

ENCHANTED LIVING



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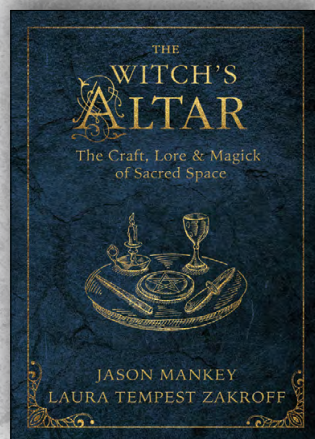


The **VINTAGE WITCH** *Issue*

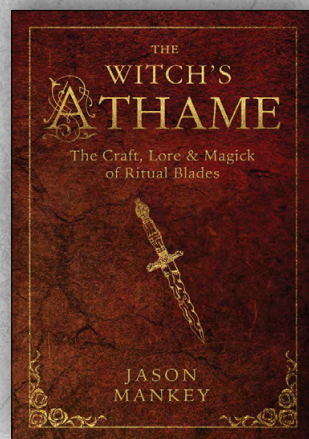
SHARPEN YOUR MAGICKAL SKILLS WITH THE

THE WITCH'S TOOLS

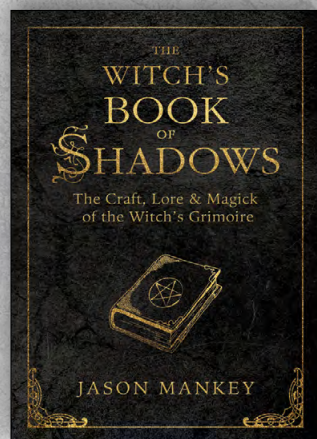
These spectacular titles feature traditions, lore, tips, techniques, and hands-on instructions for the most iconic parts of the spellcaster's toolbox.



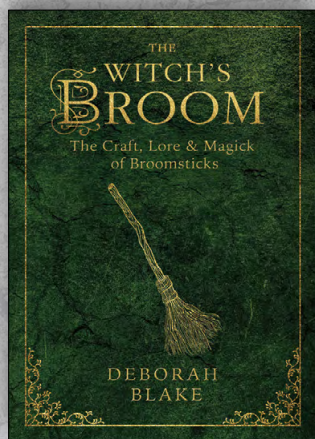
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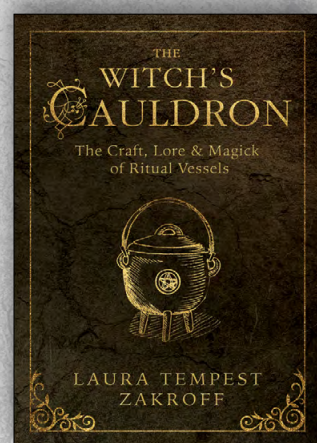
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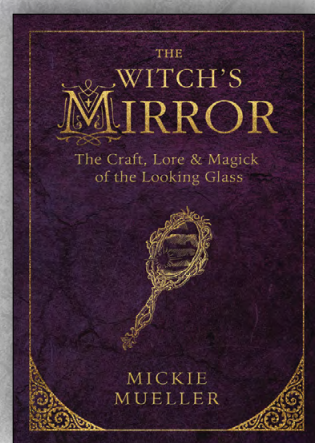
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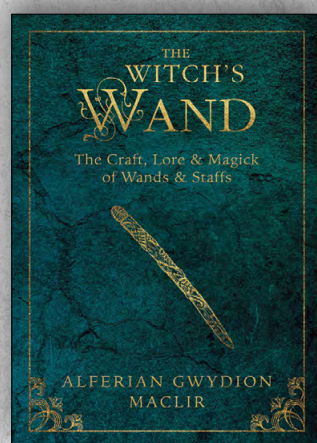
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From *The Witches Frolic* (1888) illustrated by Ernest Maurice Jessop



One thing we cannot help but notice is that you, our gorgeous and enchanted readers, have a deep, deep, possibly abiding love for witches. And so do we—especially when the weather shifts from late summer to autumn and the air crisper and bristles with possibility and the leaf-covered ground crunches beneath us when we walk. Even writing this editor’s letter in the middle of July, I can smell the cinnamon and clove bubbling on the stove and the smoke from a beautiful, crackling evening fire. Everything alive and new, ready for harvest. So we’re thrilled to present our latest autumnal witch issue, this one devoted to the vintage witch.

By *vintage witch* we mean the witches we grew up with: the old-time witches in all their glamour and ferocity, the ones who seemed like superheroes to us when we were children. Even all those hunched-over apple-toting wicked witches from fairy tales and movies and those retro Halloween cards, since even then we knew—didn’t we?—that they were a bit misunderstood and unfairly maligned over there in the margins, living their best lives in their forest huts and being generally badass.

So here in these pages, we celebrate her and her most glam accessories: her humble besom, her pointy hat, her smoking cauldron. Susann Cokal pens love letters to women accused of witchcraft throughout history, from Anne Boleyn to Marie Laveau. Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman count down their top five literary witches (Glinda! Circe!) while Kirsty Stonell Walker pays homage to all those witches that freaked out the Victorians, who feared that “women would discover freedom was for life, not just for Sabbath, and make off on their tandems or broomsticks, whichever was to hand ...”

When we asked you, dear readers, about why we all find witches so alluring, we heard the same beautiful sentiments over and over: Because they’re powerful. They do what they want. They’re ferociously independent. They’re super magical! And they can save themselves. As Walker concludes in her piece, “If I were the patriarchy, I’d be worried—and start watching the skies.”

Love,

Carolyn Turgeon



ENCHANTED LIVING

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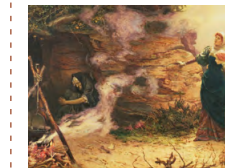
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CONTRIBUTORS

Enchanted Living's Vintage Witch Issue



Val Gleason

Val Gleason is a conceptual portrait photographer based out of Olympia, Washington. She loves to tell stories through her images and strives to captivate her audience into wanting to know more. Gleason enjoys scouting out new locations for her art, especially old, abandoned places—the creepier, the better! Her inspiration comes from folklore, mythology, fairy tales, spooky stories, history, and nature. “I have always loved stories about witches, and I portray her in a lot of my images. There is something so alluring about the idea of a woman who is villainized by society because she has chosen to live outside the norm—a free-spirited, magical being.”



Sabrina L. Greene

Sabrina L. Greene is a fine art photographer inspired by the muses of literature, classic art, and her home, the rolling blue hills of Western North Carolina. Her lifelong love of reading and exploring her native woodlands called her to begin her journey to become an artist. She recently discovered the magic of having a creative tribe, and they encouraged her to pursue her creative visions further. When she heard of this issue, she immediately thought of Appalachia’s mysterious Granny Witches and how they helped many women throughout history—using their native flora and studying the patterns of the land to heal and give spiritual guidance.



Natalia Le Fay

Natalia Le Fay is a fantasy photographer from Germany, where she lives with her family, two cats, husband, and son. She’s been in love with fairy tales and myths about fairies, dragons, and witches for as long as she can remember. She’s always been addicted to magic and herbs and has proudly called herself a witch since childhood. “No wonder that witches and everything that relates to them are so often part of my work,” she says. “For this shoot [on page 26] we wanted to portray a vintage witch who is deeply in touch with nature. Being one with nature, showing respect to it and the animals, and being strong women—those are the attributes that make us witches.”



Kim Malinowski

Kim Malinowski is a lover of brooms and besoms and, of course, words! Her latest book, *Phantom Reflection*, is a novel-in-verse that plays with the concept of a retelling of *The Phantom of the Opera*. She’s also the author of the poetry collections *Clutching Narcissus* and *Home*, and the chapbook *Death: A Love Story*. She has been published in numerous journals and magazines including *Enchanted Living*, *Enchanted Conversation*, *Corvid Queen*, *Mythic Delirium*, and *The Metaworker*. She believes that magic happens in ordinary ways and that old brooms do not retire. They slide into our closets, are hung up on walls, or are tucked away and wait until they are needed.



Karim Orange

Karim Orange is a nationally known clean-beauty personal-care-products expert and Emmy nominee. She’s also a beauty, travel, and lifetime writer who finds plants, flowers, and herbs to be magical. She has studied several types of farming, including urban, permaculture, and biodynamic. As a makeup artist she worked on our winter 2019 Hygge issue cover, glamming up Damaris Lewis. For this issue, she visited the Quiet Botanist in Hudson, New York, where she was reminded of her ancestors—magical healing women called sangomas, or witch doctors. Orange continues to use her magic to beautify faces when she’s not in her garden dancing with her beloved herbs and flowers.



Maggie Vandewalle

Artist Maggie Vandewalle studied printmaking at the University of Iowa and then gravitated to watercolor, a medium she still uses today. She recalls a childhood divided between two passions: an insatiable love of reading and a deep fascination with the natural world, interests now at the foundation of her paintings of whimsical creatures and their antics. “Straight on Till Morning,” on page 73, is open to interpretation. “I like to think the cat ‘borrowed’ the hat and is off to parts unknown because that is the nature of cats, but it’s equally likely that she’s in search of an owner who has become entangled somehow ... which is also the nature of cats.”

SEVEN MAGICAL ITEMS YOU PROBABLY HAVE ON HAND RIGHT NOW

by *Susann Cokal*

- **Mirror.** If someone you know is feeling ill, hold a mirror underwater and have the person look at their reflection. If the reflection looks clear, your friend is fine; if the reflection is greenish or wavy, get them to urgent care, stat.
- **Sugar and Violets.** You can use sugar and violets—the kind that grow in your lawn, hiding under heart-shaped leaves—to work a love charm: Coat the violets’ petals in egg whites, then twirl them lightly in a small bowl of sugar. Allow them to dry uncovered in the fridge for 24 hours, after which the egg white and sugar should have formed a glaze. Pinch off the stems and dry another 24 hours at room temperature, then store in an air-tight container to preserve the flavor. Scatter them over your crush’s food to bring out even the shyest of passions.
- **Onion.** For a true love spell, you need an onion and a little patience. Plant the onion in a pot and cover it loosely with dirt, saying, “As this plant grows, and as its blossom blows, may _____’s heart turn to me.” By the time the onion blooms, your sweetheart’s love should be yours. Just remember that onions don’t reach mature bloom until about a year after they form the round bulbs we know from cooking.
- **Beans.** Use dried beans for this one. Before tossing them into the soup pot, shake two in your hand while saying your name and your beloved’s. Then toss them onto the counter: If they land close together, you are meant to be. If not—you still have the ingredients for soup.
- **The Color Green.** Green means inspiration. To awaken your creative energy, surround yourself with plants, put on an emerald-green top, or paint a wall chartreuse. Burning green candles is said to be especially effective.
- **Salt.** Feel like having a little time to yourself? Sprinkle your threshold with salt, and you’ll keep the goblins away. Or lay down an unbroken circle of it around your house to banish all unwanted guests.
- **Book.** This is one of the most trusted means of divination ever. If you want to know your future, approach a book—*any* book—with a question. Close your eyes, open the covers at random, and set your finger down. The word on which it lands is your answer ... or the beginning of your answer, anyway. You might want to keep reading.

AN INVOCATION TO WITCHES

by Carolyn Turgeon

When searching for the right cover for this vintage witch issue, there were so many possibilities. The figure of the witch is rich and varied, and so many of you out there are creating gorgeous, witchy art, not to mention dancing under full moons and concocting herb-laden potions in your kitchens. But then this shoot appeared, as if by magic, in our submissions email and blew us away. Photographer Val Gleason says she saw that we were doing this issue and went to work, arranging this whole photo shoot near her home in Olympia, Washington. We love how old-fashioned and modern it is at the same time, how it captures that freedom and sisterhood that witches encapsulate. Yes, please!

To Gleason, a witch is “a strong, independent, free-thinking woman—someone who uses magic to push back against the norm.” Her inspiration for these images came from a few different places; the main ones were *The Witch*, directed by Robert Eggers, the book *Waking the Witch* by Pam Grossman, and Kiki Rockwell’s music, specifically the song (and video) “Same Old Energy.” We hadn’t heard of Kiki Rockwell or seen the video until Gleason mentioned them, but when we did, we were blown away again. Maybe you know the video: In it, four young women are hard at work in a historic, buttoned-up setting, until they put down their tasks and run into the fields, defying a dour, Puritan man who tries to hold them back. They break into dance, eventually joining a whole group of women dancing and spinning around a fire. It’s a powerful song and video, defiant and joyful:

Same old energy baby, history repeats
Same old energy baby, they’ll march you through the streets
Same old energy baby, they fear what they don’t know
Same old energy baby, you’ve burned this way before

We used our scrying powers to find Rockwell, then asked her to tell us more about the song and her vision. This is what she wrote to us:

I noticed something, a buzzing, a high-frequency energy that occurs when a group of women are together in a room. And I also noticed how the men suddenly shrink, tail between legs, their dark blue recoiling at the hot pink electricity of women in community, how we triple in size and take up space when we are not under the watchful eyes of man. And I thought about how thousands of women were sentenced to die for that very same power that man has simply never understood and therefore has always been

intimidated by, has needed to own and control. How men love to sexualize us and then rage when we can do it for ourselves. How shame has always been a tool for oppression. How at fifteen I learned to dilute myself in a room full of grown men or face danger. How brave and clever women have been written out of history books. How I looked at all the songs I’d ever written and realized they were all about some dumb boy not loving me back. I yearned to write about something that mattered.

On a family trip to Salem, Massachusetts, when I was sixteen, I felt the creative spirit come over me for the first time, something ancient, and for the first time I sat and wrote poems without being embarrassed. My dad told me how our direct ancestors were both burned and burner during the Salem witch trials. Then after, we went to Maine and I watched my pagan witch auntie Annie Finch lead a circle on the stormy coast, women dancing and chanting and sharing poetry and words and screams and laughter. A fire was kindled in me. “Same Old Energy” was one of those songs that fell out of me in one night, around 2 a.m., every verse spilling into my notes app fully formed, my hands could barely keep up. I truly believe I don’t even write the songs consciously, but rather that I channel them from some other realm. I spent the next week producing the song in my bedroom on GarageBand until I had something that made me want to dance naked in the woods.

We hope you love these images by Gleason here, and that you’ll take a look at Rockwell’s “Same Old Energy” online, and that you’ll head out into the woods—maybe even this very eve if you’re so inspired—to dance and sing and scream with laughter.



Still from “Same Old Energy,” directed by Oshara Ardelean

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VAL GLEASON

Photography: Val Gleason (@vallerina01)

Models: Tiffany Megan (@the.seasonal.scottish.lass), Ginkgo Greene (@ginkgogreene), Haylie Hopkins (@hotmesshaylie)









DEATH BY CHOCOLATE CAKE

Infused With Jasmine and Blackberry

by Must Love Herbs

Jasmine-Infused Heavy Cream

*2 cups heavy cream
1/3 cup dried jasmine buds*

Add the cream and jasmine to a medium saucepan. Over low heat, bring cream to a light simmer and cook for 3 minutes. Remove from heat and allow the jasmine to steep for 30 to 40 minutes. This will allow the mixture to cool to room temperature and infuse more flavor.

Once cooled, strain the liquid into an airtight container to remove any flower solids. Set aside.

Chocolate Cake

*2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon ground dried jasmine flowers
2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup vegetable oil
2 large eggs, room temperature
1 cup sour cream, room temperature
1 cup jasmine-infused heavy cream, room temperature
1 cup (+/-) blackberry jam or compote*

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Grease four 6-inch cake pans and line the bottoms with parchment paper. In a large bowl, mix together the flour, ground jasmine flowers, granulated sugar, cocoa powder, baking powder, and salt until evenly incorporated. Add the oil and mix by hand until evenly moistened. With your mixer on low, add the eggs one at a time. Add the sour cream and infused heavy cream. Beat until the mixture is combined. Scrape the edges of the bowl and mix until the batter is clump free.

Distribute the batter evenly among each prepared cake pan. You should have approximately 1 cup in each pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out cleanly.

Allow the cakes to cool for 30 minutes before carefully turning them out onto a wire cooling rack. Allow them to cool completely. While the cakes cool, you may begin working on the icing.



Jasmine-Infused Buttercream

*1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
4 cups powdered sugar, sifted
1/4 cup jasmine-infused heavy cream
Pinch of kosher salt*

Add butter to the bowl of your stand mixer, fitted with the paddle attachment. With the mixer on low, gradually add in the powdered sugar. Halfway through, add in the heavy cream. Continue to add powdered sugar until the desired consistency is achieved.

Spread frosting evenly with 1 to 2 tablespoons of blackberry preserves between each cake layer. Once all four layers are stacked, put the cake in the fridge for a minimum of 30 minutes. Pull the cake out and frost the sides and top of the cake. Return the cake to the fridge until ready to serve.

Use your imagination to add extra witchy glamour. Some ideas here include: Color a white cake batter “moss green,” bake it, let it cool, and then crumble it to create “moss” on top of your cake. Adhere actual moss to the cake platter for extra effect! Hand-sculpt mushrooms from marzipan, paint them with food-safe coloring, and decorate your cake with them, on top and around the sides. Make a chocolate “gate” by melting chocolate and piping out the design onto parchment, then let it cool. Use St. John’s Wort fresh from the garden to create a lattice of vines over the gate’s arch and along the sides of the cake.

Most of all, enjoy!



Follow Lauren May on Instagram @mustloveherbs and visit her website, mustloveherbs.com.

“You Can Take the Witch out of Salem, But You Can’t Take Salem out of the Witch” by Kambriel

I’ve lived many places, but thus far Salem, Massachusetts, was the only one where no one ever asked where I’d come from. There are some places you inhabit, and there are some places that inhabit you. Every now and then the stars align and the two meet as one. I moved to Salem in the summer of 1995, knowing nobody in the area, with no leads on a place to live, my only income from a self-produced catalog of handcrafted gothic fashions founded a year prior. Arriving on a whim, my partner and I walked past quaint brick-walled shops on Essex Street with stained glass stars glinting in the windows, with Celtic strains of Loreena McKennitt and gentle clouds of intoxicating incense floating through the air. I read the names of the 1692 witch trial victims embedded in glowing crimson in the floor of the Salem Witch Museum, took in a larger-than-life painted mural of a witch gracefully overlooking her seaside domain at Salem Witch Village, and knew I’d found my new hometown. Sadly, there weren’t any affordable places to live available, and after spending weeks familiarizing ourselves with the area as our savings dwindled, my partner was ready to strike out somewhere else, saying it wasn’t meant to be.

But I felt in my core there must yet be a way and said it was worth one last shot. I wanted one more day to see if I could make something happen. We turned the car around, got out, and walked past one of the very first shops we’d visited on those cobblestone paths, perhaps now for the last time, and there it was: a small piece of paper on the door with a few simple handwritten words: “1 bedroom apartment available upstairs.” We went inside to inquire and the owner said the lease wouldn’t begin for a few weeks, but since no one was there we were welcome to move in immediately at no extra charge. He gave us two folding chairs so we’d have something to sit on and suddenly, we were home—a home where we’d live for the next twelve years. It was a labyrinthine brick building dating back to 1805, came complete with ghosts, and while no pets were technically allowed, several windows at night were silhouetted with incandescently backlit cats casting their noble shadows on the passersby below.

The web of fate began its weaving well before that, of course. Upon first arriving, we also explored the neighboring waterfront towns. One had a centuries-old, mist-enshrouded



burial ground on a hilltop overlooking crashing waves below. I couldn’t resist doing some photography among the 17th and 18th century headstones carved by hand all those yesterdays ago with iconic winged souls, crossed bones, hourglasses, moons, and bats, each harkening us to remember and honor the fleeting nature of our given years. At one point, sitting on a stone bench atop the hillside, I carefully balanced my camera on a nearby stone after setting its self-timer, since no one else was around.

The shop beneath what would become my home offered photo processing, and the film I’d shot was developed there. After getting the prints, I saw the bench had a name carved into the side. Weeks later when we magicked into that little apartment, the last name of the man who rented it to us? The same name. I later learned the bench was placed there in memory of his ancestors decades before.

Another charmed moment was when I picked up a copy of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of Seven Gables*, only to read about one of the characters, the daguerreotypist, whose office was in the Salem Customs House in the 1800s. Why, yes, my apartment building was indeed the Salem Customs House, built in 1805, and he was writing about the very rooms I now occupied! Hawthorne himself often enjoyed spending time alone in Salem’s Old Burying Point, just around the corner from my apartment and a place I often strolled to for quiet time as well. The House of Seven Gables itself still stands in Salem like a shadowy specter nestled in lush greenery and flowers that appear all the more colorful against its blackened walls. On my first visit there, after telling a guide I’d just moved into town, he joked I wouldn’t really be able to call myself a local until I’d had a few hundred years of history there. I laughed, not knowing then something I’d learn years later about my maternal ancestry ...

The cook at the pizza shop around the corner warned me that people in the area were hard to get along with at first, but once you did, you’d know it was genuine and be able to trust them fully. I could respect that and looked forward to growing those relationships. That said, I found the denizens of Salem to be extraordinarily welcoming and generous. Each new person I met felt like a piece of a magical family puzzle taking shape. Upon first meeting a local wizard with long flaxen hair, he handed me a dark amber bottle of pure clove essential oil as a gift. An apothecary across the street offered my partner



©Kambriel

Photo of Kambriel by C.L. Williams

an oil she blended with warm vanilla, amber, and Egyptian musk that cast the most comforting aura of scent. A jeweler named Bat crafted me an intricately beaded cobweb of a necklace in glistening black with pale violet accent beads that gleamed like the aurora borealis, and a delicate silver bat centerpiece. A witch with sparkling green eyes and knife-sharp black bobbed hair who owned the Black Cat Book Shop offered space to choreograph my first local fashion show. She even offered to take part in it as well, modeling one of my diaphanous gowns with lace-trimmed, dramatically flared sleeves, while holding out a ruby crystal goblet toward me in what was ultimately more ritual than show. In New England, “wicked” is a positive descriptor, and the people of Salem were truly wicked.

When people think of Salem, they can't help but conjure images of autumn splendor. This makes sense in a town where Halloween isn't a night so much as a month. It's a time of year when the heightened energy of magic fills the air and pumpkin-everything abounds. We'd choreograph and perform dramatic vignette-style fashion shows in Salem's historic Old Town Hall for Madame Tracy's annual Vampires & Victims Ball, as our models glided effortlessly past in ethereal veils and gowns that seemed to flow on forever, sparkling like stars on the darkened stage. Sometimes I spent sleepless October nights burning the candle at both ends, crafting velvet capes and other finery for the Broom Closet, an enchanting little shop that was kind enough to make space for showcasing my designs destined to bedeck both visitors and acolytes alike who'd be lined up outside their door mere hours later. These crowds, newly clad in their crushed velvet capes, charmed amulets, and feathered hats, would usher thoughtfully past the nearby memorial stones etched with tragic yet eerily empowered final words of those who were suspended from trees and crushed by stones, those whose betrayed lives were cut short yet never forgotten. Sometimes we'd host guests from faraway lands on those chaotic October days, and they'd invariably be awakened by the sudden sound of shouting in the streets, and we'd quickly reassure them it was simply someone being accused of witchcraft—only this time by actors luring tourists to a nearby performance.

For a local though, there was a special kind of magic to the days *after* Halloween, when all went suddenly quiet after the tourists disappeared back to their everyday lives. Salem once again became a small town, and we lucky locals were left to wander the recently crowded, chaotically merry streets to barely any sound other than the chill autumn breeze. The energy

When people think of Salem, they can't help but conjure images of autumn splendor. This makes sense in a town where Halloween isn't a night so much as a month.

remained, but in a more haunting way, as cold November rains endeavored to collage cobblestone paths with the damp autumn leaves spent from their magical reverie. In winter, dagger-like icicles descended from antique wooden windows, shaped into gracefully sinister curves by a Nor'easter's howling winds. Local artists deftly carved intricate ice sculpture displays with translucent dragons and ghostly geisha, which gained an even more ephemeral beauty as the ice was softly topped with a layer of newly fallen crystalline snow. Seagulls would congregate, their feathers taking on the spectral appearance of snow before taking flight once more into the milky skies above. Doors were decorated with festive solstice wreaths made by our neighbor, a Wiccan priestess, who would twist them with greenery, spangle them with jingle spiders and silvered webs, and top them off with the welcoming wings of a gilded bat.

On sultry summer evenings, I'd walk down to the wharf through a heavy air that was scented with saline from the nearby Atlantic. The moon would cast gentle glints of light upon the eternal shape-shifting waters below. I sauntered past pitch-black iron gates to embark upon the geometric paths of Salem Common. Such walks were like tracing the steps of a sigil hidden in plain sight, wherein an evening stroll is transformed into the casting of a spell, walking ever forward to the pale domed colonnade at the heart of it all. I'll always remember opening the door to my building and descending the stately granite steps right as a young girl and her mother were walking past. The charming girl glanced over at me and gleefully proclaimed, “Mommy, look! A *real* witch!”

Spring always arrived a bit later than desired, making up for the delay in wild tangles of vibrant flowers reawakening from their icy slumber. I often sought solace from the bustle of the town, finding relief in a lush garden that was somewhat hidden from view, located behind a reputedly haunted mansion. Years later I learned I had maternal ancestors who arrived in Salem in the 1600s but moved away around the time of the infamous witch trials. Their last name was the same family name as the first owners of this centuries-old home with the tucked-away garden that was host to some of my most cherished Salem moments of comfort and quietude. It was then that I harkened back to the guide's comment at the House of Seven Gables about not being local until I'd had centuries of history there ... and realized I was a true local after all.



Kambriel believes in finding magic where it is and creating it where it lacks. You can find her fantastical design work at kambriel.com and personal updates on Twitter @kambrieldesign.



CROW TAROT
WISE DOG TAROT
GRIMALKIN'S CURIOUS CATS
URBAN CROW ORACLE
ROAR
GUARDIAN OF THE NIGHT
FÖRHÄXA TAROT

Margaux Jones (AKA MJ) is an award-winning Seattle-based artist, writer, mother, and lover of all things magical - especially crows.



CROWTAROTSHOP.COM

AT HOME: THE STYLISH WITCH'S LAIR

by Rona Berg



Hard to believe, but it's been more than twenty-five years since Alice Hoffman published *Practical Magic*, the story of the witchy Owens sisters and their magic. In 2020, when *Magic Lessons*, which traces the Owens family's backstory, was published, Hoffman spoke about finding a drawing of a witch she made when she was a child: "This is what I've been interested in since first grade. There's a reason why little girls especially are interested in witches, and it's that witches are the only female mythic figures that have power. It's really about the power of women in a man's world."

I have read and reread *Practical Magic*, and seen the film version with Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman so many times that I've lost count. I love the story and the acting, and the powerful women, but I also really adore the Owens' rambling kitchen, with its modern glass shelves lined with apothecary jars filled with ingredients for casting ancient spells: dried herbs, bits of flotsam and jetsam, tinctures, elixirs, and brews. The decor of the entire house reads like a center of power for strong women, which, of course, it is.

Here are some witchy pieces that Sally and Gillian Owens may have loved as much as I do.

Halloween High Tea

I love high tea, and the beautiful Black & Gold Halloween Tea Set (pictured above), made of porcelain and festooned with gorgeous silhouettes of bats, cats, crows, and moths, is as elegant as it is whimsical. Kiln-fired at a very high temperature to fuse the image to the porcelain permanently, it will never flake or fade but remain as permanent as your favorite tattoo. It is, of course, food- and dishwasher-safe, and the set includes a teapot and a sugar and creamer set, and either two, four, or six cups with spoons and saucers. (Also available in a Black Witch and Bats motif.)
angiolettidesigns.com

Cast-Iron Cauldron

Every self-respecting witch needs a cauldron, and the Large Tree of Life Cast-Iron Cauldron with Three Herbs Kit from Celestial Wings is a beauty. It's seven inches high (including the lid) and seven inches across and safe for food. It comes with three botanicals that you choose (or have chosen for you) for herbal healing: white sage, French

lavender buds, rosemary, Jamaican hibiscus, juniper berry, cedar, sugar gum eucalyptus, Moroccan rose bud, yerba santa. The Tree of Life design symbolizes strength, beauty, and personal growth.
etsy.com/shop/celestialwingsinc

Moon Spell Mules

Made from black canvas with frayed edges, these super-comfy handmade nonslip open-back Ancient Moon Spell Espadrille Mules feature blue or white embroidered celestial designs that are the perfect—and perfectly unique—magical shoes to wear around the house or in the garden.
magickworkingsbywitchymade.com

Witch Garden Motif

Misentangled Vision's spell-binding Spoonflower Periwinkle Witch Garden cotton fabric, in rich shades of purple and periwinkle with gold accents, is perfect for quilting and pillow making. The design features medicinal and poisonous plants, snakes, ravens, and other magical motifs. It's sold by the yard and also available as wallpaper.
spoonflower.com

Weather or Not

Stake your claim in the garden with the Windblown Wicked Witch Metal Weathervane Roof Mount, a rust-resistant aluminum witch on a magic broom weathervane. With stylized directionals and a hand-crafted, black satin finish, this witchy beauty is available as either a rooftop mount or a garden stake (mounting hardware not included).
designtoscano.com

Self-Love Altar Table

Every religion and spiritual practice based in faith has an altar table mixed in with its traditions. Curio, Craft and Conjure, a woman-owned shop in Charlotte, North Carolina, offers several altars, and they are so popular they seem to fly out the door on their power! We like the Om Altar Table, perfect for meditation, incantation, and holding ritual offerings. Curio, Craft and Conjure offers a wide range of bells, books, and candles as well as crystals, cauldrons, herbs, incense, and more.
curiocharlotte.com

Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg



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ORDINARY MAGIC

by *Theodora Goss*

To be a witch is to see the magic in everything. Your kettle is magic. Each morning it transforms cold water into hot, which brews the magical potion that will chase away the dreams—good, bad, prophetic or not—of the previous night. Your dreams are vivid, although you're not always sure what they mean. Why do you always end up in that train station? Where is that forest you walked through, and who is the woman you met there, wearing a peaked hat? She showed you a book—you remember the pages had pictures of various herbs, with symbols you didn't understand. She told you something important—what was it? You feel sure that the universe speaks to you in a cryptic language, but you sometimes wish it could be just a *little* clearer.

You settle down to your work, whatever work you do, and you've found the magic in that—whether it's in a classroom, an office, a restaurant ... Somehow, it will take you to a place you've dreamed of (a cottage in the forest, a lighthouse on the coast). Whatever it is, you will find a way to make it creative—to learn and teach and make, whether a latte or a legal brief. If it's not at all what you want (because sometimes work isn't), you remember the story of Aschenputtel, who was told to sort lentils from the ashes in the fireplace. She was helped by the white birds that sat in the hazel tree she had planted on her mother's grave—she had friends. Or you think of Vasilisa the Fair, who was helped by the doll her mother gave her. You remember Baba Yaga and think #lifegoals. After all, it's not a bad thing to be an old woman of mystery and power, who owns her own cottage on chicken legs and commands the morning, day, and night. You pin a picture of Baba Yaga in her garden of flaming skulls to your vision board.

To be a witch is to hear the world talking, to see how the trees bend down when you pick mulberries, feel how the sidewalk offers firm support to your sneakers. This power of perception—your ability to see, hear, feel—is at the center of your magic. It is what gives you the ability to understand animals, to predict the future. You don't always predict it accurately, but who does? Meanwhile, as you walk to work or the park, cats curl around your ankles, knowing you are a friend. Birds chirp at you from the privet bushes. Dogs push their muzzles into the palm of your hand. It's as though the universe recognizes you. Even the pond, sitting amid its reeds like eyelashes, or the puddles that form after rain, recognize you and wave or ripple in a friendly way, as though saying, *Hello, here you are. How nice to reflect you again.*

To be a witch is to be always in a process of becoming. Magic is, after all, about transformation. Think of the women transformed in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*: Daphne into a laurel tree, Io into a heifer, Arachne into a spider. You suspect it would be

more peaceful being a laurel tree, or even a cow chomping in a field, than a Greek nymph. And spiders spin more beautifully than any mortal. In the morning, sometimes you see raindrops sparkling on delicate filaments along your path, and you nod to the spider hanging in her web, as though to say, *Good job, little one. I spin too—stories, poems, songs, a life. We are sisters.* The old narratives tell you that something magical can come even from trauma. Being a witch does not mean avoiding loss and pain—who among us can do that? But it means at least seeing the possibility that something can come from them—trying to find the magic that will transform darkness into some kind of meaning.

You have mastered transformations. For your lunch, you turn a raw egg into poached, to place on a slice of bread you have toasted in a magical device and then buttered. Later you turn money into a silk blouse, then transform it again by embroidering butterflies on the collar, making it uniquely your own. Every day, you transmute the history of your ancestors into your singular life. You can't transform everything—there is still sorrow and poverty in the universe. But being a witch means trying, over and over. After all, no spell works perfectly the first time. When you look in a bowl of water or into the mirror, sometimes you scry—it's never completely accurate, but only the Fates have 20/20 vision. And anyway, you know that the future is, to a certain extent, what you make it. So you dream your dreams, weave your web of intentions, cast your spells. You know that to be a witch is to dance with the universe. You're not always sure which one of you is leading.

Because you have learned that magic is everywhere, in everything—your cool sheets at night, the light of the moon, the hoot of an owl in the darkness. Magic is elderflower lemonade on a hot day, the sound that the mourning doves make as they perch on the stone parapet of the museum. It's ice cream and miniature cakes and a girl in a rainbow dress smiling at you before she runs back to her mother. It's the way the river flows down from the mountains, and the stars in the night sky, and the land of dreams.

It is, above all, your awareness of these things—that is what makes you a witch.



Theodora Goss is the World Fantasy, Locus, and Mythopoeic Award-winning author or editor of nine books, including the short-story and poetry collection Snow White Learns Witchcraft and her trilogy that began with The Strange Case of the Alchemist's Daughter and ended with The Sinister Mystery of the Mesmerizing Girl. Follow her on Instagram @theodoragoss.



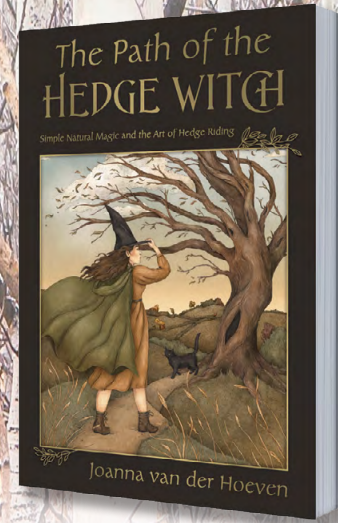
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*“To be a witch is to be always
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Magic is, after all, about
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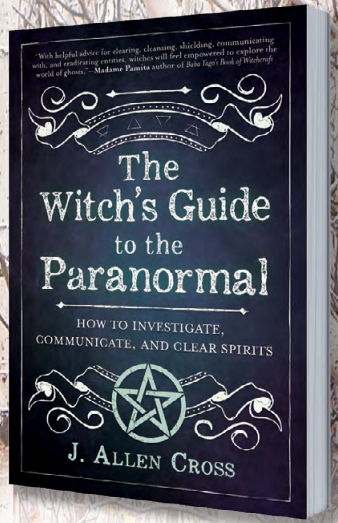
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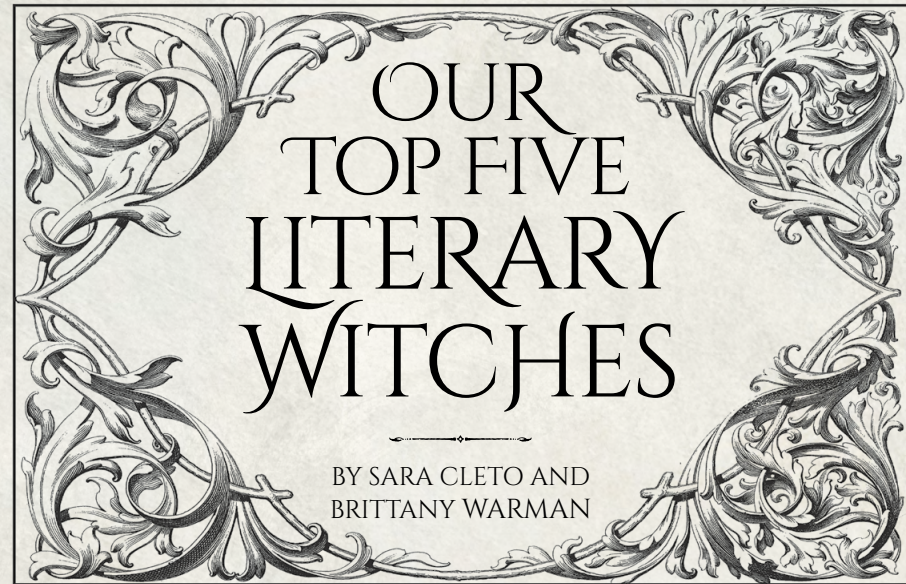


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Writing a list of our top five witches is surprisingly hard, but not for the reasons you might assume. It's not that we can't think of any good ones—the problem is that there are hundreds, maybe even thousands, of fascinating, powerful, enigmatic witches that live in stories and on pages! But since we've got space for only five, we've had to ruthlessly narrow down our list. What about, you might say, the wyrd witches from *Macbeth*? Or wise, star-crossed Serafina Pekkala from the glorious *His Dark Materials* trilogy? Agnes Nutter, Hermione Granger, Elphaba? Lilith, Hecate, Baba Yaga?

Y'all, we didn't know how we were going to do it!

One thing we have done, however, is make sure that all the witches in this particular piece are distinctly literary. This meant that we had to strike Morgan Le Fay, for example, both because she's a part of Arthurian legend and because there have been so many different literary takes on her character that we wouldn't know where to begin without spiraling off toward Avalon. So against our natures, we are (mostly) ignoring the great witches of folklore for this particular piece. We also focused on literary witches that really shaped—and often pushed back on—the boundaries of what witches are like and what we expect from them.

So here are the five literary witches

who have, for various reasons, stuck with and enchanted us the most—and made us think the most about what a witch can be.

Watho - Watho is the antagonist of an incredible (and incredibly weird) fairy tale by George MacDonald called "The Day Boy and the Night Girl" (1882). She is stunningly beautiful, with red hair and black eyes, and she has an insatiable desire to know *everything*. She also has what MacDonald calls a "wolf in her mind," which might be a familiar, lycanthropy, or arguably even chronic pain, which occasionally overwhelms her. Don't get us wrong, Watho is definitely a baddie—she's very cruel to the child protagonists that she has *kidnapped*—but she's also fascinating because she presents a model of the witch that we've rarely seen elsewhere. More of a mad scientist than a witch—she does experiments, not magic—Watho has an intense desire to understand the world around her, giving her an edge even among witches.

Glinda - While witches have always been complex creatures, unambiguously *good* witches are still relatively hard to come by. This is why Glinda, called the Good Witch of the South in L. Frank Baum's *Oz* novels (1900–1920), was so revolutionary. Baum completely transformed what a witch could be by modeling Glinda on his mother-in-law,

the well-known suffragist and abolitionist Matilda Joslyn Gage. Gage had famously postulated that the women burned as witches in the past had actually been scientists who represented too much of a threat to the status quo. In the novels, Glinda is a beautiful sorceress who protects and counsels Princess Ozma, employs a whole army of female soldiers, and, to be honest, is a lot more enigmatic and complex than her title would suggest. "Good" is a little too simplistic for witches anyway, don't you think?

Granny Weatherwax - Esmerelda "Granny" Weatherwax is a force like no other in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels (1983–2015). Embodying the classic image of the witch, Weatherwax always wears her hat and demands the respect a witch of her status deserves. She's smart, capable, and takes no prisoners. She always does what's right and never suffers fools. As Pratchett wrote, "people are riddled by Doubt. It is the engine that drives them through their lives. It is the elastic band in the little model aeroplane of their soul, and they spend their time winding it up until it knots. Early morning is the worst time—there's that little moment of panic in case you have drifted away in the night and something else has moved in. This never happened to Granny Weatherwax. She went straight from asleep to instant operation on all

six cylinders. She never needed to find herself because she always knew who was doing the looking." We admit we have a special connection to this witch too. We once made a Weatherwax-inspired witch hat covered in fake fruit and tiny dragons for a favorite professor who reminded us of her!

Morwen - *The Enchanted Forest Chronicles* by Patricia C. Wrede (1985–1996) is one of our favorite fairy-tale world parodies. In Wrede's world, princesses and witches alike reject their stereotypical roles in favor of following their hearts. The witch Morwen is a friend of the main character, Princess Cimorene, and she has no time for the aesthetic trappings often associated with witches. She is intensely practical and thinks outdated ideas like

pointed hats and overgrown gardens are ridiculous. Her home and gardens are *very* neat, thank you. She also has a variety of cats living with her (because why *should* a witch have only one familiar? Preposterous!) These novels are all about casting off who you're supposed to be and embracing your true self, even if that self isn't what others are expecting. Morwen's a bit unusual, sure, but she's definitely a powerful, awesome witch in her own right too!

Circe - We know! We can practically hear you screaming, "Circe is totally from Greek mythology, you cheaters!" And yes, you probably know Circe from *The Odyssey*, the Homeric epic where she appears as one of the dangers Odysseus must overcome on his long way home.

There are a few other places where she pops up as a mythological character as well. But while that Circe certainly has a claim to longevity, the particular (and purely literary) Circe we're thinking of is the eponymous protagonist of Madeline Miller's 2018 novel. Miller takes the small amount of information we have on this mysterious witch with a tendency to change sailors into swine and does a deep dive into a completely new, delightfully feminist version of the character: her past, her motivations, and her powers. Miller's captivating story allows us to identify with Circe, to see her not as yet another monster among monsters, but as a complex woman with hopes and fears and joys.

Who are your favorite literary witches?

Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman are folklorists, authors, and teachers, as well as co-founders of The Carterhaugh School of Folklore and the Fantastic, which you can read more about at carterhaughschool.com.





Séance Stitches

A needlewoman with a penchant for folklore, witchcraft, and horrible Victorian illnesses

by Carolyn Turgeon

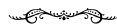


You might not realize how much you covet intricate embroidery depicting scenes of graveyards, spiritualist-era séances, and the occasional Black Phillip until you see the work of Beth Wilkes, a.k.a. Séance Stitches. Wilkes didn't even start doing embroidery until relatively recently, though she studied costume design at university and she's always made her own clothes. When Covid shut down the costume industry just after she graduated, she decided to start selling her embroidered pieces, inspired by folklore, witchcraft, and Victorian death culture, as a way of making money temporarily. She liked it so much—and became so popular—that she decided to make it her full-time thing. Now you can buy original hoop art as well as postcards and spooky Christmas ornaments in her shop on Etsy.

Wilkes says she's naturally drawn to the darker things in life. "Growing up as a home-schooled only child living in a converted chapel in a remote village in the English countryside definitely had a huge impact on me," she says—a sentence that has us swooning with jealousy. She spent most of her childhood playing in the woods, hunting for fairies, and reading age-inappropriate horror novels, not to mention being raised by a bevy of spiritualism-loving ladies, including her mother

who grew up attending séances with Wilkes's eccentric great grandmother. Stories of these ghostly affairs made their way into Wilkes's séance embroidery, which features "ectoplasm" she conjures using mixed media like original antique photographs and beading.

Wilkes's own style of magic is a blend of traditional and folk practices. What is the allure of witches to her? "In a time when women's rights and the rights of other marginalized people are being eroded," she says, "I think the archetype of the witch has more cultural importance than ever. Witches are the ultimate underdog, a person who's other but takes that vulnerability and flips it on its head." These are the women and cunning folk who provided the support that people couldn't get anywhere else within their communities—healing, comfort, and advice. "The stereotypical storybook or mythological wicked witch is also pretty attractive right now," she says. "A feral, powerful woman who takes charge in a society that expects women to be small, submissive, and weak? Yes, please!"



See Wilkes's work at [etsy.com/uk/shop/seancestitches](https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/seancestitches) and visit her on Instagram @seance_stitches.





Queenie's Potion



©Columbia Pictures / Ditz / Bridgeman Images

BELL, BOOK, AND BEAUTY

by Alise Marie, *The Beauty Witch*®

Amid a swathe of tribal fertility idols, leopard-lined cloaks, and a cabaret singer imported from Montmartre, she holds court, lounging in wait like a great feline in the stillness before the hunt. An incandescent, natural beauty glowing like a rare gem against a backdrop of decaying beatnik bohemia, she is at once a restless force of nature and a creature somehow entirely, alluringly detached. This bewitching combination captured my attention as a young girl, speaking to me as even my most beloved sorceresses had not, for Gillian Holroyd—the ultra glam main character of the 1958 film *Bell, Book and Candle*, played by Kim Novak—was *different*.

This was no wise crone of the wood, nor a fickle fairy maiden, but a satin-heeled, soigné bombshell whose lean figure was elegantly, expertly draped in the couture of the day as interpreted by the iconic Jean Louis, the French designer who set Hollywood alight with his singularly glamorous gowns. She was enigmatic: modern, with a free-spirited independence and the need to answer to no one, with the carriage of an ancient, regal goddess who was simply too cool to feel the need to beg admiration.

A powerful witch, she cast her spell, yes ... but really, she never had to. Stretching like a panther in a backless velvet

column gown, a ruby serpent coiled around her wrist, a nudge from the tip of a satin pump was all that was needed to stir the curiosity (not to mention the fervent passion) in a certain “regular” guy she simply had to have.

Her cognac kiss sealed his fate and, ultimately, her own. I used to loathe the way the story ended, but over the years I’ve come to see its lesser noticed point: Gillian didn’t give up anything, really, for true love. It may have seemed that way on the surface, but what she discarded no longer meant what it once had to her. So she moved on. She didn’t allow anyone’s perception of her to keep her caged where she no longer desired to be.

And so, to honor Gillian’s decisions that freed her spirit and changed her life in the way *she* wished, I’ve conjured this first potion as a love spell—to yourself. Anoint every inch of your heavenly body with its sensual sorcery and revel in the confidence it brings, to remind yourself of your own power, your *own* choices, and a life of beauty and love that you fully deserve. It is heavily infused with Venusian charms, age-defying beauty powers, and an intoxicating scent. Oh, and it includes a little bit of cat magic for darling Pyewacket. After all, a witch needs her familiar.

GILLIAN'S POTION

Body Oil

Conjures approximately 3 ounces

- 2.5 ounces cold pressed avocado oil
- 2 sticks cinnamon
- Seeds of one vanilla bean
- ½ teaspoon organic catnip, dried
- 6 drops jasmine absolute
- 6 drops myrrh essential oil
- 2 drops cinnamon essential oil (optional)

Fill a gorgeous bottle three-quarters of the way with avocado oil. Gently arrange the cinnamon sticks inside, then carefully scrape the vanilla bean seeds into the potion. If you don't have fresh vanilla bean, do not substitute extract intended for baking. Instead, source a good quality essential oil online or in your local shop. Sprinkle or place the catnip into the bottle, depending on its source—I love to take a whole piece, stem and all, and add it to potions. Add the jasmine and myrrh. Give it all a good, sexy swirl in a clockwise direction. If you are adding the cinnamon oil, do it now. (If you're uncertain, test a small diluted patch on your skin to see if you're sensitive—if so, the cinnamon sticks will suffice.) This potion marinates well during a waxing moon cycle, though it is powerful at any time. If possible, create it on the new moon and allow it to grow in potency until the full moon, then use it with wild abandon! As with all potions, be sure to connect with each ingredient, honoring it as you visualize and feel the energy working.

Avocado Rich and sensual, avocado oil has long been associated with beauty and love magic. Ripe with good fats, this Venusian gem is an excellent moisturizer high in vitamin E, fighting the signs of aging and feeding your skin while soothing inflammation and breakouts. It is also a noted aphrodisiac.

Cinnamon Amorous cinnamon ignites the fires of both love and money, while cleansing and increasing circulation to your skin. The increased blood flow brings life to the cells for a glowing radiance.



Vanilla This delightful vine wafts in sensually by way of Venus, heavy on the love and sexual magic. Its heady aroma and flavor intoxicates, and its aphrodisiac powers are legendary. Vanilla is also rich in copper, which helps promote collagen and elastic production. It soothes, protects from environmental stresses, and carries an enchanted scent.

Catnip What could be nicer than an herb that makes cats happy? Ruled by Venus and sacred to Bast, this one, naturally, brings love, beauty, and joy to felines and humans alike with its magic and its delightful scent. Used for calming nerves, catnip also has a mild sedative effect and acts as an anti-inflammatory for skin.

Jasmine Known as the queen of the night, sensual jasmine is an intoxicating aphrodisiac that knows a thing about beauty. A brilliant oil for reducing fine lines and strengthening skin's elasticity, jasmine also helps fade scars and hyperpigmentation.

Myrrh The female consort of frankincense is surely lovely, lunar myrrh. It has a similar high spiritual vibration to its solar partner, also bringing potent healing and protective energy. Revered

in ancient Egypt, myrrh possesses potent age-defying beauty properties.

Now, of course, Gillian's detractors helped her along the way, as often they do. Some meant well, some did not, and others still fervently held on to their own identities by way of someone else's existence. There's the adorably daft Aunt Queenie, forgetful as she is sweet, cat-clever as she is confused, and charming to no end. And then the envious Madame de Passe, a force of nature in her own right, but one who relishes the chance to outdo the younger, feather-ruffling Gillian. Both ladies had indisputable strengths but also a few flawed notions. I've harnessed each of their powers here and added a little bit of balance to help when things feel unsteady.

Queenie's Potion aids in sharpening memory, mental clarity, and focus, while Madame's provides healing and protection in among all the hex-breaking. May they all assist you in following your heart, finding your true powers, and calling your desires forth with protection and wisdom wrapped around you like an exquisite cloak—velvet, of course.

QUEENIE'S POTION

Bath Blend

Per treatment

- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary, or ¼ cup dried
- 3 large bay leaves
- ¼ cup dried lavender
- 6 drops cedarwood essential oil
- 3 drops vetiver essential oil
- 2 drops bay essential oil (optional)

You could approach this one of two ways: The first would be to use all the ingredients to create a sachet; the second, to use all essential oils instead. I prefer a bit of both. I like to form a sachet with the dried herbs and flowers, then douse with the oils before tying up. You can use a cotton or hemp tea bag, a bit of cheesecloth, or—my fave—a small piece of lace fabric, then tie it all up with a ribbon or cord. You can then either attach it to the faucet so the water runs through it, or pop it in the water once the bath is filled. I like to put it in the water, then add

more essential oils straight into the bath. Then I like to use the sachet as a bath sponge, if you will. Actually, what I really love is lying back with all the herbs and flowers floating loosely, swirling around me. It feels like I'm bathing outdoors in pure magic and truly connecting with nature. But I know not everyone will love damp flora on their skin, nor the necessary cleanup. Either way, hold your visuals and feelings strongly as you relax in warm, fragrant waters. Allow your intuition and psychic space to open up, your mental prowess to strengthen and focus, and feel the protective, healing vibrations of the water.

Rosemary This favorite arrives bearing love, healing, intellect, and youth. It offers these palpable gifts but also the ability to increase cellular metabolism to boost circulation, stimulating mystical prowess and firm skin.

Bay Nibbled by ancient Greek priestesses to read prophecy, bay has long been a magical herb of clairvoyance

and wisdom. Also used for protection, healing, and strength, it is antiseptic and astringent when used in topical potions. Plus it's a great muscle soother, with a spicy, uplifting scent that promotes feelings of well-being, enhanced creativity, and confidence.

Cedarwood Solar-powered cedarwood provides healing and grounding, locked inside the wisdom of the forest. A tree of purification, it also holds money magic.

Vetiver A time-tested witches' herb, vetiver brings luck and abundance, and protects that considerable wealth (in all its forms) you are amassing. Its earthy, lushly wooded aroma calls in the green spirits.

Lavender Lunar-ruled lavender soothes, calms anxious nerves, and brings peace. It also makes a fantastic yet gentle skin treatment thanks to its antibacterial powers. Known as elf leaf, it holds

powers of love, peacefulness, protection, and longevity—not surprising given its namesake!



Beauty Witch's Secret: Keeping a tiger's eye stone near and dear will help to boost your magic by instilling confidence, and banishing fear. Also, *puissance de chat!*

Madame de Passe's Potion

MADAME DE PASSE'S POTION

Brew
Per serving

1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
¼ cup blackberries
¼ cup apple
Pinch of cloves, ground
Grind of black pepper
Maple syrup or stevia, as desired

Mmm ... you will love this deliciously spiced, creamy brew as it heats up gently in the cauldron and its scented magic fills the air. Place the coconut milk, berries, and apple in a bullet-style blender, and pulse until completely smooth. Pour it into a small saucepan and gently warm it until it reaches a pleasurable, soothing temperature. Stir in the cloves, pepper, and sweetener to taste. Maple syrup makes a decadent, delightful addition brimming with minerals. If you avoid sugars altogether, stevia makes a good, plant-powered alternative. Prepare and

sip this with intention, of course, bringing forth healing, protection, cleansing, and a dose of love and beauty magic—because, why ever not?

Blackberry Ruled by Venus, this sexy berry carries not only her beauty magic but that of abundance, creation, healing, and protection. Voluptuous with antioxidants, bioflavonoids, and vitamins—most notably vitamin C—blackberries refine and feed the skin while revving the all-important cell-renewal process. Their deep hue ensures vibrant Jing energy, so vital to our inner and outer radiance.

Apple Said to give perpetual youth to the gods, apples were revered throughout the ancient world as offerings to beauty, love, and lust. Ruled by Venus and sacred to Freya, they also are potent bringers of peace, healing, and vibrant health. Not to mention rich in nutrients and antioxidants.

Black Pepper This oft-overlooked spice soothes pain and stiffness, and eases anxiety and stress, while the warming

quality improves circulation, boosting cell regeneration and collagen production, which helps decrease the appearance of fine lines. It also allows your skin to heal blemishes and bruises more quickly and has the benefit of protection, healing, and purification by way of fire magic.

Clove Decadently spicy, Jupiter-ruled clove oil kills bacteria and clarifies skin while conjuring love, money, and protection magic. It is even used in exorcism.

Coconut Sweet, buttery coconut oil is known for its beautifying fats but is also a bacteria-fighting warrior that prevents viruses and other harmful pathogens from attacking. This lunar-ruled gem also purifies and heightens both spirituality and psychic awareness.

Alise Marie is the author of The Beauty Witch's Secrets: Recipes and Rituals for the Modern Goddess available wherever books are sold. Find her at thebeautywitch.com and on Instagram @thebeautywitchofficial.

“Variety is the very spice of life, / That gives it all its flavor.” —William Cowper

Though often attributed to Shakespeare, the above quote actually comes from a 1785 poem called “The Task” by the English poet William Cowper. This time of year, both variety and spice are around in abundance, and both bring on a quickening sense of excitement and promise.

As the weather cools, our taste buds thrill to heavier flavors—cinnamon, blackberry, rosemary, and bay. The woody scent of myrrh and sweet vanilla are also hard to resist. They bewitch and stimulate the senses and, as it happens, get the blood flowing to the skin, providing nourishment and succor as the season shifts and surrenders the heat of summer to the cool autumn breeze. Here, our veritable cornucopia of autumn skincare.

CINNAMON

Axiology Cinnamon Lip-to-Lid Balmie

Cinnamon is a flavor, but it's also a color—a delicious shade for fall. This natural crayon is a three-in-one, perfect for eyes, cheeks, and lips. It's good for all skin types, from dry to combination to blemish-prone. And it's zero-waste and 100 percent plastic free! The crayons are wrapped in paper and set in a recyclable case made from upcycled materials.

Kari Gran Lip Whip Treatment Balm, Cinnamon

A traditional lip-plumping ingredient, cinnamon does the trick in this lip treatment balm, perfect for chapped, dry lips. This little

balm is perfect for travel, and the velvety formulation with organic camellia oil and calendula extract inevitably leads to lubricious lips.

ROSEMARY

John Masters Organics Conditioner for Fine Hair

Rosemary oil is detoxifying, and peppermint removes buildup that can wear down the hair. A blend of sea buckthorn and rice extract gently hydrates and nourishes delicate strands, leaving hair soft, smooth, static-free, and shiny.

Z&MA Anti-Blemish Serum

This targeted spot treatment reduces the appearance of pores and banishes blemishes with purifying essential oils—tea tree, niaouli,

rosemary, oregano, and thyme—that clarify the skin, restore radiance, and relieve congested skin.

BLACK PEPPER

Hurraw! Chai Spice Lip Balm

If you like chai, you'll love this chai-in-a-tube lip balm, with black pepper, clove, cinnamon, anise, and vanilla. Made with organic ingredients, it's vegan and gluten-free.

Erbario Tuscano Black Pepper Body Balm

This warm and enlivening scent with notes of black pepper and blood orange peel is transportive, immediately conjuring a spice garden in Sicily. Warm, woody, and absorbent, it is made with organic shea butter for soft, hydrated skin.

VANILLA

Bathorium Milk Coconut & Vanilla Mineral

Soak your cares away in a delicious creamy blissful milk bath, lightly scented with organic Madagascar bourbon vanilla, and spiked with coconut and oat milks. Float off to a relaxed, dreamy state—perfect before bedtime.

Satya & Sage Goddess Candle

Envelop yourself in the scent of bergamot, grapefruit, and orange essential oils, with a tinge of warm vanilla and rose. Made with soy and coconut wax, each candle includes an intention and comes in a recycled, reusable glass jar.

—Rosie Shannon

Enchanting Divination Decks

From U.S. Games Systems, Inc.



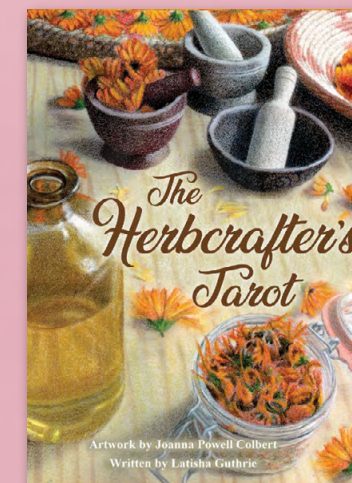
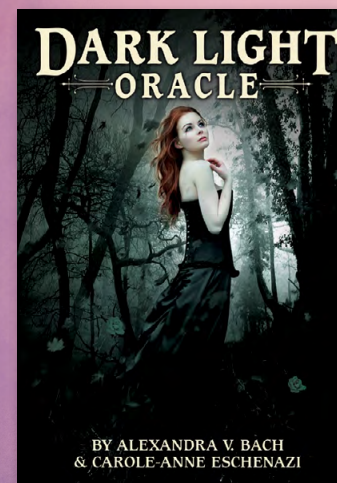
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CRAFT YOUR OWN MAGICAL SPELL JARS

A wonderful way to celebrate autumn and create something special for yourself or a friend is to create a magical spell jar. They've come a long way since their inception in the 16th century and can bring love, happiness, and healing into your world.

Spell jars, originally referred to as witch bottles, were historically made in the 16th and 17th centuries and used by both witches and nonwitches alike in England and North America, in places like Salem, Massachusetts, and the Hudson Valley. They were concocted as amulets to protect against perceived malevolent magic and supernatural entities. The vessels were frequently handcrafted with the purpose of safeguarding a new home and were either buried upside down next to the foundation or placed beneath the hearth as the structure was being built. Witch bottles also served the purpose of returning a spell back to the supposed witch who cast it.

Early witch bottles were made of salt-glazed stoneware and traditionally prepared by an individual known either as the village witch or folk healer. They were filled and personalized with interesting and sometimes bizarre ingredients like the customer's strands of hair or fingernail clippings, or even urine, tiny animal bones, thorns, pins (often pushed into felt or cloth hearts), and wrought iron nails. It is thought that these bodily components served as an extension of the self and that any maleficence directed toward the individual would be drawn into the bottle and stuck by the sharp objects therein, rendering the negative energy harmless. The completed bottles were given to the client with instructions to either bury them, throw them into a fire, or toss them into a river or stream, depending on their intended use.

Today, modern witches create their own versions of the original witch bottles, though they might avoid odd ingredients and use them for a wider variety of intentions and not exclusively for protection from negative energies. Common themes include prosperity, healing, love, friendship, peace, creativity, and more. Modern-day witch bottles have been known to include such ingredients as herbs (especially rosemary), flowers, red wine, seawater, salt, vinegar, oil, ashes, sand, coins, wood, shells, feathers, knotted threads, stones, and crystals.

With a few simple tools and easily attainable ingredients, you can make your own witch's spell jar—whether you think of yourself as a witch or not! As a green witch, I craft primarily herbal spell jars, and I'm excited to share my how-to with you. I like to use petite vintage glass bottles from my antique bottle collection. I love the worn and cloudy appearance of an old bottle, so unless it's particularly filthy, I don't scrub it clean for fear of washing off its story and the beautiful and mysterious patina cast by the hands of time. I do, however, like to energetically cleanse newly acquired old bottles with herbal incense smoke, giving them a clean slate for the intentional

magic I will fill them with. To do so, you can pass your bottle through the smoke or insert a burning incense stick for a couple of seconds.

To make your spell jar, fill a small glass bottle with dried herbs, spices, and crystals that have magical properties associated with your magical intent. For instance, if you wish for a relaxing sleep infused with memorable and vivid prophetic dreams, you could fill your bottle with dried mugwort, lavender, and amethyst crystal. All three of these ingredients work together to promote vivid dreams and psychic visions as well as to provide protection and induce a calm and relaxing sleep. I'll give you some other bottle-theme ideas and recipes toward the end of this article.

Place a cork stopper in your filled jar and seal the top with wax. I bring the vintage bottles to my local hardware store and purchase tapered cork stoppers to fit them. You can melt and drip sealing wax or candle wax over your bottle. I prefer sealing wax, as it's thicker and easier to control. As long as the seal stays intact, the potency of the preparation's magic will remain. Consider using wax of a color that corresponds with your intention. Below are some color correspondences you can use—notice that some intentions correspond with multiple colors:

- Red:** love, passion, romance, strength
- Orange:** communication, success, creativity
- Yellow:** joy, memory, wisdom
- Green:** healing, nature, abundance, money
- Blue:** protection, peace, healing
- Purple:** psychic abilities, divination, personal power
- Pink:** self-love, friendship, emotions
- Brown:** home, healing animals
- Gray:** intuition, the moon, manifestation
- Gold:** good fortune, inspiration
- Black:** protection, cleansing negative energy
- White:** protection, peace, happiness

When the crafting of your spell jar is complete, recite your wishes. Your spoken intentions can be very matter-of-fact, or you can try waxing poetic. Maybe something like ...

*Herbs, flowers, spices divine,
Dance with sparkling crystal in this spell jar of mine.
That which I desire for good, please grant me.
Work your potent magic. Blessed Be.*

Place the bottle on your sacred altar or in a place where you would like its influence to work. Continue to focus on your intention and use your own efforts to help bring your wishes to fruition. Spellwork is *work* on your part, as well on the part of the helping hand of the universe.

BY SUSAN ILKA TUTTLE,
A.K.A. WHISPER IN THE WOOD

Magical Spell Jars

Susan Ilka Tuttle



Here are a few dried herbal combinations you may wish to try, associated with common themes. Of course, feel free to change them based on your needs and the availability of herbs. I also tossed in some crystal correspondences. You can mix and match recipes if you'd like, depending on your goals.

Love: rose petals, hibiscus, orange peel, cedar needles, yarrow, cinnamon, poppy seeds, a sprinkling of sugar, with rose quartz

Healing: pine or balsam fir needles, blackberry leaf, mint, thyme, allspice, with clear quartz

Happiness and harmony: basil, garden sage, rose petals, with yellow jasper

Protection: basil, bay leaf, red raspberry leaf, juniper berry, rosemary, cloves, black pepper, with amethyst or black tourmaline

Prosperity and abundance: mint, moss, dandelion, clover, nutmeg, and jade or citrine

*All plant matter used for your spell jars should be thoroughly dried to prevent mold and mildew from forming.

Susan Ilka Tuttle is a green witch, herbalist, spirit medium, author, and photo artist living in rural Maine. Enjoy her new book *Green Witch Magick*, in which she explores thirteen essential herbs for the witch's cupboard through herbalism and magic-based projects. Visit her botanicals shop at inthewoodbotanicals.com, learn about her spirit mediumistic readings at susantuttlespiritmessenger.com, and follow her on Instagram @whisper_in_the_wood.

A TRUE LOVE CHARM



Photography and text by
SABRINA L. GREENE PHOTOGRAPHY

A True Love Charm

Sabrina L. Greene

“I hope they’re home,” Eliza whispered to herself as she walked down the mountain’s well-worn path to the drover’s road ahead. The light was fading into embers above the tree canopy on the north side of the ridge, but she wasn’t worried. The sun’s last rays would guide her to the witch’s home on the valley floor. Clutching her shawl tighter around her, she quickened her steps.

An hour later, she saw the large white house on the next hill. It was massive and sprawled across the lawn, just like her sister told her it would be. Eliza paused and murmured to herself, “You’ve come this far. There is no need to stop now.”

She crept to the door and softly knocked. She didn’t hear anything, and just as she was about to turn away, the door opened. The woman standing there was dressed in some of the most stunning fabrics Eliza had ever seen. Her gown was jet black, just like her hair, but the blue framed in the middle of her corset was what struck Eliza the most.

It was the color of the rolling mountain ranges encompassing the valley, reminding her of the Balsam ridge she had descended from.

The woman curtly nodded her head and stepped aside to let Eliza in without saying a word. Swallowing hard and mustering courage to shroud her heart, she took a deep breath and walked across the threshold; after all, she was here for Larkin.

Eliza played with the tattered edges of her late grandmother’s shawl, feeling embarrassed by how simple her clothing looked. This woman was clothed in such finery! Feeling intimidated but determined, she looked at the mysterious woman and asked, “Are you Anna?”

“No, but she is here. What business do you have with her?”

“I require a love charm,” she said. At least she sounded confident, even if she didn’t quite feel it yet.

“And who told you that we provide such baubles?” the woman snapped. “You should get back up on the ridge you came

from, foolish girl.” The woman turned to open the door and usher her back into the encroaching darkness.

Practically shouting, Eliza said, “My sister Rena did!”

Turning, the woman replied, “Rena? From up on the Balsams?”

“Yes, she said that you could help me and that I should ask for Anna.”

“You must be Sylvia’s youngest daughter then. *Hmmm.*” She walked past Eliza, and the scent of herbs and lemon filled her nose. Eliza had not seen a lemon in almost two years and her mouth watered. How could this woman afford lemons?

“Come on, then!” The woman’s stern voice broke through Eliza’s thoughts and beckoned her forward.

The floors creaked as they turned down a hall, and darkness seeped through the floorboards and cracks like a palpable smoke. Yet she could see candlelight flickering in the room at the end of the hall and hear people laughing. Her heart began to race, and she wondered if the woman could hear it.

The woman opened the door, and the sound of laughter barraged her already fragile senses. Motioning to a blond young woman, she said, “Anna, here is another one.” Then she moved behind a table full of more things than Eliza had once seen in the general store in Waynesville when she was eight.

Her mother had taken her and her sister to the booming logging town to buy a mirror. Eliza had never heard of a mirror before, but neighbors talked about them. When they made it to the general store, Sylvia gave her a penny and sent her to the candy counter. When she walked up to the glass containers, she was mesmerized by the vibrant colors. There were so many hues that she didn’t know existed until they presented themselves to her at that moment. Each piece shone in the window and glittered as light danced across its surface. It reminded Eliza of the multicolor quartz stones she would find in the streambed on hot summer days.

“This one will do,” her mother had said across the store, and the man behind the counter began to wrap something up in paper. Rena was giggling and standing on her tiptoes.

“I guess every young girl needs a mirror to admire herself with, don’t they?” the clerk asked. “How old are you?”

“Thirteen. I just turned thirteen last week!” Rena replied.

“Well, enjoy it. Would you like me to put this on your husband’s account?” he asked Sylvia as he pulled out his ledger.

“No, I will pay for it now.” And she handed the clerk her change purse full of coins. To Eliza, it seemed like he took forever to count them all.

“There you are, three cents back to you,” the man said as he pushed the coins back to her mother.

“Go ahead and let Eliza choose three more pieces of candy, please.”

Walking to the counter where Eliza stood, he said, “I would be delighted to.” He showed her the side of the counter she could choose from, and she considered each piece as if they were rare treasures.

That evening as they climbed back up the mountain trail to their farmstead, Eliza listened to her mother and Rena chatting. “Rena, don’t have this out when your father is home. Do you hear me? I have been saving for it a long time from my needlework earnings. And we’re lucky he went to visit his ailing aunt this week.”

“Yes, Mama, I know.” Rena was bubbling over with excitement. “Do you think I’ll be able to see my true love with this? I just need to lean over the well and hold it up to see his reflection, right?”

“Perhaps,” her mother said dismissively. But Eliza saw her smile as Rena ran ahead, singing the ballad about Sweet William and his lover to the treetops.

“Mama, what’s a mirror?” Eliza had asked when she slowed down to let her catch up.

“It’s a tool you can use to see yourself like the reflection you see in a bowl of water, but only clearer.”





Puzzled, she asked, “How will Rena see her lover if it only shows a reflection?”

Laughing to herself, Sylvia said, “I will show you when you turn thirteen, Eliza, I promise.”

That had been eleven years ago, but Sylvia had died of pneumonia the following winter.

Glancing up above the hearth now, Eliza noticed a mirror there too, but it was larger than the one her sister had held in her hands years ago. She shook herself to shed the memory before looking at the new woman standing in front of her.

“Are you cold?” the pale-haired woman asked. This must be Anna, Eliza thought. She wore a blood-red coat and dress with a spiderweb of black over the bustle.

“No, just a little nervous, I guess.”

Anna smiled, turned, and looked over her shoulder to another woman with long red hair and said, “What do you see, Morgan?”

Morgan laughed with a voice that sounded like tinkling bells drifting on the wind. “A water nymph crying by a stream. Her raven-haired warrior comes from the west to escort her journey above the falls with a wild potato in his hand.”

“Ladies! Can’t you see you are scaring her?” The voice came from the corner of the room, and Eliza jumped. “Stop being so peculiar and find out why she is here.” Eliza had forgotten that Rena said four witches lived in this house. “Come here and have a seat. Would you like something to eat or drink?”

Sitting on the settee, she relaxed in this witch’s presence. Her dress was as purple as the wild violets that showed their faces at the beginning of each spring. Laying her book down, she said, “I’m Sybil. What’s your name?”

“It’s Eliza, after my grandmother.”

“Well, Eliza, why have you come down to visit us tonight? Oh wait, Morgan, fetch her some tea from the kettle in the kitchen.” Morgan stood and left the room.

“I have come for help, you see. It’s

about a man.”

“It’s always about a man,” Anna scoffed.

Sybil glared at her but motioned for Eliza to continue.

“His name is Larkin, and he says he loves me, but ...” she trailed off, unsure of what to say next. “He hasn’t asked to marry me. He loves me just fine! We often meet near the base of Watterrock Knob.” Stammering, she continued, unable to stop the flow of words, “I mean, I have hinted, and he has too, but I’m tired of waiting! He is my true love, so I just need a charm to help him along.”

“How long have you been waiting?” Sybil asked.

“About a year and a half.”

Anna interjected, “Larkin? The only Larkin I know of is the one who works in the logging camp up in Sunburst.”

“That’s him! Larkin Davies! Their camp has moved closer to the Balsams now, so we get to share each other’s company more often.”

Anna turned to look at the dark-haired woman who had let Eliza in. “Do you know him?”

“I know enough,” she said.

Morgan re-entered and handed Eliza a cup of tea that smelled like wildflowers and honey. The scent immediately calmed her nerves. “So you need a love charm to woo him into matrimony?”

“If you don’t mind, I can pay!” Eliza said. “My sister Rena told me how much you would need.”

“Rena!” Anna exclaimed. “Why, Morgan, how did I miss it? She looks like a younger version of her sister, doesn’t she? Except for her coal-black hair.”

Morgan stared, and Eliza was unsettled by how unearthly still she was sitting. Her eyes were piercing, as if they could see straight to her soul. Blinking slowly, Morgan replied, “Yes, she does.”

“Well, why didn’t you say so?” Anna said, grabbing a candle. “Sybil, I am sure you can look through your books and find the appropriate spell, *hmmmm*? Oh, and by the way, this is Deborah.” Anna patted

Deborah’s shoulder, and she glanced up briefly from the herbs she had been crushing in a bowl, then returned to her work.

The room came alive with the witches moving about, gathering herbs and colored bottles, talking about what would make the best charm for Larkin. Eliza sat drinking tea and found herself getting giddy as she watched them work. Warmth tingled in her toes and spread up her legs, then covered her like a cocoon. Once in a while, she’d glance up at the mirror and she swore she could see its surface ripple, but she wasn’t sure.

Someone gently shook her shoulder a while later, and Eliza opened her eyes. She hadn’t even realized that she had fallen asleep. “Did you rest well?” Sybil asked.

“I’m sorry! I didn’t know I had fallen asleep!” Eliza blushed, thinking that they must think her rude.

Morgan glanced her way and said, “Not rude. It was the tea.”

“Oh, thank you, that is the best I have rested in a long time.” Anna handed her a small bundle wrapped in a handkerchief as she sat up.

“Wear it at all times under your dress. Once a month, take it out under the full moon’s light and feed it three drops of your blood. Then say, ‘New moon, new moon, come unto me. And tell me who my true love is to be.’”

“Okay, I can do that,” Eliza said.

Sybil came into the room and handed her a small basket. “It’s just some bread, cheese, and a piece of fried chicken to nibble at on your way home.” The sun peeked above the ridges and light spilled into the room.

“Thank you! Anna, can I put this on now?”

“No, wait until the moon is full this weekend, and remember to do what I said each month to keep it charged.” She smiled and helped Eliza to her feet.

All four escorted her to the door, and Eliza waved to each as she started back toward the Balsams. When Eliza crossed



the first hill, they all went back inside except Deborah, who prayed a blessing over the girl. Entering the room where they had all spent the night, Deborah heard Anna say, “She doesn’t even know he is married. Someday I am going to hunt down that fool and end him.”

“Patience is wisdom,” Sybil mused.

“How long before she finds out?”

Deborah asked Morgan.

Morgan stared out across the mountains. “According to the fae, about three moons, I believe. Her heart will break, and her familiar will awaken. He will be of your people, you know.”

“And of the Wild Potato Clan, I gather.

The keepers of the land.” Deborah smiled.

Sybil said, “Her ancestors are great, and she will learn the old ways just like your ancestors and mine, Morgan.”

Turning, she asked, “You didn’t actually give her a love charm did you, Anna?”

“Of course not!” she exclaimed. “I gave her a charm of protection that the Morrigan blessed herself. I even used the last bits of highland moss from the old country I had left.”

Morgan quietly whispered, “She will return when the time is right. Her roots run deep in both the ways.”

“Fae and what? I thought Sylvia only

had the fae blood,” Sybil asked.

“She had Cherokee too and did not know it. Not even Rena knows.” She sighed contentedly. “Oh yes, the fae will call her to us first, then he will come.”

Deborah’s smile widened. “Yes, her true love will come, and he will be of my people. I am thankful she will need their guidance as well.” Quietly, she took a jar to the stream to capture some of the water Eliza had walked through for her scrying bowl. This way, when Eliza’s awakening was near, the water sprites could call out for her return.



WHAT READERS ARE SAYING

“*Falling Through Time* was a breathtaking read. I fully intended to read one poem a day to lift my spirits, but ended up being so captivated, I couldn’t stop.”

—Jessica Cantwell: author of *The Realm* series

“This is an authoritative collection by a master of the art. Thoughtful, nuanced and very relatable, the poems in this book explore the nature of our relationship with that most enigmatic of substances, time itself.”

—Barbara Lennox: poet and author of *The Wolf in Winter*, book one in the *Tristan and Isolde Trilogy*

“*Falling Through Time* is a masterful collection of poems, which could only have been written by a poet at the height of their powers. The poems move from the sharp, detailed vignettes of remembered moments to a more abstract, transcendental finale, reminiscent of the great Northumbrian poet Kathleen Raine.”

—Steve Griffin: poet and author of Amazon best seller, *The Boy in the Burgundy Hood*

“*Falling Through Time* is a medley of poetry in a cappella—ranging from poignant to fanciful—Ross hits every note.”

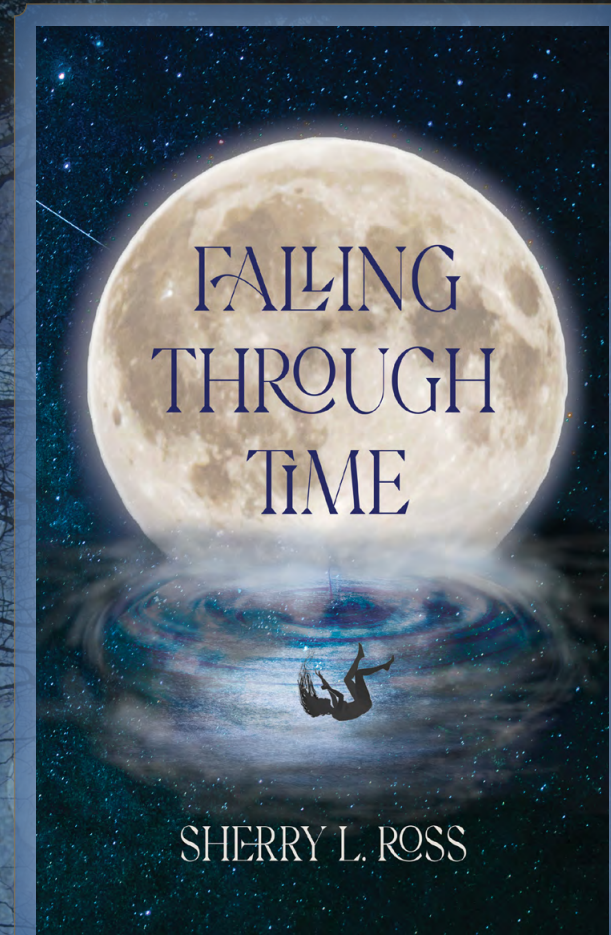
—Nanette Kreitzman: author of *Prism and Grim Secrets*

“*Falling Through Time* is a delightful and thoughtful collection of poetry that reflects on time—its impact on us, our journey through it and the many facets of time itself. Beautifully written, the personality of the poet shines through her words.”

—Julia Blake: poet and author of 13 books including *Black Ice*, a steampunk retelling of Snow White

“Ross has an exquisite way with words, and I dare anyone to read this book and not come away with a sense of having their heart and soul nourished.”

—Julie Embleton: author of the *Turning Moon* and *Voyager Chronicles* series



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From the author: “These poems are a small amount of consciousness: mine. It is me falling through my time here on earth. I hope they will resonate with you and your own exquisitely unique and universal consciousness.”

“Sherry Ross is an authentic Gothic dream landscapist, a nostalgic story-winder, a cosmic-conscious adept, and a faery conjuror...one in touch with the ‘twilight world’ ...that mysterious intersection with its very sheer veil.”

—Dr. Vern G. Swanson, author and editor of over 20 books on art, culture, and religion

OTHER BOOKS BY SHERRY: SEEDS OF THE POMEGRANATE | THE VINETROPE ADVENTURES, BOOK 1

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Models: Anna Sorrells, Debbie Whichard, Sybil Todd, Morgan Ferguson

Costume/Gown Designer: Sybil Todd of White Knight Cosplay (@whiteknightcosplay), Assistant: Dakota Todd

Hair/Makeup Team: Fab Flawless Hair and Makeup Artistry (@fab_flawless_makeup_artistry), Assistant: Alyssa Brewer

Venue: Authentic late 1800s home owned by Debbie Whichard, soon to be called The Farm at Sweet Basil Life and open to the public.



CABINET OF CURIOUS CLAY

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

If you enjoy well-made, gleaming gorgeous ceramics but prefer your pottery festooned with ghosts, bats, skeletons, and the occasional demon or in the form of a jack-o'-lantern or witch hat, then Lindsay Keating, a.k.a. Cabinet of Curious Clay, might have just what you need—if you set your alarm and manage to nab a piece during one of her scheduled public releases, that is. If you're even five minutes late, you'll likely be out of luck.

Keating began making ceramics in 2014 when she took a class at the park rec center near her apartment and fell in love with the process. "There's something extremely enchanting," she says, "about putting the pieces into the kiln and opening it a day later to see a complete magical transformation!" She started selling her work at craft fairs, where for years she'd been vending T-shirts she printed and bags she sewed. Her early ceramics work featured pieces covered in barnacles as well as hand-painted art nouveau motifs, but her personal tastes have always run darker: She's been into the goth subculture since the late 1990s. When she started making spooky ceramics around 2016, she knew of only one other potter on Instagram that was making them. "Since then a bunch of others have sprung up," she says. "It's been cool to see how arts and crafts have been transformed by subcultures over the past twenty years."

Aside from the goth scene, she's inspired by history and historical art, including medieval



woodcuts of witches and devils. Other inspirations are the Victorian aesthetic and "just any really old, strange art like Bosch." Her one-of-a-kind jack-o'-lanterns are some of her favorite pieces to create. "I throw them on the wheel, alter them, and carve their faces. I love experimenting with them and continue to add new elements. I try to make 100 jack-o'-lanterns each spooky season!"

Keating also founded and runs the super

popular Darksome Art & Craft Market, a quarterly virtual market where all manner of witchy creators peddle their wares, all "handmade work with a dark vibe." She also hosts one in-person market, Every Day Is Halloween, each October at Philadelphia's Mount Moriah Cemetery.

While she doesn't call herself a witch, she's drawn to the magic of witches and pays homage with the ceramic witch-hat vases pictured here. "I think many women are drawn to witches," she says, "because they're powerful, often female figures who've been maligned and persecuted for trying to be seen and heard in our patriarchal society. I think we've taken the witch and reclaimed her and some of our power."



Follow Lindsay Keating on Instagram @cabinetofcuriousclay to find out about her upcoming sales. She'll also have an art exhibition of more sculptural ceramic work—Pandora's Pottery—at the Philadelphia International Airport in Terminal D from October 2022 through April 2023.

A Love Letter to Ladies Accused of Witchcraft

BY SUSANN COKAL



Bridgeman Images

Anne Boleyn in the
Tower of London (1835),
by Édouard Cibot

When I was in high school, I had pointy features and big teeth and black vintage clothes. I read research books for fun, and some of them were about witchcraft.

I was not popular. My classmates hummed the theme music for the Wicked Witch of the West as I walked past. They mumbled nasty words in the halls. And one day when I was riding my bike through a new neighborhood, somebody sent a small blond-haired boy out to the front yard to yell “Witch! Witch!” so loudly that his little feet levitated off the porch slab.

I was startled—and proud. Somehow, in that moment, I knew I would survive the teen years.

Call a woman a witch these days and you’re giving her a compliment. A witch is in touch with something that defies categories; she sees possibilities that others do not. She has powers. She’s rarely malevolent—in fact, she may be a perfectly nice person. She may be you.

We need witches. From time to time they have been banished, but history still seeks them out. The Biblical king Saul, for example, once found himself in a pickle, needing his God’s advice about fighting the Philistines. In desperation, he sought out the elusive Witch of Endor—who was worried about using her powers after Saul himself had outlawed all witchcraft. But with his special permission, she raised the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel, who gave Saul some good news (he would trounce the Philistines) and bad (Saul had offended God by getting help from a witch, and now he was doomed). A classic double bind: Saul won the battle but died the next day.

People have always gone to witches when they needed help, condemned witches when things didn’t go their way. In the Middle Ages, the same woman who delivered your child without pain or gave you a love charm could be the one you blamed for blight among your cows the next month, with unhappy results for the witch. Anyone considered especially ugly or beautiful or smart or good with herbs or just *unusual* was at risk.

The accusation that stuck was usually that the witch used her supernatural powers to hurt other people. The real problem was usually uneasiness over the fact that this “different” person was actually managing to survive, possibly even thrive. “Well,” I imagine the zealots huffing, “if she doesn’t need us, we’ll prove we don’t need her.” And *poof!* She was a witch.

There is power in endurance. Accused witches linger around us in history books and folklore that preserves their legends. They are our teachers—and our cautionary tales.

If I am a witch (I admit nothing yet), I am in mostly good company. Some of history’s accused—and occasionally convicted—witches are my heroines. They were creative, resourceful, independent, and even kind in times when those qualities were not greatly encouraged.

Enchantresses, I’m looking at you. Let’s invite a few of the accused to meet us at the corner of Tudor and Tennessee and reveal the powers that brought them both high and low. We might even start something ... Let’s call it, for now, a club.

Anne Boleyn

The Tudors continued the medieval tradition of fingering inconvenient women as witches. And nobody found ladies more inconvenient (after having first of all found them alluring) than Henry VIII.

We know that Anne was a temptress, using the king’s lust to win favor and power for herself and her ambitious family. Was that so wrong? When he spotted the twenty-five-year-old beauty among his first wife’s ladies in 1526, Henry was twenty years older than she was, and he was famous for using and discarding women. He’d done it with her older sister, so he must have thought this would be another wham-bam-thank-you-with-a-castle situation. But Anne was ambitious too. She wanted a crown just as much as her family wanted it for her. Why shouldn’t she set herself a challenge?

There was nothing Anne could not make into an asset. Some accounts say she had an extra pinky finger on one hand or the other, plus a large mole on her neck, which is why she made the wearing of very long sleeves and neck ruffs fashionable. Because extra fingers and large moles could be signs of—you got it, witchcraft. Strategically, Anne flirted—but she made Henry wait. In fact, she drove him so mad with longing that in order to win her, he divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and founded a new religion with himself at its head. The Church of England disbanded England’s abbeys and took the wealth to itself and its king; now fabulously rich, Henry officially married Anne in January 1533 and went on his way rejoicing.

For a few months, anyway. In September, Anne gave birth to their daughter, the future Queen Elizabeth I. Henry was not amused. Seven years into the relationship, a big part of Anne’s charm had been the promise of a son ... Well, he could still hope.

Three miscarriages later, though, Henry was tired of waiting and tired of Anne; he was ready to elevate his new lady love, Jane Seymour. But he could not start a new religion every time he wanted to be rid of a wife, and even under the C of E, he had to give a good reason.

When Henry divorced Catherine, he’d said that the marriage displeased God because she’d been married to his brother before him. With Anne, he varied the theme and claimed that she’d lain with her own brother and other men, which meant that she’d committed treason by cheating on the king. For good measure, he also fell back on an old strategy: That’s right, call the woman a witch. She must have been one to enchant him so deeply—it was *sortilege*, or spell casting, that had done him in. Plus which, the brother. Now, that was nasty.

Anne was arrested, and so were a slew of men who confessed (with or without torture) to having been her lovers and having conspired to kill Henry, and her fate was sealed. When told she was condemned to die, she reportedly encircled her neck with her hands and declared, “I heard say the executioner was very good, and I have a little neck.” She then laughed, causing her jailor to write, “She has much joy in death.”

Maybe, maybe not. One thing about Anne—while she was

Accused of Witchcraft

Susann Cokal

alive, she *lived*.

As to witchcraft, let's say for a moment that Anne did snare Henry with sortilege. If so, her powers were limited to seduction, for she could not get herself out of the Tower or her condemnation. But as long as we're tossing accusations around, what about that thing with Henry's left leg—the varicose ulcer that burst during a joust at Greenwich in January 1536, just as the marriage was on its last legs as well? The ulcer had formed from a wound sustained in a joust nine years earlier (really, fellows, enough with the jousting!), and it reopened when Henry fell off his horse. He also lost consciousness with a concussion, and Anne was in such a panic that the stress may well have brought on the miscarriage that ended their union.

Anne may have been fairly easy to get rid of, but that ulcer wasn't. It never healed again, and a matching infection formed on Henry's right leg. His jousting days were over, and as he spent his time eating and drinking to excess, so were his good looks.

So ... coincidence? Or divine justice? Part of me—a vindictive, morally dubious part—would like to believe it was Anne's doing. Even if she was powerless to free herself from the machinery of Tudor law, she might have had just enough sortilege left to make sure that even though Henry might find women to occupy his bed, he must have known he had lost his mojo.

And one other thing: If witches are bad and church is good, who is the sinner here? The woman who insisted on a church wedding, or the man who outlawed his people's faith to get what he wanted?

Anne, you are perfect in my eyes. May you find joy in the company you keep now.

La Voisin

Catherine Deshayes Monvoisin (or Montvoisin) may actually have been as wicked as people said she was, but she probably didn't start out all bad. Naturally, sources disagree about what she did or did not do, but it seems she had a relatively quiet start in life with a husband who was a jeweler, and she gave birth to at least one daughter. When her husband's business failed, she began supporting the family as a midwife and fortune teller, reading palms and faces and drinking a bit more than was good for her. By the 1670s, now a widow and a single mother, she had established herself as the French court's premier fortune teller, love witch, and, um, poisoner.

Maybe some of her intentions were good. Making your way through the court of the Sun King was a dicey proposition, and she helped out some unhappy ladies. If you needed a spell to inspire or keep a man's love, or an elixir to free yourself of an unexpected pregnancy, you turned to Catherine, now known honorifically as La Voisin. She counted at least one mistress of Louis XIV among her clients, providing the notorious Madame de Montespan with aphrodisiacs and the hookup to a priest who

celebrated a dark mass in love's honor.

La Voisin is most famous for her fatal "inheritance powders," or poisons. With a breathtaking talent for micromanagement, she organized an international ring of alchemists and traders—many of whom were also female fortune tellers—stretching to Italy and Spain. Her specialty was getting rid of husbands who cheated or had made themselves otherwise undesirable. (*Tiens*, she might have said; it is not necessary to explain why the heart wants what it wants.) When Madame de Montespan became Louis's former mistress, she is said to have used one of La Voisin's brews in an attempt against the king and his current lover.

Let me be clear: I'm not holding Catherine up as a model of feminist behavior. But if you squint a certain way into the scry-stone of time, what she accomplished is fairly impressive. She rose from the middle class to become a fixture in the Sun King's court, and she was an international businesswoman at a time when a woman was hard-pressed to own so much as a house or a small bakery. This was not easy to do.

La Voisin's reign ended in 1679, when the police arrested her as she left church. It turned out that some of her clients had confessed to their priests about those murderous potions, and a years-long investigation had led to Catherine. During a year of imprisonment, interrogation, and alcohol withdrawal, she admitted to a fraction of her crimes, albeit not to any that would carry the death penalty. Still, the evidence was damning enough, especially when her daughter bore witness against her, and La Voisin was burned at the stake in 1680.

Catherine, I deplore your dark heart, but I admire your business sense and your ability to keep your mouth shut under pressure. Never apologize, never explain.

Tituba

A dozen years after La Voisin was executed, a handful of tween girls rocked the town of Salem, Massachusetts. For sheer efficiency, no witch hunt can hold a black candle to the Salem Witch trials, which saw 200 people accused (75 percent of them women), thirty convicted, nineteen hanged, one pressed to death, and five dead in jail—all in under a year and a half.

Nine-year-old Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, eleven, started it all by falling into convulsions, hurling things around the room, and screaming in a way that had the rest of the town shouting, "Spectral evidence! Supernatural!" Perhaps because they felt pressured to name names, and perhaps because it was sort of fun to get people in trouble, they first accused three women even less powerful than themselves. One was very poor, one a beggar, and one had a now-famous name: Tituba, a young Caribbean woman enslaved in the Parris household.

Sure, the girls were young. So were the others who joined them in the ranks of the Afflicted, as the witches' *soi-disant* victims were known. And you may say that life had been hard on them. Puritanism wasn't an easy row to hoe, and the area was under



The Witch of Endor Raising the Spirit of Samuel (1783), by William Blake

social and economic stress after a colonial war with France. Pointing fingers at potential witches was a way for the girls to claim their own power.

But still. Mean girls. They do get a lot of attention by picking on people less lucky than they are.

Most of the accused protested their innocence, but—in a courtroom shocker—Tituba embraced the accusation. Oh yes, she said, she and the devil had an agreement. Plus, there were more witches in Salem, and they were going to take the Puritans down.

So was she a witch? By Puritan standards, almost certainly. She may have grown up with a mélange of African gods and Christian rituals. As to the visions she described of black dogs, red rats, yellow birds, and a book in which she signed her name—only Tituba really knew what she saw or inspired suggestible little girls to see. She named a few names too and identified monsters among the sedate Puritans.

Her surprising revelations turned the hunt upside down, and things really got out of hand. More girls suffered invisible attacks and spontaneous visions, and the Court of Oyez and Terminez was in almost constant session before the governor ordered a halt to the manic proceedings. In May 1693, everyone returned, more or less, to normal life. The Afflicted found they were mostly okay after all, and the accused were released from their jail cells.

Tituba was released too—into the hands of a new owner, since the Reverend Parris refused to pay her jail fees. No one knows where she ended up.

Tituba, I admire your courage. You saw a chance to terrify the witch hunters, and you seized that moment hard. Though your story ends tragically, with further enslavement, for a while you used the master's tools to tear down his house. In another time, your wits might have made you a queen.

Marie Laveau

Friend to the incarcerated, hairdresser to the wealthy, and worker of powerful charms, Marie Catherine Laveau was in some ways the woman Tituba might have become. She was good-looking, clever, and talented as a midwife and herbalist. She was also intimidating. She knew how to deliver a cutting stare, which would help build her reputation as a practitioner with true powers from beyond. In other words, she was as full of contradictions and possibilities as any other woman with power.

Marie reigned as New Orleans's most powerful voodoo priestess of the 19th century, when the establishment considered a spiritual path that included the afterlife to be a form of witchcraft. Born in the Vieux Carré in 1801, just before the Louisiana Purchase brought the territory under U.S. control, she never quite fit into the mainstream—but the mainstream flowed to her.

Here's what's really remarkable: Unlike most of the women in the club, Marie does not seem to have suffered from being considered a witch in her lifetime. Even though voodoo was officially frowned upon, her good works among the people protected her reputation. To many, she was, and remains, an

admired (and often feared) folk heroine, though her legend is as much a mishmash of fact and memory and conjecture as any historical portrait.

The 19th-century American public was fascinated by New Orleans voodoo, which had developed since colonial times into a combination of Catholic and African rituals. The African gods became spirits, sometimes called archetypes, both protective and malevolent. A priestess might invite those spirits to use her body for a while, taking a ride into the living world. The practice was never specifically made illegal, though it did cause unease in the white patriarchy, who feared that the rituals (like any religion arising among enslaved African Americans) would stir up discontent and help organize a rebellion.

Marie's rise to the priesthood began after an early marriage left her widowed at age nineteen. She set up housekeeping with a nobleman by the fancy name of Christophe Dominick Duminy de Glapion, and she gave birth to between seven and fifteen children, only two of whom survived. She nonetheless found time to dress the hair of New Orleans's wealthy women, either in her own salon or in her customers' homes.

Far more than a chatty society stylist, she was savvy enough to work her way into a system of obligation with the servant class. By curing them of various ailments—or if that failed, paying them for information—she accumulated a wealth of secrets that helped her make accurate divinations, or supernaturally informed visions of her clients' lives and problems. From heartache to family strife to indigestion and rheumatism, she gave sound advice. Did she do it with the help of an enormous pet snake named Grand Zombi? Doubtful—that part of her legend seems to have arisen in 1913, well after her death. With help from the spirits? Most likely; the web of gossip may have helped, but Marie's divinations transcended earthly knowledge.

She did not share her gifts with the wealthy alone. Her



Marie Laveau (1977), Charles Massicot Gandolfo

mauritus images GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo

philanthropic side emerged as she tended the sick during outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever, and she helped other women of color learn the skills to better their lives. She also visited condemned prisoners to offer spiritual comfort.

Sure, there is a seamier side to her legend; it all depends on whom you ask. According to one less positive newspaperman, Marie organized “indecent orgies of the ignoble Voudous,” leading many women astray through her spiritualist rites. I rather hope that she did.

Those rites (most likely some exuberant dancing and spirit possessions) may have been the brainchild of Marie's younger daughter, known as Marie II. She was a public-relations whiz who convinced Marie I to perform mass rituals—most famously, before a group of

12,000, both Black and white, one sacred Saint John's Eve. After Marie I died in 1881, Marie II became a voodoo queen in her own right.

Even today, if you need a wish granted, you can go to Marie *la Première*. Find her tomb in the Glapion family crypt and draw an X on the side; turn around three times, knock on the wall, and shout out your wish. If Marie grants it, come back and draw a circle around your X. Don't forget to leave her a small gift in thanks; Marie may be generous, but she still operates on a system of favors. And she appreciates generosity in others.

Marie, I believe in your kindness, but I also admire your ability to intimidate. Too often, a good heart is crushed in the wheels of propriety; let the power of kindness also inspire awe. If I ever make it to New Orleans, I'm bringing you some juicy secrets.

The Bell Witch

Kate Batts is—and I must say *is*, not *was*—equal parts witch and ghost, plus a superstar of American folklore. Best known as the Bell Witch, she sprang from the area around Tennessee's Red River in 1817 and has inspired countless books and movies.

If you're into tales of the supernatural, you've already met her in plot points in everything from *The Amityville Horror* to *An American Haunting*. If she were around in the age of social media (and who's to say she isn't?), she'd be that girl who's always on her phone or at the keyboard, making sure her story gets out.

The oral tales of Kate's doings first became written ones with 1894's *Authenticated History of the Bell Witch*, for which newspaper editor Martin V. Ingram interviewed local residents and descendants of the Bell family, the original targets of her supernatural fury. They reported that Kate's witchy ghost could speak, pinch people, destroy furniture, appear and disappear, and transport herself long distances lightning-fast. She targeted the Bells—particularly Betsey, a young lady of the house—with slaps and pokes, ripping the sheets off their sleeping bodies, and paralyzing the mouth of paterfamilias John, whom she called Old Jack. Kate thought of herself, she said, as “a spirit” who “once was happy but have been disturbed.”

As the spectral witch's fame grew, people traveled from around the countryside to meet her, discovering that she knew the Bible well and loved to talk about the Bells' neighbors. In the reasons given for her fury, we find a wellspring of American folklore. Some swore she was angry because Mr. Bell had harmed a Native American burial mound on the land he occupied—perhaps the first time that explanation appears. Some said that the witch wasn't Kate at all but the spirit of an overseer John had murdered.

And then there's adolescent rebellion. Whoever this spirit-witch was—I'll keep calling her Kate, since that's what she called herself—she apparently did not want Betsey to marry the boy who'd been courting, and she had it out for Old Jack in particular. While she occasionally sang sweetly to Lucy, John's wife, she cursed him right and left and eventually poisoned him. Naturally, her reputation grew thereafter, and so did her doubters, foremost of whom was an anonymous writer who in 1856 put forth a certain, and by now predictable, theory concerning Kate and Betsey.

We'll grant that author one or two points: Maybe Betsey, a young girl squirming under her father's thumb, felt that her one shot at happiness lay in spells and impersonations, and she took power where she could find it. It's possible that she had a gift for ventriloquism and used it to stage the Bell Witch's visitations.

The anonymous writer contradicts earlier reports in a significant way: He (oh, it was probably a *he*) claimed that Betsey was trying to bring her beau to the altar. Ingram disagrees with the theory, noting that when Betsey called off the wedding in 1824, the witch-spirit disappeared. She reappeared to the Bells just a few times afterward.

Well, if the witch was Betsey, I have to applaud her resourcefulness. She not only scared the tar out of a few people (including, perhaps, her suitor), but she also drew attention to acts of racial injustice with the old burial mound and even, in a

roundabout way, the story of the overseer—not to mention the patriarchy embodied in her domineering father.

Whoever she was, the Bell Witch demands respect for having thrust a small Southern town into international consciousness. And it seems she isn't done yet; Tennessee's odd events and house hauntings are still attributed to Kate today, and the cave where she's said to linger is a top tourist attraction.

Kate—or Betsey—I relish your endless invention, and I choose to believe you did not kill Old Jack. If happiness does have the power to soothe spirits and stop people from pinching each other, I hope there is more happiness in the world, and fast.

Here's something that might make Kate happy, and perhaps the spirits of all the others accused, rightly or wrongly. Speak the new words of power aloud:

I am a witch.

I am a witch.

And be glad.

Susann Cokal is the author of four novels, three of which take place in an enchanted Scandinavia. They include the award-winning *Kingdom of Little Wounds* and her latest, *Mermaid Moon*. Visit her at susanncokal.net.

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BENEATH THE WITCH'S HAT

by Jill Gleeson

It's as essential—as elementary really—to the vintage witch as a broom or flowing skirts.

No, even more so. Much more than pointy shoes or a black cat familiar, the tall, peaked hat with the big brim has come to represent magical and mysterious women, women of immense strength and a certain undeniable wisdom who connect deeply to the earth below and the stars above, harnessing the infinite energy (with cauldron or without) in the service of what we lesser mortals cannot guess. In pop culture, the witch hat is everywhere, from television's *Bewitched* to Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels and, of course, beloved films like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Practical Magic*, not to mention all over Instagram. Gandalf wears one in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, proving that, yes, other humans, nonbinary or not, top their heads with them, too. But they seem much more typical of women witches.

Witches long ago may have donned hats as a way of concentrating their sacred power or simply to denote their otherness. Perhaps in some times and places, they were imposed on them by a backward and foolish society, fearful of female ferocity. The hat's long history, tangled and wild as a spellcaster's curls, provides no verifiable answers to its bygone use (or if it was actually used at all), but of this we can be certain: If its takeover of popular culture is any indication, the pointed witch's hat is here to stay.

For Alassie, the Barcelona-based designer whose handmade hats grace these pages, witch hats represent an “iconic element in the classic witch's fairy tales that inspire us.” Alassie and her team of fifteen create and market her hats, along with, as she says, “all kinds of garments and accessories that can be combined to build a lot of witchy outfits: capes, dresses, skirts, bags, headdresses, belts, and even jewelry.”

Currently, Alassie's brand, Costurero Real (roughly translated as Royal Sewing Box), produces about a dozen different witch hats made of 100 percent wool felt. Many feature whimsical touches such as mushrooms, constellations, lights, snails, leather, little bottles, spells, and even squirrels that are crafted from materials like leather, resin, foam, and fabric.

Alassie's creations are the latest in a long line of conical caps. The earliest known evidence of humans wearing them are the

witches of Subeshi, three female mummies unearthed in China that date back to between the 4th and 2nd centuries BCE. They are wearing tall, pointed hats, though there seems to be no proof they practiced enchantment. Later, Jews and Quakers, both persecuted groups, came to be associated with similar hats, as did “alewives”—women who served beer in medieval Europe. Whether any of this actually somehow led to the enduring image of witches wearing the famed headgear, who knows—the answer has been lost to the ages.

Perhaps actual witches of old simply had been wearing them all along. In any case, it's believed that the first artistic representation of a witch in her now emblematic pointed hat comes courtesy of a woodcut from the early 18th

century. The scene depicts a hat-wearing witch riding a broom, followed by a horned, winged devil and what appears to be a wizard, also atop a broom but missing the peak on his hat. Through the centuries, the stereotype of the evil old necromancer in the tall, pointy hat would be passed down from generation to generation, culminating in Margaret Hamilton's memorable, green-skinned Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Today, hat or no hat, witches are more often acknowledged to be agents of good rather than evil, thanks in part to the efforts of people like Alassie. It is clearly through the tender eyes of sisterhood that she sees witches.

“From the beginning, witches were usually represented as women who live apart, who are independent and powerful, and are distanced from the traditional family role, fertility or home care,” she says. “They are always related to something wild, unknown, and uncivilized. They are also capable of breaking the rules of nature and at the same time live in harmony with it ... The history of witches can be understood as one of those women who did not conform to the systems created by the men who wrote history. And I feel that they represent us, that their struggle is still our struggle in other contextual conditions. But we continue to fight, and we continue to burn.”



Find Alassie's online shop at [costureroareal.etsy.com](https://www.costureroareal.etsy.com).

Follow Jill Gleeson at [gleesonreboots.com](https://www.gleesonreboots.com).



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALASSIE



“The history of witches can be understood as one of those women who did not conform to the systems created by the men who wrote history.”





Photographer and Model: Alassie
@alassie



Lucia Manne: Redwing, 1888

by Katharyn Howd Machan

I put my green bowls
where my green bowls go.
I'm a witch: acknowledge it.
I've helped seven people I love
leave the earth for eternity:
no ghosts, no grave-deep lamentations
about who they never got to be.
My best friend? Her hair's silver-white
as a moon only true love imagines.
And now we're both dying
wisely, assured we'll always
take that twisting rocky path
towards the tower we climbed high as girls
where small red mushrooms grow.

Katharyn Howd Machan lives in a town in central New York resplendent with gorges and waterfalls. Author of thirty-nine published collections of poems—most recently A Slow Bottle of Wine, winner of the Jessie Bryce Niles Chapbook Competition—she teaches creative writing in fairy-tale-based courses at Ithaca College.

Seductive Subversive Saucery

by Kirsty Stonell Walker

For the Victorians, witchcraft was a thing of both fantasy and all too real fact. As late as 1895, there was the terrifying case of Bridget Cleary in Tipperary, Ireland. Believed to be bewitched, she was burned alive by her husband on the evidence that one of her legs was longer than the other—ample proof that she must have been bedeviled.

Bridget's fate was extreme, but more mundane tales regularly peppered the newspapers throughout the later 19th century. Regional papers carried accounts of witchcraft resulting in the killing of livestock, illness in servants, and drying up cow's milk. That particular spell was supposedly countered by putting a pair of breeches on the cow's horns, causing it to run toward the house of the witch. Against a backdrop of all these rural accusations and superstitions, it seems odd that painters would choose witches as their glamorous muses, but women and their magical powers have always fascinated male artists. When the spell is cast, however, who has the power and who should be afraid?

You don't have to search too far in 19th century art to find an archetypal witch. She is the fairy-tale type, the trope of an old crabapple-faced bundle lurking malevolently in a cave and cackling at inappropriate moments. Images like Edward Brewtnall's 1882 painting *Visit to the Witch* shows witchcraft as a preserve of the old while young nubile maidens come to visit, flirting with the chance of a bit of magic on their side without having to put in the hard work of gathering herbs and squeezing toads and the like. The beautiful and youthful are merely spell tourists, not yet dedicated to the world of black cats and brooms. The old, wizened witch of art is sexless and amoral, not actively evil but fiddling with the natural order of things. The girls who visit want love potions to ensnare an unwilling suitor, proving to men that women are always up to something when you leave them alone together.

There is a definite difference between a sorceress and a witch in art. John William Waterhouse's *The Magic Circle* (1886) shows a young and beautiful creature with overtones of Kate Bush in her long gray-lavender dress and wild hair. She is alluring but to be feared, as she is serious in her craft. Similarly, Frederick Sandys's *Medea* (1868) is so intense in her art that she's in the act of yanking off her coral beads. The significance is that coral protects children, and part of the spell she is casting will kill her errant lover's children and his new wife. Men are right to fear a sorceress; just look at Merlin and Vivien of Arthurian legend. There was a wizard who was

capable of great magic, such awesome power, and he is left ensnared and entangled by Vivien, the beautiful enchantress. A sorceress or an enchantress has definite overtones of sex in their arsenal. Vivien and Medea have that power over men, yet neither use it for merely love. Medea wants to rain death down upon him and Vivien wants Merlin locked away. If a woman has ultimate power, she will not use it to make you love her. She will destroy you, unless you get her first.

Tragically, this was the case for Dorothy Henry, the beautiful young model for artist John Currie, who was obsessed with her. He painted her portrait and, after leaving his wife, vowed to marry her, his muse and torment. His obsession grew deranged, and he painted her again in 1913 as *The Witch*, in which she combed her hair and smiled in a knowing manner. Dorothy had become Lady Lilith, a Biblical witch and destroyer of men's dreams, combing her hair in her self-absorbed vanity. No man is enough for these creatures, no man can fulfill the desires they have. Only their own reflection is enough, and that is a frightening thought. Currie, mad with jealousy and anger, shot Dorothy in her Chelsea apartment in 1914. He then shot himself, telling a policeman who found him as he died that he had done it because he loved her. Currie left his wife a letter of explanation, saying that Dorothy had power over him, was ruining him, and he had no choice, even at the expense of his own life. She was twenty years old.

In a climate of such fear, it is unsurprising that artists sought to strip witches of their power by stripping them of their clothes. Among the necklace-clutching sorceresses and wrinkle-cheeked grannies are a swath of naked, nubile, naughty witches astride their broomsticks, some of the most beautiful painted by Luis Ricardo Falero. *Twin Stars* (1881) is possibly Falero's best known, if not most notorious, work. It was once boarded up by Scotland Yard's vice squad for being obscene, but now graces the walls of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. It didn't take long for Falero to add flying witches to his heavenly bodies, and they were equally as gorgeous. Falero painted witches many times, clutching their broomsticks between plump pink thighs as they hurtle about deep blue night skies. One is even riding side-saddle in *The Witches' Sabbath*, her flame-red hair flickering behind her as she holds a torch to light her way. In *The Belated Witch*, Falero shows us one of the sorcery-sisterhood who has obviously been too busy getting ready to get to the Sabbath on time. For Falero, witches are Titian-haired, like fiery thunderbolts, far more titillating than threatening.



Witches Going to the Sabbath
(1878), Luis Ricardo Falero

Visit to the Witch (1882),
by Edward Frederick Brewtnall



But in 1878, Falero produced the truly epic *Witches Going to the Sabbath*, a whirlwind of bottoms, boobs, thighs, and the occasional goat. This swirl of naked flesh shows half the witches not even bothering with a broom at all, some hanging on to others. A game old hag is shown grabbing both a goat horn and a younger witch and even a chap with a beard in this equal-opportunity Sabbath. It's hard to know where to look as there is enough disturbing erotica to satisfy everyone. It is an unusual witch picture that involves men, so what is this hurricane of a Sabbath warning us about? Surely by making the women young and sexy, Falero has given the male gaze the power and made the witch merely an excuse for women to be naked in a picture? There is a playfulness in all of Falero's nudes, but *Witches Going to the Sabbath* is different. There is urgency and determination in the journey, and these denizens of the night have gathered as a group, providing strength in numbers. Unlike his other nubile ladies, these witches are not displayed for your pleasure—they have somewhere to be. The witches in this picture have a gathering to attend that is none of your business, and you should be afraid. But what could those naked ladies be up to that could be of concern?

The answer may lie in Jean Veber's turn-of-the-century picture *Witches* (1900). Like Falero, Veber's girls ride naked on a broomstick. One girl has her hair streaming behind, the other has hers piled up in a Gibson Girl-style pouf on the top of her head. These are very Edwardian witches, modern and ridiculous, but below them is a neat little sketch of presumably the same two girls on a tandem bicycle. We are suddenly struck that these witches not only want freedom in the skies; they want freedom over themselves. Susan B. Anthony wrote in 1896: "I rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a bike. It gives her a feeling of self-reliance and independence the moment she takes her seat; and away she goes, the picture of untrammelled womanhood."

Witchcraft!

The spell these women wanted to cast was one



Witches (1900), Jean Veber

of emancipation, and it is no coincidence that the suffragettes embraced the bicycle as their chosen form of transportation, free of male control. Through cycling, they were able to slowly transform their style of dress away from constriction and corsets to gathered trousers and freedom. With the new harem-style pants, you could clearly see that a woman had two legs! She might as well be naked. The bicycle was mostly a vehicle for one, a way for a woman to travel away from the control of her father, brother, or husband. She could determine her own path, her own destination, and she could go at speed. A woman on a bicycle needs no husband to transport her or decide her destiny. The Suffragette Spinster on her bicycle was the epitome of self-determination and became the poster woman for the new market for bicycle sales to young women. Despite being embraced by capitalism, the lingering distrust of a cycling spinster remained. It's no coincidence that in the 1939 movie *The Wizard of Oz*, the frantically peddling Miss Gulch transforms into the Wicked Witch of the West, her bicycle morphing into a broom before Dorothy's eyes.

The power of the witch lies in her autonomy. The Victorians feared that women would discover freedom was for life and not just for Sabbath, and make off on their tandems or broomsticks, whichever was to hand. I have always wondered about the significance of a witch's broomstick. Is it meaningful that a woman could use possibly her most important domestic tool, a symbol of labor and servitude, to subvert and deny male

power? If women cannot be trusted alone with brooms, what can be done? Even removing their clothes does not make women behave, although it does give us something pretty to look at. Freed of clothing, aboard transport built for one (or shared with a like-minded friend), women move more quickly, bright and fast like comets, finding others that share their beliefs. Together, the witches will gather, will combine their magic.

If I were the patriarchy, I'd be worried—and start watching the skies.



Kirsty Stonell Walker is a writer and researcher whose passion is bringing forward the stories of women who might have otherwise vanished in history. She's the author of *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang* and *Light and Love and Stunner*, a biography of Pre-Raphaelite superstar Fanny Cornforth. Visit her on Instagram @kstonellwalker.



Straight on Till Morning
by Maggie Vandewalle

Sweeping Humble

by Kim Malinowski

I remember her best sweeping. Forever sweeping. No doubt we kneaded dough and salted bread. I'm sure we seared meat and glazed rolls. Oh, yes, peeled potatoes, shucked corn, washed the dishes too. But I vividly remember her brooms. I learned to hold the long pole, rounded, rough with bark, with birch bristles—sometimes breaking apart with more mess than the dirt I was attempting to beat outside. The bristles scratched and slid away the day's debris—but mine wasn't magical like hers. My broom was just for cleaning.

She used her ordinary broom to sweep up mud left from my boots. She would lightly tap my leg with the bristles, shaking with laughter at my chagrined smile. Her smile was aging, the sunlight shining paler on the full curves of her lips. She would nod, explain again how this normal house broom swept table salt, detritus, muck, and that even those piles got swept to the grass or to the lane. We did not want even dust to come back to us.

On special days, and during the full and dark moons, she used majestic brooms. The mysterious brooms found their way from walls, from beneath furniture, out of closets, even cupboards! Corners and edges were swept, but special care was taken over



Brooms and photo by Victoria Francés

thresholds. One never knew what was waiting in such liminal spaces. Closets were swept out for health and luck. She threw sooted salt, rosemary, pebbles, onto the floor. She brushed mixtures of herbs from hearth to door and then out to the lane. She would spit for luck and then do it all over again. The smell of lavender wafted between rooms, and the potent smell of crushed seasonal herbs hung savory in the air.

She swept humbly, honoring the old ways. Magic and hearth energy surrounded her. She did not hide from neighbors but also did not paint signs that screamed “witch lives here.” She would lay comfort on those that needed it, dab comfrey oil onto open cuts, and

sprinkle rosemary into food for headaches.

She showed me how to dry both medicinal and magical herbs and how to throw and bless them with intention. I learned the moon's secrets, how the sun controlled growth, and how to turn the wheel of the year. I knew how to blow out my breath just so as I swept herbs into the lane, releasing what I no longer needed. We readied ourselves and our home for new adventures by calling in fresh energy.

When I was ten, she helped me tie and prepare my first broom. It was spring, and the pole was already chosen—apple. Apple was for love! I already had thoughts about attracting my first crush with it, and I had hoped this broom would do the trick. But, she counseled, this wasn't that type of broom and would not bring that type of love. I nodded sagely, as if I could really understand. I thought I did.

I gathered blossoms of all colors, and after we tied the willow strips, we tied bangles and charms, ribbons, and my beautiful blossoms. The bark was tender but still a bit rough in my hand. Everything had been soaking to make the wood pliable, and I placed my beloved creation into the garden to dry. It soaked up sun magic in the pole and moon magic in the bristles. It is a completely male and female tool—not like a wand or cauldron. I felt its power—all of it—as I placed it over my bed. Sweet dreams, new love, possibilities.

Years went by. Every season she swept cayenne. I always sneezed with the black pepper she added. The thyme and lavender swirled. The scents brimmed with freshness every time, no matter the season. The brooms, fresh after old ones were burned, always had ribbons. During winter, greenery and berries were bound together to cast out shadows and stagnation. Each broom, each besom, helped bring in the new season. She swept out death and decay and peacefully asked for life and light to be allowed back in.

She watched me hop my enchanted broom, adorned with bright new flowers along with the dried old ones. I lovingly hung it above the bed of myself and my beloved.

Perhaps a year later, maybe one more, age and weather caught up to her. I found her huddled in blankets, tucked in her bed. Her eyes were already half glazed. I had not done this before. This was not my role. Not yet. Something made me ask if she wanted to make a broom.

She nodded slowly. “One last one.”

I gathered an oak pole quickly. She might not last. I found prepared broomcorn for the upcoming season. The willow strips were already soaking and had been for a while. I helped her tie the broom together, and she placed flowers and leaves on it. I fastened them to it where she instructed. I left and let her hold the broom. She placed her whole essence into it: her fears and happiness, her birth, and now her death.

I came back and I knew it was the end. I placed my hand on her arm. We sat there, her with the broom, me with her, until she gasped one last time and her life force was released. I left the broom with her and watched her for hours. It was proper to help her transition to the next stage of her journey. After a while, time stilled, and I picked up the broom, full of power and meaning. I placed it at my door upside down. Protection. She would always

She swept humbly, honoring the old ways. Magic and hearth energy surrounded her. She did not hide from neighbors but also did not paint signs that screamed “witch lives here.”

protect me.

I could not part with her other brooms. Not even the dirty, ordinary ones. I placed her brooms and besoms around my house, breathing in faint, leftover magic. And then I gathered memories. Lots and lots of memories. I gave out miniature scrolls to family and friends, and we all took turns writing what we could not speak. I wrote down my wishes. I know her secret lovers

wrote down juicy gossip. Everyone wrote down a story and a blessing. I took the tiny scrolls and sewed them to a newly made broom. I made it just for this magical nostalgia. I placed it over my hearth. I could not burn it as some traditions called for. Someday, I will need to read those memories.

Now I sweep to the moon and into the lane. Sooted salt and cayenne to protect from strangers. I laugh as I slide the dandelions for summer and daisies for love. I wish and remember her each time I hold a broom or besom. I know she dreamed of my hearth and the love found within my home, and I know that she is the cause of it.

Visit Kim Malinowski online at kimmalinowskipoet.com.

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The Art of Broomcraft

by Carolyn Turgeon

How can one not love the humble broom, the most mundane of household instruments and one of the most powerful symbols of witchcraft and magic? Who of us didn't, as a child, straddle a broom and imagine ourselves hurtling through a night sky, preferably with a kitty cat (or two) in tow? We love how with a broom you can clean your floor of literal dirt but also sweep from your life all bad vibes and bring into it all manner of abundance, as long as you sweep with intent ... and possibly an herb or two. And right now you can find a variety of gorgeous, witchy artists handcrafting brooms that sell out immediately online, and you can, if you're up for it, make your own. (You can peruse our past witch issues for some lovely tutorials.) Below we talk to three different broom makers whose work we love: one in Hudson Valley, New York, one in the Texas Hill Country, and one in a rural area of the Basque Country in France.

PASKALINI SAVOPOULOS *broomswire at Vagabond Spun*

Why did you start making brooms?

I fell in love with and purchased my first handmade broom at our local Renaissance Festival here in New York. It really made me stop and reconsider this humble tool. I, as I find many people are, was in awe that this item we take utterly for granted was made by hand and was so beautiful. A couple of years later I learned about a broom making workshop at the John C. Campbell Folk School in North Carolina and ended up spending a week there learning traditional Appalachian broomcraft from master broom maker Marlow Gates. I lived in that workshop for as many hours a day as Marlow and his assistant would allow. I was absolutely hooked. I made as many brooms as I could. Being a baby broom maker who'd never whittled a stick or used a saw ever meant I didn't make many, but I wanted to remember everything and build as much muscle memory as possible while I had the guidance to correct any potential mistakes. When I got home, a dear friend knew I was going to take this as far as I could, and her husband made me a beautiful foot brake—broom spindle, foot winder, there are many terms for the tool—so I could continue to make brooms from home. I've been making brooms ever since.

What does it mean to you, making brooms by hand?

Honestly I adore working hands and handmade things. Making brooms



by hand means that each broom has its own personality. Each piece is individually considered as it comes to life. It allows me a deeper connection to nature as I walk the woods or shores of the river in search of handles. Broomcraft came to me while I was still very much in the broom closet and has brought me community in so many ways. It's pushed me to learn new skill sets to elevate my offerings. It has also allowed me to dig deeper into my practice. When I'm called to make something special, perhaps concerning ritual or deities, I like to read a lot about what I'm working with to see how I can bring that to the piece. For me, making brooms by hand is an expression of love.

Who is your customer?

My customer is anyone who finds joy

in a handmade item. I try not to isolate my work to active practitioners only, and I never want anyone to feel they can't purchase a broom because they don't have a practice. I make each piece knowing that there is a person for every broom, and I do not assign intention to them, rather I allow them to find their person and allow that person to assign intention to their piece. People often ask in my booth, "What is this one for?" And I reply, "Well, it depends on who takes it home." I'll offer some examples of how others have told me they use similar pieces.

How do you define a witch?

That's a tricky question. There are so many ways to begin to define a witch, and at the same time it's incredibly difficult. For me a witch is someone who

seeks connection with nature and natural rhythms—someone who has recognized that there are energies at work in the universe and has decided to commit themselves to paying attention to those energies, learning how to manipulate and apply them in their lives to help guide them along their path to become the truest version of who they were meant to be.

How do you stay enchanted in everyday life?

My everyday life can get really hectic, and it's easy to get overwhelmed. I have a lovely smudge spray from Hous Freya that I use daily. It helps ground me and even if I'm feeling blah in the morning the scent brings me comfort and helps me mentally prepare for my day. Otherwise I keep small bits of magic everywhere—crystals in pockets, hand-gathered herbs hanging in my car, leaves, feathers and other things that I've collected on most surfaces in any space I occupy. Just little daily reminders of time spent connecting with nature.

NAM JOTI KAUR KHALSA
*owner of Blue Cypress
School of Holism*

Why did you start making brooms?

I had a dream around 2011 that included a message about sweeping the floor. In it, I asked a Qi Gong master, "What is the path to enlightenment?" And he answered, "To reach enlightenment, you must sweep the floor." That started me on a quest to understand what it means to "sweep the floor," on many levels. There's physically sweeping the floor, literally cleaning out your house with something that came from the earth. Sweeping the floor is also an act of meditation, a sacred practice that grounds us. There are the old habits and patterns we get stuck in and need to clear. There's work we can do within our communities ... This is where my fascination with brooms comes from, I think.

I wanted to learn to make brooms myself but was unable to find a class or resources, so I tried teaching myself to make a kitchen broom with wire. I was proud and hung it on the wall, but the



broom was not functional. Then my husband surprised me one birthday with a shave horse (a traditional workbench), and when we went to pick it up from the man selling it, my husband told him I wanted to learn to make brooms. The man said that his wife was a broom maker. I was shocked. His wife came outside and ended up showing us her studio. When she opened the door, there were brooms hanging everywhere, on every wall, all kinds of brooms in various states of completion, and shelves and shelves of broomcorn, fiber, and other supplies. I cried. Sometimes when you're determined, the universe puts what you need right in your path. The woman, Karen Hobbs, ended up teaching me broom making for the next year and a half, before she died. Meeting her changed the course of my life. Now every broom I make is in honor of her.

What does it mean to you, making brooms by hand?

Making brooms by hand connects me with something old, as old as the earth and the people who inhabit it. It gives me purpose and is an incredible outlet for creativity, spirituality, and magic. Now I'm teaching my three children—they're ages thirteen, sixteen, and seventeen—to make brooms by hand. I believe my youngest son will be the one to become a full-time

broomsquire (someone who makes a living from making and selling handmade brooms).

Who is your customer?

Anyone and everyone. Who doesn't work with brooms in one way or another? Last year I opened my store, Wabi Sabi Broom Shop, in my hometown of Wimberley, Texas. It was my youngest son's idea to turn an old office space into a broom shop. There I meet all kinds of people looking for old-world brooms—tourists who want a souvenir from our small river town, new homeowners shopping for a kitchen broom ("never take an old broom into a new home"), young witches looking for altar brooms, older people who remember their grandmothers using pieces of broomcorn to test their cakes, and locals who want to support the artists in their area.

What else do you make? Please tell us about all your endeavors!

I also own a school and an apothecary, and make herbal formulations, heirloom corn husk dolls, hand-sewn goods, plant-dyed and eco-printed clothing, and whatever else my imagination leads me toward.

Do you consider yourself a witch?

I do consider myself a witch but only by





my own definition.

In my opinion, a witch is someone who walks close to the earth, is in relationship with the medicine and wisdom of plants, and works the magic of alchemy (transforming lead to gold) on the self.

How do you stay enchanted in everyday life?

This human existence is fleeting and death is ever present. It is a miracle that any of us are even here at all. And that is enchanting to me.

VICTORIA FRANCÉS,
artist

Why did you start making brooms?

I've always had a passion for everything related to the witch's world. When I was a child, I used to dream about flying through the skies on a broomstick, just like the witches did in fairy tales. My childhood drawings are a pure example of this! Later on, when I actually got into the practice of traditional witchcraft, I started to become more interested in folklore, mainly the lore and legends related to the area I live in and also the traditional ways our ancestors made their tools. This is how I started to make besoms in a traditional way, specially designed as a ritual tool but also suitable for domestic or decorative use.

What does it mean to you, making brooms by hand?

For me, making brooms by hand is a way to recover a very old craft and tradition that might otherwise be set aside. In this way, I also try to offer that special charm so connected to the rural life and the ancient times when objects were more than just mere tools.

Who is your customer?

Customers that are interested in my brooms vary a lot: It could be a practitioner of witchcraft or sorcery, a museum interested in traditional tools associated with the rural way of life,



someone who wants to dress up in a classical witch costume for Halloween, or even a person who simply appreciates the handcrafts elaborated with charm, far away from the cold industrial manufacturing that dominates the world today.

What else do you make? Please tell us about all your endeavors!

Mainly I've been a professional illustrator for more than twenty years. I consider myself to be a storyteller and author of illustrated albums. I also enjoy living firsthand the world that my art reflects, which brings me a total coherence with the way I understand life and my personal beliefs.

Do you consider yourself a witch?

I would define myself more as a practitioner of hedge witchcraft, in constant learning and evolution, and with an avid interest in the field of ethnobotany and folklore.

How do you stay enchanted in everyday life?

I've always tried to join my personal life with the way I express myself artistically. To make this a reality, I absolutely felt the

need to live in the most rural environment possible, where the local customs, the folklore, and the study of legends were more accessible for me. This made it easier for me to develop my animistic view of nature, being in direct connection to it in its pure wild and untamed stage. I'd say that this is the real magic for me—and I can no longer live without it.

What advice would you have for those looking to live a more magical life?

I believe that one of the keys to having a connection with the magical and the arcane is, first and foremost, to know how to identify or interpret the several signs that life offers us during our existence. For this to happen, a sincere compromise with ourselves is essential. Then we can start practicing magical thinking to extricate ourselves from the excessively rationalist belief system that oppresses us spiritually and that we inherited from the Enlightenment. After opening our eyes to that other reality, which has always existed and has never abandoned us, everything will start to change in a radical way—and magic will form part of our lives.

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WHAT IS SOUR IN THE HOUSE A BRACING WALK MAKES SWEET

Rose Hip Jam Doughnuts and Apple Cider Doughnuts

As difficult as it can be for me to believe sometimes, there are people out there who just don't get foraging. Why spend an afternoon hiking in the cold fall air and plucking small fruit from thorn-covered branches, only to then spend all evening meticulously processing your harvest and cooking it into a thick jam? Wouldn't it be simpler to just go to the grocery store for a jar of preserves?

The short answer is, of course, yes. But a simple amassing of foodstuffs is not the only thing foraging represents. We are lucky enough to live in an age of convenience. Most of us no longer rely on our own hands to produce preserved foods for the cold season ahead. We have access to ready-made products that require just a few minutes in the toaster or microwave to be ready. We can eat on the move, multitasking the way our production-based society has taught us to.

But foraging offers so much that the supermarket does not, from the joys of being outside in the frosty morning listening to quail burrowing in the dry bushes to the exotic flavors that wild foods provide. There is simply nothing else that tastes like rose hip jam, for example. It has a tart flavor slightly reminiscent of crisp apples, but with a complexity that is all its own. No spices need to be added to bring out the beauty of this wild flavor. No pectin is needed either, as rose hips are all packaged up to provide their own. This is slow food at its best, a chance for communion with nature, for the community of a group of family or friends processing rose hips while talking and laughing, for the warmth of the smell of preserves on the stove.

If you were to nibble on a wild rose hip in the fall, you'd find that you have to take tiny, squirrel-size bites to keep from

breaking through to the center where hard seeds and irritating hairs fill your mouth with unpleasantness. You'd find that the little nibbles of rose hip you taste would be tannic, slightly bitter, and tart, though this varies greatly by time of year, type of rose hip, and number of frosts—I have tasted rose hips that were hard and crunchy, and others that were sweetened and softened by many frosts, yielding a sweet-sour paste that was an unexpected treat. I often nibble on rose hips on my morning walks and forest wanders, though many non-foragers may wonder why I bother. Perhaps Henry David Thoreau can explain better than I can:

“To appreciate the wild and sharp flavor of these October fruits, it is necessary that you be breathing the sharp October or November air. The out-door air and exercise which the walker gets give a different tone to his palate, and he craves a fruit which the sedentary would call harsh and crabbed. They must be eaten in the fields, when your system is all aglow with exercise, when the frosty weather nips your fingers, the wind rattles the bare boughs or rustles the few remaining leaves, and the jay is heard screaming around. What is sour in the house a bracing walk makes sweet.”

Ah, yes. “What is sour in the house a bracing walk makes sweet.” Indeed, it's true—I crave the bitter tartness of the wild when my nose is red with cold and frosty air fills my lungs. It fills a void in my sensory scope of the world. It just seems to fit, the same way the scene would be empty without the rustling of little birds in the bushes below, no doubt feasting on the same seeds I carefully avoid. How many other moments of sweetness can be found on those bracing walks? How many problems solved while ruminating to the pace of your steps? Foraging is its own

kind of sweetness, and rose hip jam is but one example of what can be gleaned from the wild. Dedicate yourself to the whole experience.

WILD ROSE HIP JAM:

I have to break it to you: Rose hip jam is going to take some work. There are two main ways to tackle it, and which one you choose is totally a matter of personal preference. Just be prepared for it to take some time, patience, and dedication. Rose hips should be harvested after the first frost, if possible. They become much sweeter and a little softer, yielding a richer and smoother jam. Make sure they are completely ripe (a rich bright red) before you begin.

Inside each rose hip are a bunch of seeds surrounded by fine hairs. It's very important to remove these hairs, as they can be irritating to the digestive system and mucous membranes they come into contact with. Your options are:

- Remove the stems and any leaves from the rose hips, then place them in a saucepan with twice the amount of water as the rose hips (so if you have 1 cup of rose hips, you'll need 2 cups of water). Bring to a boil and cook for about 30 minutes, or until the rose hips are very soft. Mash them often using a potato masher. Once you have a fairly smooth paste, press it through a kitchen sieve to remove the seeds and any large pieces of the rose hips. Then, strain through muslin several times to make sure you have removed all the tiny little hairs. This technique may seem like less work, but it's going to take some time, patience, and shoulder muscles.
- Option two is to remove the seeds and hairs beforehand. Using a sharp knife, cut all your rose hips in half. Then use



BY THE WONDERSMITH



your fingers (tip: wear gloves to prevent an uncomfortable sticky, itchy feeling) or a tiny spoon to scoop out all the seeds and hairs. Rinse the rose hips well. Add the rose hip halves to a pan with an equal amount of water and boil until very soft, about a half hour. Mash with a potato masher as described above. Press through a sieve and then through muslin at least once to make sure all those little hairs are gone.

At this point, you should have a fairly smooth puree of rose hips, sans seeds or hairs. Measure it out, then add an equal amount of sugar, plus 1 tablespoon of lemon juice for every cup of puree. (This will help keep the jam's vibrant red color.) Simmer together, stirring often, until the mixture has thickened to your liking. The natural pectin in the rose hips will create a jam-like texture without the need for store-bought pectin. Remember that the mixture will continue to thicken as it cools. One helpful way of determining the set of your mixture is to have a plate in the fridge. Periodically, place a dab of the rose hip mixture onto the plate and let it sit for about a minute. This is approximately the consistency of your finished jam.

Once your jam reaches the consistency you like, remove it from heat and pour into sterilized glass jars. Store in the fridge for up to three months. (You can also water-bath can your jars for longer-term storage.)

JAM-FILLED DOUGHNUTS:

Like the rose hip jam that fills them, true yeast-risen doughnuts take a little patience. Yeast is a living thing and needs to be treated with care—that means being mindful of the temperatures you subject it to (no boiling water! ow!) and where it will thrive. Yeast-risen confections are delicate things, but that doesn't mean they are difficult. Just be aware of their needs as you allow your hands to form them.

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup lukewarm milk (think a cozy temperature for a bath and no hotter)*
- 2 teaspoons active dry yeast*
- 4 large eggs, room temperature*
- ¼ cup maple syrup*
- ¾ cup unsalted butter*
- ¾ cups all-purpose flour, plus a little extra*
- 1½ teaspoons fine sea salt*
- Vegetable oil for frying*
- Jam for filling*
- Rose hip sugar, below*

Melt the butter and allow it to cool slightly. In a large bowl, combine the lukewarm milk with the butter, eggs, yeast, and honey. Mix briefly to combine.

Sift in the flour and the sea salt and mix on low speed (if using an electric mixer) or by hand until all the flour is incorporated. (It's okay if there are some lumps in the dough at this point.)

Cover the bowl loosely with a

slightly dampened clean kitchen towel, then allow it to rest for 2 hours at a comfortable room temperature.

Wrap the dough tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 3 hours or overnight. (Or up to four days.)

Dust the surface of the chilled dough with flour and gently knead it into an even ball. This shouldn't take long—about 30 seconds.

Roll the dough out to a half-inch thickness. Using a jar, cup, or cookie cutter, cut out two half-inch rounds of dough. Place these on a lightly floured surface and allow them to rest while you heat the oil.

Place the oil into a pot that has at least 4-inch tall sides. (Oil should be 2 to 3 inches deep.) Heat until it is between 365°F and 375°F. This is the perfect temperature for frying doughnuts: too hot and they burn on the outside before the insides are fully cooked; too cold and the doughnuts will soak up a lot of oil before they are done cooking. If possible, use a candy thermometer to determine the temperature of the oil. You'll also want to set up a doughnut draining station by placing a few layers of paper towel over a wire cooling rack.

Gently and carefully drop three doughnuts into the hot oil and fry until the bottoms are a light golden brown, about 1 to 2 minutes. Gently flip and cook the other side. Remove with a slotted spoon and place on the cooling rack to drain. Continue with the rest of the doughnuts, being careful not to overcrowd the pan of oil, which will prevent the doughnuts from rising completely. Keep an eye on your oil temperature and adjust the heat on your stovetop as needed.

Once the doughnuts have cooled for about 5 minutes, toss them in the rose hip sugar to coat them completely.

Poke a hole in the side of each doughnut with a wooden spoon handle, being careful not to poke all the way through, and use a piping tip with a large hole to fill them with rose hip jam, about 2 tablespoons per doughnut.

ROSE HIP SUGAR:

It's especially important to make sure that the rose hips you use for this recipe are completely free of the irritating hairs they contain. You won't be running this sugar through muslin to remove them, so do your best to make sure they are completely removed and rinsed out.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup cleaned rose hips, pips and hairs removed, then rinsed*
- 2 cups granulated sugar*

Rinse the rose hips and then dry with a paper towel.

Combine the rose hips and ½ cup

sugar in a food processor and grind until the rose hips are broken up into small pieces and a paste has started to form.

Add the rest of the sugar and pulse to mix evenly. Spread out the sugar on a clean baking tray to dry out a bit before dunking the doughnuts in it.

GLUTEN-FREE APPLE CIDER DOUGHNUTS WITH GLAZE AND APPLES:

Harness the richness of autumn apples with these flavorful gluten-free doughnuts! I adapted a recipe from *Gluten Free Artisan Bread in 5 Minutes a Day*, which is a fantastic resource for gluten-free baking enthusiasts. To make these doughnuts, you'll want to use fresh-pressed and unfiltered apple juice to get the best flavor. I like to forage apple trees on abandoned farmsteads, but there are also plenty of apples and crabapples to be found in the city. Use a cider press or juicer to extract their juice for this recipe.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup gluten-free flour mixture of choice (see below for my recipe)*
- 2 cups cornstarch*
- 2 teaspoons xanthan gum*
- 1 tablespoons granulated yeast*
- 1½ teaspoons salt*
- 1 cup lukewarm apple cider (the fresh-pressed cloudy kind)*
- 2 eggs*
- ½ cup honey*
- ½ cup unsalted butter*
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract*
- Vegetable oil, for frying*
- Glaze, below*
- Edible gold dust*

Whisk together the flour mixture and other dry ingredients (including yeast and salt) in a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer.

Add the cider, honey, eggs, butter (melt, then let cool to room temperature), and vanilla. Mix everything together until the

mixture is uniform and smooth. (This is most easily done with a stand mixer with the paddle attachment.) The dough should be slightly wet but not too sticky.

Cover and allow to rest until the dough rises, about 2 hours at room temperature. Refrigerate the dough for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Dust the surface of the dough with rice flour, then place it on a floured surface.

Roll dough to a thickness of half an inch, making sure it doesn't stick to the surface or the rolling pin by using flour as needed.

Using a doughnut cutter or round biscuit cutters, cut the dough into doughnuts (about 3 inches across with a 1-inch hole in the middle.)

Place the doughnuts on a floured surface and cover for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, using a deep heavy-bottomed saucepan or deep fryer, heat 3 inches of oil until it reaches 360°F to 370°F. (Use a candy thermometer to measure.)

Carefully drop or lower two doughnuts into the oil. Cook for 2 minutes, then carefully flip over and cook the other side for another minute. Both sides should be golden brown.

Use a slotted spoon to remove doughnuts from the oil and set them on some paper towels to drain. Cook the rest of your doughnuts in this way, being careful not to crowd the pan, which would prevent them from rising properly.

Let cool completely. Meanwhile, set up a cooling rack over a baking sheet.

When the doughnuts are cool enough to touch, dip them halfway into the glaze, then flip over and place on the cooling

sheet to drop off excess.

Let the doughnuts cool and the glaze dry, then use your clean finger to add a little streak of edible gold luster to the top of each doughnut.

Glaze and Decorations Ingredients:

- ½ teaspoon maple extract*
- 3 cups powdered sugar*
- Pinch of salt*
- ½ to ¾ cup apple juice*
- Several small apples*
- Cinnamon powder*

Mix together the powdered sugar, maple extract, salt, and ½ cup of apple juice to make a smooth mixture. Add more apple juice, a little at a time, until the icing has a thin consistency.

Use a mandolin or carefully slice the apples into even, thin slices crosswise. Cut each of those in half to make two half-circles. Bring a small pot of water to boil and boil the slices for 2 to 4 minutes, until softened enough to bend but not at all mushy. Drain on paper towels.

Dip the warm doughnuts in the glaze, then overlap the softened apple slices all the way around each doughnut. Finish with a dusting of cinnamon.

*My all-purpose gluten-free bread flour mixture is:

- 4 parts white rice flour*
- 2 parts sorghum powder*
- 2 parts tapioca flour*
- 1 part potato starch*
- 1 tablespoon xanthan gum for every 3 cups of flour mixture*



Find Miss Wondersmith and her wonder-smithing on Facebook @thewondersmith, Instagram @misswondersmith, and at thewondersmith.com. She and her beloved have also started a new channel to chronicle the collaborative ways they are making and sharing wonder together, including a new series dedicated to original fairy tales and magical foods. You can follow along at youtube.com/c/thewondersmithsworkshop if you so desire!

The SANGOMA SPIRIT MEETS The QUIET BOTANIST

by Karim Orange

Photography by Kristin Reimer

I recently learned of a flower shop in Hudson, New York, that uses Mother Nature as its muse. This is no ordinary flower shop, where you purchase items that will die in a week or two, but a display of artisanal everlasting arrangements, consisting of dried flowers in an array of colors, textures, and shapes. Introducing the Quiet Botanist, where you can smell the aroma from the streets! My background as a makeup artist and my love of color and flowers collided when I entered the space. It was a bit overwhelming at first, but I let my sangomas spirit guide me to the right flowers. Founder and creative director Rebecca O'Donnell, born in Australia and based in New York City, shared that this response is common with guests in her store. Upon entering, they calm down and the spirit world guides them in the right direction. That's why she created the Quiet Botanist: out of a desire to slow down and listen.

I was always a quiet child who felt a magical connection to flowers and plants. When I was a little girl my mother took me to the botanical gardens. When she turned away, I picked a bunch of flowers and started smelling them. The scent overcame me, and my breathing became heavy. The next thing I knew I was dancing in a trance, but there was no music playing. In my head I heard the djembe, which is an African drum (pronounced *gem* like gemstone and *beh* like the beginning of bed).

I closed my eyes, and the smell, sound, and movement took over me being on earth. I remember opening my eyes and my mother just looking at me and shaking her head in approval. When we got home that evening, she said "welcome" and explained that our ancestors were from a very special group of magical healing women called sangomas (the Southern African name for witch doctor). She told me that the trance dance I experienced was out of my thinking mind or an altered state and that the dancing, combined with the gifts from the earth, such as flowers, herbs and plants, was used to heal. In Botswana and Namibia, women would sit in a circle, clap, and make tongue sounds (*lay-lay-lay-lay*), while the healers danced and danced. That day in Hudson, this is what I transcended to. In Africa, the word *doctor* always follows the word *witch*. Witch doctors are healers and respected in most of the tribes. I learned that day that this was my ordained destiny even before my birth (*lay-lay-lay-lay*).







My fate did not keep me in Africa. The pale tribes came before my birth from Europe to conquer the darker tribes and ship them off to distant lands. Africans were stripped of their names, culture, history, and freedom to some extent. But we were never stripped of our sangomas spirit. The sangomas live in our healing. The sangomas live in our food. The sangomas live in our dance. The sangomas live in our wombs. The sangomas live every time we see and smell a flower, pick an herb, and connect to this new place, our new existence. Our sangomas spirits are still rooted to our motherland.

In Africa, our witch doctor culture was loud! We praised! We danced! We drummed! We made noise (*lay, lay, lay, lay*). In our new lands we were taught to be quiet. We were taught to be submissive. We were taught to obey. To the pale tribe it looked this way but was never that! Our inner sangomas spirit, even when quiet to earthly ears, was always loud to the spirit and to the earth.

My silence had always been extremely loud around flowers, herbs, and plants. I speak to them, I kiss them, I cry to them. As an urban farmer I grow them and love them. They are an integral part of my well-being. They make my spirit sing, and sometimes my worldly body rejoice (*lay, lay, lay, lay*). I still pick up flowers, smell them and dance.

In Hudson, standing in her magical store, O'Donnell and I talked more about the Quiet Botanist. She shared that one of her current favorite flowers is the *Banksia hookeriana*, an Australian flower known to help with fatigue. The energy of this flower is said to give you vitality, strength, and inspiration. Another of her favorites is the bearded iris, which, if it were to speak to her directly, would say *slow down, enjoy the process, downtime is essential to keep everything in balance*. It would also say *call your mum*.

I shared that I had a similar connection with iris and its properties of royalty and wisdom, and that when I take in its scent, especially when I feel beaten down, I receive mental powers (*lay, lay, lay, lay*).

We spoke about our shared creative background. O'Donnell was a creative director until Lyme disease steered her on this new path where she is able to merge her creative skills and love of botany in a quiet environment.

The displays and arrangements in her shop are simply poetic! When I asked her about whom she would create an arrangement for if she could do so for anyone in the world, O'Donnell chose the poet Mary Oliver, whose poem "Invitation" is her favorite. She would create a large, wild foraged bouquet with flowers from upstate New York—Queen Anne's lace, thistle, goldenrod, and daylilies—that would be hung to dry, and it would express how much O'Donnell appreciates Oliver's talent. This sounds like pure magic!

I truly believe there is a quiet botanist in all of us (*lay, lay, lay, lay*).



Follow *The Quiet Botanist* on Instagram @thequietbotanist.
Find Karim Orange online at karimorange.com or on Instagram @thatgirlorange.
See more of Kristin Reimer's work at photomuse.com.



THE WOMAN WHO COULD

TALK TO BEES

by Monica Crosson

There once was a small village tucked deep within a forest that seemed made for the dark landscape of October. Maybe it was because the weary town framed itself perfectly under the bare limbs of bigleaf maples that scratched the sky and welcomed the wind that blew away the last traces of summer's reign. Though most of the townsfolk took to their homes to make peace with the darkness in front of their fires, there were those whose spirits felt akin to the change of light and color. One such girl lived at the very edge of town, where the forest met the river. She and her grandmother kept bees that produced a honey so sweet, it was said to induce salacious dreams that could not be discussed in decent company. They used the wax the bees produced to make candles, rumored by townsfolk to send messages to the spirits of the dearly departed.

The girl grew up wild among the tangled forest. She had no need for the people of town; the deer and the fox were her sisters and the cedar and hemlock her friends. She had no need for a formal education either. Her grandmother taught her how to identify herbs and trees and to listen to the call of birds whose whistles and clicks warned of changes in the weather. She learned to read the shapes of clouds and the direction of the wind. But most of all she learned to work with bees. These bees did not become dormant when the air turned cold but collected pollen all winter long from the flowers that grew in her grandmother's glasshouse, which was attached to the kitchen. All through the dark half of the year, as the girl helped her grandmother prepare salves or dip candles, the scent of honey and the bee's constant noise was a reminder that life persisted even during the darkest times.

Sometimes, when the moon was full

and the girl could not sleep, she would go to the kitchen for a bit of bread and butter, only to find her grandmother whispering to the bee skeps lining the glasshouse shelves.

One night, curiosity got the best of the girl, so she asked her grandmother to tell her why she talked so secretly to the bees. Her grandmother led her back to her bed, and as she tucked her in, she soothed her with a lullaby the girl had heard many times before:

*"Lovely one who lies beneath the rose hips fair,
close your eyes as I stroke your hair.*

*In the morning we have castles to make,
from the thorny briar where the waters quake.*

*For now, swarming bees will lull your sleep,
so, settle your mind, dear, for your secrets,
they'll keep."*

The grandmother kissed the child on the cheek and then whispered in her ear. "Your secrets the bees keep, my dear one."

And they did have secrets to keep, the girl and her grandmother, because witches must hide, even when living in a town so suited to October's amber glow. Magic, no matter how beautiful or helpful, was still feared. Yes, there were those who crept to their door at night desperate for a bit of the special beeswax to light a candle that would allow them to speak to a lost loved one, or begging for a few ounces of honey to ignite a passion they'd lost long ago. But those were the same people whose vicious words kept the girl and her grandmother on the outskirts of town.

Years passed, and the girl grew up. It was she who tended the bees all year long now. In the summer they swooped and buzzed and filled the bright landscape with their sweet scent. As autumn approached, they moved into the glasshouse where their lull directed the girl in her craft. And she, in turn, told the bees of births and deaths and her secret desire to fit in with a world she felt so

distant from. On some days, she thought her family's gift felt more like a curse. After a while she resented the bees.

Her grandmother had become frail over time, and soon the woman who could talk to the bees was taking care of her grandmother as if she were her own child. She dressed her, fed her, and sat her in a rocker where the old woman whispered parts of spells she had once known. One night as the woman carried her grandmother to bed, the old woman asked in a feeble voice, "Tell me again why we talk to the bees. For the life of me I can't remember."

As the woman tucked her grandmother in, she soothed her with the lullaby that had been sung to her as a child.

*"Lovely one who lies beneath the rose hips fair,
close your eyes as I stroke your hair.*

*In the morning we have castles to make,
from the thorny briar where the waters quake.*

*For now, swarming bees will lull your sleep,
so, settle your mind, dear, for your secrets,
they'll keep."*

She kissed her grandmother on the cheek and whispered. "Your secrets the bees keep, Grandmother."

The old woman smiled and, as she began to drift away, said, "Please tell the bees one more secret for me." She pulled her granddaughter close and whispered in her ear. With tears streaking down her face, the woman nodded and went to tell her grandmother's secret to the bees.

Her grandmother was buried on the property, in her favorite dress with the gray shawl and next to two other graves, on All Hallows' Eve. The woman who could talk to bees set up her small cauldron and filled it with alder branches, the wood of the dearly departed. She then gathered beeswax candles and rolled them in the herbs as instructed by the bees. Mugwort, calendula, sage, rosemary, and mullein all pulled back the veil between the worlds of the living and the dead.

Photography by
THE WITCHING HOUR
PHOTOGRAPHY



Models: Jo Maldonado and
her service dog Baruh



It was just before the clock struck midnight that the woman tucked the beeswax candles rolled in sacred herbs into her cauldron among the alder branches and lit them. As the flames grew, the candles melted, lighting the herbs and branches and sending plumes of sweetly scented smoke rising into the night sky. As she chanted the words given to her by the bees, she saw three figures

appear in the mist that rolled off the river: her mother, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother, all holding hands as they walked together toward her.

It was all she could do to hold back the sobs as she saw the three witches before her. Three women who had passed down the secrets of magic one to the other and now looked to her with pride. It was at that very moment the woman who could

talk to bees realized how very special their gift was and not a curse to be ashamed of. As the fire burned low and the three women began to fade, she blew a kiss to her ancestors, thanking them for their visit. She wiped away happy tears as they disappeared, then turned toward the house knowing exactly what she would tell the bees.



TELLING THE BEES

Throughout history, we've been enchanted by bees. Vital to our agriculture and valued for their honey and wax, bees were revered as bringers of wisdom, played a role in community rites, and were associated with deities from cultures all over the world. Beekeepers considered their bees to be a part of the family or community, and because of that, there were many strange traditions associated with tending bees.

In one such tradition, called "telling the bees," the head of the household would let the bees know when a death had befallen the family. Other family happenings, such as births, marriages, or absence due to war or a long journey, were also shared with the bees. Failing to do so could mean disaster, as the bees may swarm, die, or not produce enough honey for the season.

Bees have also had a long association with witchcraft. Tales of witches dancing unabashedly under a full moon or chanting spells over a large black cauldron are not complete without a black cat or toad whispering to them of dark enchantments and evil deeds. These familiar spirits were often thought to have been low-ranking demons or even fairies and would come most often in the form of a dog, cat, newt, owl, or toad. But bees too were thought to be familiars to witches—maybe because it was believed that bees formed a connection between the spirit realm and the human world, or because of their association with fertility, as couples trying to conceive would be given pots of honey. No matter the reason, we cannot deny our bewitchment with those busy creatures who speak in a symbolic language of dance, can predict the weather, and can read the electric field surrounding flowers. So next time you're near a hive, feel free to tell the bees "thank you."

CAULDRON TAPERS

Autumn brings a chill and a darkness that settles across the land, drawing us to the fireside. Thus begins the dark half of the year for those of us who live in the northern hemisphere. We can celebrate this transition, as October closes and the veil thins between the world of the mundane and that of the otherworld, with a bonfire kindled by beeswax and sacred herbs. Specific herbs such as mugwort, sage, mullein, rosemary, and calendula all have associations with divination, funerary practices, or communication with the spirit world. Rolled onto beeswax tapers and used to light an alder wood (a tree associated with the dead) fire, these herbs can give you a very magical bonfire.

You will need:

- One honeycomb beeswax sheet (8 by 16 inches) cut in half to make 8-by-8-inch sheets for two tapers
- Two lengths of cotton wicking, approximately 9 inches long
- Combination of any of the following herbs and essential oils: mugwort, calendula, sage, mullein, rosemary
- A lighter

To make the candles, lay the wick along the edge of a sheet of beeswax and start rolling the candle by bending over about an eighth of an inch of the wax around the wick. Once secure, roll the candle slowly, making sure to keep it even. When you've come to the end, form a smooth edge by gently pressing the edge down onto the side of the candle.

When you're ready to press your herbs into your candles, use a lighter to quickly and gently warm the wax in the area you're pressing. Press larger leaves first in a way you find pleasing, followed by smaller petals. If you choose to use essential oil, anoint your candle with it before use.

You can ritually use your tapers to ignite a fire in a cauldron, firepit, or other fireproof container to call in the spirits—or just to enjoy a fragrant fire on a brisk autumn evening.

Warning: These are not meant to be burned in a candle holder—but used only as a fire starter outdoors in a secure fire-safe container.

Monica Crosson's latest book is *Wild Magical Soul: Untame Your Spirit & Connect to Nature's Wisdom*. Follow her on Instagram @monicacrosson.





VERONICA VARLOW

Life of a Love Witch

My first memory of her was seeing the flash of her blonde Marilyn Monroe curls at the top of the stairs as she reached out her red-painted nails to crank a wheel of brass bells to call in the spirits. Her cozy house on the lagoon sang out with the lullaby of those ethereal brass bells. That moment was my first enchantment of the great alchemy of music and magic. She was my Grandma Helen, and I was four years old.

Making the music of the bells and spirit speaking were our nightly rituals when I stayed at her house. The bell wheel belonged to her Czech-Romani mother Anna and was passed down to my Grandma Helen. When we called the spirits at nighttime, it would be similar to what I imagine other families' prayers together would be. You see, I was raised with the idea of the spirits being our friends. Grandma Helen explained that the spirits were our ancestors, they were the animals that we loved that were in the spirit world, they were guardian spirits and friends that protected us and helped us navigate our best and most magical lives.

We would call the spirits to thank them for our day and tell them specific things that we were grateful for. We would mention any wishes or hopes and call out the names of those we loved that had crossed over to the otherside to honor them and say hello. We would end by saying, "Thank you, spirits!"

When you do this practice with the ancestors, you will get an answer. My beautiful Grandma Helen journeyed to the spirit world when I was just twelve, but the traditions and magic she taught me during our time together have helped me stay connected to her. When I have asked her and the spirits for help over the years, I will receive a message in my dreams or a clear sign will show up. Sometimes I'm

given the answers I seek through a song that will randomly come on or a song that keeps repeating itself in places that I go.

Four years ago, I performed a love spell to conjure my future husband on October 27. I asked my ancestors to be my supernatural matchmakers! My reasoning was that if the ancestors and spirits know me the best, who better than them to pair me with the best person for me? As I lit a candle that I inscribed with a love sigil, I played "Come Here My Love" by Van Morrison on repeat to work myself into a delicious trance and cast a powerful spell.

When the love spell was complete, I hopped into my little VW Bug to drive to my burlesque gig in the city. I tossed my phone on the seat beside me and rolled down the windows. In the middle of the Williamsburg Bridge, as I headed toward Manhattan, my phone turned itself on and started playing Tom Petty's "Here Comes My Girl." I had not been listening to music on it, and I certainly had not entered my passcode. I knew that this had to be a supernatural sign because there was no other explanation. I thought, Well, if I'm headed into Manhattan and the song "Here Comes My Girl" starts playing, my future husband must be in Manhattan somewhere!

Thirty days from that exact date of the love spell and the phone playing by itself on the bridge, I had my first date with the future David Varlow, who lived in Manhattan! You want to know how I knew for certain that he was the one? On Valentine's Day, three months later, with no knowledge of the story that I just shared, I woke up to a text from him saying, "I heard this song this morning and thought of you."

The song he sent was Tom Petty's "Here Comes My Girl."

Thank you, spirits!

The Bohemian Magic Tradition of Connecting With Your Ancestors

• Set the Space and Time •

During the autumn months the veil is the thinnest between this world and the spirit world, so this is an ideal time to connect with and honor your ancestors. Decide where you feel most comfortable having an out-loud conversation with them. Is there a special place you'd visit with them when they were here on this earth? Is there a special place where you feel deeply connected to some otherworldly beauty, like the forest or the beach? If you have the time, it's nice to plan and set this up just like a meeting you would have with a friend. Although in emergency situations I've spoken out loud into my phone to the ancestors as I walked down a busy New York City street. No one needs to know how long distance that call really is!

• Picture This •

If you have a photo of your ancestors, animals in the spirit world, or any other friends and loved ones who have crossed over that you want to connect with, it will help your connection. My Grandma Helen had a permanent family altar on her blue hutch in the corner of the dining room. She proudly displayed the photos of our departed family, friends, and animals in the room where we all sat down to eat. She would regularly put glasses of water and small plates of food in front of their photos. Photos contain strong magic.

• Light a Candle •

Like I talk about in my book *Bohemian Magick*, my grandma believed that when we light a candle, as it disappears on this side, it begins to appear in the spirit world. You can write a word on the candle or

their name, and the candle becomes a supernatural letter that you can send from here to the spirit world.

• Set an Offering •

Your spirits and ancestors will appreciate a small offering. An offering can be anything from flowers that they loved, chocolates or favorite foods, a piece of jewelry, a postcard of a place they adored, or a song they loved. My grandma's middle name was Rose and she loved roses, so I set up roses for her and a small plate of Windmill cookies (her favorite). When I'm communicating with my old best friend, Jeff Moody, who went to the spirit world in 2006, I play "Haunted When the Minutes Drag" by Love and Rockets because that was the closing song at the club where we loved to dance. Whatever it is, make it something personal and it will help strengthen your connection. If you're trying to communicate with ancestors or guides that you haven't met yet, flowers are always an excellent offering!

• The Magic of Music •

Once you've set up the photo of your ancestors and loved ones in the spirit world and placed an offering before their photo, it's time to make the connection with music! Music is the invitation to the spirits. Ring bells, shake a tambourine or a rattle, thump out a beat on a drum, or clap your hands. You can use your voice to sing words, make extended vowel sounds, or even hum. You can also put your favorite song on that means something to you or to the spirit you're trying to reach.

• Words Are Wands •

Speak out loud from your heart. Say what you are grateful for in your life. Highlight the events and moments that have made you happy and feel connected. Share hopes and dreams. Ask for signs of how to be put on the best path to make those dreams manifest into reality. If you have any concerns or questions, you can always ask the spirits. Ask them to guide you to the best solution. Then call the names of those you love and who love you on the otherside. Thank them for being a part of your story. Thank them for continuing to guide you in your journey of life and, just like my Grandma Helen taught me to do, end by saying, "Thank you, spirits!"

• Watch for Supernatural Signs •

Within forty-eight hours of your connection, you will receive a dream, be drawn to a clear sign, or even hear a song come up that will give you your answer.

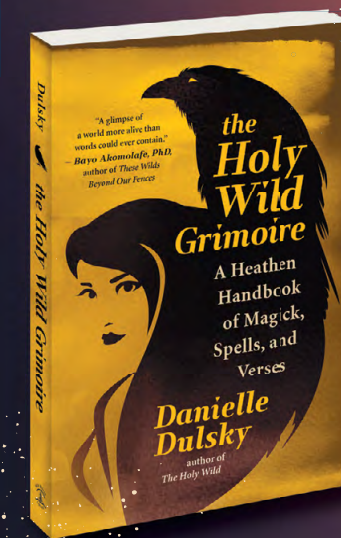
This treasure of connection that my grandma taught me is some of that vintage magic that has been the foundation of my life and the spells that I cast. I pass this personal method of spirit communication on to you so that you can feel closer to your ancestors and loved ones on the otherside.



Photo by Katrin Albert

Veronica Varlow's best-selling book *Bohemian Magick* is now available everywhere—packed with secret spells and rituals passed down from Grandma Helen. Read more about it, as well as about her *Witch Camp* and *Love Witch Tarot School*, on lovewitch.com. Find Veronica on Instagram @veronicavarlow.

An Invitation to Be Witch and Bewitch



"A potent book of magick, *The Holy Wild Grimoire* is brimming with soul-stirring prompts and incantations that are sure to reignite your sparkle."

— TRISTA HENDREN, creatrix of *Girl God* anthologies



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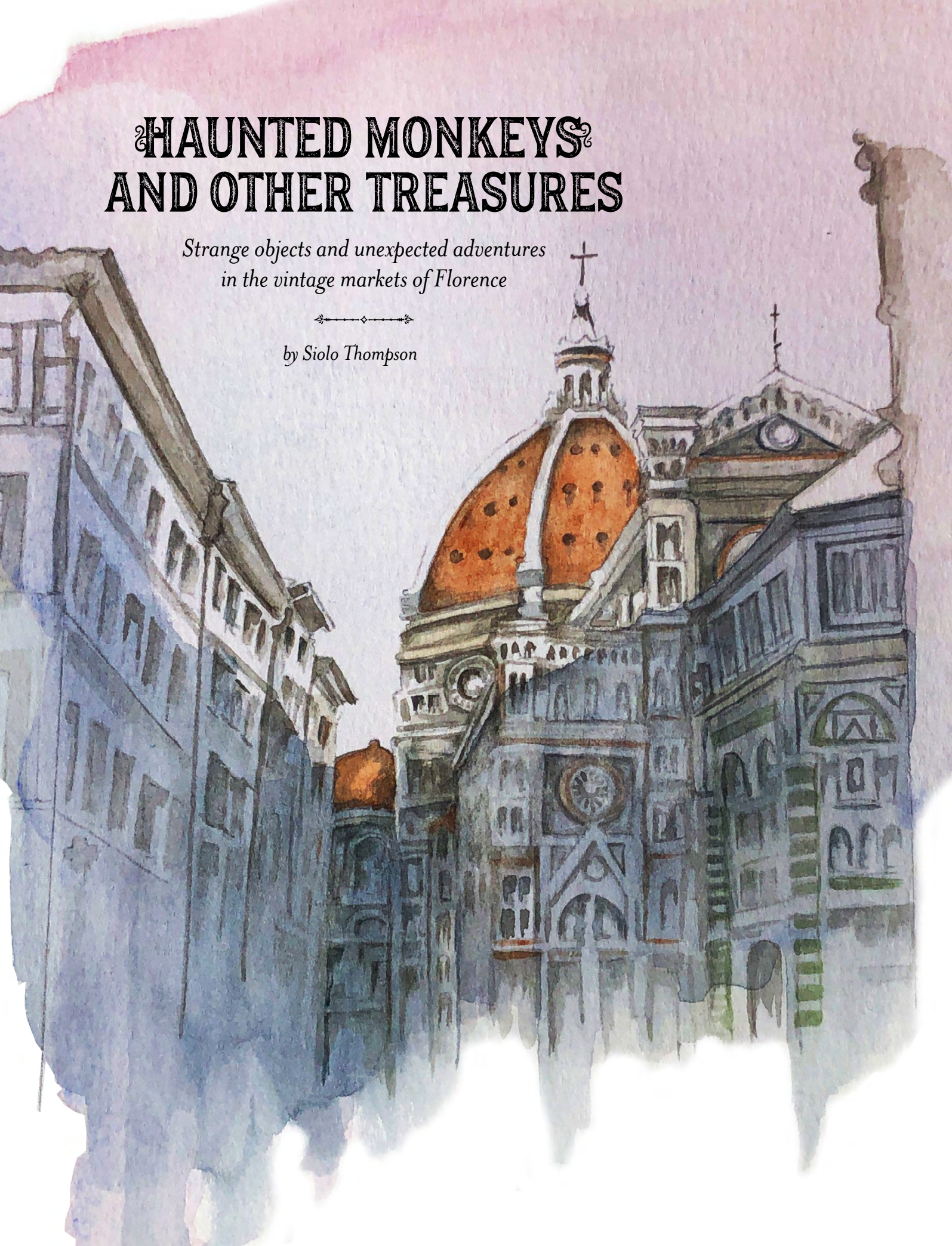


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HAUNTED MONKEYS AND OTHER TREASURES

Strange objects and unexpected adventures
in the vintage markets of Florence

by Siolo Thompson



I was attacked by a blind woman and her obese guide dog” is not a sentence I ever thought I would write. First, if the creature had not attacked me I would never have referred to the dog as obese—sweet, chonky, floop potato, yes; obese, no. I’m never rude to dogs. Second, I’ve always considered the blind to be a mostly nonviolent population. Statistics support this. However, this particular blind woman seemed to be actively and, dare I say, gleefully violent when she was hitting me across the face with her collapsible seeing-eye cane. Of course, it was the haunted monkey that had started it all ...

Florence, capital of Italy’s Tuscany region, is a city of many wonders. It houses some of the greatest masterpieces of Renaissance art. It is also a city of commerce. For centuries the merchants of Florence have traded in silk, precious metals, leather, and other goods. In modern-day Florence you can shop for fine jewelry on the Ponte Vecchio and browse high-end designer boutiques near the Duomo, but vintage shops also abound and market stalls pop up at various piazzas every weekend.

I recently visited the huge open-air market that materializes every Tuesday at Parco delle Cascine. This market is mostly frequented by locals. Here you’ll find household goods, food stalls, toys, and produce stands alongside vintage- and secondhand-clothing vendors. Look elsewhere for fine jewelry or elegant antiques, but if you need a six-pack of shower curtains or discount burkas by the kilo, this is the market for you. It’s a chaotic, lively place, great for people watching.

It was a beautiful summer day and the market was crowded. I noticed a blind woman and her dog walking nearby. They meandered near the vendor stalls, the dog stopping to sniff around, catching smells from the nearby Lampredotto stand where a heavy-set, mustachioed man was braising fragrant pots of heavily seasoned tripe. I was looking through a pile of books at the far end of the park when the barking started. The barking was followed by shouting. The shouting was not abnormal; if you put three Italians in the same approximate space, at least one of them will begin shouting. But this was more shouting than normal, and alarmingly, the shouting seemed to have nothing to do with food or soccer. I looked to the adjacent stall where the dog was barking frantically—a black retriever type with a grizzled gray muzzle and one eye tinted by the unmistakable blue fog of cataracts. I questioned his employment qualifications, but I suppose “seeing-eye dog” implies a single-eye requirement ... He wore a little red “working dog” garment. Because of his size, this was more of a tube top than the usual vest. The blind woman—late middle age, khaki pants, blue denim shirt—was yelling at the dog. The stall owner—a grouchy man with a gray ponytail and wire-rimmed glasses—was yelling at the woman. The other vendors were yelling at ponytail guy for yelling at a blind woman. In short, total chaos.

Due to my particular position and perhaps because I wasn’t busy yelling, I was able to see that the dog was barking at a specific object, a ceramic monkey with a thousand-yard stare. I thought, *I should grab that monkey and remove it from the dog’s eyeline.*

However, dogs (as many a TikTok video proves) possess a certain sense of object permanence. And so, when I stupidly grabbed the monkey and shoved it behind my back, the dog lunged at me with enough force to break free of the blind woman and his restraining vest garment. I landed on top of the monkey and the dog landed on top of me. The woman, pulled forward by the force of the dog, struck out with her cane—a collapsible affair with a tennis ball glued to the end of it.

The first shot caught me on the side of the face. She was undoubtedly certain that the dog had apprehended an assailant of some sort and she was determined to show said enemy what for. And so she flailed about with the cane, hitting me, the dog, and a few of the bystanders. It should be noted that she didn’t hit very hard, but what her blows lacked in injury, she made up for in insult. For nothing will damage your dignity quite so effectively as being struck with a tennis ball by a shouty blind woman while trapped under a fat dog on top of an ugly monkey. She was also literally insulting me as all this was going on. I couldn’t quite catch everything that was being yelled, but the insults seemed to be mostly vegetable-based: “Floppy zucchini!” she shouted. “Corrupt eggplant!” And with particular venom, “*Ineffectual fennel!*” That one stung.

People surged forward to help the woman. The dog was apprehended and reinserted into its tube. The monkey and I were forgotten as the pair were hustled away and fussed over. I gathered myself up and retrieved the monkey from the ground. As I went to stand, ponytail man watched me. He made a little hand gesture. Not yet fluent in the complex language of Italian hand talking, I could only guess at what it meant: Disdain, contempt, derision? No, unfortunately, it was something along the lines of “You break it, you buy it.”

Oh.

I looked down at the horrible thing—rictus grin, eyes that had seen things, a little white vest with dapper frog closures, some kind of phallic scepter, or was it a weapon? A mace? A club? Weapon or no weapon, the creature was remarkably awful. But it wasn’t broken—it seemed perfectly fine. The man in the glasses was yelling now, insisting that it was damaged. I did my best to defend myself, but the stress of the moment significantly diminished my vocabulary. I mumbled, trying to remember all the words needed to construct the sentence I was grasping for: “Sir, please, see that your monkey is not broken. This, your monkey, is very healthy, no? I will return to you this monkey which is ...” *Unbroken* was the word I wanted; *uncircumcised* is the word that came out.



His eyebrows shot up to his hairline, and he made the universal gesture for “hand me the damn monkey.” And then, looking at me over lowered glasses, he pointed—with a creepy, yellowed, two-inch-long pinky nail—to the tip of the scepter where something, a little bobble maybe, seemed to be missing. I guffawed. I was 98 percent certain that if that thing had been broken, it hadn’t just happened. I did my best to protest; he did his best to extort fifty euros out of me. The larger commotion now over, people began to float back toward us, and soon there was a hearty debate going. The monkey was passed around, a magnifying glass was produced, some yelling was done, some laughing as well. Eventually twenty euros was agreed upon, and red-faced, I forked over the cash.

I walked petulantly to the hot doughnut stand for some much needed consolation. Behind me I overheard ponytail man saying mirthfully, “I’m just glad to be free of the dammed thing!” Did he mean “damned” as in pesky, unwanted, inconvenient? Or “dammed,” as in Chucky, Annabelle, or that spot Lady Macbeth is always yelling at? I pondered this as I rode the tram home with the unwanted monkey cradled infant-like in my arms. Perhaps thinking it was a baby, people would crane to peek at the thing and then recoil. I tied a handkerchief over the monkey’s face and fastened it with a hairband, possibly making it creepier, but at least it couldn’t throw ghost eyes at any dogs we encountered.

The monkey incident made me think of my last visit to Florence, two months before. I’d left my only nice clothes hanging in a hotel closet in Rome and needed something to wear to an evening event. I perused the boutiques and tried on a number of items, but nothing was quite right. As the sun was setting I wandered into a little courtyard where a handful of shops were selling vintage clothing and jewelry. I entered a quiet store where the proprietress sat in the gloom of twilight, the evening lights not yet switched on. The woman bore an uncanny resemblance to her dog, or was it the other way around? They both had huge, watery brown eyes and wavy, golden hair that framed their heavily jowled faces. One was a spaniel, the other, spaniel-ish. I entered with trepidation, not because the pair seemed unfriendly, but because I felt unsure about the space. Despite the dilapidated sign outside advertising, “*vintage, a buon prezzo*,” it was more of a disheveled living room than a clothing store.

“*Buona sera*,” the woman said hoarsely from her perch on a lumpy couch, the dog grunted. Neither of them stood up. “*Buona sera*,” I responded. The two sets of limpid eyes followed me as I awkwardly tip-toed around a bulbous armchair that was heaped pile-of-leaves-style with wool coats in earthy colors. The room was furnished with old things—steel filing cabinets, heavy mismatched bureaus, a tall dresser painted orange, rocking chairs, office chairs, and woven wicker dining chairs. A carousel horse lurked in one corner, its once bright flourishes chipped and faded. And everywhere—draped, piled, hanging—old clothes.

Coats and dresses and capes and suits. Fabric everywhere. It was like being back in the womb, if you were a mitten and your mother a sweater.

The floor creaked with each step, and both sets of eyes followed me as I explored the soft goods. The drawers of a cabinet yawned open, and when I looked in I saw a pile of jumbled flesh-colored things. “Vintage prosthetics,” the woman (or possibly the dog) declared, and I thought, *Now we’re talking!*

I pulled a well-formed foot from the drawer. The nails were painted bright red. It was smaller than my own foot, maybe a size six or seven. It would make a perfect paperweight. If I worked in an office, I would use the foot to hold down my important papers. People’s eyes would be drawn to it as they sat across from me, interviewing for a job. Next, the drawer yielded a child-size hand, the palm realistically chubby, a ball-jointed wrist lending it delicate movement. I happily imagined the scene at airport security, a taciturn TSA official pulling one limb after another out of my carefully packed carry-on.

I tried on a military greatcoat, an admiral’s hat, a matador’s cape. *Where had all of this stuff come from?* The woman and the dog watched me placidly, never moving from their perch. *Damp ghosts*, I thought with a shudder. I prefer mine dry, but who doesn’t?

The door opened, and an enormous man entered. He had wild, dark hair streaked with gray, and his beard was a wiry cumulus over a red scarf. He also had a dog, a sharp-faced schnauzer wearing a silver tuxedo jacket. Italian dogs always dress to impress; it’s one of their many charms. The spaniel wriggled, threatening to stand, but then he settled back on the couch. The woman said nothing.

Over his shoulder, the man had a large black bag, the plastic kind used for heavy-duty garbage and body disposal. He set it down, and it crinkled around the contents, which had the vague bulk and shape of clothing. He spoke to the woman in rapid French, which I don’t speak, and then said, “*Buona sera*,” in heavily accented Italian before making a hat-tipping gesture, though he wasn’t wearing a hat. He turned and left. The snooty dog followed, looking smugly over its shoulder at us. We all knew it had been the best-dressed creature in the room, he hadn’t needed to rub it in.

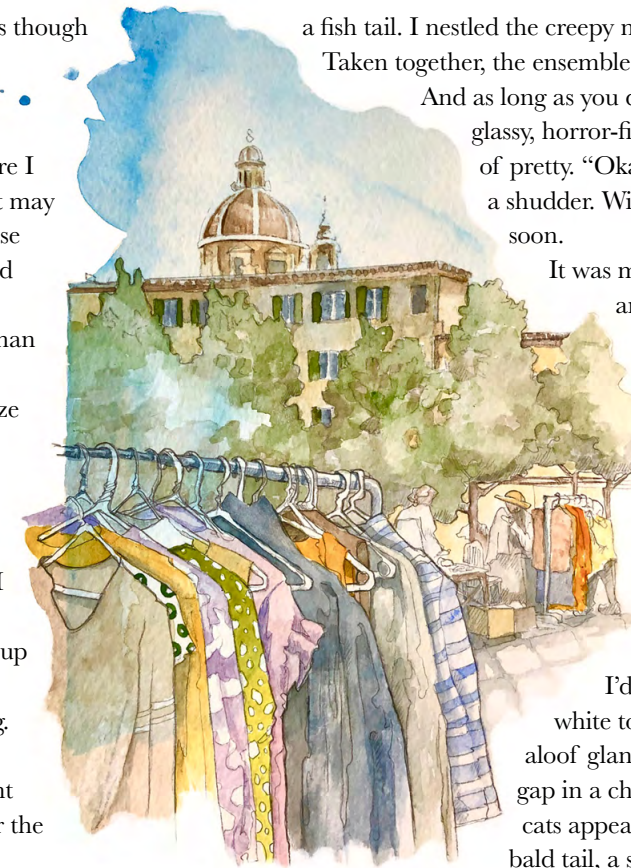
With the activity over, I went back to browsing. The woman sighed heavily, and I heard the labored creak of the sofa as she dislodged herself. She came to me, followed by the rheumy-eyed dog. “Here,” she said. “This is what you need.” She pulled a tunic-length shirt dress from a rack behind another rack. The print, a blue and maroon paisley on a dung-colored background, was better suited to a sixty-year-old bachelor’s bedspread, or a Civil War-era carpetbag. It was very ugly, so I tried it on. Mutton-sleeved, bias cut, asymmetric in odd ways—it had only one pocket, almost but not quite in the middle of the skirt, and a faux necktie fastened left of center. What were they thinking when they made this thing? Is it a dress, or a blouse, or a frost

proofing sack for a potted palm? It was as though two people designed it, an office worker from 1978 New Jersey and a demented Italian poet trapped in 1778. Obviously I had to buy it. “120 euro,” she said before I asked, “but eighty if you pay cash.” That may seem a deep discount, but it didn’t surprise me—the Italians will do anything to avoid paying taxes.

I didn’t have that much cash. The woman gave me directions to the nearest ATM, and I hurried out into the Florentine maze of streets. Music issued from the nearby boutiques, mannequins standing faceless and pert, tourists speaking a dozen languages. When I came back with my eighty euros, the big man had returned. I entered shyly as they seemed to be in the middle of an argument. He was holding up a brocade waistcoat, she was shaking her head angrily at it, the dogs were growling. Everyone paused when I came in. The woman had wrapped my strange garment in paper, tied with black string. I gave her the money and made an awkward retreat.

I shuffled down the alleyway past all the little shops selling oddities. *What on earth could I wear this thing to?* A bring-your-own-typewriter party was the first thing that came to mind, but one is so infrequently invited to those. My eye was drawn to a store the size of a broom closet. The window was carefully decorated with patterned wallpaper and twinkling lights. In the center of the display was a silver cake stand upon which rested a perfectly preserved tortoise with the head of a hummingbird. It was splendid and awful, the price tag said fifty euros. I wondered how much it would be if I offered cash.

Unlike that hummingbird-tortoise sculpture, the ceramic monkey had bad vibes. Maybe it was just ugly rather than haunted, but I wasn’t taking any chances. Anyway, it was never going to fit in my suitcase. The trick to getting rid of a haunted monkey is to persuade someone else to take it by artfully arranging it among other, nonhaunted objects. At least I hoped that was the trick. A haunted object can be passed on only to a willing recipient—I don’t know where that rule came from but like the whole vampires-have-to-ask-permission-before-they-come-in thing, once you are aware of the rule, you are obligated to abide by it. And so, I approached the *free* pile of stuff on a table outside the gate to my apartment complex. I dusted off a struggling jade plant and turned the rainbow-hued ceramic container to hide the chipped bit. Against the plant, I placed a postcard I had picked up at the Pitti Palace museum gift shop. It featured a pink and turquoise grotesque, with a monkey face and



a fish tail. I nestled the creepy monkey between the other items.

Taken together, the ensemble had a kind of aesthetic cohesion. And as long as you didn’t look into the monkey’s glassy, horror-filled eyes, it was just the right side of pretty. “Okay!” I said as I turned away with a shudder. With any luck I’d be rid of the thing soon.

It was my final evening in Florence, and I set out with my sketchbook to capture the city at dusk. I set up on a low wall near an abandoned railway structure. The Tuscan light that so many artists have praised streamed around me as I painted. The grass, sprinkled with the diaphanous, scarlet blossoms of feral poppies, swayed in the warm breeze.

I’d been there a while when a large white tomcat sauntered by, giving me an aloof glance before disappearing through a gap in a chain-link fence. Before long, more cats appeared—a long-haired gray with a bald tail, a scruffy orange cat with one ear, a black and white creature scarcely more than a kitten. Curious, I packed up my sketchbook and followed. The fence was high and topped with razor wire, the breach only cat-sized. With a bit of determined contortion, fence bending, and wriggling about in the dirt, I managed to get to the other side. The old train yard was resplendent in the gloaming—the tracks shone silver, the light was pure gold. I walked on for a while in the company of cats. Eventually I reached a congregation point where dozens of the creatures lounged, waiting for some feline-specific event. *Probably a union meeting*, I thought. I had just begun to converse with a large tabby when I heard a voice behind me. “Don’t believe anything that one says. He is notoriously unreliable.”

Startled, I turned to find a friendly face, Jose, the waiter from the Peruvian restaurant where I’d been eating lunch most days. He offered me a beer from the six-pack he was carrying—a Cusqueña, a Peruvian brand that I’d been surprised and delighted to find in Italy. Jose was one of many Peruvians I’d met in Florence. I had, by chance, booked lodging in a Peruvian neighborhood near Porta al Prato. He pocketed the bottle tops, explaining that they used them to play checkers in the park, which was where he was heading. We walked together, chatting for a while, crossing out of the train yard through some hedges and into a narrow lane that smelled of horse. Underfoot, dry olive leaves rustled and crunched. Jose looked at his watch and stopped walking.

“Do you want to see something beautiful?” he asked.

“Always.”

“Okay.” He looked at his watch again. “Now, hold your breath,” he said.

I took in a deep breath and stood still. The air was sweet with summer things—cut grass, lilac, jasmine, and the heady musk of horses. The unmistakable rusty-hinge call of a pheasant rang out from a field nearby, a distant dog barked, insects buzzed, and faraway traffic rumbled. Just as I thought I couldn’t hold my breath any longer, a low hissing sound began to fill my ears, followed by a *pop!* as a hundred antique streetlights all came on at once. Their globes were illuminated with the sulfuric yellow of an old postcard. The night changed in an instant, transformed into something old and mysterious. I exhaled with a gasp. It was a moment of pure, everyday magic. Tears sprang as I laughed at the incredible beauty of it. Jose smiled, pleased that I was pleased. As though in a fairy tale, an old woman emerged from a gloomy courtyard. She was hunched over and shrouded in fabric. In each hand she had a pail of food. Cats sprung from the shadows, following her in a long tail-like formation.

In the park, Latin pop music was playing from old-fashioned boom boxes and young men played basketball on a cracked concrete court. Stone tables were occupied by people playing cards or bottle-top checkers. Small groups of men and women drank beer and chatted animatedly in Spanish or a mixture of Italian and Spanish, “Italangolo.” I parted ways with Jose after promising I wouldn’t tell his mom he had been shortcutting through the train yard. I wandered the city for the rest of the night: through military installations, and old fairgrounds, racetracks and sculpture gardens; through the old streets, now empty and quiet. When I finally arrived back at my lodgings, the monkey and the jade plant were both gone. The postcard was still there, leaning against the wall. One of the neighbors had written a message on it:

“I took the plant and got rid of the monkey. It was scaring the children.”



Siolo Thompson is a Seattle-based writer, illustrator, and recreational potato eater. Follow her on Instagram @siolothompson.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR TREASURE HUNTERS VISITING FLORENCE:



Mercato delle Pulci

Largo Pietro Annigoni, 50122

A classic flea market that operates year round (*pulci* is Italian for fleas). This was once an open-air market but is now housed in a permanent structure in Piazza Ghiberti. Vendors offer books, vintage movie posters, antiques, jewelry, and clothing. Mercato di Sant’Ambrogio is adjacent and features secondhand

clothing stalls as well as fresh fruit and vegetable stands and street food carts.

Mercato del Porcellino

Piazza del Mercato Nuovo, 50123

Once a silk market, this touristy destination now sells mostly souvenirs and leather goods. While you probably won’t see any vintage items here, the market mascot, a large boar, is said to dispense good luck when patted on the snout. So in my estimation it’s worth a visit—free luck is free luck, even if it comes out of a pig’s nose. In the streets nearby you will find some of the higher-end Florentine antique and vintage shops.

Mercato di Santo Spirito and Piazza del Carmine

On weekends in the Piazza Santo Spirito, market stalls cluster around the square’s fountain. Fresh cheeses, hand-dipped candles, honey, and other seasonal goods are on offer as well as some clothing and household goods. A scant three blocks away in the Piazza del Carmine, vendors offer vintage clothing

and other goods on Sundays. This market is not active in the height of summer, during July and August.

Mercato delle Cascine

If you find yourself in Florence on a Tuesday morning, venture off the beaten track and visit Parco delle Cascine, a huge green space where a large market pops up from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on every Tuesday and, seasonally, on Sundays. An excellent place for bargain hunters, at this market you can find shoes, vegetables, bath mats, or even a dinner jacket for your snooty schnauzer. The park is also a popular place to walk, run, cycle, and dog watch. Pro tip: This is a great place to find hot doughnuts!

Additionally, there are several good vintage shops in the historical center of Florence, including those on Borgo degli Albizi. It’s always a treasure hunt, but some of the stores carry high fashion, haute couture, and fine jewelry as well as the fun, strange, and sometimes bizarre. Just try to avoid the haunted monkeys.

WITCHES’ LADDERS

From *The Spirited Kitchen: Recipes & Rituals for the Wheel of the Year*

by *Carmen Spagnola*

This ritual is a form of knot magic where an intention is methodically bound to a talismanic object. As always, a strong, clear intention strengthens the spell significantly. A charm is spoken for each knot you make.

Distill your intention to a short phrase you can easily remember and repeat. For instance, to call in Persephone, you might say, “I honor you, Persephone. Please be with me

now.” Repeat this as you tie each knot. Or you might have a more elaborate intention such as “This home is filled with love, trust, and harmony. Our bonds are secure. We nurture a culture of repair. We honor each other’s spirit.” For each knot, you’d repeat a key word such as “love,” “harmony,” “secure.” The magic is bound at the end of the working with a declaration such as “And so it is,” or “My word is firm.”

To make your ladder, you’ll need:

- *Twine*
- *Scissors*
- *A few sticks that carry the right energy for your magical working*
- *Corresponding materials, such as flowers and herbs, feathers, antlers, bones, nuts with holes drilled through them, dried apple or orange slices, beads, ribbons in symbolic colors, locks of hair, mementos, or heirlooms*

Tie the sticks together, using either one piece or two parallel lengths of twine, as is your preference. Your correspondences can be threaded onto the twine as you go along, or you can tie all the sticks together for your ladder first, then attach the correspondences after. Hang your ladder to anchor this energy in your space.



Level Up Your KNOT MAGIC

I use a specific knot called the constrictor knot, which is easy, elegant, and very secure. Find a how-to demonstration at Animated Knots (animatedknots.com).



Carmen Spagnola is a Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef turned trauma recovery practitioner, clinical hypnotherapist, and kitchen witch. She is author of The Spirited Kitchen: Recipes & Rituals for the Wheel of the Year, host of the Numinous Podcast, and founder of the Numinous Network, an online learning and support portal for people healing from trauma through a cross-pollination of somatics, attachment theory, and nature-based spirituality. Visit her online at carmenspagnola.com.

THE WITCH BEHIND THE WITCHES

by Briana Saussy

A confession is required before we begin. Although I spent the earliest years of my life creating colorful syllabi on construction paper describing all the magic lessons I would be teaching my rapt audience of stuffed animals, and although I spent many an hour with my (endlessly patient) calico cat encouraging her to balance on the end of a broomstick, I did not have more than a passing familiarity with the stereotypical image of a witch.

I do have a picture of myself dressed up as a witch. It was taken in my maternal grandparents' living room, the heavy, straight-out-of-the-seventies goldenrod polyester curtains providing a suitably mystical background, at least in the mind of my seven-year-old self. In the picture I'm wearing a bright yellow Mexican dress, lushly embroidered with flowers and flowing green vines, the kind of dress I had in every color and wore (along with much of the seven-year-old girl population of San Antonio) throughout the summer. You cannot see my feet in the photo, but I'm willing to lay down serious money that I was wearing one of my beloved pairs of jelly sandals. A fake gold chain encircles my head, and my expression is suitably serious and pensive. This, to my mind, was the epitome of a witch. No warts, no crooked backs or pointing fingers, and not a scrap of black cloth in sight. Thirty-five years later, not that much has changed.

The word *witch* was never a slur to me but nor was it an unqualified compliment. A witch, a *bruja*, was someone, something, more ambiguous than simply good or bad. A witch was someone who might use their knowledge for good or ill, who might cure ... but also curse. Most of all, a witch was someone who had a nuanced, frank, and honest relationship with power. Contrast this to another magical figure in my young life, a *curandera*. These people were (and are) holy. They dealt in the language of curing and healing only. They worked not for personal gain but for the collective good. *Curanderas* also had deep relationships with their power, and that power was always in service to the good.

As I grew up, learned more, made magically minded friends, and started taking on clients for myself, I discovered that the divisions were not quite so stark—even and especially in the community—as I had first thought, but they were (and are) still there.

If *witch* was ambiguous to my young self, magic was not. Magic was everywhere and in everything. Magic was my paternal grandmother lovingly patting her Saint Christopher medallion and talking to him before she revved up her Lincoln ... even to drive five miles to the grocery store or movie theater. It was my maternal grandfather watering his plants while standing barefoot on the earth, talking to barn owls—ghost birds, as his culture thought of them—and showing me where

the horny toad had made a little den for itself in an old rock pile. Magic was my great aunt who always smelled like gardenias and cheese biscuits and a tiny nip of tequila pressing a wishbone into my tiny hand, teaching me how to pull until the crisp snap was heard while we stood in her fragrant log-cabin kitchen. It was my paternal grandfather telling me old Scottish stories like “Tam Lin” and my maternal grandmother making sure I knew by heart all the best Bible verses, beginning with a full memorization of the twenty-third Psalm. Magic is and was my mother teaching me the names of plants as she shamelessly filches seeds and cuttings from front yards and graveyards alike or picks up dead and broken animals from the middle of the highway to give them a proper burial. It is my father telling me to find work that makes me happy and only after that, makes money. This was the magic I was taught and lived next to day in and day out, and so my brain made the logical connection that the sources of this magic—grandparents, aunts, and parents—were the witches I knew best.

My witches were as far as you could get from the short, twisted, squat, hairy, squawking, cackling, wart-nosed, black-clothed, and finger-pointing varieties with their chicken-footed houses, fang-filled mouths, and endless hunger for children. Or were they?

I first encountered the character of the more stereotypical witch in stories, the fairy tales and myths that were both read and told by heart to me. Later I discovered the image of these types of witches in books and film. While this witch did not feel anything like the witches I was accustomed to, I was fascinated by her ... and it was almost always a her ... nonetheless. In my growing years I came to understand that the stereotypical witch was not descended from a single image but rather a chimera of images cobbled together through literature and fear, in large part as an effort to explain why magic and power, especially in the hands of women, were not to be trusted.

The witch's bent and twisted shape and wild cackle bring to mind her shape-shifting abilities and underscore her relationship to animals and the natural world. Yet her penchant for devouring children marks her as unnatural, un-feminine; it runs counter to the idea and ideal of women as bearing and nurturing children. Her appetite, often alluded to in terms of sexual desire, reaffirms the norm that power not be made available to women, or those of a lower class, those who look, speak, smell, or think differently, because they wouldn't know how to wield it correctly. Even the witch's pointed finger brings to mind the untactful bluntness of someone who has not been raised to have nice manners, someone raised out of civilization—the rudeness of pointing being one of the first things we teach young children even to this day.

This image of the witch moved me, spoke to me, because I could see her in my witches. She was the witch behind the



Major Andre's Tree, from *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1928), by Arthur Rackham

witches in my life. Not her physical form. My witches wore embroidered blouses and silver jewelry and spectacles and pearls. They carried briefcases that matched their boots and black church purses full of everything you might need during a long, boring service: tissues, Vicks vapor rub, and Sucrets. My witches drove pickup trucks and old brown Chevrolets and had heavy turquoise and silver rings on their earth-loving fingers ... which they did, and sometimes still do, point.

So, no, I did not see her form, but I felt her force. I felt her

speaking through the women and the men in my life who whispered their own spells over my head: Be safe, be brave, find your own way, know your power inside and out, own it, speak with it, write with it ... do this for yourself and your babies and for all of us who could not ... because we didn't look right or sound right or speak right or smell right. Do it for us too. And so I do, and so I have, and so I shall. May it be so for all of us.



Briana Saussy is an author, storyteller, teacher, spiritual counselor, and founder of the Sacred Arts Academy, where she teaches magic, divination, ceremony and other sacred arts for everyday life. She is the author of *Making Magic: Weaving Together the Everyday and the Extraordinary*, and *Star Child: Joyful Parenting Through Astrology*. See more at brianasaussy.com.

FROM OUR READERS

FOR THIS ISSUE WE ASKED OUR READERS: WHY DO WE FIND WITCHES SO ALLURING?

Witches are so alluring because they are the epitome of personal freedom. Witches don't follow the crowds—they are their own people. Magic and flight, divination, talking to animals ... a witch's powers are limited only by our imaginations.

—@thepracticalescapist

What I love about witches is that they take matters into their own hands, be it healing herbs or banishing spells. Independent to the core, charting the course of their own lives, choosing their own path through the woods. The time of the witch has come again, the wheel has turned, the clock struck three. Women (and some men) have cast off the yoke of patriarchy and modern society, choosing the old ways. I encourage everyone who wishes to be free to join us...

—Heather S.

Because they remind us that, once before, we could be whoever and whatever we wanted to be without consequence—that we could empower ourselves and that we could find the magic in life that so many overlook.

—@neverlands.fallen.star

It's the inherent power! Drawing it from within themselves, not relying on anyone else, usually not answering to anyone else either. —@mylife4thelore

Why do we find witches so alluring? Because with magic comes power. —*Andrea Ritchie*

I think I've always found witches to be alluring since it made me believe that magic could be a part of my everyday world. As a kid, witches in books were who I wanted to be; as an adult I can see magic in the littlest everyday things.

—@djs_wildflower

We find witches alluring because they do not ask permission. —@stingrae2007

For me, I believe it is the feeling and sense of freedom that I find so alluring about witches. They color outside the cultural lines and are not bound by the tenets of society that most of us find ourselves trapped in.

—*Jillian Homen*

Witches are the guardians and gatekeepers of musings, melodies, mushrooms, mythologies, and magics. —@velvetglamgirl82

Witches create their own everything.

—*Lisa J. Cannon*

Often we are drawn to and allured by witches because they represent female power in a world where we as females don't always feel powerful.

—@cbrooks1010

Women find them alluring because they are (for the most part) independent women with power! It scares the sh*t out of the patriarchy! —@each.of.these

We are mysterious, we have inner strength, we are able to manifest what we need, and we always have an herb, potion, or spell for that ... —*Jessica Blessing*

Unlike their counterpart, the princess, the witch is powerful, resourceful, independent, and needs no prince to rescue her. She's a survivor and the heroine of her story. She has mastered the ability to commune with nature. She respects the earth and offers gratitude when using nature's bounties for healing and enhancing her abilities. She speaks the same language as the animals and is able to engage their energies. Her beauty rests in her higher power, in her soul. She walks with an air of authority. Although not evil, she is a force to be reckoned with! She is what we all aspire to be. The powerful feminine force that resides in all of us. —*Kelley Mulick*

They represent female empowerment.

—@thebookpriestessreads

I feel the allure is the interwoven combination of (1) endless possibilities, (2) seemingly having a sense of control, and (3) a touch of mystery. The stuff of magic.

—*Chrys O'Brien*

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