate develops magically and psychically to a high standard but at the same time perhaps with a greater emphasis on practical work. After all many people - particularly parents and people in full time employment may simply not have the time to go through long gruelling programmes of psychic and magical training. A middle way as it were needs to be found. There could be many brethren put off aiming for the higher degrees because of these issues.

Does this mean that standards will then fall? Possibly but then I believe that the key will be to ensure quality not quantity - in other words perhaps new initiates should be trained to a high standard although not to the extensive and intensive standard of the 1970's and early 80's.

As we have seen, wicca and paganism in the present has shifted a great deal toward personal experience rather than formal instruction. Although there is probably little now that can be done to reverse this situation it will be a great shame if initiation disappears altogether and the craft foregoes its status as a mystery religion. Much knowledge could be lost. And although wicca in particular is unlikely to return to the higher standards of training than thirty years ago.

Much can still be learned from those days and the present movement would do well to remember and learn from them.



# DREAM WITH YOUR EYES OPEN...

AFTER A YEAR OF CANCELLED AND POSTPONED  
EVENTS, FANTASY FOREST FESTIVAL ROSE FROM  
THE ASHES AND BROUGHT US BACK TO JOY AND  
COMMUNITY AFTER A LONG, LONG WINTER.

Bekki Jo Milner  
Witch Editor

Photo courtesy of Cecile Dubuise

# FANTASY FOREST

FANTASY FOREST ISN'T PURELY A PAGAN EVENT - NO MATTER WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN - IT'S MAGIC IS FOR EVERYONE!

LIVE MUSIC, MARKET STALLS, COSTUMING COMPETITIONS, ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND GROWN UPS ALIKE - AND WE WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE THERE FOR THE WEEKEND TO ENJOY ALL IT HAD TO OFFER!

After so long away from bigger events, it was exciting and a little nervewracking to be attending an outdoor festival. That said, the event was wonderfully managed under government guidelines to keep us all safe - limited tickets, hand sanitizer, specified routes around the festival grounds and - most difficult for me - no dancing! Considering most of the restrictions were being lifted the day after the festival ended, visitors and staff alike did all they could to make Fantasy Forest a safe and happy event.

Special mention must be made of the wonderful volunteers - The Purple Shirts - without whom there would be no Fantasy Forest!

A big part of the Pagan event circuit for me is live music - and to see such wonderful bands as The Dolmen, Inkubbus Sukkubus and Perkelt (to name but a few!) back on stage doing what they do best was somewhat emotional - I hadn't seen real live music since March 2020.

As regular visitors to Castlefest in the Netherlands, when Fantasy Forest started in 2019, I was overjoyed at the idea of something similar taking place here in the UK. Despite the past year, the 2021 event rose from the ashes of 2020 just like the pheonix of the fire ceremony.



Amidst the bands, the costumes, the market stalls and entertainment, the ceremony at the heart of the event takes place on Saturday evening. This years statue was a pheonix - fitting for the first festival back after so much was cancelled. Visitors were invited to write messages or wishes on scrolls or upon the wooden feathers prior to ritual. It was a moving ceremony, the fire lit by honoured guests along with Martin, the man who made it all happen. It is an emotional affair, bringing much needed hope, and remembering those who are no longer with us - you can view the video of the ceremony on the Fantasy Forest Facebook page.



I've always hoped for a UK based fantasy festival, and Fantasy Forest granted that wish when it debuted in 2019! After a shaky start, we were worried it might have been a one-off experience, but it is back and better than ever. Guest starring some of the best Fantasy artists and personalities around, the atmosphere itself is created by the visitors themselves. It is as magical as we choose to make it, and I believe going forwards it will only get more incredible. "Dream with your eyes open!" they say, and the costumes, effort, passion and creativity of everyone involved from staff to visitors makes that promise a wonderful reality. Escape to another world for a weekend, and come along in 2022! - brother and sister Ezekial and Evangeline Mayor (top right)

Had an Amazing First time at The Fantasy Forest Camp at Cheltenham, we are here in costume as "The Raven Fae " keeping all the naughty elementals in order!! It was very hot in costume but so worth it!  
Love and wishes from,  
Lynda Sagar and Ade Farrington. Xxx (top left)

Photos from Runecast Copper (bottom left and center) [www.runecastcopper.com](http://www.runecastcopper.com)

The Boarding Crew and the Orcs - photo by Combat Wombat - (opposite page, bottom center)



We were at Fantasy Forest as performers with The Sherwood Outlaws. We had a fantastic time meeting everyone, providing archery, storytelling, combat and a medieval camp. We will definitely be returning next year too!  
Photo by Corinography, from Katie Ward (top left)

Having got married at the first Fantasy Forest in 2019 and having made so many wonderful new friends there, the Year of the Phoenix was a long awaited reunion and 2 year anniversary for us. We are so happy to find that although the festival was bigger and better than before, it has retained its friendly, safe atmosphere with all of the magic and no hassle. A beautiful, inclusive event for all ages, we look forward to celebrating under our wedding tree for many years to come.

Much love and gratitude for the organisers and crew of purple shirts who make sure everyone stays happy throughout, here's to 2022!  
Mand & Minty May (top right)

My 1st visit to Fantasy Forest, In awe at the incredible costumes, bands, stalls and the whole event team effort. This is an image of my sister I took rocking her simple bed sheet toga! (a last minute costume change due to the heat!) I look forward very much to visiting next year – such a great vibe  
<https://www.facebook.com/GinaNellcreates> (bottom right)



Emily Gillett - submitted by photographer Jon Webb (Roving Man)  
My second Fantasy Forest, a wonderful festival like no other - like minded people having lots of fun. (Top center)

We went to fantasy forest festival on Sunday for the first time ever & really enjoyed our time there even with the heat, everyone we met was lovely & the children had a lovely time. I brought new costumes (fairy) for the children while we were there from Minerva craft which the children loved & had lots of fun in & are still enjoying playing in now that we are home. We are hoping to go again next year & hopefully camp for all the days as we had such a good time.

Marie Newberry (top left)

Pentacle Drummers by Herne Greenwood (top left and bottom)





The heat was immense, but us costumers have joy to spread. This is the way.... - Mandalorian (Phil Weldon, top right)

The Fantasy Forest Festival is certainly a place to find interesting people from all walks of life. After being locked away for 15 months because of the virus, I checked the planetary transits and found out that something wonderful was about to happen, especially as Venus and Mars were about to align in the sign of Leo which meant it would be a good time to have a party and listen to some amazing music!

My husband and I arrive at Fantasy Forest just after mid-day, and we were amazed at how friendly and helpful the stewards were, and they directed us towards the main stage, and thankfully my husband managed as if by magic to find two seats at the front. It was a very hot day, but we did manage to see Captain of the Lost Waves, Perkelt and the fantastic Dolmen who sand under the waxing crescent moon, and they were all stars in their own right! - Caroline Clarkson Drake (bottom left)

The fantastic Purple Shirts worshipping their bag of frozen food! - Submitted by James Collins (top right)



# FANTASY FOREST

returns to Sudeley Castle

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for more information visit:

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Fantasy Forest had so many wonderful costumes which lots of photos had been taken of.

However mine isn't of the people.

It was taken as the ceremony of the burning of the pheonix was happening and was the back drop of that ceremony through the trees.

Its of the sun shining down through them and creating a heart over the whole festival.

This heart sums up the whole festivals atmosphere, the hard work of the organisers, purple shirts and the love that people shared between them through interaction.

So poignant as the Ceremony was all about the Pheonix rising from ashes like the human race from this past year.

- Vicky Williams



# TAILTIU QUEEN DRUIDESS GODDESS OF THE EARTH

THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR IS JUST ABOUT TO TURN AND WE WILL BE WELCOMING IN THE FIRST OF THE HARVEST FESTIVALS, LUGHNASADH, ON AUGUST 1ST. LUGHNASADH IS ROUGHLY TRANSLATED TO MEAN LUGH'S ASSEMBLY (LUGH BEING ONE OF THE HIGH KINGS OF IRELAND AND MEMBER OF THE TUATHA DÉ DANANN) AND SO WE COMMONLY ASSOCIATE THIS TIME OF YEAR WITH THE MANY SKILLED GOD LUGH. HOWEVER, LUGH'S ASSEMBLY WAS ACTUALLY FOUNDED IN HONOUR OF HIS FOSTER MOTHER TAILTIU WHO DIED ON AUGUST 1ST.

## THE STORY OF TAILTIU

Taitiu (pronounced Tal-chew) was the daughter of the king of Spain and the wife of Eochaid mac Eirc - the last of the Fir Bolg kings of Ireland. Taitiu was a beautiful and beloved Queen and Druidess - she was known as one of the most learned women in Europe. She reminds me of Hypatia, dedicated to knowledge of science and the mysteries. When Ireland was invaded by the Tuatha Dé Danann, the Fir Bolg were defeated and Taitiu's husband was killed. Taitiu survived and remarried Eochu Garb of the Danann and became foster mother to high born Lugh who was of Tuatha Dé Danann and Formorian heritage. Fosterage was very common in Ireland at this time, in particular in Royal families as a way of gaining alliances. Taitiu being so skilled in the arts herself, then trained Lugh in all that she knew as well as battle and he went on to become a High King of Ireland and known as Samildánach, one who is skilled in all the arts.

Taitiu dedicated her life to the land and to her foster son Lugh. She worked tirelessly to clear and prepare the land for farming and in the end it claimed her life.

"When the fair wood was cut down by her, roots and all, out of the ground, before the year's end it became Bregmag, it became a plain blossoming with clover. Her heart burst in her body from the strain beneath her royal vest; not wholesome, truly, is a face like the coal, for the



sake of woods or pride of timber.

LONG WAS THE SORROW, LONG THE WEARINESS OF TAILTIU, IN SICKNESS AFTER HEAVY TOIL; THE MEN OF THE ISLAND OF ERIN TO WHOM SHE WAS IN BONDAGE CAME TO RECEIVE HER LAST BEHEST. SHE TOLD THEM IN HER SICKNESS (FEEBLE SHE WAS BUT NOT SPEECHLESS) THAT THEY SHOULD HOLD FUNERAL GAMES TO LAMENT HER ZEALOUS THE DEED."

[HTTPS://CELT.UCC.IE/PUBLISHED/T106500D/TEXT033](https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T106500D/TEXT033).

HTML

Lugh was so devoted to Taitiu that when she died he was devastated and worked hard to carry out her wishes. Before her death, Taitiu had already chosen her place of burial at Teltown and this is where the funeral rites and celebrations took place. As mentioned previously, Lughnasadh roughly translates to Lugh's Assembly and was the

funeral rites and celebrations that he set up in honour of his foster Mother. This went on to be called *Áenach Tailteann* and was a festival that took place each year on August 1st (which was the day she died) and lasted for many weeks. These festivals were mostly famous for their sporting and art competitions - the sporting part of this event became so famous throughout Europe it is thought to have inspired the Greek Olympic games.

The festivals also comprised of chants and laments sung by the druids to honour the dead, handfastings and arranged marriages, and fairs selling food and wears. This also became a time when laws were decided and disputes settled. *Áenach Tailteann* was also to be a time of peace as declared by Taitiu herself:

A FAIR WITH GOLD, WITH SILVER, WITH GAMES, WITH MUSIC OF CHARIOTS, WITH ADORNMENT OF BODY AND OF SOUL BY MEANS OF KNOWLEDGE AND ELOQUENCE.

A FAIR WITHOUT WOUNDING OR ROBBING OF ANY MAN, WITHOUT TROUBLE, WITHOUT DISPUTE, WITHOUT REAVING, WITHOUT CHALLENGE OF PROPERTY, WITHOUT SUING, WITHOUT LAW-SESSIONS, WITHOUT EVASION, WITHOUT ARREST.

A FAIR WITHOUT SIN, WITHOUT FRAUD, WITHOUT REPROACH, WITHOUT INSULT, WITHOUT CONTENTION, WITHOUT SEIZURE, WITHOUT THEFT, WITHOUT REDEMPTION:

NO MAN GOING INTO THE SEATS OF THE WOMEN, NOR WOMAN INTO THE SEATS OF THE MEN, SHINING FAIR, BUT EACH IN DUE ORDER BY RANK IN HIS PLACE IN THE HIGH FAIR.

· [HTTPS://CELT.UCC.IE/PUBLISHED/T106500D/TEXT033.HTML](https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T106500D/TEXT033.HTML)

In terms of the wheel of the year, Tailtiu's death signifies the death of the growing season and the start of harvest. Hers is a story of motherly love, sacrifice for the greater good and dignified and loving rulership. Tailtiu teaches us the importance of grace in the face of adversity and the importance of leaving a legacy of peace. Tailtiu's name is thought to mean 'Great one of the earth'; she is Queen, Mother, Protectress, Druidess, Teacher, and Goddess of the arts.



I REALLY HOPE YOU ENJOY CONNECTING  
TO TAILTIU THIS LUGHNASADH AND THAT  
SHE BLESSES YOU WITH HER WISDOM,  
GRACE AND ABUNDANCE!

# Words from the Witches Journal

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

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

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

PORTLAND JONES  
WITCH WRITER

Mooving through my cupboard, I came across a book that I have had for a while, *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Divination* by Stephen Karcher, printed in 1997. In the section 'Learning to listen', he said:

'WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHOSE VOICE WE CAN NO LONGER HEAR. WE HAVE LOST THE EXPERIENCE OF A LIVING WORLD THAT RESPONDS TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS. WE HAVE LOST THE LANGUAGE THROUGH WHICH THE WORLD CAN SPEAK TO US.'

This I firmly believe. We are so busy in our modern lives that we pay scarce attention to the world around us. We lose our connection. Yet if we attune ourselves, we start to notice the voices that speak to us, the signs and symbols that can guide us if we let them. There is no such thing as a co-incidence. Every event has a purpose; everyone who enters our life has something to bring to us.

I opened this book to glance once again at the pages. Sheets of paper fluttered to the floor: A series of drawings I had made. I have no recollection of why, nor if they were in the style of someone else, or my own design.

A booklet that I must have downloaded from the internet - *Arcadia or the gospel of the witches* by Charles Godfrey Leland 1890. Leland claimed to have become acquainted with a 'witch informant' in Italy in 1886. The book portrays the origins, beliefs, rituals and spells of an Italian pagan witchcraft tradition. The book apparently was influential in the development of Wicca.

I found a list of traditional names for plants. They were certainly far more colourful than the names we use today. Some were named for their uses, some for what they looked like, and



some were corruptions of earlier names. Using herbs and plants must have been exciting when using bloodwort, bat's wings, hundred eyes and dew of the sea. Much more prosaic when you realise that's yarrow, holly, periwinkle and rosemary.

Also hidden within the pages was a leaflet detailing the coven meetings and rituals from 2007. It was attractively presented with a saying on the front. 'Power is a sacred gift, it should be used wisely and with humility.' This saying was not attributed but whoever wrote it was very wise.

This leaflet told a tale of our history in its own right. Part way through the year the coven that I am part of today hived off from the original group we were with. The year started with a different name on the cover, with different locations for meetings inside. Changes were made to reflect the new coven, details crossed out in pen and re-instated in the margins. This sufficed until a new leaflet was printed.

The year's plan was ambitious with a topic listed for each week unless there was a ritual. The topics covered were many and varied, trying to understand the world around us and exploring new areas.

We looked at the similarities and differences between Wicca and traditional witchcraft; we discussed the cone of power. We selected two herbs each, then gave a talk on their magical and healing uses, and we made from them a potion, cream, spell or charm.

We spent a while looking at how to get back to nature, making homemade shampoo, soap, body products, practising ecological living. These considerations are still part of my day-to-day living.

We worked out how to do basic numerology, and made our own inks. We made an amulet for protection. We drafted our birth charts and interpreted them using writings on astrology. We studied crystals, colours, tarot, palmistry and aura reading. A year of structured learning gave us a good grounding in our craft.

Something that we often did was to take time to understand ourselves, our true personalities, and how these were affected by the things we learned, and how we could change by using our increased understanding. Often we thought of this as being on a quest, setting out on a journey to seek an answer.



The last sheet of paper to slip from my book was an essay written by one of the coven. She explained how her zodiac sign manifested in her character. Here are a couple of short extracts.

'I AM THE BULL PERSONIFIED. EVERY NATURE OF THE BULL I HOLD WITHIN MYSELF.'

'I RARELY GET ANGRY - IT TAKES A LOT OF PUSHES. I MAY STAMP MY FEET AND SNORT MY ANNOYANCE, BUT MAINLY I'M CALM AND CONTENT. BUT WHEN I AM PUSHED THAT ONE TOO MANY TIMES - I BOIL OVER AND IT'S OVER THE TOP - I ACT ON IMPULSE AND FACE THE CONSEQUENCES LATER.'

This analysis and understanding of her actions and behaviours led her to an answer.

'I NEED TO CHASE MY DREAMS RATHER THAN WATCH THEM PASS ME BY.'

It was fascinating to find these forgotten memories, to remind myself of all the things I have learned. I gave a wry smile at the amount I have forgotten. Yet with the prompt from these papers much came rushing back. We learned steadily over the years, so many things we studied. I have shelves laden with lever-arch files containing a font of knowledge, records typed up or photocopied. I hope one day to put them into some sort of order, to make different topics more readily accessible. Although I may not; it's really quite fun finding random things to read and mull over, to see if thoughts have changed.

The illustrated encyclopaedia of Divination Stephen Karcher 1997 Element Books Ltd

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aradia,\\_or\\_the\\_Gospel\\_of\\_the\\_Witches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aradia,_or_the_Gospel_of_the_Witches)



# ODE TO THE WITCHES SUMMER

OH THE SWEET MAJESTY  
THAT IS SUMMER. THE  
WINDS RIPE WITH  
GREENS, FLORALS AND  
THE DAMPNES OF THE  
BIRTHING EARTH. THE  
VERY AIR WE BREATHE  
IS ALOFT WITH FER-  
TILITY AND VITALITY.  
SUMMER IS A CALL TO  
DANCE WITH JOY AND  
ABUNDANCE, A SPACE  
WHERE WE ARE FULL,  
KNOWING THE DAYS  
WILL GROW SHORTER  
AND THE HEAT WILL  
WANE, BUT FOR NOW,  
WE MOVE WITH SPARK  
AND APPRECIATION OF  
THE BOUNTY WE CAN  
SEE BEFORE US.

SAMANTHA TEVES  
TWELFTH HOUSE APOTH-

The energy of the summer is built first in the cosmos, with summer taking place beneath Cancer, Leo and Virgo sun transits. Cancer asking us to nurture, to sympathize, to feel. Leo asking us to bloom, bold and confident into the sunlight. Virgo asking us to ground the elation and turn our faces towards the coming harvest. Summer is a lifetime in itself, a rebirth of sorts. We begin in our depths, coaxed up and out by the entrancing heat, to twirl with fearless bliss and indulge our inner child, blooming in absolution alongside the florals. We dance, bloom and like the Earth, we shed those colorful petals and trade our pleasure for practicality. fruit budding from the vine, ready to nourish and slow once again.

The nectar of summer is bloomed in the greens, endless shades of chartreuse, forest, hunter and fern, dancing beneath un-shoed toes. The Earth has birthed all that we could ever need, and we are called to her wild beauty under the sweltering summer sky. Summer is herbs, the scent, the touch, the magic. It is green magic at its finest, with basil for protection and love, thyme for health and purification, a dash of lavender for peace and an open mind. The call to traipse fingers over green leaves and run palms over fresh mint growing near the garden gate, the urge to burrow toes into lush grass carpets and burry noses into anything in bloom. Summer is rainstorms, clearing the stagnant and watering the ever-swelling nursery pots and garden beds.

Alive. That is the summation of Summers Magic. Its touchable, its smellable, its visible. Summer asks us all to live, to really live. To set our boundaries, to reach wildly for what we desire, to be the very essence of the Sun. Bold, bright and giving. A celebration of you and all that you've sown, all that is blooming, all that you give to the world. May we all find ourselves under this Summer's Sun intoxicated with that sense of "alive". Moving through the enchanting energy, empowered, grateful and so full of love.

# SUMMER HERBAL TEA ICE CUBES

*A recipe by Samantha Teves of Twelfth House Apothecary*

An easy way to celebrate the bounty of summer herbs while keeping cool and working a little magic into your everyday sipping!

These simple yet delightful ice cubes are so easy to make but pack a helpful punch for keeping cool in the summer weather. An instant iced tea just waiting in the freezer for those hot days or when you need a quick hit of herbal magic. These can be made using fresh or dried herbs!

- First pick your herbal ingredients and toss them into a pot, the ratio of herb to water just depends on how strong you would like your ice to be. You'll taste it when they begin to melt in your drink.
- Add your water, at least enough to cover the herbs and bring the water to a simmer. If you would like to blend with an intent to the herbs, this is a great time to stir and add your own personal magic touch! Upon simmering, turn off heat and cover for 10-15 minutes.
- Strain your herbs (carefully! it will be hot still), you can use a strainer or cheesecloth depending on how much you mind bits of herb in your ice/drink)
- Pour strained tea into ice cube trays & freeze for several hours or until frozen solid!
- Add a few cubes to your water bottle/ drinks/ cocktails/ etc! These are great for some herbal magic on the go!

Make sure to check all allergies and contraindications if working with new herbs!

These can be made easily with any herbs you prefer but these combos are our favorite! We typically choose herbs that aid with cooling or are calming to the mind and body.

Lavender Hibiscus

Lemonbalm Elderflower

Mint lemon verbena

Chamomile Rose



# Wise Words from the Old Crone Harness Your Own Magic

Understanding how you can harness the power of magic is within us all in greater or lesser degrees. Reading books on the subject can certainly help but magic is not something you can learn purely from books. The way you can increase your awareness is by practice, repetition and careful planning.

Rituals and spells can focus your desires and intent and can help to raise your psychic energies and channel your intuition. When you want to ask the Universe for assistance with a dream, desire or intent, you can assist your intention by firstly writing it down. This helps in several ways. Firstly you can hone exactly what it is that you are asking for and change it to make sure you know what it is you are requesting. Secondly so that you can see and rehearse how you will say or sing your chant. This helps other several ways, the act of writing helps to engage the brain, seeing what you have written hones your skills and repetition of your intent both focusses and imprints your intent, thus raising the energy within you and thereby raising the magic.

Saying it out loud is often the one which most people find the most difficult especially when you are alone. I know you may well feel rather silly. I have done when I began spell work. Be brave. Begin by repeating it in your head then try a quiet whisper and gradually increase your volume. It will work and make you much more confident. Remember that you are using your five senses. The writing is touch, the saying is hearing, the reading is seeing, if you light some incense, smell and always have a drink and snack handy for taste and grounding. Thus engaging all your senses you can enhance what you are doing and raise your energy levels. I usually have a piece of chocolate handy as it helps to ground me. Well that is a really good excuse to eat chocolate isn't it? It is also a small reward at the end of the ritual or spell just to remind you that you are doing well. Chocolate also raises the serotonin levels within your body. The darker the chocolate the more effective and also the healthier for you.

If you take each step slowly and notice how you feel at each moment you are also doing things mindfully. This again will support your emotions and spirit and enhance your outlook and mindset. This will make you so much stronger, and improve your natural instincts, refining your practice.

So go ahead and polish up your skills, light a candle to begin your ritual or spell and focus on your breathing. Light a joss stick or even choose a perfumed candle. Write your intention on paper and keep it to fold up tightly and burn later. Follow your ritual spell and find that magical power within you.

If you want to be even more eco-friendly then when you burn your paper, place the ashes on a plant, herb garden, fairy garden or keep it and add to it and make black salt for purification.



# Raven & Luna's Tarotscopes

## Forecasts For Your Sun Sign

### LEO

*3 of Wands, The Chariot, The Lovers*

You'll be making headway with something, most likely a romantic partnership, a strong connection or finding someone you can collaborate with. It's time to really go for what you want! You may be reflective of past relationships, realising that there's actually something which may be getting in the way of you committing to new relationships. Don't be afraid to tell someone how you feel. There's a block stopping you from progressing, it's holding you back from finding the stability you crave. Learn from past mistakes or risk repeating the same cycles.



### VIRGO

*2 of Swords, 2 of Wands*

There's likely going to be a choice which involves two very different pathways. You may not believe in your ability to make a correct decision or don't want to face the decision you know needs to be made. This indecision may be causing issues in partnerships (especially business) or with someone you're close to at work or in a study setting. Stop overthinking it, you know what needs to be done.



### SCORPIO

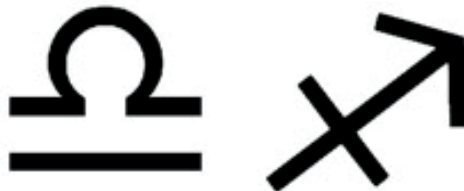
*5 of Pentacles, 5 of Swords*

You may be going through many changes, or be met with obstacles, but it's your responsibility to stay dedicated to what you're wanting to do—don't allow that inner voice of fear deter you from what you know is right. You may come to blows with someone and are likely to snap. If lots of people are saying the same thing they might have a point, so at least consider their view before getting defensive.

### LIBRA

*Queen of Pentacles, 7 of Cups*

You have lots going on, most of which could actually be you doing things for others. Ensure that you're nurturing yourself and using your money wisely, as you may be spreading yourself too thin. Everyone wants a piece of you, which sometimes is good but it's also overwhelming. Your (emotional) health may be impacted unless you put in boundaries.



### SAGITTARIUS

*Judgement, The World*

Something you've been waiting for, news perhaps, will finally happen. You could receive an epiphany, a realisation or even go through a spiritual awakening. Use your better judgement and weigh up your options, not making a quick decision without all the information. There's no pressure to go through with something if you've changed your mind, but you need to communicate that.



## CAPRICORN

*4 of Pentacles, Ace of Pentacles*

You'll feel invigorated, hopeful and full of energy. You could come into an inheritance, receive a bonus or have an increase in your income. Spend and invest it wisely! Any past difficulties you've had with money could make you worried about losing it even when things are going very well. Enjoy your successes and attract more of the same.

## AQUARIUS

*10 of Swords, Ace of Wands*

Those studying or teaching may find this month tough. You could learn something about someone, or a situation, that's going to hurt but it'll provide a major awakening. You may take something on and instantly regret it because it's harder than you realised or you feel an obligation to go through with what someone expects. Ask for support if you need it!

## PISCES

*5 of Cups, The Hanged Man*

You may feel like you've missed something. Try to see it from someone else's perspective and be honest about the part you played to understand why someone's reacting or acting in a certain way. There was a reason why something needed to end or why you needed to let go. Give yourself time to adjust to a loss or change, allow yourself to grieve.

## ARIES

*10 of Cups, Page of Swords*

Generally this month should serve you well. You may be involved in a family celebration, receive good news or there may be a new addition to the family, although not necessarily a baby! There may also be a new start concerning your home life. You don't have to work so hard to get your point across, just be honest if you want someone to take you seriously.



## TAURUS

*Death, 6 of Swords*

Something you've wanted to end might finally do so. Plans, especially moving or travel, likely won't work out how you thought so be prepared. It may be time to accept that things aren't going to happen how you want so you need to move on. If you've been meaning to get your vehicle checked don't put it off any longer, it's not worth your safety.

## GEMINI

*Page of Wands, Knight of Swords*

You may be entering new area of study or work and are feeling enthusiastic about it. Preparation and planning is key to this being a successful path for you- find ways so that you don't get too overwhelmed, especially if you tend to leave things to the last minute! You may become interested in something that will really capture your attention and imagination or finally find a job or hobby that fulfils you.



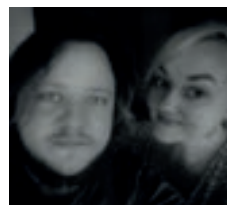
## CANCER

*5 of Cups, The High Priestess*

This may be a low month for you and maybe you can't put your finger on why. Is there something you're holding back from someone? Try not to keep things to yourself if they're impacting your (emotional) health, share the load by exploring your feelings. Ignoring your intuition may lead to a mistake or you may learn about something that's difficult to accept.



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



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## CONNACH

FIRST ALBUM  
COMING SOON!

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



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

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THE LOVERS

# Grimoire

## HERB BUNDLES FOR SMOKE CLEANSING

If you're harvesting your herbs, it's a perfect time for wrapping up some herb bundles.

You can use these for smoke cleansing and ritual, and they're pretty simple to make. All you need is your fresh cut herbs and some string or thick cotton.

Bundle your herbs together and wrap tightly with the string. I find it helps to rest the bundle over the string and criss cross around it.

Tie it as tight as possible, as when the herbs have dried the bundle will shrink - too loose and it will fall apart. Leave it somewhere cool and dark to dry out - usually 3 to 6 weeks depending on the size of the bundle.

Take a look at some of my favourite combinations and their uses below:

### NEW BEGINNINGS

This bundle blend is great for clearing old energy, or if you're starting a new job or venture.

Basil  
Bay  
Nettle

### HARMONY

A bundle of fragrant herbs to help clear energies that are lingering, and bring inner peace.

Mint  
Sage  
Thyme

### CREATIVITY

Clear creative blocks or boost self confidence

Chamomile  
Lemon Balm  
Rosemary

### TRAVEL SAFE

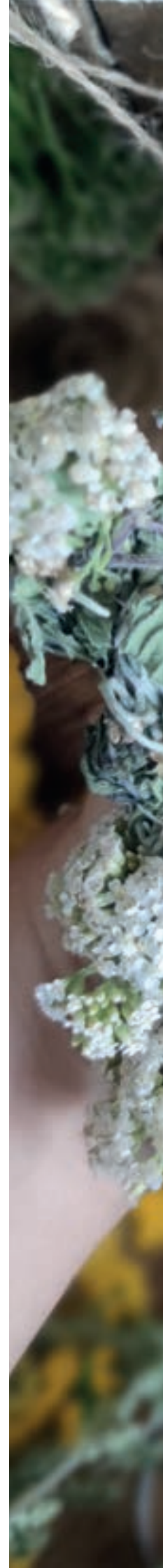
A bundle to burn before embarking on a journey - be it divine or mundane

Basil  
Lemon Balm  
Sage

### INTUITION

For ritual, psychic or dream work (Do not use if pregnant)

Dandelion  
Mugwort  
Basil





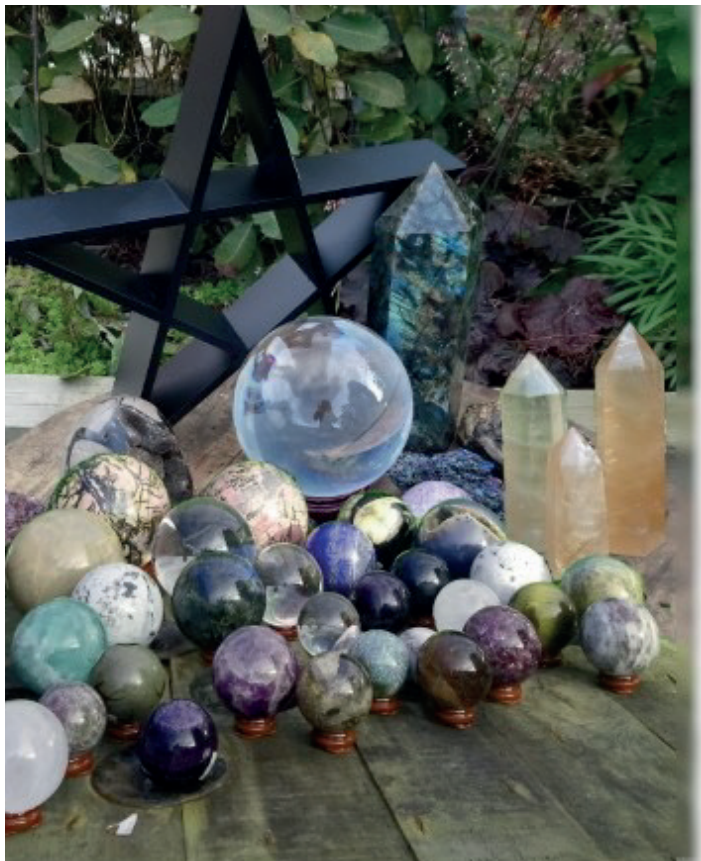
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Pagan Poetry  
&  
Fiction

Photo by Klaire Dawn Ader

## Saturn Returns

Just for a tiny split second,  
In the midst of all the fanciful glee,  
My plastered over, war-torn heart.  
Forgot it was made of paper-thin glass.

My rising sign is hastily preening,  
And licking it's neurotic wounds.  
Two halves split, for better or worse,  
Failing to make sense of the other one's noise.

Meanwhile, my poor waning moon sign,  
Tries in vain to fix its busted scales.  
Yearning for a balance it longs to find,  
Hunting for a ying to its lonely yang.

My sun sign dips and turns it's back,  
On the earth it flew so wearily from.  
It isn't designed to be under such reign.  
Birds die inside cages, too weak to sing.

The planets won't fix what mustn't be mended.  
Where they'll lead, I'm anxious to wonder.  
Their puppet strings grasping cruel and firm,  
Leading us all through the darkening of time.

But just for a tiny split second,  
In the midst of all the flames and swords,  
Saturn remembered my heart's made of glass.  
And turned it to dust, just because.

Kelly Buchan



# Avonmouth

Helen J.R. Bruce

Witch Writer

It was the coldest of summers. A chill wind blew from the East, stripping the fragile blossom from fruit trees and tearing the leaves that had unfurled in spring. The earth froze in the fields. The river stilled under a thick skin of ice. In the village, people were running out of things they could burn.

"There's only this," said Martha. She was the youngest of three sisters, and her small hands held a carved wooden horse.

"What about the bed frames?" asked Jane. She was the middle sister, and believed she was most sensible.

"Gone," shrugged Martha, offering her toy to the dying flames. A hand settled softly on hers.

"No," said Iris, "it isn't worth the burning." Her hands were rough from hard work. The callouses on her palms recorded three winters of caring for her younger sisters alone. "There is a log pile in the woods. I stacked them good and tight. The wood at the heart might be dry." She reached up to the rack by the door and pulled free a thick woollen coat.

"You're mad, you really are." Jane shook her head, arms wrapped protectively around herself against even the thought of it. The toe of her scuffed leather boots tapped a quick rhythm on the floor.

"Trust me a little," Iris told her, pulling open the front door, and then shutting it behind her as quickly as possible. She returned with arms full of waxy brown cloth.

"Fathers cloak," Martha cried, reaching out to rest her slim fingers on the folds of material, "he said that, once, the wind tried to bite him and it blunted its teeth!"

"Yes," nodded Iris, "this might be a magic cloak." She turned a couple of folds aside and curled her fingers around a thick wooden handle. The axe was heavy. It had been made to be swung by a man used to manual labour. But over the years Iris had mastered it, and the well oiled blade shone silver like moonlight on ice. "Take up the floorboards. I'll be as quick as I can."

Her hand was on the door handle when she felt something pressed towards her.

"Take this," said Martha. She was holding out the wooden horse again, its back turned dark from years of handling. "Dad said it would protect us."

"They're just stories!" snapped Jane.

Iris shot her a glance that could have turned the snow back in its tracks. "Who are we to decide what is and isn't a story?"

Jane dropped her shoulders and leaned on the long handle of the axe. There had been books in the house. Some of them held drawings of princesses and princes, while others had peasants on adventures returning with riches. But they always returned. And that part was only a story. She gave her sister a mute nod of acknowledgement.

Iris patted the wooden horse and tucked it into a deep pocket of her coat. "I feel braver already!" she told Martha lightly. Then, turning to Jane, she rested her palm on her younger sisters shoulder. "Only

take up the boards you really need. We'll need to replace them." Then she was off into the snowscape, wind whipping the tattered edges of the old cloak around her.

She took the sled from the lean-to that was still called Father's Workshop. It travelled easily over the crisp layer of snow, smoothing over the tracks she left behind. Iris's wet weather boots were perhaps her most treasured possession. She had cleaned and fed the leather, and had them resoled whenever the tread grew too thin. Her parents had believed in growing into things, which meant the boots had followed her from childhood to womanhood, and still fitted her feet. They were keeping the chill out now, and she was grateful. The wooden horse was an added weight in her pocket, but the shape felt comforting under her cloak. She couldn't feel it through her gloves, but she knew from memory that the wood was rubbed smooth from the touch of fond fingers. Emptying her lungs with a rattle, Iris let the weight of responsibility slide from her shoulders. It fell like softening snow from the straining branches of trees, and brought tears behind it. The weather was deadly. It had already gone on too long. Livestock was dying, and the young and old would be next. The axe blade was sharp, and she had the muscles to wield it, but did she have the strength give mercy in face of starvation? Or was she a coward, willing to wait while cold did a true woman's work? Throwing down the rope handle of the sled, she turned up her eyes to the thick, snowflecked sky.

"Why?" she cried, raising her hands, gloved palms to the heavens. "Why?" she cried, disturbing a rag-taggle of rooks who shattered from the trees in a burst of black feathers. "Why?" she sighed softly, covering her eyes and pressing her fingertips against her forehead. The rooks laughed raucously, eyeing up the flesh on her bones as a much needed meal. They would need to work fast before she froze.

A sharp crack jolted the air. Iris dropped her hands, eyes darting side to side in search of danger. Another crack, fading off into the splintering sound of something under immense strain. The rooks circled, halted in their mockery. A slab of ice creaked and squealed.

Iris stared. It was the river! It ran narrow and fast here, the current beneath battling the frozen skin which restrained it. The crack deepened, screeching with tectonic rage. Ice slid against ice, screaming in torment, and a sharp slab was forced upwards and free. Spray settled as a low hanging mist. Water bubbled up round the wound, gulping and gurgling like a living thing. Iris backed away slowly. Her blood fizzed with fear and wild wonder. The river was fighting. She picked up the rope of the sled with a renewed resolve. She must fight as well. Clenching her fists, she turned towards the forest.

The trees huddled darkly, their shoulders curled low with snow. There was no trace of a path, and Iris struggled to recall the sanctuary of the forest in summer. She had come to work hard, gathering wood for the winter, but she had also come to be free from the eyes of the village. It wasn't that they were rude to her, or unkind, but they had a habit of going quiet whenever she walked past. The silence fell, only to be filled moments later by the inevitable whispers of she's holding it together still then, poor mite. It can't be easy having both parents dead. It made her nails bite into her palms and her heart thump hard in her chest. They treated it like an illness that might be contagious. They felt sorry for her, but they kept their distance, as if her continued survival marked her out as something stranger and stranger.

Her breath hung as ice crystals on the air. The river swirled and sang in an old liquid language. Iris took a step towards the trees, and was startled as a huge shadow broke away from the gloom. Rearring up, it sent droplets of water flying, which hit the earth with the rattle of pellets. Steam poured from nostrils stretched wide, sucking in her scent, as sharp hooves cut the snow into crescents. Iris stared.

The air smelt sharply of horsehair and blood. No one in the village owned an animal like this, and she couldn't imagine it harnessed to a plough.

Kneeling, she pulled at the knot in the rope on her sled. It wasn't much of a weapon, but a length of good rope kept the angry ram away while she was gathering mushrooms. This horse was no sheep, but it had eyes and soft skin at the folds of its muzzle. Iris squared her feet and stretched the rope taut in her hands. Never run from a predator, that's what her father had told her, and this creature moved with a hunger for more than grass under the snow.

"Yah!" cried Iris, spinning the knotted end of the rope in a slow circle. The horse lowered its head and launched into a slow trot. "Shoo!" the girl cried, spinning the rope fast at arms length in front of her. The creature shied, prancing sideways just beyond reach. Its black coat gleamed like polished boots, or like the night sky flecked all over with snowflakes for stars. The air seemed to still. Even the river grew quieter, as if holding its breath. Iris felt the rope turn heavy in her grasp. It was a great weight now, and it dragged her hands down towards the earth. The breath of the horse was a steady rhythm, rolling away in great clouds that hung on the air. Her hand seemed to rise by itself. For a moment, there was nothing in the world except the slick gleam of black hair and the desire to know how smooth it felt. The river gurgled quietly as Iris laid a hand on the horse's neck.

There was a jolt of pain. The girl's eyes grew wide, and she went to pull away, but her hand was stuck fast. The horse squealed with excitement, baring teeth that looked a little too sharp, and turned eagerly towards the river. Iris dug in her heels, ploughing up two furrows of snow. But it was no use. High above her, the rooks were circling once more, chattering to each other in a mocking tone. Silly girl, silly girl, they seemed to cry. Iris gripped the rope still wrapped round her hand. She took a deep breath, then ran forward, bending her legs and springing upwards with all her might. Her nails dug into the skin of the animals neck as she pulled herself onto it back. There was the tingle of pain again as she felt her legs gripped the fur. The monster beneath her reared up and screamed in triumph.

*The story continues in the next edition of Witch Magazine.*

# MALDORIYA



A Short Story by RON GEORGE

/ bathoriya

# Maldoriya

A story by Ron George

Canon's Ashby, England, 1551. Witches Valley to be precise. Home of the original 13 covens of the sisterhood, long before the village became a province of the Kings. Before the persecutions, before the witch trials, there was one witch in particular that led them. She was a High Priestess. Her name was Maldoriya. Legend has it, she was so powerful in dark magic that she could turn a person into stone by merely breathing on them. Ultimately, she was burned at the stake. The villagers were so terrified of her that they buried her head first in her grave, so that she couldn't claw her way out. The home she lived in still exists, deep in the woods where nobody dares to go. Many believe her spirit still resides there. This is where the story begins.

...June, 1984...

"I thought you were grounded?" Megan asked, leaning across the passenger seat to open the window of her car as her best friend Abigail approached.

"It's two o'clock in the morning," she said, sticking her head through before opening the door and tossing her backpack onto the seat behind her. "I was quiet."

"Yeah, sneaking out's always the easy part, right?" Megan noted.

"Whatever," Abigail dismissed, pulling a pack of cigarettes from her jean shorts.

"So let's do this then," Megan smiled, putting the car in gear and taking off.

"You do know I could've been with my boyfriend tonight," Abigail said with a cigarette between her teeth, tilting her head slightly to light it.

"You're grounded, remember?" Megan replied, adjusting the cap on her head as the wind began to rip through the opened T-tops.

"As if that ever stopped me before," Abigail said, taking a drag and exhaling into the night air.

"So, did you ever tell him you're a witch?" Megan asked, concentrating on the darkened road in front of her.

"I mean, is that really necessary?" Abigail returned, glancing over at her.

"Oh my God, Abbie!" Megan exclaimed. "Seriously?"

"What?" she asked. "Maybe I don't want people knowing my shit."

"He's your boyfriend," Megan noted.

"And?" Abigail questioned.

"Your choice I guess," Megan said, dismissing it.

"Well, what about you?" Abigail asked. "You and Ryan are close."

"He knows," Megan answered.

"Hmm," Abigail replied, silent for a moment and staring out the window. "And is he creeped out about it?" she finally asked, curious.

"Hah," Megan laughed. "Yeah, a little."

"So then he doesn't know where we're going tonight, does he?" Abigail questioned.

"Well, it's not like I have to tell him everything," Megan replied.

"Yeah, I thought so," Abigail returned.

They had been driving for the better part of thirty minutes, leaving the small town of Canons Ashby behind them. Turning onto a dirt road, Megan clicked on her high beams that actually made little or no difference at all against the pitch darkness enveloping them. Creeping along slowly, the only noticeable sound was from her own car's tires crunching against the gravel stones beneath them and the soft rumble of the exhaust. Otherwise, it was deathly quiet.

"Look, there's a sign," Abigail said, eager to point it out.

"I see it," Megan acknowledged, stopping the car. "It's too dark though, I can't read it."

"Wait," Abigail said, reaching for the backpack she threw in the backseat and pulling out a flashlight. Clicking it on, she leaned out the window and pointed its beam in the direction of the sign. Witches Valley, Enter at your own risk, it read.

"It's old," Megan said, noticing the faded and worn out letters that made it barely legible.

"Yeah, but it's there for a reason," Abigail argued.

"It's not meant for us," Megan rebutted, putting the car back in motion. "We're witches, right?"

"I don't know," Abigail said, feeling the hairs on her arm stand up as they entered the forest. "Do you even have any idea where you're going?" she asked, jumping nervously from the screeching sounds of nocturnal creatures coming from directions impossible to determine.

"Loxley River," Megan answered. "As soon as I see it, then I'll know we're there."

"See it?" Abigail laughed. "You can't see anything in this darkness. No, seriously, we need to just go back."

"It should be coming up actually," Megan noted.

"I want to go back!" Abigail reiterated.

"What is wrong with you?!" Megan asked annoyed, looking over at her dark silhouette. "You're afraid?"

"Yes," she admitted. "This is way too creepy for me."

"Well, what the hell did you expect, Abbie?" Megan shot back. "Listen..." she said, suddenly hearing the sounds of flowing water. "This is it!" Apparently even the crows knew they had arrived, as they began squawking in unison.

"Aha, do you hear that?" Abigail asked. "Crows... in the middle of the night."

"It's almost morning," Megan corrected her.

"It's night!" Abigail yelled with indifference.

"Fine," Megan said, shutting the engine off and throwing the gear shift in park. "If you want to sit in the car, then have at it."

"You're seriously crazy," Abigail replied.

Megan sighed, as she reached behind the seat and pulled another flashlight from Abigail's backpack. "Stay here. I should be back in an hour or so," she said, shutting the door behind her.

Abigail sat stubbornly watching her friend and the beam from her flashlight quickly fade away from her sight as she disappeared into the thick foliage. "Shit," she said to herself, opening the car door and knowing she would regret what she was about to do. "Wait!" she called out to Megan.

...moments later...

"Changed your mind, did you?" Megan asked, as Abigail caught up to join her.

"I don't want to be alone out here," she admitted.

"We're not alone," Megan replied. "Look!" she exclaimed, pointing to a large house ahead of them caught in the flashlight's beam.

Perhaps in the daylight, it would have been easier to recognize. At night, however, it seemed as if the forest had swallowed it whole. Most of its once prominent features had been reclaimed by nature. Trees hovered over its two story structure, their branches extending out over the rooftop and concealing it like a veil. Only a few of the upper story windows were visible. The rest were completely covered in ivy.

"What do you mean 'we're not alone'?" Abigail asked,

"Her spirit is here," Megan replied, walking past what remained of the iron gate surrounding the property. "I can feel it. She's watching us." A few seconds later, Megan realized that Abigail was no longer by her side. "Abbie?" she called, turning around and shining her flashlight behind her.

"There's no way in hell I'm going in there," Abigail said, standing ten-feet behind in the beam of Megan's flashlight.

"Would you rather stay out here by yourself?" Megan asked.

"NO!" Abigail shot back. "Got any other stupid questions?"

"Then let's go," Megan said, turning back toward the house.

"I hate you," Abigail pronounced, following her.

Moments later, after several attempts at freeing the front oak door from its rusted hinges, they were standing inside. Panning their flashlights around, it was almost surreal to see the home's furniture completely intact, covered in dust and untouched for centuries. A large oil painting mounted on the wall caught Abigail's attention. Megan confirmed that it was, in fact, of Maldoriya, and Abigail's fear of her slightly subsided. She didn't have the appearance of what she considered to be an evil looking person. If anything, she was quite beautiful. That didn't mean she was willing to go roaming about the house carefree as Megan insisted upon doing.

"Sometimes, her bravery borderlines stupidity," Abigail thought to herself, lighting a cigarette as Megan did just that. Making her way through the house, as the wooden planks creaked beneath her feet, Megan wondered why the flooring was even still there. By all means, they should've been completely rotted and gone by now. With the exception of

the stone foundation, the house in general shouldn't have been standing. It was peculiar to say the least. Turning into another room, her eyes widened with excitement. Candlesticks in ornately decorated holders riddled its interior, along with spell books and an altar. It was exactly what she had been looking for. Intrigued, she entered. Casting her flashlight in every direction, suddenly all off the candles ignited into flames simultaneously.

"Whoa," she said, backing up momentarily. "So, you know I'm here don't you, Maldoriya?" she asked the empty room.

"Okay," she acknowledged, slowly surveying the room. "What do you want from me?" As if on cue, a spell book opened itself to a specific page. Walking over to it, Megan ran her fingers across the brittle pages and read it out loud.

Feather of an owl and yarrow root,

Earth, water, air and fire.

Send these spirits from where they stand,

Back to the realm of which I desire.

So mote it be!

"Megan!" she could hear Abigail's terrified scream echo through the house. "What the hell is happening?!"

Whatever was happening, Megan was experiencing the same, watching as her hands disappeared before her very eyes.

Her arms followed and before she knew it, they were both gone within seconds.

"So, would you care to explain?" Abigail asked moments later, noticing the open landscape of a field through the windows and seeing Megan standing next to her.

"This can't be right," Megan said, taking a look around the room. Everything appeared to be brand new.

"Oh, you think?" Abigail smirked.

"I wasn't even in this room with you," Megan stated.

"Do you smell the air?" Abigail asked.

"It's different, yes," Megan agreed. "Cleaner."

"Everything is different, damnit!" Abigail cursed. "What the shit did you do?!"

"No... this... this can't be happening," Megan stammered.

"What did you do?" Abigail repeated, grabbing her forcefully by the arm.

"I read a spell," Megan reluctantly admitted.

"I see," Abigail said, staring at her as her blood began to boil. "You just couldn't help yourself, could you?!" she yelled.

"I'm sorry," Megan yelled back, jerking her arm free from her grasp.

"Sorry?" Abigail laughed. "We're in the 16th century you freakin' idiot!"

"Well, we're somewhere different... a different realm or something. I don't know," Megan struggled to explain.

"Why don't you ask her then?" Abigail said, motioning with her eyes to the hallway.

Turning around quickly to look, Megan's jaw dropped. "It can't be!" she gulped, seeing Maldoriya sitting with her back to them at a table. "Are you sure it's her?" she questioned, hiding herself from the opened door frame.

"Well, who else could it be?" Abigail whispered. "You're the damned expert!"

"No, it's definitely her," Megan agreed, reaching to close the door as quietly as possible. Looking down and noticing a chain hanging loosely from a bolt lock, the skeleton key intact, Abigail quickly wrapped it around the iron slide bar and locked it. "Now what?" Megan asked, looking panicked.

"I don't know, but at least she can't get in here," Abigail returned. The door had just enough give to it that Megan was able to peer through the cracks. "What is she doing?" Abigail asked nervously.

"She's just sitting there," Megan answered.

"Hiding from me is not going to help either of you," Maldoriya said, her back still turned to them as the chains suddenly broke loose and fell with a loud thud to the floor.

"That's not good," Abigail gasped, looking down at them.

"Maybe we should just meet her," Megan whispered.

"That would be a most wise decision," Maldoriya agreed.

"I'm not going out there," Abigail refused.

"Well, if you must remain in that room, beware of the demons," Maldoriya deceitfully smiled. "They come out at this particular hour, hence the chains around the door. And they do seem to have a taste for human flesh." Seconds later, the door creaked open as Megan and Abigail stepped out.

"Far too easy," Maldoriya laughed, turning around to face them. "Welcome... Sisters," she said, pausing as she emphasized the last word, her emerald green eyes radiating as if they were made of glass.

"How did you know that...?" Megan began to say, standing still and trembling with fear.

"That you're witches?" Maldoriya interrupted, walking over to them until she was merely a few inches from their faces.

"Tell me," she said, eyeing them over cautiously. "Which one of you is the fool and the other that so foolishly follows?"

"Her!" they both said at the same time, pointing at each other.

"You're the one that read the damned spell!" Abigail yelled, looking to Megan annoyed. "None of this would've ever happened if you didn't bring us here in the first place."

"Seriously?!" Megan argued back. "I didn't exactly beg you to come with me. And besides..."

"Enough!" Maldoriya said, throwing her hand up to gesture. "One of you... and I mean only one of you," she said with emphasis to avoid any further arguments between them. "Tell me what brought you here."

"We got lost," Abigail quickly came up with.

"That you certainly are now, Child," Maldoriya replied. "Care to try again?"

"I... well I mean..." Abigail stuttered.

"Yes, the truth is hard to pronounce when your tongue is twisted from a mouthful of lies," Maldoriya replied sternly.

"We came because of you," Megan interjected.

"Indeed," Maldoriya agreed, already knowing the reason. "So, you are witches," she reiterated, walking back over to the table as her long black cloak drug across the floor behind her.

"Yes," they both confirmed in chorus.

"Sit," she demanded, as she lowered herself into her chair.

Megan and Abigail hesitantly pulled a chair out to join her and sat down.

"So, you think you are witches?" Maldoriya asked, pouring herself a glass of wine and sliding the bottle over to them.

"You have no idea what true witchcraft is about."

Megan grabbed the bottle to take a swig before coughing from the strange burning taste of it.

"Nor how to drink wine," Maldoriya added.

"So where are we?" Megan asked, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

"You are in my world, the spirit world," Maldoriya answered.

"Holy shit!" Abigail exclaimed, deciding to take a swig of wine herself.

"And so elegantly put," Maldoriya noted sarcastically. "Although, not so holy."

"No, seriously," Megan said panicking. "We have to get back. You don't understand. If our parents find out..."

"That is a problem you should have thought about before you so irresponsibly read an incantation from my spell book!"

Maldoriya replied with a raised voice.

"But I... whew, that's strong wine," she started to say, feeling woozy. "I thought you wanted me to read it. The book opened to that page by itself."

"Well, of course I did," Maldoriya replied. "But I presented only the opportunity to do so. The choice to read it or not was yours to make."

"I don't feel so good," Megan said, looking at Abigail and seeing three of her.

"Me either," she agreed. Within seconds, both of them were unconscious and slouched over in their chairs.

"Well, I only needed one witch," Maldoriya laughed to herself. "But the more the merrier."

...an hour later...

Megan opened her eyes to the ceiling above her before she noticed the restraints across her naked body, bound to the table she was laying on.

"Megan!" Abigail cried, sitting on the floor with her hands tied behind her back.

"What happened?" Megan asked, hardly able to turn her head in an attempt to face Abigail.

"We were drugged, obviously," Abigail said. "She's going to kill us."

"Sacrifice, actually," Megan corrected her. "At least me anyway."

"Precisely," Maldoriya agreed, entering the room wearing a black robe meant specifically for that purpose.

"Why?" Megan asked.

"I am certain you know enough about me not to ask that question, but very well, I shall indulge you," Maldoriya said.

"After being burned alive at the stake, my grave was cursed by burying me headfirst. Quaint, don't you think? To solidify the curse, my marker was placed upside down. So you see, even with my powers, there are no spells I can use to return to the living... save ONE. That particular one requires the blood of a virgin witch. All of it," she explained. "And here you are."



Abigail had been frantically working the knots loose from the rope around her wrists. She was hoping Megan would keep Maldoriya distracted. All she needed was another minute.

"I am honored, actually," Megan said, noticing what Abigail was doing and playing along.

"Really?" Maldoriya replied with a raised eyebrow. "And how so?"

"Well, you're kinda like a legend to me," Megan answered. "I... well, I don't know if I should say actually, but..." she hesitated.

"Please, do tell," Maldoriya insisted.

"Well, they say that you were so evil and powerful in dark magic that you could turn a person to stone," Megan began to explain.

"By breathing on them, I presume," Maldoriya said.

"Yes, exactly," Megan confirmed.

"Two minutes, trust me," Abigail mouthed to Megan, holding two fingers up and free from her ropes.

"Charming," Maldoriya laughed, her back to Abigail and not noticing her slip away. "That power I'm afraid is reserved only for the Gods. You are misinformed."

Abigail raced down the hallway to the first room they had encountered. The painting of Maldoriya was what she was after. "Think we don't know anything about witchcraft, bitch?" she said to herself, now standing in front of it and pulling out her cigarette lighter. "Think again," she growled, clenching her teeth in anger as she held it up to the painting and lit it.

Hephaestus, God of Fire, I summon Thee,  
Both image and spirit must no longer be.  
Melted paint be that of her face,  
Rid her spirit, remove her from this place!  
So mote it be!

Abigail watched as the painting began to ignite.

"You tricked me!" Maldoriya screamed, feeling the heat beginning to manifest all over her body as she spun around to notice Abigail's absence.

"I do honor you," Megan admitted. "But I will not die for you."

"You know nothing of honor!" Maldoriya spat.

"Well, I do know one thing," Megan returned. "Either release us, or burn... again."

Maldoriya paused. She was not willing to give up her prize so easily.

"You're running out of time," Megan pushed her. "Your soul will be destroyed."

"Fine!" Maldoriya yelled, admitting defeat. "You are free!"

"Look, there's a sign," Abigail said, eager to point it out.

In reality, they had already been there, although neither one of them knew it. Maldoriya had given them their freedom. The spirit world is unlike the other world. Memories are lost, but perhaps, not all of them.

"I see it," Megan acknowledged, stopping the car. "It's too dark though, I can't read it,"

"Wait," Abigail said, reaching for the backpack she threw in the backseat and pulling out a flashlight. Clicking it on, she leaned out the window and pointed its beam in the direction of the sign. Witches Valley, Enter at your own risk, it read.

"It's old," Megan said, noticing the faded and worn out letters that made it barely legible.

"Yeah, but it's there for a reason," Abigail argued.

"I do have a bad feeling about this," Megan admitted.

"So maybe we should just go back," Abigail suggested. "Hey, I know a restaurant that's open all night long."

"The food can't be good if they're open all night," Megan said, turning the car around.

"Why would you say that?" Abigail asked. "What does that even mean?"

"I'm just saying," Megan returned.

"Oh by the way, are you really a virgin?" Abigail asked.

"So that question came out of nowhere!" Megan exclaimed.

"Yeah..." Abigail agreed, wondering herself where it came from.

THE END



RON GEORGE

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Elizabeth Franklin  
A Witch's Tale



# Explore the magic of crystals and herbs with two new books from author LISA CHAMBERLAIN

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# WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO...

The latest witchy music on our playlists!

## CHAMBERS OF MY MIND



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Follow the story of a Witch sent to her death in this video created by vocalist Taloch Jameson.

Want more? Subscribe to their YouTube channel, or sign up to their Patreon for exclusive weekly concerts:  
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Modern Coven's latest single The Beast is out on all good digital platforms now, and check out the video on YouTube



Prima Nocta's latest album - Flag of the Greenman - is out now! They return with an album full of true Folk Metal - raise your horns!

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# *Lughnasadh Blessings*



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