

ENCHANTED LIVING



ISSUE NO. 65 WINTER 2023

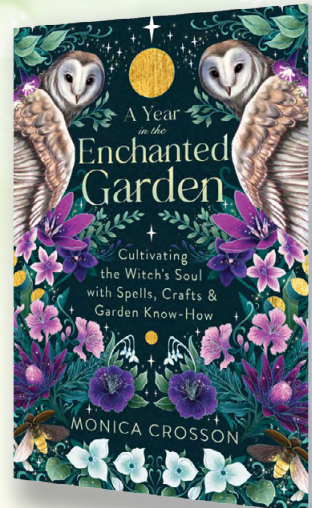
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— THE YEAR OF THE WITCH —
The **WINTER WITCH** *Issue*

A Year of Enchantment

WITH LLEWELLYN



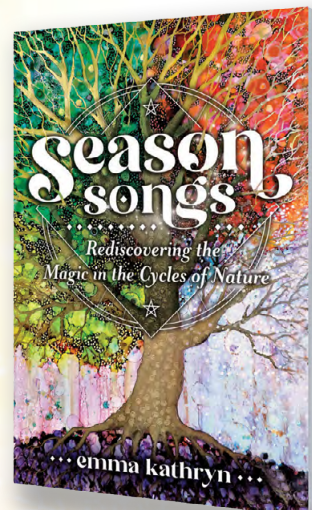
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The Snow Queen (1911), from Hans Christian Andersen, with illustrations by Edmund Dulac



Here, finally, is our winter issue, the last in our yearlong homage to witches. We began last spring with an exuberant cover girl in pink and green, then carried through summer with sister witches dancing around a bonfire, and blazed into autumn with flaming-haired twins. Now we have come to a more quiet scene and season: Under a full moon, a solitary witch with starlight hair holds a jar that manifests all her desires.

Open the cover and discover much more: A Viking *völva* grips her long iron staff and prophesies by Freyja’s will. La Befana takes her broom and sweeps out remnants of the past year. The crones of winter join you for Yuletide, at a table with a nice red cloth and some evergreen boughs. And so on, throughout these pages.

It’s winter now. Or, as Theodora Goss puts it on page 25, it’s “a time for dreaming, whether with your eyes open or closed—for doing the interior work that does not get done during the more active parts of the year.”

The earth is quiet, covered in ice and snow and frost, but underneath the ground the roots of the trees are working, growing, twisting, preparing for spring. “Winter is the time of rest,” Alise Marie says on page 100, “but it is also a prime time for *plotting*.” For writing poems, for curating enchanted playlists, for creating home sanctuaries, for being our most dazzling, powerful selves. This is what this magic is all about, right? Remembering who we are, who we’ve always been, and tapping into, as Veronica Varlow says on page 29, “the unique and beautiful power of your own magic as we’ve journeyed through the wheel of the seasons.” Our year of the witch has been all about that journey, getting in touch with and celebrating all of our most dazzling, ferocious selves—and all of our sisters—throughout time: now and in the past and in the future.

Next year we’ll return to a variety of themes (though we’ll continue to glory in all things witchly). In the spring we’ll celebrate the art and magic of books; in the summer we’ll luxuriate in flora and fauna; next fall we’ll praise autumn queens; and in the winter we’ll revel like it’s 1499. But we hope that this year, the year of the witch, will continue to nurture you ... and that you’ll come back to it when you need to remind yourself how magical you are and have always been.

Love,
Carolyn Furzeon

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ISSUE 65 | Winter

FICTION, POETRY & ESSAYS



40 • AN ODE TO CIRCE
by Yinsey Wang

49 • WRITING POETRY INTO DARKNESS
by Robin Gow

50 • ELDER MOTHER
by Ali English
Illustration by Rachel Oakes



58 • MAGICAL WINTER WEAR
by Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman
Photo by Priscilla Hernandez

63 • SHAPING THE FUTURE WITH FREYJA
by Gina Spriggs

85 • TO GROW A WITCH
by Ember Markussen
Vintage illustration by Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

96 • WINDWITCH
by Katharyn Howd Machan
Art by Ivan Bilibin

97 • SIX BIRDS ONE WAY, THREE THE OTHER
by Katharyn Howd Machan
Art by Ivan Bilibin

HOME, FASHION & BEAUTY

32 • AT HOME: WINTER WONDER
by Rona Berg

33 • WITCH BALLS
by *The Witch and the Goddess*

70 • THINGS WE LOVE
Erika Leahey

89 • THINGS WE LOVE
Val Gleason



52 • CREATING A SANCTUARY AT HOME
by Imogen Dalton
Photography by Sarajane Corani



90 • THE WITCHES WHO RULE THROUGH WINTER
by Susann Cokal
Art by Ed Org and Debra McFarlane



98 • WINTER BEAUTY MAGIC
by Alise Marie, *The Beauty Witch*®

SPECIAL FEATURES

24 • THE WITCH IN WINTER
by Theodora Goss
Photography by Mike Shane



36 • THE ENCHANTED PLAYLIST
by Nathan Kotecki
Illustrations by Steve Parke

42 • CATCHING THE MOON
by Kambriel. Photography by Ronald L. Sowers

46 • LA BEFANA
by Regina M. Hansen
Art by Erika Leahey

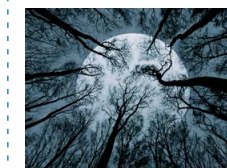
60 • WOMEN OF THE IRON WAND
by Susann Cokal

64 • A YEAR IN THE ENCHANTED GARDEN
by Monica Crosson
Photography by Alexandria Corne

71 • FIRE BURN AND CAULDRON BUBBLE
by Kirsty Stonell Walker

74 • BABA YAGA'S GINGERBREAD HUT
by Must Love Herbs

82 • SOUL + SELENE
by Carolyn Turgeon
Photography by Ken Miner



104 • COYOTE SEASON
by Briana Sausy

COLUMNS

9 • ICY WINTER MAGIC
by Susann Cokal

29 • LIFE OF A LOVE WITCH
by Veronica Varlow

106 • FROM OUR READERS



10 • OUR COVER STORY: A SOLITARY WITCH
by Carolyn Turgeon
Photography by Steve Parke



78 • THE WITCH OF THE WINTER WOODS
by Brittani Jenee' Cal
Art by Jana Heidersdorf



86 • CRAFTING A MAGICAL YULE LOG
by Susan Ilka Tuttle

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Enchanted Living's Winter Witch Issue



Brittani Jenee' Cal

Brittani Jenee' Cal (she/her) is a multiracial writer, poet, and performer originally from Nevada, where she fell in love with the mountains and desert sunsets. She has a B.A. in English and creative writing with an emphasis in poetry and is in her last year of Emerson College's popular fiction writing and publishing M.F.A. program. After spending five magical years in Okinawa, Japan, she moved to Suffolk, England, where she currently resides. When her muses aren't taking her calls, she seeks inspiration by birdwatching, forest bathing, and stargazing. Regarding the theme of this issue, she says, "To anyone who has ever been lost in the winter woods, never forget: There is magic burning brightly inside you."



Monica Crosson

Monica Crosson is a witch and writer who lives in a cottage in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. If she's not hiking mountain trails, she's tending her garden or hugging old-growth trees in the rainforests. She's the author of *The Magical Family*, *Wild Magical Soul*, and the soon-to-be-released *A Year in the Enchanted Garden*, all published by Llewellyn Worldwide, and contributes to many other Llewellyn publications. About her latest tome, which is excerpted in this issue, she writes: "Together we'll celebrate the dawn with salutations, harness magical energy at midday, dance with fairies at twilight, and cast spells under a full moon."



Jana Heidersdorf

Jana Heidersdorf is a fantasy and horror illustrator from Germany, uniting her love for nature, books, and the otherworldly in her work. Her ethereal artworks are a blend of traditional and digital techniques, starting with pencil drawings and ending with digital collage or even weird doll sculptures. Despite the variety in style and media, a dark fairy-tale sensibility and penchant for moody textures weaves like a golden thread through her art. "Hans Christian Andersen's Snow Queen is a recurring subject in my work," she says, referring to her pieces in this issue. "She has haunted me since childhood." Her book on mermaids was recently published by Eye of Newt Books.



Nathan Kotecki

Nathan Kotecki is a writer, visual artist, and creative who lives in Durham, North Carolina. His alter ego, 20th Century Boy, is a resident DJ at the Wicked Witch in Raleigh, where he spins all-vinyl dark-alternative sets a few times a month. Lately his favorite enchanted playlist has been an exotic ethereal instrumental mix he uses for yoga sessions. Writing "The Enchanted Playlist" for this issue, he says, was a lovely opportunity to praise so many artists and songs he's loved for most of his life. "I wanted to focus on the idea that sound is just as important a source of enchantment as the other senses," he says. His third novel, *My Love for You Will Still Be Strong* was released last fall.



Steve Parke

Our photo editor Steve Parke is an award-winning illustrator and photographer whose work has appeared in publications like *Time*, *People Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *Style*, *Vogue*, and, of course, *Enchanted Living*. His book *Picturing Prince* was published in 2017. Of his cover shoot with Rachael Platt, he says, "There was a hill near my house that had a lone tree on it. I thought it would be amazing as a backdrop, so we waited until the sun went down. We also photographed her in a local river. She was incredibly daring and got into very cold water to bring some water-spell ideas to life!" Parke also illustrated Nathan Kotecki's article as a tribute to the art of Aubrey Beardsley.



Yinsey Wang

Yinsey Wang is an occasional self-portrait artist, model, writer, and costumer based in England. Although she's a full-time lawyer, Wang loves getting creative when she can. A massive fan of *Enchanted Living*, she's overjoyed to be in these pages focusing on witchcraft, magic, and powerful beings, and her article and self-portraiture center on the complex character of the sorceress Circe. Fascinated with folklore, mythology, and fairy tales, Wang loves delving into the ways iconic female characters have been portrayed (often by men!) and seeing how they can be reinvented or reinterpreted for a new audience.

ICY WINTER MAGIC

by Susann Cokal

Winter magic is about reinvention. When you cozy up for the dark months, your magic is about cleansing your spirit, settling your relationships, crafting a new happiness.

Snow and ice combine the cleansing, life-giving properties of water with the energy focus of crystals. Their natural transitions through melting and freezing promote other magical transformations.

The way you gather your materials will have an impact on the type of spell you cast: For calming energy, collect snow soon after it stops falling. Avoid packing it tightly. And if you need an awesome super-blast of wintry power, collect during a storm or blizzard. (But be careful—those winds are dangerous!)

- * To free yourself of anger, jealousy, or misplaced affection: Activate the crystals in snow by moonlight or sunlight by rubbing them between your hands. Form the snow into a loose ball and whisper the name of the bad feeling (or bad person) you want to be rid of, then bring it inside, set it in a bowl, and watch the negative energy melt away. You can give the spell an extra boost by pouring the water into your favorite potted plant and letting it help a good thing grow.
- * To attract the love of someone who is cold to you, harvest the biggest icicle you can find. Add something that belongs to the person, if you have such an item; otherwise write their name down and wind it around the base of the icicle. Take it to bed and hold it in your arms. You'll melt that cold heart in no time.
- * To freeze someone out of your life or just put a relationship on hold for a while: Write the name of the bothersome person on a slip of paper, then pack it into a snowball (as tight as you like!), or freeze it in a bowl of water. You can keep the person on ice by transferring everything to your freezer, but eventually the magic will start to fade, so it might be wise to deal with your emotions sooner than later.
- * Any spell for which you need a poppet can be worked with a snow woman or snowman. Snow poppets are especially good for white magic of transformation: Give the figure your own name, for example, and decorate it to represent the qualities you want to develop in yourself—make it stand straight for confidence, give it a smile for happiness, put a coin in its pocket to bring prosperity. As the figure melts, your magic and intentions water the earth, and they will become part of your personal landscape.
- * Try this even if you don't live in a snowy clime: For good luck and prosperity, fluff up your feather pillows and duvet until the down floats like snowflakes. Announce out loud that the white storm is for Frau Holle (or Hulda, Holla, etc.), also known as the Dark Godmother or White Lady. She is a witchy Germanic goddess who spins and weaves, sometimes flies about on a broomstick, and welcomes the spirits of children who have died young. When she makes her bed, the feathers reach the earth as snow; she rewards mortal feather flurries with golden coins.
- * For the simplest cleansing of all, write the word for your negative emotion in the snow. As the sun melts the word *envy* (for example), it lifts the monsters out of your heart.

A SOLITARY WITCH

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

When we first discussed doing a photo shoot with ceramicist Rachael Platt, she said, “For some reason I cannot get out of my brain a scene where a single figure is holding a lit manifesting jar, and an array of illuminated jars surrounds them. Their face or form is illuminated by the candlelight and the full moon above them—almost like an action shot of something super-magical occurring, a glimpse into a manifesting ritual ceremony.”

We loved this idea for the cover of our Winter Witch issue, the last in our special yearlong witch series and the perfect moment for manifesting all your intentions and dreams and desires, right in time for the new year. The manifesting jar is, Platt explains, a ritual magic tool to help the user focus their intent, home in on their motivations and desires, and then release this energy out into the world—while also containing that energy in their sacred space. Yes, please!

So Platt and Steve Parke met one night under a full moon, and they created the cover to this issue. They met again in the forest and by the river to create the enchanting images that follow.

You might recall Platt from our 2019 witch issue, where we featured the handmade ceramics she creates through One:Eleven Pottery. We showcase them again here, beautiful objects that can be used for everyday rituals or magic—if there is even a distinction. “There is magic inherent in the mundane,” Platt says. “I feel that even the simplest practice of morning coffee in and of itself is a magic ritual.”

We love this about witchery: The brooms, the cups, the jars, the herbs, and the rocks that could not be more commonplace are the simplest tools for the most gorgeous magic.

Below, we ask Platt about her latest work and these images.

Enchanted Living: Can you tell us about the manifesting jars and how they work?

Rachael Platt: The jars function as a means to physically assign and contain personal objects of power, energetically sealing the intentions of the user within the vessel and thereby helping them to focus and anchor their thoughts, visions, and dreams. You can transfer the spiritual energies you collect and organize and reinforce them in the physical world.

The jar is a ritual tool. Its magic can be as simple or complex as you desire it to be. The first step is to fill it with artifacts, herbs, crystals, or other meaningful objects that resonate with one’s identity and the goal at hand. You are collecting energies to be focused. Then, the user sets a candle at the top and allows the wax to drip and melt onto the lid, the entrance of the vase, thus

sealing it closed and further focusing or harnessing the energies. When the manifestation is complete or the goal no longer serves, it is simply a matter of breaking the wax and starting again.

And one of the best parts of the object: It is completely reusable for as long as the user wishes. The vessel can be washed, spiritually cleansed, and fixed again with new intentions for many years to come.

EL: Why did you start making them?

RP: I started to make them for myself in private rituals because I found a need to contain manifestation energy in my own life. I wanted a way to focus my thoughts and direct them in a more purposeful fashion.

I feel as though sharing this tool with others, giving them a physical reminder of their desires and dreams that is not simply a one-use object, is an ideal way to spread intentionality and awareness. I have had a jar of my own in my sacred space for almost a decade now.

EL: What can you share about the power of wishing and manifesting?

RP: I think on my pottery name, One:Eleven, and the ideas behind numerology—repeating numbers, repeating energy, and the power inherent in continuously imbuing the manifest goal with power. One can create their own reality with their thoughts and intentions. This is the magic inherent in my energy work with ceramics.

EL: Tell me about the shoot and images here. How do they celebrate solitary elemental witchcraft?

RP: It was incredible to work with Steve Parke and depict some of the very essence of my beliefs, visions, and inspirations. We focused on capturing forest scenes, trees, rushing rivers, and the moon. A lone figure both interacting and merging with the natural world around her is very much the basis of my artwork and spiritual craft. Witchcraft is a solitary experience, where one focuses on their place in the natural world, celebrating the old gods and the land around them. To me, the slumbering landscape of winter has always been a metaphor for a harnessed power within—cooled and peaceful, collecting energy until one is ready to release it with the abundance and promise of spring.

EL: The cover image was taken under a full moon. Can you talk about lunar phases and how the full moon pertains to you and the manifesting jars?



PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE PARKE



RP: Doing manifesting work under specific moon cycles can be profound and very powerful. The full moon is arguably the most potent time for spell work because of the energetic ferocity. If you are looking for the perfect moment for your wish jar, this is it. The image I am depicted in represents just that—a harnessing of elemental, seasonal, and cyclical manifestation energy.

EL: Can you say more about what you do and the vision behind your work?

RP: I create art with care and magical intent. I am thinking of the lovely humans who will use my work as I make it. It is an intentional, energetic process, both spiritually and physically. I have some methods that will always remain private, but I can say that clay inherently is magic.

My vision is to bring to you objects and experiences that elevate your rituals, whether they be daily sips of coffee or more profound energy work in your sacred space. I pour a lot of myself into each piece, and I think when you hold them, you can feel me in the work. That's my one true goal: a deep connection distilled and permanently affixed to stone.

EL: Do you have anything to say about winter witchcraft in general ?

RP: Winter witchcraft to me has always been an inward practice: of solitude, self-work, self-reflection, dreaming of the days ahead and what one wants to focus on and manifest for themselves. The murmur of the earth beneath the snow. You can take the time to slowly muster what is necessary to take on the rest of the seasons and their high energetic flow. I always find winter to be a time to dive deep into shadow work: communing with yourself, the

dark side, the dark days, and transmuting that energy to again accumulate and later reap the harvest of rest and self-reflection.

EL: Do you have any special connection to winter?

RP: Wintry scenes have always had a huge impact on my work, especially in clay. I have always had an interest in depicting the viny, bare-tree, or woodland scene, and I've been particularly interested in winter for the past twelve years. Winter trees resonate because of visceral and recurring dreams I have about tree spirits, my love of the remaining wilds of the world, and deep appreciation for spiritual interpretations of trees from a variety of cultures and religions.

One of my favorite ideas is that the tree serves as a ladder to descend from or ascend into a variety of spiritual worlds. Trees are portals of sorts, aged wizened grandparents watching over us on the physical plane. The wintry, bare, exposed tree speaks to me perhaps because I appreciate the slumbering form of its full splendor. The gnarled roots and twisting branches speak of years withstanding the elements, a map of time, motion, surviving.

EL: How do you stay enchanted?

RP: I stay enchanted by continuously educating myself in all things that resonate with me spiritually, including the ceramic arts, folklore, and the natural world. Paying attention to my responses to just about everything in life, whether it's a new book, or a conversation, or a photograph, can be a doorway to better understanding and a deeper connection.

Follow Rachael Platt on Instagram @oneelevenpottery and find her work on Etsy at etsy.com/shop/oneelevenpottery.



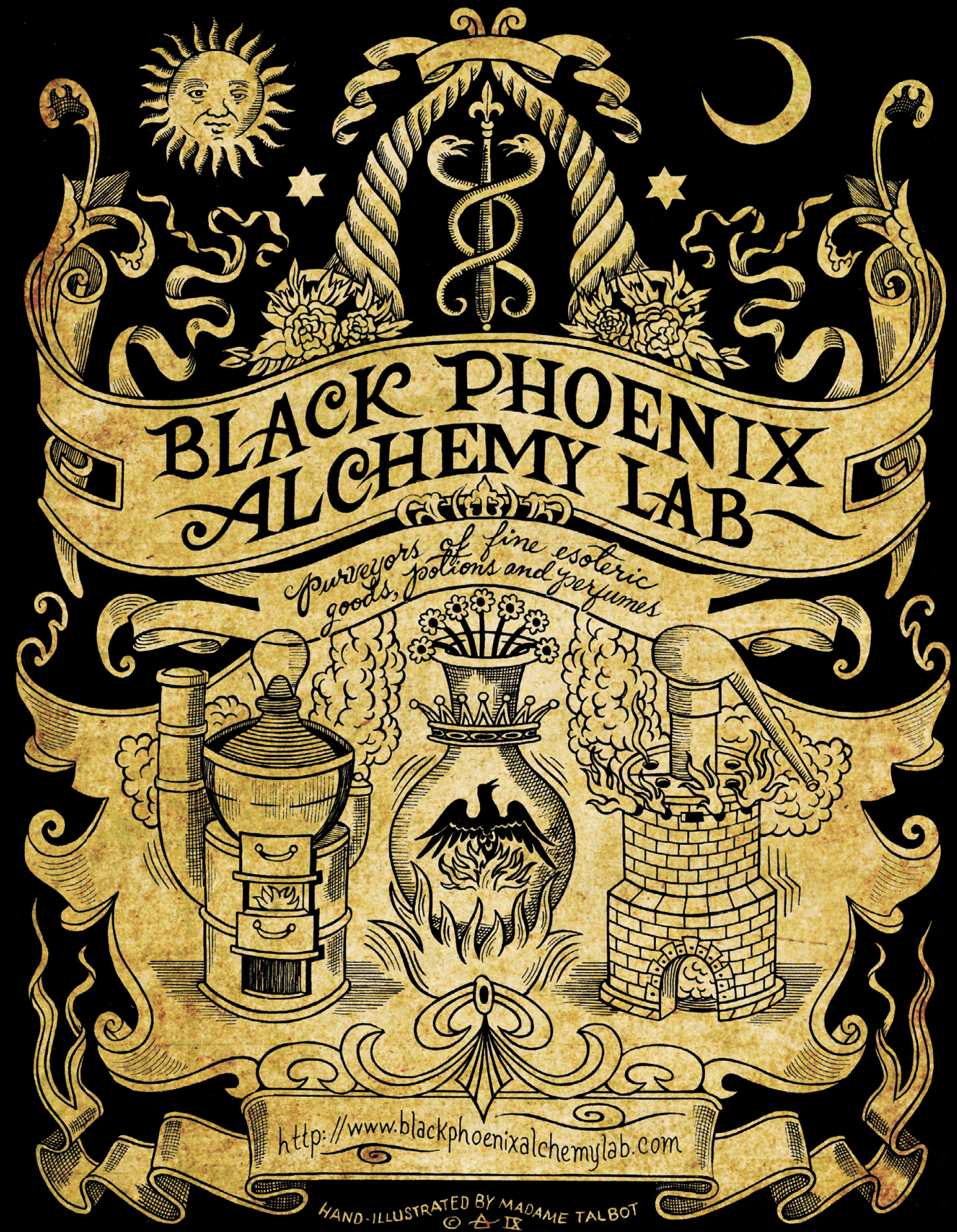




*We love this about witchery: The brooms,
the cups, the jars, the herbs, the rocks that
could not be more mundane and are the
simplest tools for the most gorgeous magic.*









THE WITCH IN WINTER

by Theodora Goss

Photography by Mike Shane with Sage Sovereign

The temperature has dropped, and you've taken out all your cozy sweaters. Each morning the edges of the leaves are rimed with frost. The grass crunches under your boots. Soon, any day now, snow will start falling in large, soft flakes, each one as different as a fingerprint.

It's time to put the garden to sleep. In autumn, you gathered the large red hips of the wild roses and all the sour little crab apples not eaten by the birds. You turned them into jams and jellies that shine like rubies and garnets in the winter sunlight. Bundles of herbs are drying in your kitchen, hanging from the rafters—the air smells like lavender and sage and thyme.

You gathered in all the sweetness of summer. There are cut-glass bottles of sunlight in your pantry and skeins of fluffy white clouds in your knitting basket, waiting to be wound into balls so you can knit hats for two little girls who live down the street. You're planning to make them with floppy ears, so Sofia and Svetlana will hear what the sky is saying. In the drawer of your work desk, you have small cardboard boxes, the kind used for matches, filled with the buzzing of bees, assorted birdsong, and the sound of water dripping down a rain pipe. There is no water dripping now—everything is already frozen, and when you step outside, your breath is a white mist on the cold air.

Cordelia the cat is curled by the fire—or Solomon the snake, or whatever kind of familiar you have to help with your potions and spells, because every witch needs a familiar. It could be a black poodle named Mephistopheles. Whatever-it-is says, in a sensible, sarcastic voice, “Aren't you done preparing for winter yet?”

Because winter is here, and all the hopes of spring, the preparations of summer, the gathering in of autumn have come to this: The rows of tinctures and creams in your workshop. The notebook of new spells gathered from various magical conferences and the classes you taught on witchcraft at the local community college, where you are now an adjunct professor of magic (“Don't let it get to your head,” says Cordelia or Solomon or Mephistopheles). The ideas for magical objects to create jotted down in almost illegible cursive:

A mirror that lets you see the happiest day of your childhood.

A tea that lets you get a full nine hours of sleep.

A soap that washes away sorrow.

There is still so much to do—final orders to fulfill from your Etsy business before you close up shop for the winter months, wood to stack in the woodshed, and of course the garden. It needs to be tucked in, just like a child. Before the snow comes, you will pull a blanket of oak leaves over it, to protect the roots of the rosebushes and the bulbs waiting under the ground. You imagine what they will look like in spring: first the snowdrops

and grape hyacinths, then the daffodils, and then tulips, if the rabbits haven't eaten them first—pink tulips shaped like trumpets and the dark purple variety called Queen of the Night. You still have things to do, lists to make, an attic that needs cleaning ...

Seriously, stop. Winter is a time for resting and dreaming. Even your broom, which soared through the sky in autumn, carrying you to the moon or the farmers market, is yawning its bristles off. Sit down in your favorite chair, draw one of those cozy sweaters more closely around you, and make a final list, this time of everything you're accomplished.

It's been such a wonderful year. Like every year, it's had its sorrows (which is why the world needs that soap) but also its joys. You've learned some things, like how to talk to the wolves in the local wildlife sanctuary—you're not very good at wolf, but you're getting better. You've practiced some other things, like drawing insects and butterflies. Witches need to understand the world, and what better way than by observing it closely and trying to capture it in colored pencils? Next spring, you'll try watercolors. You've met some fascinating people, like the students in your classes and the witchy sisterhood at various conventions, including in Iceland, where you met—you're pretty sure you met—an actual troll. You spent time with the librarian at your local library, the barista at the local coffee shop, and the neighborhood squirrels.

Look, Mephistopheles is tugging at your sweater ... Seriously, aren't you ready yet?

Finish your final chores. Check on the house ghosts and make sure they're warm enough. Will they be comfortable up in the attic, among the boxes of clothes from your mother and grandmother, three generations of witches? Sometimes they like to come out and haunt you dressed as flappers from the 1920s. Do they need some blankets to cuddle under, or are their sheets enough? Do the toads and snails in the garden have winter homes? Has the fox that sometimes visits made herself a warm burrow? Do you have enough suet and seeds for the birds that are overwintering, the juncos and chickadees? Remember to put a heater in the birdbath so they have fresh water when the temperature drops below freezing. Check on the human inhabitants of your neighborhood: the Patels and Kowalskis; the Huang sisters, who are retired seamstresses and helped you so much with your Halloween costume; the Smiths and Khans and De La Rosas. Make sure old Mrs. Lollobrigida, who is almost eighty-five, has put in her storm windows. Being a witch doesn't just mean knowing and making things—it means taking care, paying attention, remembering what other people forget, whether that's a recipe for goulash or the needs of a widow living by herself.



Say goodbye to the geese that are leaving for winter. “Are you sure you don’t want to come with us?” they will call. But you have a pile of wood for the fireplace, a warm chair to curl up in, and books waiting for you—not academic books, not for winter, but the many-colored fairy books by Andrew Lang, starting with *The Blue Fairy Book*. Maybe you’ll rewrite all the fairy tales with witches in them. Maybe in your version the witch will save Snow White from marrying a materialistic prince, help Rapunzel become an herbalist, or make a foster home for Hansel and Gretel in the woods. The fairy-tale writers didn’t really understand witches, who are fundamentally *caretakers*. A witch would have woken the Sleeping Beauty, made sure she brushed her teeth, and helped her with college applications. Also, she would have pruned those poor rosebushes.

Later, when the year turns, there will be a celebration of Yuletide, with pine boughs and holly wreaths and the Mediaeval Baebes on the CD player. You’ll invite all the neighbors over for hot cider and your favorite gingerbread, made with real chopped

ginger. But right now, the house is quiet. The world outside is also quiet, and look—great fat flakes of snow have started to fall. There is a cup of chamomile tea by your elbow, and Solomon has curled around your ankle. He is snoring in his sleep.

It’s winter, a time for dreaming, whether with your eyes open or closed—for doing the interior work that does not get done during the more active parts of the year. Sit back, take a sip of tea, and rest now.



Theodora Goss is the World Fantasy, Locus, and Mythopoeic Award-winning author or editor of eleven books, including the short-story and poetry collections The Collected Enchantments and Snow White Learns Witchcraft, as well as 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.

Find photographer Mike Shane’s work at mikeshanephotography.com. Follow Sage Sovereign on Instagram @sagesovereign or at sagesovereign.com.



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VERONICA VARLOW

Life of a Love Witch

 In the full moon, you receive a tea-stained scroll wrapped in red silk ribbon on your doorstep. You tug the ribbon and the cream-colored page unfurls, revealing vibrant pink ink: Your presence and magic are requested at the Winter Witch Camp Bonfire. You gather your things and drape yourself in a luxurious deep red cloak. The winter winds dance along its edges as you walk the stone pathway to a warm, crackling fire. A warm mug of hot apple cider with cinnamon sticks is placed in your hands as all of us welcome you.

Here we are all together at the final initiation of the year.

This was all meant to be, and you are exactly where you are meant to be in this very moment.

The purpose of these initiations we've been practicing together on the pages of *Enchanted Living* has been to tap into the unique and beautiful power of your own magic as we've journeyed through the wheel of the seasons.

The chilly days of winter provide us those moments inside to slow down and reflect.

Many tales and stories about this time involve looking at the past, present, and future. One classic story that comes to mind is Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" and its ghosts of Christmas Past, Future, and Present. This theme rings especially true to us during the holidays, which remind us of past times we cherished as we celebrate our lives today, and also inspire us to look toward the future—and what we want to create in it—as the new year approaches.

And now, for our final winter witch initiation, here is an invitation to honor your own story. As we honor our stories, we give love to the past, present, and

future versions of ourselves. This is a powerful way to end this year and start the new one off with clarity, with passion, and with purpose.

So let's take a moment to visit with Past You, to honor Present You, and to make delicious plans for Future You.

YOUR WINTER WITCH INITIATION RITUAL

- You will need:**
- A physical photo of you as a child*
 - A physical photo of you in the present*
 - 3 pieces of paper*
 - A pen that you love to write with*
 - A 4-by-6-inch picture frame*
 - Matches*
 - 3 tea lights*
 - 3 teaspoons of calendula*
 - 3 teaspoons of rosemary*
 - 3 teaspoons of lavender*

A Special Note

I recognize that there's some work to this initiation (finding old and current pictures and taking the time to print them out if need be, as well as writing thoughtful letters and claiming words), but I assure you that *the work you put into it will equal the result you get out of it.*

Crafting a spell in the physical world by printing out photos instead of just using them on your device makes a spell tangible and much more powerful. We're sensual creatures, and to be able to hold a photo in our hands and light a candle in front of it without the glare of electronic light from a phone is important. I understand that it takes more time and work to do this, but it's called witchcraft for a reason. Your magical intention creates the solid foundation, and the "crafting" part of it weaves your unique power to the spell.

That's what makes it work.

I share this spell with you as the final seasonal initiation because when I created a version of it over a decade ago, it pointed me in the direction of my truest life purpose. I share this story and these words in the deepest hope that you also gain clarity, confidence, and purpose from working this magic. I believe in you!

Gathering Your Spell Items

In this spell, you'll be working with photos of Past You and Present You. It's important that you connect with the memory or feeling in both photos, so choose wisely! When you look at them, you want them to generate feelings of happiness, of fun, of confidence, of playfulness, of mirroring the true core You!

For example, I chose for my spell a photo of me when I was in the Brownies, which is part of the Girl Scouts of America. I remember being so proud to be a Brownie: to learn about animals, plants, and trees; to learn how to volunteer and help the community; and to sing songs and be a part of something that felt really good. Although the picture is blurry and my eyes are squinting in the sun, I remember the moment this photo was taken, feeling so confident and strong in my uniform. One of the few physical objects from childhood that wasn't lost to me in a 2011 house fire is my beloved Brownie headband. I would wear that all the time when I wasn't in my uniform. I found meaning and purpose in the troupe as a seven-year-old girl. This photo is how I choose to honor Past Me because the Brownies were a pivotal part of my life. When I chose it for this spell when I first performed it, it changed the outcome of my life.



For your Present You photo, choose an image that really captures you in a real moment. I realized lately that so many of my photos feel posed for the internet, and I'm consciously moving away from that. My favorite photos of me are the ones where I'm laughing or crinkling up my face—smiling or being caught unaware in a moment that is real and deep. These are the ones that exude the essence of the real me. Choose a photo that illuminates a piece of your beautiful soul.

For my Present Me photo, I chose a photo of me and Ninety at Witch Camp. Every year, we throw our heads back and howl together at the start and end of camp. It is the moment when we call in our wild souls and give them permission to express themselves in a safe space in the community of Witch Camp. This photo was a deep and meaningful moment in time, and it represents the person I am today.

Remember how I said that choosing my Past Me photo changed the course of my life? Thirteen years ago, as I was doing the original version of this spell, I realized in looking at my Brownie photo that I was feeling sad because I wasn't that age anymore and couldn't participate in the Girl Scouts or Brownies. Suddenly a bolt of inspiration

struck me, and that's when I created Witch Camp: the magic version of the Brownies for adults! My Present Me photo is carrying on Past Me's love and legacy and bringing that beautiful community to the present.

The reason I'm sharing these stories with you is because I know that when you take the time and energy to pick the right photos that speak to you, magic happens. Now let's begin our spell!

YOUR WINTER WITCH INITIATION RITUAL

To begin, you want to create a living altar somewhere safe in your space where you can see it for a cycle of twenty-one days, preferably as our current year is passing into the new year. It is said that it takes twenty-one days to make a habit stick, and by seeing this altar and lighting candles before it for twenty-one days, you'll really set a solid foundation for your year. If you like working with the new moon, I would suggest beginning on December 12, 2023, and continuing until January 2, 2024. Also, it should be noted that if this article finds you after the dates I have specified here, it is appropriate to do this spell over the course of twenty-one days any time that feels right to you as the year is going through a transition.

Setup

Place your Past You photo to the left with an unlit tea light before it. Then place your Present You photo in the center with an unlit tea light before it. Then take the manufacturer's paper out of the picture frame (you will be using that) and set the picture frame to the right with an unlit tea light before it. Now you're ready to begin.

The Spell

- Gather your calendula, lavender, and rosemary and sprinkle the mix in front of your altar around the photos and the picture frame and the tea lights. Repeat this incantation three times with a strong and clear voice:

*Past, present, and future,
I gather herbs of three.
Rosemary I scatter
To remember Little Me.
I add a pinch of lavender
To calm and now empower.
Present Me is brave and bold
In this magick hour.
Calendula brings joy and sunshine
To illuminate Future Me.
I honor all the days of my story
In love, so mote it be.*

- Now it is time to turn to your Past You photo. Take three deep breaths and feel them coming through to the you in the photo. Strike the match and light the tea light. Repeat this incantation three times with a strong and clear voice:
*Little Me, I call upon you.
I honor you on this day.
May my child self guide me,
For I know you know the way.
Blessings to you always;
I hold you in my heart—
I keep you alive in joy and wonder
And never shall we part.*

- The incantation you just spoke opens a portal to Past You, and now is your time to talk with her about what you honor about her, what traits she had that you really want to bring into your present life and continue to create with in the future. You may choose to write her a separate letter to honor her (that's what the paper is for), or you may want to write to her in your grimoire and date it with this spell. You may want to just speak aloud the words from your heart. No matter what you choose to do, make sure you speak to her and form this connection between the past and the present. This is powerful and personal magic.

- Then turn to your Present You photo. Take three deep breaths, look into your eyes in the photo, and hold honor for your self now. Take a match and light it with the Past You tea light, then use the match for the Present You tea light. Say this incantation three times to further your connection:

*Present Me, I honor you now.
Stand strong in all that you are.
For you are magick and you are brave,
Illuminating the dark like a star.
There is a power deep within you
That is unique, true, and strong,
And you just have to believe in it
Because it has been there all along.*

- Take a sheet of paper and write down the things that you're proud to have accomplished on your journey so far. They can be big or small, but it's important to honor all your successes and how far you've come. Oftentimes, we achieve a goal and then just push to get to the next goal without properly taking a moment and patting ourselves on the back for what we've accomplished. Write down a list, look at the words, and allow yourself to feel proud of what you've done. Say the list aloud, and say "Thank you" to your photo after each accomplishment. Take your time with this. Say it slow and proud: "Thank you." Present You will move forward into the future with more confidence after this ritual.

- Lastly, we move to the empty frame—this is the Future You, who is not written yet. As a magical being, it is your time to write your own gorgeous future. Take the manufacturer's paper out of the frame and use it as a template to cut your blank paper to its exact size.

- Now that you have the two candles burning brightly for your Past Self and your Present Self and you've honored them both, take a moment to let them empower you with thoughts of the future. Who do you want to be? How would you describe Future You? What traits does Future You hold that you're most proud of? Some examples of descriptive words are *passionate, powerful, leader, creative, kind, successful, graceful, joyous, sensual, generous, healer, mystic, courageous*. Close your eyes and meditate on which three words you want to claim for the next year. It also might help to open your own grimoire or magic journal and write a vision of what Future You is doing. Set a timer for ten minutes and just allow yourself to write. Then after you write your vision, you

will have a clearer idea of what your three words might look like.

- Choose the three magic words that you're claiming for your Future Self. Write them down and put them in the frame. Take three deep breaths, look at the words in the frame, and feel your Future Self near. Take a match and light it with the Present You tea light and bring it to light the Future You tea light. Then say this incantation three times to further your connection to your Future Self:

*Future Me, I call to you
As I send you love from today.
You are unique and beautiful,
Growing stronger every day.
I send you all of the blessings
To grow and learn and thrive,
To cherish every moment
With the joy of being alive.
You change this world with your love,
And your kindness leads the way.
This is how we honor our legacy
On each enchanted day.*

And the last time you say this incantation, say these words: "See it. Be it. So be it." This sends the spell out into the universe for your ancestors, guides, and guardians to hear.

- Sit with the Altar of You (Past, Present, and Future) and allow yourself to connect with all three. When you're ready, say "Thank you. I love you," and blow the tea lights out.

Repeat this spell by lighting the candles and saying the incantations daily for twenty-one days and move forward into the New Year with a deep sense of legacy, of love, and of clarity as you embrace and honor the story of you.

All my love—Veronica



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.

AT HOME: WINTER WONDER

by Rona Berg



Winter is the season of cozy, which the Danes call *hygge*. In Sweden, it's *mysa*. And in Finland, recently anointed “the world’s happiest country” for the sixth year in a row by the UN World Happiness Report, it's *kalsarikännit*, which translates to “staying at home and getting drunk in your underwear.”

Well, whatever. Nestling at home is certainly something we all can enjoy, especially when home is warm and cozy, and filled with love, light, and beautiful things. This winter, create a *mise-en-scène* for your own most cozy season ever with a flickering scented candle, a soft woven blanket, goblets filled with wine, and a toast to people you love.

Here are a few of our favorite things for one of our favorite seasons.

Blood-Red Goblets

We adore colored glass, especially when it is blood-red, hand-painted, and hand-cut in a pine cone pattern. The Pinecone Cut Goblets, inspired by vintage glassware, are perfect vessels for wine, water, and whimsical nonalcoholic imbibements. Each one is individually shaped by a master craftsman and dishwasher safe. williams-sonoma.com

Some Enchanted Evening

The Stella Lantern With Fairy Lights is made to enchant. Inspired by carved metal lanterns from Morocco, the Stella showcases a punched-metal dot-and-star design and is finished in matte black. The reflective interior's warm metallic gold allows light to flicker softly and create a romantic glow. The lantern comes with a string of sixty battery-operated LED fairy lights, which can be exchanged for an LED candle. Bold and beautiful! lights.com

Majestic Metal Wreath

Inspired by the stately grandeur of deer antlers, this circular Eric + Eloise Collection Rustic Gold Deer Antler

Sculpture Metal Holiday Wreath from Darby Trading (shown above) adds a touch of rustic elegance to the front door, wall, or hallway over the holiday season and beyond. A unique statement piece that draws inspiration from one of nature's majestic creatures. darbycreektrading.com

Soft as Velvet

Nothing beats the weight and feel of a velvet blanket, and the Velvet Sofa Blanket—in rich caramel or hunter green—is what you'll want to wrap yourself in throughout the entire winter. Warm and super-soft, this blanket is great for a cozy-up on the couch or a catnap. You may need both colors. It's a wrap! theapollobox.com

Self-Love Spell Kit

The holidays can be tough, so there is no better time to show yourself some love—or give the gift of self-love to a friend. This kit will help bring clarity to your power and purpose and encourage you to feel stronger and even more special. It includes quartz crystals, a charm bag, candles, and vials of rose and orange essences along with rosemary, mugwort, clove, lavender,

frankincense, and more. Plus: a beautiful self-love spell created for you by *Enchanted Living's* love witch, Veronica Varlow. enchantedlivingmag.com

Wood It Be

We love the Millwood Pines Manderson Wood Salad Bowl for so many reasons: the whimsical metal stag head perched on the edge of the bowl, the richly striped slats of wood, that it's the perfect size for serving salad at lunch or dinner, and the fact that it feels so solid, it will probably last forever. What else can you say that about? wayfair.com

Ethereal Scents

The finishing touch on a room is often the way it smells. With this Winter Forest diffuser, your home will smell like a pristine and beautiful pine forest. The matte black reed diffuser holds scent sticks, and if you like flame, you can add a candle in an emerald-green-faceted glass jar. Crafted from alcohol-free fragrance oils in a low-VOC diffuser base. anacuahouse.com



Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg

WITCH BALLS

A Tutorial by
Suzanne Lemmon a.k.a. The Witch and the Goddess



I've always been fascinated by pagan crafts and their origins—especially the art of making wards, which are magical items intended to protect. Researching the history of these tools allows me to feel a stronger connection to my magic practice. One cherished example is witch balls, a kind of ward that originated in England during the 1600s. They are used for protection against evil spells, hexes, negativity, sickness, and ill fortune. Plus, they're gorgeous. They are definitely among my favorite things to make—and are sure to be yours too!

Legend has it that the beauty of mystical witch balls attracts negative spirits thought to be threatening a home's tranquility. An orb's swirling colors and uniqueness mesmerize the evil being. After a spirit touches a ball, its malevolent energy is trapped within the webbed strands of glass inside the orb, which prevent the spirit from affecting its surroundings.

Traditionally, witch balls are hung in an east-facing window. But really, any area around your home—whether in a window, on a desk, or even on a porch or elsewhere outside in a garden—

is suitable for placing a witch ball to ward off (and possibly trap) negative energy.

Making witch balls is still a popular pagan craft and can take only minutes per ball. They make lovely ornaments for Yule as well as gift giving. Family and friends will love them as special handmade ornaments and will be captivated by the history and magical meaning. Maybe best of all, creating a ball will give you a greater connection to your witchly craft.

I like to begin mine with the clear glass ornaments carried in craft stores. These are especially easy to find around the winter holidays. I add flowers, herbs, spices, crystals, and charms that correspond with a specific intention, such as protection, happiness, good fortune, or peace. You can fill your witch ball as much as you want with your chosen ingredients. I like to fill mine halfway so I can see the individual items inside.

Once you have all your materials gathered, you're only minutes away from completing your own mesmerizing witch ball.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Ingredients can vary depending on your specific intentions. It's totally up to you!

- 1 3-to-4-inch clear glass or shatterproof DIY ornament
- 1 or 2 4-inch cinnamon sticks
- 1 to 3 sprigs of lavender
- 1/8 ounce preserved moss
- Small dried flowers, ferns, pine cones, crystals
- 8 inches of natural twine
- 5 inches of cording
- Hot glue gun with glue stick
- 10 inches of ribbon
- 1 magic charm



INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1: Remove the hanger from the top of the ornament. Set aside. Before adding anything, I like to smoke-cleanse the inside of the ball with a stick of incense.

Step 2: Carefully, a few pinches at a time, add the preserved moss.

Step 3: Put your other elements inside one by one.

Step 4: Add the hanger back on the top of your ornament by squeezing the two metal progs together and sliding them inside till the hanger snaps back into place.

Step 5: Add a tiny spot of hot glue to the base of the hanger and press the end piece of twine in place, gluing and wrapping the twine around the top. Cut excess twine.

Step 6: Tie on a magical charm and add ribbon to the hanger.

Your enchanting witch ball is ready to hang in your home—or a friend's!



Find more of Lemmon's creations at etsy.com/shop/thewitchandthegoddess, or follow her on Instagram @thewitchandthegoddess.

THE ENCHANTED PLAYLIST

by Nathan Kotecki

Illustrations by Steve Parke

In the realm of the senses, enchantment can take many forms, as you well know. Enchantment may come visually in a beautiful room or image or vista.

It may come through scent, in petrichor, perfume, or potpourri. It may come through taste in food or drink or even snowdrops. It may come through touch, in the brush of a fabric, a gentle breeze, or a lover's kiss.

And of course, enchantment can come through sound, perhaps as simply as the pure tone of a distant bell or as sublimely as the roar of a waterfall. I am a child of the 1970s who came of age in the '80s. A musical omnivore from a very young age, I have spent forty years collecting music and working as a dark alternative DJ, so it should be no surprise that I find something singularly enchanting about a well-curated playlist.

In the '80s, a playlist was a physical object: a mixtape, painstakingly compiled from songs recorded off records and other cassettes. In the '90s, it was a mix CD, pulled together from digital tracks and burned on a disc. For a little while, playlists even floated around on thumb drives. More recently, we've given each other digital playlists on an app or a streaming platform, with no physical artifacts involved. What hasn't changed is that I make playlists for many different contexts: dinner parties, workouts, rainy days, Sunday mornings.

As the cooler weather moves in and the days grow shorter, more time indoors might mean more opportunities to listen to music, and I'm here as a friendly stranger to compare notes with you on the pleasures of making enchanted—maybe even bewitching—playlists.

Because I wouldn't be surprised if you'd made at least one playlist for the purpose of enchanting yourself or others, no? For this witching season you'll be decorating enchanting rooms, choosing something enchanting to burn, brewing enchanting teas—what better way to bind all these enchantments together than with a curated selection of music that stretches the magic from three dimensions into four?

Taste, as always, is personal. I wouldn't presume to know what music you find bewitching, so I'm not here to present the definitive enchanted playlist (though I do have some songs to share that might entice you into broadening your horizons). I am here, though, to pay tribute to the pleasures of making playlists for the purposes of enchantment. Take a stroll through the possibilities with me, won't you?

There is a version of an enchanted playlist that is pretty widely known, I would guess, one dominated by what I would call Goddess Pop or maybe White Magic Women (and what

a splendid genre that is). This sort of playlist is the home to "Rhiannon" or "Gypsy" or "Rooms on Fire" (all hail Stevie Nicks!) and possibly Sarah McLachlan. ("Into the Fire" is a personal favorite.) Perhaps some Kate Bush (if you haven't heard "Nocturn," do check that one out) or maybe something even more ethereal, like Loreena McKennitt's "The Mummer's Dance."

If that is to your liking, I'd like to recommend "Witchcraft" by Book of Love, "Lake" by Anna Domino, "Blinding" by Florence + the Machine, and "You'll Be Mine" by the Pierces—and that's just scratching the surface, as you well know if you're a fan of Goddess Pop. On the ethereal side, I'd give you "Cloudless" by Cranes, "Mesmerism" by Dead Can Dance, "Cursum Perficio" by Enya, and "Love Song" by Ofra Haza.

Maybe your inner witch is drawn to enchantment flavored with a little more darkness, even a hint of danger. That playlist might feature "Spellbound" by Siouxsie and the Banshees and "A Forest" by the Cure. If this is your genre of choice, I'm very happy to recommend "D for Desire" by All About Eve, "Shallow Then Halo" by the Cocteau Twins, "The Burning Season" by Faith and the Muse, "Garden of Delight (Hereafter)" by the Mission UK, and "Song to the Siren" by This Mortal Coil. As someone with an abiding love for the goth canon, I can tell you that it is deep and rich with darkly alluring tracks.

Maybe Stevie Nicks is your doorway to a more rock-oriented playlist, one that also might include Patti Smith's "Dancing Barefoot." In that case, I offer the Cult's "Brother Wolf, Sister Moon," Love and Rockets' "Seventh Dream of Teenage Heaven," Pink Floyd's "Learning to Fly," and, if Halloween is near, maybe even the Eagles' "Witchy Woman" or Donovan's "Season of the Witch." There are mystical and bewitching corners in many a rock discography.

Sometimes enchantment can feel a bit gendered, somewhat confined to the feminine, but I can imagine a lovely mix called Enchanted Boys, perhaps leading off with "Wrapped Around Your Finger," by the Police and maybe including "Living a Boy's Adventure Tale" by a-ha (yes, *that* a-ha!), "Zamba" from Bryan Ferry, "Mercy Street" by Peter Gabriel, "To Look at You" by INXS, and "Mysterious Ways" by U2.

The point I'm trying to make is that no matter what genre you favor, there is magic to be found there. R&B? How about "Close to You" by Maxi Priest, "Caught Up in the Rapture," by Anita Baker, "Spell" by Deon Estus, and "Haunt Me" by Sade?

Synthpop? "Continuum" by Bel Canto, "Euphoria (Firefly)" by Delerium, "For the Love of Big Brother" by Eurythmics,





and “Keep the Streets Empty for Me” by Fever Ray. Even musical theater and film have enchantment to offer: “Some Enchanted Evening” from *South Pacific*. Too on the nose? How about “Love to Me” from *Light in the Piazza*, or “Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered” from *Pal Joey*, or even “Magic” from *Xanadu*? And genres are by no means sacred cows: Mix and match! If you like the songs, who cares what genre they come from?

Making a playlist is a bit like furnishing a room or making a cake from scratch: Amazing experiences await when you choose the right things, put them in the right combinations and the right order, and trust your senses. Here are some helpful tips for curating an enchanted playlist.

Find Your Purpose. I try to articulate what I want a playlist to do. Do I want it to keep me enchanted on a long drive or flight? Do I want it to enchant me as I fall asleep? In this winter season, do I want it to enchant my guests at a bonfire or a séance? It’s also helpful to determine a desired length. Do I want a tight hour? Ninety minutes? Two hours?

Seek and Find. I go to my music collection, and I always start in divergent mode: I take a stroll through my library and dump any song that might be a possibility into a placeholder playlist. I’m trying to hold in my mind the particular flavor of enchantment I want, and if something seems like it would be a good fit for the soundtrack of that movie, in it goes. I’m not thinking about sequencing yet. I’m quite sure that not all of these tracks will make it into the mix. But frequently I am surprised to find that things I thought were a sure bet don’t

make it to the final mix, so at this point I’m giving anything that feels halfway possible a shot.

Revel in the Possibilities. Once I have my placeholder playlist filled, I proceed as though it is at least twice the length of my desired playlist. That way I can really winnow down to the truly golden options and not have to settle for tracks that are good but not great for my theme.

Narrow It Down. The first round is usually pretty easy. There will be tracks that, now that I’m seeing and hearing everything I chose, are clearly not strong options. I delete them from the playlist and don’t look back.

Kill Your Darlings. Sometimes that first round of cutting will get me close to my desired duration, and I only have to make a few difficult choices. But near the end of last year I was making a playlist for the winter solstice, as I am prone to do, and after a round of winnowing, I still had close to four hours of music. My personal firm limit for these mixes is two. That made for a sweetly tough exercise, thanking some excellent songs but telling them, “Not this time.”

Home In on the Vibe. I start to think about the arc or journey my playlist might take from start to finish. I may notice that much of my list is acoustic, in which case the really synth and electronic tracks might be a bit jarring among them. Or I might notice that my list is a bit heavy on male vocals, in which case I’m going to hold on to the female vocals and look for guys to winnow out. (You don’t have to use these rules! Notice your own patterns and do right by them. Your patterns will be different from mine.)



Line Them Up. At some point I will start to play with the sequencing, figuring out which song sounds right following another song. What is the best first song for this playlist, the one that will properly welcome me into this enchantment? What is the best final song, the one that sets me down where I hope to arrive? Sometimes the last notes or sounds of one song sound similar to the first notes or sounds of another. Sometimes two songs are in the same or harmonious keys. (Circle of fifths, anyone? Any music majors out there?) Sometimes one song thematically builds off another. What ultimately matters is: What order of these songs pleases me the most?

Look for Perfection. This phase—sequencing while simultaneously making some final cuts—is deliciously arduous. I obsess over this because I know that if I succeed, this collection of songs will transform into something greater than the sum of its parts. The playlist’s collective effect will be more enchanting than any single song by itself. That’s when I feel I have succeeded with a playlist.

Change Your Mind. Since I imagine most of you will be working digitally, the beauty of modern enchanted playlists is that they can be edited very easily. I might listen to a mix for a few days and notice that something isn’t quite right, and there’s nothing to prevent me from going back in and making adjustments, or even going back to the library to look for something else, now that I have a clearer idea of what this playlist truly needs to be. Sometimes a song wears out its welcome. Sometimes I hear something new and rush to find the right spot for it in a playlist I already have.

Enjoy! Ultimately, this is most important: In the same sense that there is no wrong way to dream journal, there is no wrong way to make an enchanted playlist. The only rules that matter are the rules that get you the results you want. The only test that matters is: Does it enchant you in the way you wish to be enchanted? If so, then congratulations, you have a lovely, living creation that will last longer than any month, any cake, any candle, or any bath. Whenever you need this playlist, it will be there, and at some point in the future this playlist might even be a cherished touch point from a particularly magical season in your life.

Some final thoughts on enchanted playlists: Don’t keep them to yourself! Trade playlists with friends; that’s both a lovely gift and an excellent way to discover new music. And if you are inclined, make cover art for your playlists. That is one of the things I truly miss about the old days of mixtapes and mix CDs: spending another few hours to make a collage that fit inside the plastic case like the cover of a book, giving sweet hints about what the listener would hear. I know that doesn’t apply to digital playlists, but on occasion I’ve made those collages anyway and used them as wallpaper or a screensaver on my laptop, which is delightful in its own way.

Closing with fond wishes that this winter season is enhanced by your perfect enchanted playlist.



Check out Nathan Kotecki’s writing and his DJ work at linktr.ee/20cb. Find Steve Parke on Instagram @[steve.parke](https://www.instagram.com/steve.parke) and at steveparke.com.



Halo: Carbickova Crowns @carbickovacrowns
Corset, skirt, and sleeves: The Raven's Goddess @theravensgoddess
Color toning: Infinite Tools and Only the Curious color presets



AN ODE *to* CIRCE

Text and photography by Yinsey Wang

Circe, the daughter of the Titan Helios and the ocean nymph Perse, is a goddess and enchantress in the ancient Greek mythical tradition who has a bad habit of turning her enemies into animals. She also is a master of potions and herbs.

One of her best known associations is with the hero of Homer's epic tale *The Odyssey*. As Odysseus and his seafaring companions try to find their way home after the long Trojan War, they end up landing on the island of Aeaea, Circe's domain. She punishes the crew's trespass by transforming many of them into swine. Odysseus is the exception. His intelligence and charming tongue fascinate Circe so much that she is convinced to spare the rest of his men and returns them to human form. She also decides to make Odysseus her lover; she will so fascinate him that he forgets his longing to return home to Ithaca. After a year, Odysseus realizes he must continue his journey back to his island kingdom and leaves Circe.

It is quite commonly accepted that women who are arbiters of their own fate and who channel power through their own agency are often linked with witchcraft and magic, and hence become a danger to men. Circe is primarily seen as a seductress and an episodic challenge for the great hero Odysseus in the Greek epic cycle, an obstacle to overcome before he accomplishes his main goal. In the Victorian period, she becomes a popular art subject to demonstrate the power of the femme fatale (the morally questionable woman who lures men away from goodness).

I wanted to explore Circe's identity in my self-portraiture—to explore Circe's complex emotions and the power she herself wields. I am looking through her eyes, rather than taking the stories told about her at face value, where she's so often reduced to a lustful witch looking to exact vengeance.

Follow Yinsey on Instagram @tornandpolished.



CATCHING THE MOON

An interview with Pamela Zimmerman

by Kambriel

Photography by Ronald L. Sowers

Baskets exist to store, to carry, to hold. Sometimes they contain day-to-day, imminently practical objects; sometimes they capture what's far more elusive: thoughts, memories, joys, even a touch of melancholy. The basket may well hold the essence of its weaver or some wildness and wisdom from the spirit of the tree from which it came. Perhaps on occasion, a heartfelt incantation has been woven into a basket's undulating rows of pine and sinew. It's even possible that a slender ray of moonlight can become trapped within its tangles and never quite escape, even with the rising of the sun.

Pamela Zimmerman's creations transcend into the mysteriously sublime. In her "Catching the Moon" series, Tenerife lace is woven into webs atop soulful faces peering out from below. One might ask if it's they who caught the moon, or if the moon entranced and ultimately caught them.

Kambriel: When were you first drawn to the ancient yet constantly evolving craft of basket weaving?

Pamela Zimmerman: I've always loved baskets and have especially been drawn to Native-style baskets, particularly coiled ones. Living and working in northern Arizona as a National Park ranger before I ever made a basket, I studied and bought Native American baskets and wished I could make something like them.

K: How has being based in North Carolina—with its long, rich tradition of basket weaving and roots in Cherokee, Gullah, and European cultures—inspired your work?

PZ: I love all forms of indigenous baskets from around the world. They are constantly inspiring. I've lived here for over thirty years, and North Carolina's influence has really been in the availability of materials: There is so much that grows well here—longleaf pine needles, which I have used extensively, and also the fabulous array of weedy things people don't want that are easy to find in abundance, like vines (honeysuckle, Virginia creeper, wisteria, kudzu, English ivy), yucca, and dandelions. Free and available materials have always been essential to the basket maker, who uses what they have; this is the tradition of all Native people's basketry.

K: Did this diverse array of cultures have a special impact or provide inspiration for your own particular style or techniques?

PZ: I've been inspired to see how the cultures that came before made baskets with what they had access to. It is something I have pondered and preached throughout my time as a basket maker and teacher. Most tribes altered their basketry forms, sometimes quite dramatically, to appeal to Europeans when this continent was invaded by white men. Many things we consider typical of a certain tribe were adopted as "traditional" forms by that tribe in recent historical memory. I can give many examples: the Coughatta pine-needle baskets, as well as the Tohono O'odham coiled-yucca and devil's-claw baskets. Even the Cherokee have begun to make pine-needle baskets, though there is no record of pine-needle baskets existing in that culture until relatively recently. The whole Gullah basket tradition is driven by the historic atrocity of cultural displacement by slavery. They combined their skills from Africa with what they could find in the New World to make what they needed and generated a whole new heritage. All these cultures have influenced me in that they are taking what they have and making what they need, whether it be to have something to sell or to winnow grain.

K: At what point did you feel yourself coming into your own, experimenting beyond traditional basketry toward the realm of personal creative expression?

PZ: I've experimented from the very beginning in my basketry journey. I learned my first technique, coiling, from Judy Mallow's *From Forest Floor to Finished Project*, but I struck out and did things my own way, the way they worked for me. Coiling lends itself very well to ad lib. It's the easiest basketry technique, in my opinion, because it has only two active elements. After coiling alone for several years, I found the North Carolina Basketmakers Association and started going to their annual convention, where I took and taught my first classes. I selected classes for the techniques they contained as opposed to the basket we were weaving, for the sole purpose of adding techniques to my repertoire.

It took a long time to think I had come into my own. One curator said, "If you can do *this*"—a finely woven piece—"why in the world would you want to do *that*?"—a rustic weaving. One artist told me that if I did not make one style recognizably mine, I would always appear as a student. The implication is that the process of exploration and discovery is only for those who are unlearned. That is sad as well as wrong. Look at great creators in history who did not focus: Leonardo, Picasso, Michelangelo. They were not criticized for dabbling in too many media. Why was it wrong for me to explore as many directions as I wished? I finally resolved this question within myself. People want relationships between things when they are presented together. I generally explore a new idea at least three times before I am ready to move on, though often the first rendering remains my favorite. So I give the appearance of focus while my creativity remains at large, actively seeking new, challenging, exciting avenues of applying my store of techniques I collect along the way.

Why is this important? I have learned another secret. I always heard of people hitting creative walls, running out of ideas. I could never comprehend this. It doesn't seem possible for me to not have an idea or something to work on. The secret lies in the fact that I have not focused. When you choose to work only in one direction, when the project is finished, of course there is nothing else to do. I freely explore whatever comes to my fancy. I am an artist because I must be; curiosity and creativity is a compulsion. If I cannot have fiber, it will be expressed another way: in the teaching of my children, making my unconventional dinner, or watercolor. It will emerge, nonetheless. I am here and have come into my own.

Catching the Moon

Kambriel

K: Basketry can strike a perfect balance between the utilitarian and artistic. Is striking such a balance a goal in your own pieces?

PZ: Utility is important only when I am making a particular thing I need. The rest of the time it is all art. I imagine early man, painting on a cave wall. The woman was over here figuring out how to weave a sandal from a yucca plant or something. He's over there, indulging himself in something *purely decorative*, making handprints on the wall or documenting his fabulous hunt: the beginning of painting art. She is figuring out how to make something out of what she has found, something to make life easier: the beginning of fiber art. Eventually, she will also make it beautiful, but there is so much to figure out about making it *work* first. Painting has always been decorative. Fiber was about making something you needed. Both of these transcend and become art when creativity is employed and whatever is made evokes emotion. Whatever the medium, art is accomplished when the mundane is transformed into the thought provoker.

I consider myself a fiber artist and prefer to work in a sculptural context. Once a year, my family takes a vacation on a remote rural property, where I try to weave with what I can find in the woods: twigs, barks, vines, grasses. At these times, I sometimes try to make useful baskets. It feels like I'm an ancient Native woman when I sit in the creek and weave with my children playing nearby. I often feel like I am the first basket maker, trying to figure out how to make a vessel with what I have around me. It's a wonderful, primal experience and never fails to enrich my perspective as an artist.

K: You created a series entitled "Catching the Moon." Does the moon hold special significance for you?

PZ: The "Catching the Moon" series was an outgrowth of my face baskets, the first of which was a gift for one of my children's teachers. It was very emotional, putting that face in the basket. I'm still trying to figure it out. Faces attract us. The faces draw people in who would not otherwise look at a woven piece. I have been told by some other artists that faces are wrong in baskets. As far as I'm concerned, that is as good a reason as any to keep making them! But many of my weaving ideas come in the middle of the night, and that is how the "Catching the Moon" series started, when one of my children was not sleeping well. Lots of nights. Lots of moons. Even after he started sleeping better, there were more moons. They all had something different to say. The middle of the night is like that.

K: As this issue's theme is "Winter Witch," what do you personally consider to be some of the most magical and meaningful aspects of the winter season?

PZ: Winter is the time when we contemplate endings. It seems everything is ending and yet, it does not. The leaves come back.

The birds return. Baby animals are born. All of that is magical. The older I get, the harder it is not to revisit the comparisons of life to the seasons of the year. I am in winter now, and it is good.

K: Do you find yourself weaving any particular thoughts, feelings, or wishes into the baskets?

PZ: But of course! The feel of a finished work is imbued with emotion and contemplative energy. When I make a moon piece, I contemplate the feeling I want it to exude. I often see my entire life as a woven work, all the different threads connecting me to the world around me. Maybe every artist sees their work as an outgrowth of how they envision their world relationship, but this is very strong for me. I feel as if I'm weaving all day long, even when there's not a fiber piece in my hands.

K: The porcelain faces you crafted to look out from beneath the intricately woven Teneriffes on these pieces often have a timeworn, chipped, and weathered appearance. I feel this gives them a greater sense of history and depth of individual personality, not to mention a wonderfully crone-like charm! Did you specifically want to avoid making them look too refined and smooth, too perfectly symmetrical, too conventionally pretty?

PZ: Thank you! Yes, I tend not to like things that are "perfect." When I first started weaving, I wanted to make a perfectly shaped basket, and I tried for a long time. It was part of my learning process. Eventually I realized that nothing is perfect and that sometimes it's better to celebrate the difference than to try to make things exactly a certain way. To me, the whole purpose of weaving is exploration. There are very few rules: Don't get hurt. Don't eat it. Try not to stain the furniture and walls. Other than that, I do what I want with the fiber, not what I've been shown to do with it. I tell my students, "This is not skydiving—it is art. The worst that can happen is the weaving will be ugly. Why not take risks, and plenty of them? The payoff far outweighs the penalties."

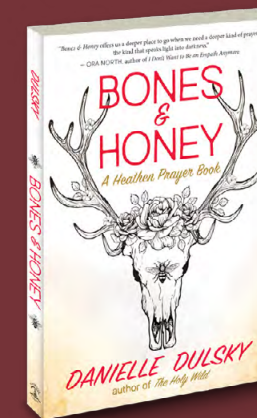


View the entire series at catchingthemoon.com and more of Zimmerman's work at etsy.com/shop/basketsbypamela.

Follow Kambriel on Instagram/Twitter @kambrieldesign and find her witchy array of offerings at kambriel.com and etsy.com/shop/kambriel.



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LA BEFANA

by Regina M. Hansen

In my family, Christmas doesn't end until January 6. On the traditional feast day of the Epiphany, following my grandmother's custom, the porcelain Magi, who began traveling from the kitchen on December 24, finally reach the Nativity in the middle of the dining-room table. They're followed by the figure of an old woman in a headscarf: La Befana. She carries a broom, which she will use to sweep the house not just of dirt but of any remnants of the old year.

Some call La Befana a witch. Because she may leave treats and gifts, others see her as a kind of Italian Santa Claus. But La Befana is so much more than either of those things. Like the Italian and Italian-American women who raised me, Befana embodies both pragmatism and magic, both hard work and abiding love.

These days, the most common Befana story reflects the well-known stereotype of the Italian *nonna*, cooking and cleaning while everyone else is doing seemingly more important things. Befana is sweeping her house when the Magi show up asking her the way to Bethlehem. When they invite her to come along to greet the baby Jesus, she declines because she hasn't finished cleaning. When Befana finally sets out, she is carrying a basket of sweets for the newborn, but by then she has missed her chance. Now she travels throughout Italy leaving gifts for good children, and coal for bad ones, perhaps in hopes of finally finding the baby Jesus. This is the story that appears in Italian-American author Tomie DePaola's *The Legend of Old Befana*, as well as in poems and stories by Phyllis McGinley, Ilse Plume, and others.

This story has both moved and pained me since my teenage years. It always reminds me of my mother—who to this day will not sit down and rest unless the dishes are done. It reminds me of my Nony Marie standing over an ever-

*"La Befana vien di notte,
Con le scarpe tutte rotte
E' vestita tutta strana.
Viva viva la Befana!"*

*"The Befana comes at night,
in ragged shoes
and strange clothes.
Long live the Befana!"*

simmering saucepot, and my Nony-Nony Emma endlessly crocheting what she called "sleeps" for her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Like me, my daughters have often been touched by the unfairness of Befana's tale, by what often seems like hard work unrewarded. As my youngest told me recently, "It's so sad. Befana is too late."

In fact, there is more to my mother, my grandmother, and my great-grandmother than clean dishes and crocheted slippers, and there's more to Befana than a swept floor and a basket of goodies.

Befana is a woman of mystery, whose much-debated origins go back centuries. According to many scholars, her name derives from *Epifania*, the Italian word for the Epiphany holiday itself. Historian Samantha Hughes-Johnson notes that the earliest literary mention of Befana is from "La Trinzuzia," by the 16th century poet Agnolo Firenzuola. But Befana has been part of Epiphany festivities since at least the 13th century. In *Befana Is Returning: The Story of a Tuscan Festival*, scholar Steve Siporin describes rites that go back to the Middle Ages, including a mummers parade in which revelers dress as Befana and go door to door singing and giving gifts. In fact, as with many folk traditions, Befana's origins probably predate Christianity. According to both Siporin and scholar Carlo Lapucci,

Befana embodies the figure of La Vecchia—literally the "old woman"—a representation of the passage of time. Some of the oldest Epiphany festivities involve the burning of a Befana puppet to symbolize the end of the old year and beginning of the new.

La Befana and her festivals have survived many attempts at suppression and misuse or abuse, most especially during the Fascist era. In 1928, according to scholar Diana Garvin, Mussolini replaced the Epiphany with a new holiday called *la Befana Fascista*. "Instead of the grandmotherly Befana," Garvin writes, "children were now told that Christmas presents came from Il Duce." Writer Olga Cassaretti notes that Fascist Befana brought only gender-specific gifts, with boys receiving toy weapons while girls got baby dolls.

The fact that Befana survived this co-optation is a testament to her cultural importance. Today Befana is more well-known than ever, and like all the Italian *nonnas* who have survived war and struggle over centuries, Befana is beloved. In Italy, where the Epiphany is a public holiday, she can be found at the Befana Market in Rome's Piazza Navona, at La Festa della Befana in the Marche region town of Urbania, or participating in the Regata delle Befane on Venice's Grand Canal, among other places. Befana is celebrated in ways large and small wherever Italians have made their homes: from Canada, where she appeared on a 1992 postage stamp, to Australia, where she is the subject of a children's book, *Is the Befana Coming to Fremantle?* by Daniele Foti-Cuzzola and Daniela Pruiti Ciarello. And Befana is welcomed yearly by at least one family in Somerville, Massachusetts.

It's not clear when Befana became associated with the search for the baby Jesus, but whatever the story's origins, I recognize her. Befana is my mother, who raised young children alone while earning

*La Befana,
Italian witch of Epiphany*
by Erika Leahey
@_deathofseasons_





La Befana (1821), by Bartolomeo Pinelli

a law degree but for whom a well-ironed shirt is still the highest expression of love. She's my grandmother, who scoured sales and charity shops for Christmas gifts for her twenty-two grandchildren and never forgot anyone, but who also returned to school in her fifties, eventually earning a Master's degree in social work. She's my great-grandmother, who learned her crochet and embroidery skills as the privileged daughter of Italian nobility but who supported her six children as a

seamstress and finisher in a Depression-era clothing factory.

My daughter is right that Befana's story is sad. But it isn't only sad. After all, Befana may have missed the baby Jesus, but she never gives up looking. That complex blend of love and stubbornness is the essence of the Italian and Italian-American women who made me who I am.

My house would not live up to Befana's standards. I'm not the best at

ironing, and I have certainly left dishes in the sink while writing a story or reading a book. But I do like a nice swept floor, and like Befana, like all of them—my mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sisters, and aunts—I've never met a baby I didn't like. I understand the love inherent in Befana's story, to keep working, to keep searching, to never give up. Befana knows who she is. She endures. Viva, viva La Befana!



Befana's biggest fan, Regina M. Hansen is a fantasy novelist, university lecturer, and scholar of the fantastic. Visit her at reginamhansen.com.

WRITING POETRY INTO DARKNESS

by Robin Gow

I'm a witch who comes alive in the summer. I rejoice in berry harvests and love to burn ritual fires for the solstice. For many years of my practice I struggled with the descent into winter's brilliant darkness, often feeling as if I'd gone to sleep along with the flowers and trees. Some years ago, though, I started to stop resisting winter's darkness and found something glorious here.

Being a witch and poet are one and the same to me. If you look across time, witches have been skilled in the arts of language, and likewise, famous poets are often witches, even if only just dabblers in divination or spellwork. Writing a poem every morning has been part of my altar practice for about seven years now, and the longer I write, the more powerful I feel myself growing as a witch and the closer the connection I feel to the earth and the seasons.

Where I live in Pennsylvania, I watch the seasons most by noticing the farmland. I see the seeds being sown and the tall and magnificent corn of late August. I think maybe this added to my feelings of despair and emptiness when it came to winter. I saw the barren field and forgot that its silence was making way for the harvest to come. Without fallow months, a field cannot produce crops. The earth requires rest and time to listen.

This is what I've found in my poetry practice in the winter. Through writing, I've found that the abundance of the world doesn't disappear when the days are short and the nights are long. Instead, it shifts. It finds new places to bloom.

I used to panic at incoming snowstorms, but now I prepare myself to write. I take notes on what I see out in the world: a cardinal bright through brown leaves, a wandering fox by the field's edge, my breath on the kitchen window's glass. I collect these details the way I collect the wildflowers of summer, and then I turn to the page.

For me, poetry is usually an offering or a message to the universe. I might write a poem to echo back the grief I might feel in the oak tree that's lost all its leaves or what it means for a cycle to close. Sometimes I feel as though the land is writing along with me as I pull words and images from my morning walks and sew them together into tapestries to give to the spirits of winter.

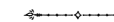
Then, sometimes, I write a poem like a spell, seeking something from winter's darkness. So often in our world we turn away from silence and darkness. We fear what we might find if we sit alone and feel the night at our windows.

When I write poetry, I let the night in. Everything that's

dormant and waiting. I find all my fears and held breaths. Winter is a great time for shadow work, and writing poetry will open up those shadows in yourself that, when brought to the light, can help you be a more balanced witch and person.

Most of us were taught poetry in grade school and usually in a very rigid way. People tend to think of strict patterns and forms, and those can be used, but my approach is more about opening a pathway to speak in our oldest, most true voices.

There is always a hearth to return to in ourselves. I choose to fill mine with poetry. With what will you fill yours?



Robin Gow is a poet and witch from rural Pennsylvania. Her class on witchcraft and poetry, *Enchanted Incantation*, is offered through *The Magical Path* school of witchcraft. Learn more at themagicalpath.com/enchanted-incantations-magick-course.

Elder Mother

by Ali English

Illustration by Rachel Oakes

Grandmother Elder, that's what they call me. They can't seem to agree if I am a tree or a shrub, which is fitting really—I've always dwelled on the edges, the boundaries between the wild places and where you humans live. A weed, that's what they say—dig me up, rip me out, but once ... once I was a fairy queen. I've always been silver-haired, gnarled, but beautiful nonetheless.

Hyldemoer, they named me. Radiant queen of Midsummer, ancient queen of Samhain. I've been a shelter for witches and a healer of the folk—they named me the Medicine Chest of the People, did you know that? I'm the Mother of Life, Death, and Rebirth—the Great Wheel, though you'd never think it to look at me. I can help you see into Faerie, but remember: If you look into Faerie, Faerie looks into you, and you may never be the same again. My blooms bring visions. When you become trapped in a maze of thoughts with no way out, you may call on me. If you need healing, I can help. I can bring fire and channel water, just another example of my duality. Just like you, I'm not all good or all bad, but a harmonious blend of both. Speak to me gently and I'll guide and guard you.

They say I dwindled after Judas was hanged from

my branches. Don't believe everything you hear though—I've always been this size. Closer to the underworld, and why not? That's where my power comes from, after all. There are so many tales about me, and some of them even hold a grain of truth. They say I'll pull out any babies laid in a crib made from my wood, and while that's not absolutely true—I bear them no ill will after all, poor wee bairns—it's not entirely false either. I've always dealt with death and rebirth and wisdom, and babies are too close to the source.

I'll give you my wisdom, if you ask me—but be polite, child, always be polite. I'll tolerate no disrespect. I'll give you my berries and my flowers, if you ask me nicely—I'll take some of your berries and flowers and wood when you become a tree, and consider it a fair bargain. I'll watch over a family from the shadows and protect them without them ever knowing about it. I'll protect your beasts from being hagridden too, if you ask me. I'll reach into the underworld and speak to the Norns and bring back fairy wisdom, but I'll only share it sparingly with you mortals—you live such fleeting lives, after all, and some of their lessons are too deep and wide and wild for most mortals to bear. Speak to me at the full moon and the dark, at dawn and dusk, when the sun is not fully up and the moon has yet to retreat.

Ali English is a qualified and practicing medical herbalist, artist, poet, author, interior designer, and hedgewitch living in Lincolnshire, U.K. Her seasonal series of herbalism books, Wild Medicine, is available from a variety of individual bookstores or direct from the publishers, Aeon Books. Visit her online at eldrum.co.uk.

Rachel Oakes is a fairy and folklore artist living in Cambridgeshire, U.K.—a county of ghost stories, witches, and wild-eyed hares. To see more of her work, visit [@enchantedoaks](https://www.facebook.com/enchantedoaks) on Facebook or Instagram as well as [etsy.com/uk/shop/enchantedoaks](https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/enchantedoaks).



Photography by
SARAJANE CORANI



CREATING A SANCTUARY AT HOME

by Imogen Dalton

Your home is a part of you. It's your refuge from the world, a place to keep everything that's most important. It's also your base camp from which to start every exploration. So it should make you feel safe and comfortable; it needs to soothe your soul and bring you joy. To do all that, your home must express your spirit—and your aspirations—as authentically as possible.

You can make every part of your home into a sacred space that enhances positivity, relaxation, productivity, joy, or creativity. Bringing in these energies is a beautiful act of creation and a constant journey—which means your home is not going to stay exactly the same forever.

As you create or re-create your space to reflect who you are now *and* the person you want to become, you may feel the need to shed belongings or to give it all a thorough cleaning. You might create an altar space for meditation and inspiration, or redo a big area with a fresh design. Small changes, such as different colors or fabrics, can make an interior feel entirely new, as can the addition or subtraction of one or two key objects.

How do you begin to revamp what might be years' worth of home design to create the sanctuary that your best self needs and deserves? Below are some suggestions.

Declutter

As we grow into our authentic selves, we feel the need to shed our pasts and re-emerge like the phoenix from the ashes. This step is about cleansing yourself of some possessions. You don't have to start with anything big. You might get rid of food that is out of date in your cupboard, or socks with holes in them, or photographs from an old relationship.

If you decide to shed some still useful items such as clothes, kitchen equipment, a perfume you don't like, or a book you'll never need, consider donating them or gifting them to a friend. When I have finished with a book I know I won't read again, I wrap it in ribbon before passing it on to somebody I know will love it, with a little note saying, "Thank you for being an amazing friend," or something similar. Then I get the experience of passing on joy as well as cleansing myself of something that no longer serves me.

Keep in mind that getting rid of old possessions can spark panic or upset for some people. Sometimes we hold on to things for fear of who we are without them, or for fear of losing our memories, or because we might need them one day. If this is you, then maybe you could spread the decluttering over a few days, or meditate on what you may need to get rid of, or perhaps put things into storage instead of saying goodbye to them entirely. You can decide how many items to purge; I recommend at least five, but if just one feels right and good to you, then stick with that. This experience should be nothing but positive.

When you have done any decluttering, reward yourself with a nice cup of tea or a bath. Think about how you are cleansing not just your home but your energy too. Honor the fact that you now have created room for new beauty and joy.

Perform Sacred Cleansing

Brooms aren't just for flying! House witchery, a practice that has been going on for centuries, is another aspect of creating your home as a sacred space. It is where the idea of "cleansing energy" comes from.

The next time you clean, try really doing it with intention. Do it with the knowledge that you are changing the energy of your space and scouring away negatives: Dirt, grime, and all the rest of it are just parts of the past you don't need. Do it because you love and are grateful for your home. Don't do it with negativity, out of grudging necessity to achieve the bare minimum (though sometimes that's plenty!). This time, do it with positivity. When you clean with the intention of love, gratitude, and positive energy, you not only change the experience but make cleaning into a sacred ritual.

One way I like to infuse cleansing with joy and love is by choosing or making cleaning products that I love and that are good for the environment. There are many recipes to be found on Pinterest or cleaning blogs (I recommend BrocanteHome, my favorite home-based blog, which I've been reading for more than a decade now). When you use products that you love or that simply smell great, you will naturally enjoy cleaning more and be more inclined to do it. I've also recently gotten into listening to podcasts while I clean. (My current faves are Katherine Ryan and Cara Alwill.)

Go to a shop and browse the cleaning aisle for a product that speaks to your soul with its beautiful smell or gorgeous packaging. Then go home and use it—with intention, love, and the knowledge that you are changing the energy of your home.

Create an Altar

You can establish an altar anywhere in your home, on any surface. You may have several, as I do, with different purposes: one for calmness and sleep, one for creativity, one for divine connections. Design your altar with intention and positivity, using whatever nurtures your most sacred intentions.

Start by choosing a space that feels right. This could be on top of a set of drawers, on a windowsill, on a bedside table. Next, tidy and wipe down the area, focusing on cleansing the energy of the space. Then have a little stroll around the house and garden to see if there is anything that you already have that you can put on your altar. You might use plants or flowers, crystals, deity statues, photos, candles, incense. For example, if you want a money-manifestation altar, you could set down coins, along



with a note with the amount you wish to manifest.

Don't overthink it. The main goal should be finding things that represent the intention of the altar space; everything is there to enhance the energy. Once your altar is set up, light a candle and focus your intention briefly before getting on with your day. Every day, or whenever you can, tend to your altar: Throw away any dead flowers, clean it, light the candle, and refocus on the intention. If you have multiple altars, then make cleaning them a part of your morning ritual.

When you see your home as a sacred space and sanctuary, your relationship to it changes. If you follow this guide for few

days, or a week, or a month, you will find that when you love your home, your home loves you back. It nurtures you. How you treat your space is part of a reciprocal relationship—most definitely one of the most important relationships in your life. By creating a sanctuary at home, you will see that the effects of these practices begin to infiltrate all areas of your life. You will feel brighter, energized, loved, and grateful.



Imogen Dalton has been writing and self-publishing for many years about spirituality, rituals, and mythology. She shares more about rituals and her other interests on her YouTube channel at @imogendalton.



DARK ROSE INTERIORS *by Sarajane Corani*

Dark Rose Interiors, which you see pictured on these pages, is essentially my home. My aesthetic can probably best be summarized by looking at my Instagram, @darkroseinteriors: Dark and wildly romantic. Gothic, Victorian, Renaissance. A touch of fairy tale and rock and roll!

My greatest inspiration, where I find all my ideas, are my greatest loves: books, stories, history, historical buildings, architecture, art, and music. My home decor draws heavily from my love for Amy Lee and Evanescence, for example.

My ideas for each room are based on senses and feelings; atmosphere is absolutely key. The most important consideration for me is really how I want the room to feel rather than how I want it to look. To let your true style and personality shine through, and to avoid copycat or cliché looks, I believe you have to try and embrace the abstract idea and go all out with your imagination. An example of what I mean might be the abstract concept of gothic. What does that mean to *you*? To some, it's heavy black makeup, pumpkins, ghosts, spiderwebs, Dracula, etc., but to me, it is much more about haunted castles, ghost stories, a girl alone in a dark wood, eerie mists, dark Victorian London streets,

trailing ivy. The imagery is the thing to hold on to and is definitely what I try to capture when decorating or buying things for our home.

In my opinion, creating a sanctuary is not simply decorating to suit a given style. It's a fundamental way of life. It is absolutely necessary for my personal expression and well-being, for indulging and fueling my imagination, for allowing me to retreat from the mundane—my home lets me live inside a fairy tale. Expressing myself as I've done at home has fed into my overall confidence too. My dress sense, for example, has really been informed by what goes on at home. Your soul will thank you for manifesting it in such ways!

Some may look at my pictures and make judgments like, "You have to have a lot of money to create that." We all know that money can be problematic in a world that almost demands that we be acquisitive. My advice is therefore twofold:

- Be patient. I've been collecting antiques and vintage items for almost thirty years (I'm forty-seven!), so what you see has taken a long time to manifest. I've always bought what I loved and have never considered whether I have space or whether something goes with

anything else. If you buy on gut instinct, you can't go wrong. I love to imagine the stories behind the items I buy too. That's what makes your room or space interesting! Fad buying can leave you feeling a little empty, so it's always worth waiting for just the right thing and pushing yourself for something special if you can afford to do so. Ebay, Facebook Marketplace, and antiques fairs have done well for me over the years. Let go of stuff that doesn't bring you joy, and don't be surprised when your tastes evolve—this is normal.

- Create atmosphere. Try candles, low lighting, and big plants that cast shadows in the lower lighting. When it comes to color palettes, darker, richer tones are far more intimate, and when it comes to positioning objects within the room, don't forget to add things above eye level wherever possible. And don't just put stuff around the edges of a room. Layering—objects, textiles, pictures—adds interest and texture. You want your room to really envelop you and delight you on every level ... and to appeal to every one of your senses.

Corani is based near the beautiful, historic city of York, U.K. Find her on Instagram @darkroseinteriors.



"In my opinion, creating a sanctuary is not simply decorating to suit a given style. It's a fundamental way of life."

“CLOAKED IN SILVER FROST”

Magical Winter Wear

by Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman

Photo by Priscilla Hernandez

“... a great lady, taller than any woman that Edmund had ever seen. She also was covered in white fur up to her throat and held a long straight golden wand in her right hand and wore a golden crown on her head. Her face was white—not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing-sugar, except for her very red mouth.”

—from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis

When the air starts to turn crisp, the leaves fall, and the sun vanishes for long periods behind gray clouds, it's easy to lose the inspiration to dress as your most magical self. Soft hoodies and fleece leggings call to be worn under cozy blankets while sipping hot chocolate. But just because winter weather presents some challenges to enchanted dressing doesn't mean there aren't options for the discerning modern witch or fairy!

The best place to embrace a fae style in your winter clothing is undoubtedly a warm coat. We recommend you look for one in a rich, bold color that makes you stand out against the harsh elements! Look for embroidery, velvet, and faux fur trim for an extra dose of magic. A little silver embroidery across a dark wool coat can go a long way. If you're feeling especially bold, you might even try a cloak instead of a coat. Cloaks are incredibly warm, and you really can't beat them for drama.

Winter is the time to embrace contrasts in your clothes. Pair wool with lace, a fuzzy sweater with a skirt of sheer layers, or velvet pants with a filmy top. Color-wise, think particularly about employing colors that pop against each other, like red on white. (Picture the White Witch's mouth on her pale face.) You can also try throwing in an unexpected color—like bright pink—to shake things up a bit!

With jewelry, it's always tempting to go for all silver and clear or white stones like quartz, moonstone, and diamonds. This kind of jewelry recalls the

shimmering snow, the bare trees, and the storms of the winter season. We'd recommend looking for pieces that incorporate branches to increase that effect. That said, don't snooze on gold at this time of year—as the White Witch demonstrates, a golden wand and crown can be quite striking too.

Lastly, it's hard to get around the fact that winter commonly means you have to break out your heavy boots. But even boots can contain a spark of enchantment. Seven-league boots aren't a staple of fairy-tale clothing for nothing! Look for a pair that have a little something special to them—maybe it's a pretty design sewn into their sides or a flash of color in the lining. If you have lace-up boots, you might consider swapping out the plain black or brown laces for something more fanciful. If none of those options work, a pair of fun, warm socks can really perk up your mood too.

In winter extremes, you might be tempted to throw on any old thing as long as it's warm—but that doesn't have to be your only option. Finding small ways to add a little magic to your cozy outfits can make a big difference when you're facing the gloomy skies of winter!

Note: The line “cloaked in silver frost” appears in Lorraine Schein's poem “To Chione,” published in the Winter Solstice 2018 issue of *Eternal Haunted Summer*.



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.

Find Priscilla Hernandez on Instagram @[yidneth](https://www.instagram.com/yidneth).





WOMEN OF THE IRON WAND

The Viking *Völva* and the Craft of Prophecy

by Susann Cokal



An old man in tattered clothes shows up at your door. *I want a prophecy*, he says, blinking his single eye. *I need to know what will become of this world.*

You take pity. You agree to work *seidr*, fortune-telling magic, in exchange for the old man's ring and necklace.

You summon your maidens and sit down in your seat of power, holding a long iron staff. You are of average height at five feet, two inches, but you were raised by giants; the heavy wand is nearly half your length. You set its end against the ground, where it connects you to time and the cosmos. Perhaps you also throw some henbane seeds into the fire for inspiration; the smoke has helpful hallucinogenic properties.

When the girls begin to sing, their voices carry you out of yourself and far from your village. You travel on a different plane of existence, narrating your vision aloud: The oldest deities create the world out of a void by lifting the land out of the sea. The primary gods, the *Æsir*, bring order to chaos, and then fight with the Vanir, gods of wisdom, fertility, and fortune telling. The World Tree, Yggdrasil, grows through all nine worlds, from underworld to earth to the gods' Asgard. Your trance takes you to Ragnarök, the terrible last battle between gods and giants that will destroy the cosmos and leave another watery void. And then (in a late addition to the story) comes hope, when a son of the great god Odin returns from the dead to see fields greening over.

At that, your client throws back his cloak. But you already know who he is; you just told him his own story. He is Odin himself, the one-eyed chieftain of all gods, the deity of wisdom, war, Valhalla, and the winter Yule festival.

He thanks you.

As a *völva*, a Viking sorceress and seer, you are one of the most powerful women of your time. You are experienced. Respected. And quite probably rich. You are needed all over the north, so you travel, either alone or with helpers, depending on whether you prefer to bring your own singers or rely on local talent. Set your sights high: In the Norse sagas, *völvar* are invited to splendid feasts and receive gifts of jewelry, oxen, and more.

One of several Viking graves in Fyrkat, Denmark, shows how revered the *völvar* were. One woman was found buried in a blue and red gown embroidered with gold threads, luxuries usually reserved for royalty. Her necklace was inspired by the one worn by the goddess Freyja. The grave includes a collection of objects useful for the afterlife, including her long iron wand (also classified as a rod or even a distaff for spinning), a packet of

that magical henbane, and an amulet in the shape of a stool-like chair such as the one in which she sat for *seidr*. No queen could have wished for a better burial.

Some poems in the Edda, the medieval anthologies of Viking sagas, stories, and poetry, warn that seeresses are deceptive. Worst of all: "Beware a *völva* who prophesies good." That sort is just a people pleaser or has her eye on a nice fat reward. The true fortune teller sees a bleak future, and happiness is merely an accident. But who wants to foretell only doom? Are you wrong to offer hope, rebirth, visions of greening fields? Perhaps it is not entirely a bad thing that some of the sorceresses have names that wink at duplicity, such as Grima ("mask") and Huld ("conceal").

The *völva* who foretells only good things might be lumped together with some rather horrible types of sorceress: *fordæda*, *hála*, *skass*, and more—meaning variously *hideous*, *stupid*, *evil*, *strumpet*, and worse. These would be the ones who cast spells for a "witch ride," a magical attack on a sleeping enemy. The victim can suffer anything from a bad dream to death.

Whether your magic is entirely to the good or occasionally malicious, sorcery is a female province. Male sorcerers, the *seidr*-men, are fewer in number and less well respected. In the sagas, a man who takes on a feminine role as a *völva* is the object of suspicion.

And that's just fine with you.

You have given Odin the most important prophecy of the Viking era, to be recorded in a poem known as the *Völuspá*, a section of the 13th century Elder Edda. You will always be associated with the one-eyed god, but the fertility goddess, Freyja, has just as much influence. She is the *seidr*'s first practitioner, and she is everywhere in the ceremony and in the lives of Viking women. A Sami *völva* in the sagas makes it exclusive: She prophesies only by Freyja's will. In the Prose Edda, Freyja is "the most renowned of the goddesses," and deservedly so. She is a shape-shifter, a beauty, and a mother of daughters; she is also a patroness for warriors, and she's a wife, albeit to the rather negligible god Odr. (She loves him; the heart wants what it wants.) Romantic love pleases her, and she is the goddess on whom to call for matters of the heart.

As for the occasional scandal, Freyja has those just like any other powerful female. In a move classic to women's detractors, the trickster god, Loki, accuses her of improprieties with her brother. (Anne Boleyn, anyone?)



Ride of the Valkyries (1879), wood engraving after drawing by E. Doepler, Junior

Never you mind, I imagine her saying as she climbs into a chariot pulled by two cats; I'm off to Sessrúmnir.

That is Freyja's great hall of the dead, which stands on a plain called Fólkvangr ("field of the people" or "field of the army"). Sessrúmnir ("room of seats") welcomes women who have suffered "a noble death," including *völvar* and those who fulfill more traditional roles as housewives, weavers, and mothers. Freyja also hosts half the warriors who fall in battle, and she is the one who does the choosing; Odin's Valhalla takes Freyja's rejects. She's a model for the Valkyries, who escort warriors to Odin's Valhalla.

I like to think Sessrúmnir was created for women, with the men as guests or accessories, like Freyja's signature falcon-feather cloak and her famous necklace, Brisingamen. I picture the hall hung with tapestries in foliate green and deep red, Freyja presiding in a golden gown—perhaps spun from the red-gold tears she weeps when her husband is away. Here you can discuss the mysteries of the *seidr* and the fortunes

you foretold, as well as the loves in your life, the harvests, the daughters. The table is laden with the very best mead and honey cake, brewed and baked by you and your sister *völvar*.

Someone proposes that you all work *seidr* magic together. You thump your iron rods upon the stones of the afterworld and sing. Once again, you travel to the beginning of the world, sights set on Ragnarök.

In the midst of a vision, a heavy knock sounds on the door. It is the sound of someone who has been rapping for a while and has grown impatient: Odin, Loki, the spirit of a stray *seidr*-man?

Freyja gets to her feet with firelight gleaming over her dress. She raises a drinking horn and spills fragrant mead over the table in a benediction. *What will become of this mad, violent, beautiful world?* she asks her *völvar*. *What do we think? Open the door!*

Susann Cokal is the author of four novels, the latest of which is *Mermaid Moon*. Visit her online at susanncokal.com.

SHAPING THE FUTURE WITH FREYJA

by Gina Spriggs



Seidr magic was practiced by the ancient Norse people—particularly the female sorceresses and seers. It is the type of magic that Freyja, the most renowned Norse goddess, was reputed for, and it remains a robust and respectful form of magic to this day.

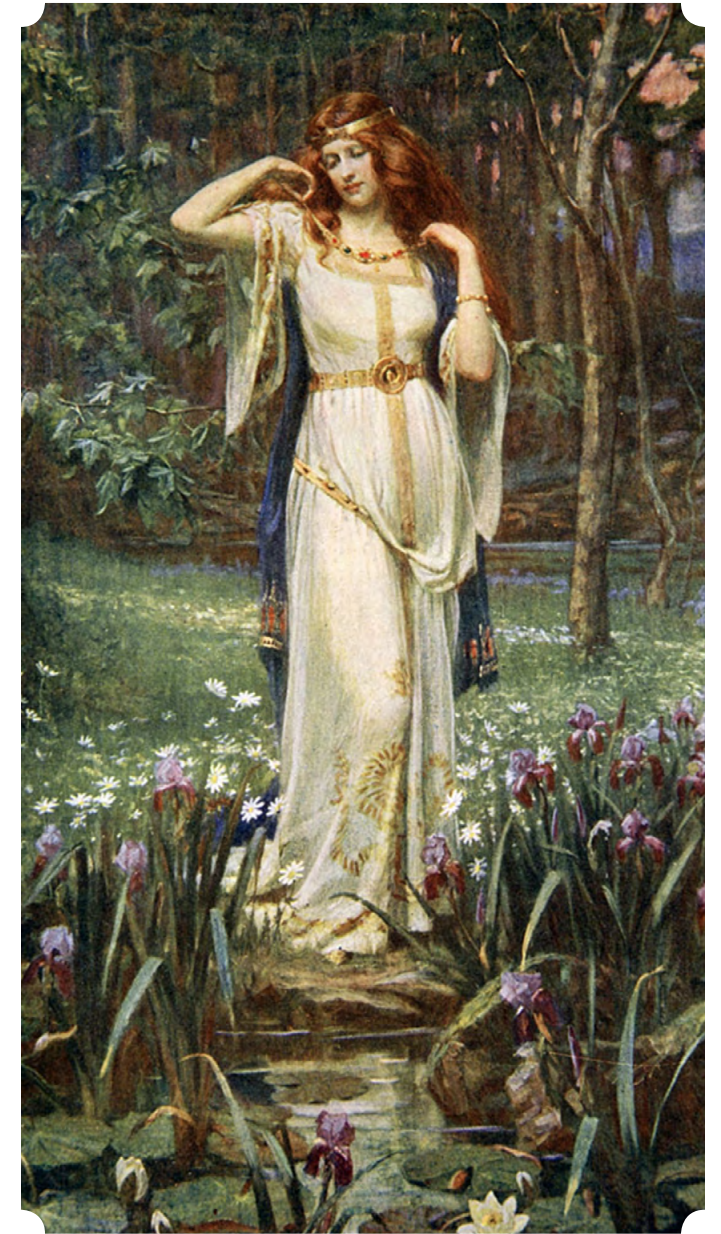
Seidr involves the knowledge, manipulation, and channeling of natural energies and forces, including communication with spirits and deities. It is often associated with healing, shape-shifting, divination, prophecy, and shaping the future.

Here are a few suggestions to consider before embarking on a *Seidr* ritual:

- Make sure you believe that you deserve the future you want. Your sincere belief will influence your outcome.
- Word your desire to align *with* the flow of natural energies instead of *against* them. (For example, if you and a co-worker are vying for the same position, don't perform a ritual *against* your co-worker. Instead, create one that focuses on magically helping them get an alternate job or one aimed at enhancing your chances of getting the job.)
- Your desire should be probable. (If, for example, you just left a job where you made \$50,000 a year to start your own business, your ritual might set a \$65,000 goal your first year before leaping toward a goal of \$200,000. You can more easily imagine what \$65,000 *feels like*.)

Are you ready to script the next part of your life? Here are some suggestions for how to petition Freyja and gain her support:

- Choose Friday, the day named after Freyja, to dedicate an altar space to her. Adorn it with symbols and items representing her, such as daisies, amber, and images of cats or falcons. Burn rose, jasmine, amber, or vanilla incense to set the sacred atmosphere.
- Offer Freyja fresh flowers, honey, mead, or sweets. Call or sing her name, and light nine gold, red, pink, or white candles.
- You can also offer her handmade crafts, poetry, or artwork as a personal expression of devotion.
- Enter a meditative state through drumming or chanting while staying conscious of your breath.
- Visualize yourself and Freyja's presence. Breathe in her energy.
- Express your desires aloud, then wait for her guidance and wisdom. Allow her to inspire and empower you.
- Ask for a sign from her that your request has been heard. Common signs include cats, feathers, and daisies. Remember



Freyja and the Necklace (1890), by James Doyle Penrose

that these signs may cross your path in different ways, in their natural form or, for example, as an image on a T-shirt, or in piece of art, or on a billboard.

- Let Freyja inspire you all next year.



Gina Spriggs is a master tarologist, intuitive development mentor, course creator for *DailyOm*, and co-owner of *Curio, Craft & Conjure*, a metaphysical store in Charlotte, North Carolina. In each of these roles her goal is to help align women with their intuition, power, and purpose. See more at ginaspriggs.guru.

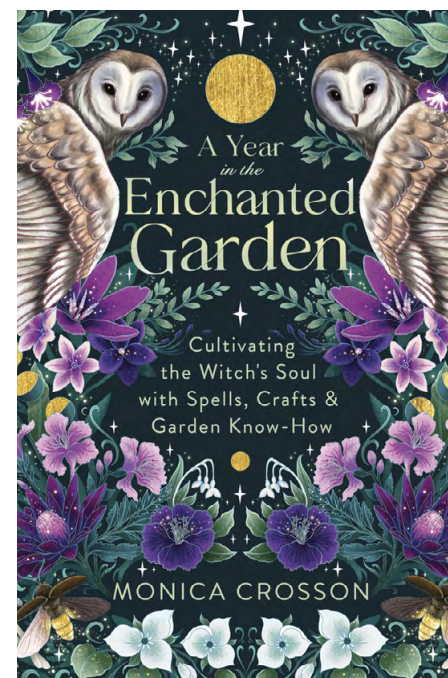
A YEAR IN THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

by Monica Crosson

Photo by
MONICA CROSSON

The Enchanted Garden

Monica Crosson



Iwrote *A Year in the Enchanted Garden: Cultivating the Witch's Soul With Spells, Crafts & Garden Know-How*, my new book from Llewellyn, to inspire you to discover the true enchantment of a garden (big or small), to get your hands dirty and learn to work with the rhythms of nature in your own specific region, and to get to know the spirits of your land. I invite you to tap into energy that is unique to your own magic with gardening tips, stories, recipes, charms and spells, herbal folklore, and seasonal celebrations for every month.

This is your invitation to stroll through the garden gate and down a stony path. Sit beneath the willow; she whispers eloquent tales of a witch (like you, like me) weaving magic with a green-tipped wand. Never mind the dirt stains under the witch's fingernails; she finds solace in the company of growing things.

Here is an excerpt:

Here We Go A-Wassailing

In northwestern Washington, winters can be particularly dreary. We have known people who have moved to our beautiful valley during the summer and by September declared, "The rain isn't

as bad as I thought it would be." We chuckle at their naïveté and say, "Just wait until November." Where I am, in eastern Skagit County, the mountains that surround us trap the clouds, so we can sometimes go months without a break in the weather. By the time spring arrives, we open our doors bleary-eyed and suspicious of the big, bright round thing that dominates an unfamiliar blue sky.

One particularly cold, soggy January afternoon, after weeks of continual drizzle, my five-year-old daughter said to me, "Mama, can't we just shoo it away so the sun will come back?"

I smiled and then said, "I wish I had a spell to make it disappear."

She went back to playing with her dolls and had soon forgotten all about the gray dampness that kept her indoors, but it got me thinking about rituals meant to scare away the winter and encourage the arrival of spring. I knew all about the carnival celebrations that would be happening in February; their pre-Christian roots began with festivals to usher in the spring. But the ritual I was most interested in was the mid-January ceremony known as wassail.

Long, long, ago, British people set out in small groups, sometimes led by a wassail king and queen, into the bitter cold of a January evening. This would typically take place on the eve of Twelfth Night, January 5 or January 17, depending on which calendar was used. As they walked down the winding paths that led to their orchards, they banged drums and rang bells to frighten away winter spirits. Along with them they brought a special brew of cider or beer that had been prepared with herbs, sugar, spices, eggs, and cream. Typically, they surrounded the oldest fruit-bearing tree, chanted rhymes, and sang songs to wake up the spirit of the tree. In some traditions, the trunk of the tree was beaten with a stick to get the sap moving. As an offering, pieces of dried bread would be dunked into the wassail bowl, and the elected queen would place them in the hollow or supporting branches of

the tree. Some of the wassail brew would then be poured about the roots or upon the tree's trunk, and the revelers shared the rest.

It was that very evening that my daughter, Chloe, who was rightly elected queen, and my sons, Joshua, age twelve, and Elijah, age nine, followed me down a winding path, equipped with apple cider and some bells, to our small orchard. As we walked, we shook our bells and cried out, "Go away, winter! Ye have been banished!"

The kids ran circles around the gnarly old apple tree that produced the smallest and knobby apples you can imagine. "Wake up, wake up!" they screeched and jingled their bells. Chloe, taking her role of elected queen very seriously, ceremoniously dunked toasted bread into our wassail bowl and tucked it into the crook of one of the lower branches. "Here you go, nature spirits," she said. "I hope this helps you wake up and make all this rain go away."

We sang what verses we could remember from that old carol "Here We Come A-Wassailing," then spilled a little of the wassail onto the roots of the old tree before sharing the rest among ourselves. "Here's to a good try, old friend," I said and raised the bowl. Of course, after taking a big swig from our wassail bowl, Joshua had to spray the contents from his mouth all over the tree's trunk.

"Joshie!" Chloe screamed and started hitting him with her bells.

"I was just blessing the tree," he said, blocking her blows with a now sloshing bowl of apple cider. This statement threw my nine-year-old into a fit of laughter, to which Chloe responded with a set of bells between his eyes.

"It's time to go in," I said as calmly as I could. I watched as my three little witchlings ran screaming and laughing back to the house, and then I turned toward the tree. "I know you get it," I said and patted the twisted trunk. "Blessed be, dear spirit."

Photo by
ALEXANDRIA CORNE
@alexandriacornephotography



This is your invitation to stroll through the garden gate and down a stony path. Sit beneath the willow; she whispers eloquent tales of a witch (like you, like me) weaving magic with a green-tipped wand. Never mind the dirt stains under the witch's fingernails; she finds solace in the company of growing things.





Planting Your Bare-Root Tree

Bare-root trees and shrubs are typically available to buy at your local nursery between January and March. What's great about buying bare-root plants is that it is an easy and affordable way to add fruit-bearing or flowering trees and shrubs to a new garden. Also, most bare-root trees sold are typically a dwarf or semi-dwarf variety, so spacing isn't as big of an issue as it would be were you to purchase a standard-size tree.

When to plant your bare-root tree will vary from region to region, but ideally

you want to plant trees when they are still dormant. In warmer regions, that means late fall to early winter. In colder regions, just after the ground has thawed.

When you are ready to plant your bare root tree or shrub ...

- Take off the protective packaging and gently untangle root system.
- Soak in water for approximately three to six hours.
- Dig a hole that is at least double the size of the root spread. Break up the sides of the hole to accommodate growth.
- Mix equal parts garden soil and good

compost and partly fill in the hole.

- Place the tree in the hole and fill soil in around the roots. Make sure the root collar (where the roots meet the base of the tree) is level with the ground. Pack the soil in well.
- Build up the soil a little around the tree to form a water basin and give your tree a good watering.
- Cover a three-foot-wide and two-inch-deep area around the base of your tree with mulch to hold in moisture.
- Water every seven to ten days until the tree is well established.

A NEW TWIST ON AN OLD RITUAL

Now that you have your new tree or shrub firmly planted in your garden, why not bless it with a new twist on an old-fashioned wassail ritual? This ritual is a great way to bless your new addition to your garden, and it also blesses the birds who call your garden home. Try your hand at making my dairy-free and egg-free version of old-fashioned wassail. Or how about picking up some locally brewed hard cider or beer?

You will need:

Evergreens (real or artificial)

Floral wire

Wassail, beer, or hard cider

Bells, pans, whistles, etc. for making noise

Small bird feeder filled with seed

A pretty wassail bowl (optional)

Elect someone from your family or friend group to lead the procession. (This ritual can also be performed alone, though it is more fun worked as a group.) Twist the greens with floral wire to form a crown. This will be worn by the elected leader, who represents a Green Man or Green Woman character.

Your leader will carry the wassail bowl, or whatever container holds the

cider or beer bottles. All others will carry the noisemakers, which may include bells, whistles, pots and pans, and so on. Don't forget to have someone carry the filled bird feeder. As you make your way to the tree, bang those pots and shake those bells—be as noisy as you please! Yell out for winter spirits to flee. Remember to make it fun—dance about and make merry!

Your elected king or queen will then lift the wassail bowl or open container and spill just a bit over the roots of your tree. As this is done, all say something like this:

*Health to thee, my [fill in type of tree] tree
Steadfast upon the ground.
Be it weather good or foul,
May every sprig flourish well
Upon your leafy crown.*

Then have your elected leader take the bird feeder and hang it from a branch. As this is done, all say something like this:

*Hail thee birds who grace this tree,
Your presence brings us cheer.
We hope this offering of seed and mirth
Eases your stay here.*

Now everyone can cheer and share in the libation.

Wassail

4 small apples

¼ cup brown sugar

1 quart apple cider

1 cup orange juice

1 cup cranberry or pineapple juice

½ cup brandy (optional)

6 allspice berries

2 cinnamon sticks

1 teaspoon grated nutmeg

Dash ground cinnamon and ginger before serving (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Use a melon baller to scoop the cores out of the small apples. Set the apples on a cookie sheet and fill each one with approximately a tablespoon of brown sugar. Bake for 40 minutes. Pour apple cider, juices, and optional brandy into a stockpot and warm over medium-low heat. Cut a square of cheesecloth or muslin and place the spices on top. Tie it closed with cotton twine and float it in the mixture until it warms. Do not let the brew boil.

When ready to serve, remove the spice bundle and float the baked apples. You may also add a dash of cinnamon and ginger to the bowl.

Monica Crosson's new book, *A Year in the Enchanted Garden*, is now available for pre-order. Her other book, *Wild Magical Soul: Untame Your Spirit & Connect to Nature's Wisdom*, can be found at your favorite bookseller. Follow her on Instagram @monicacrosson.

Baba Yaga by Erika Leahey
@_deathofseasons_

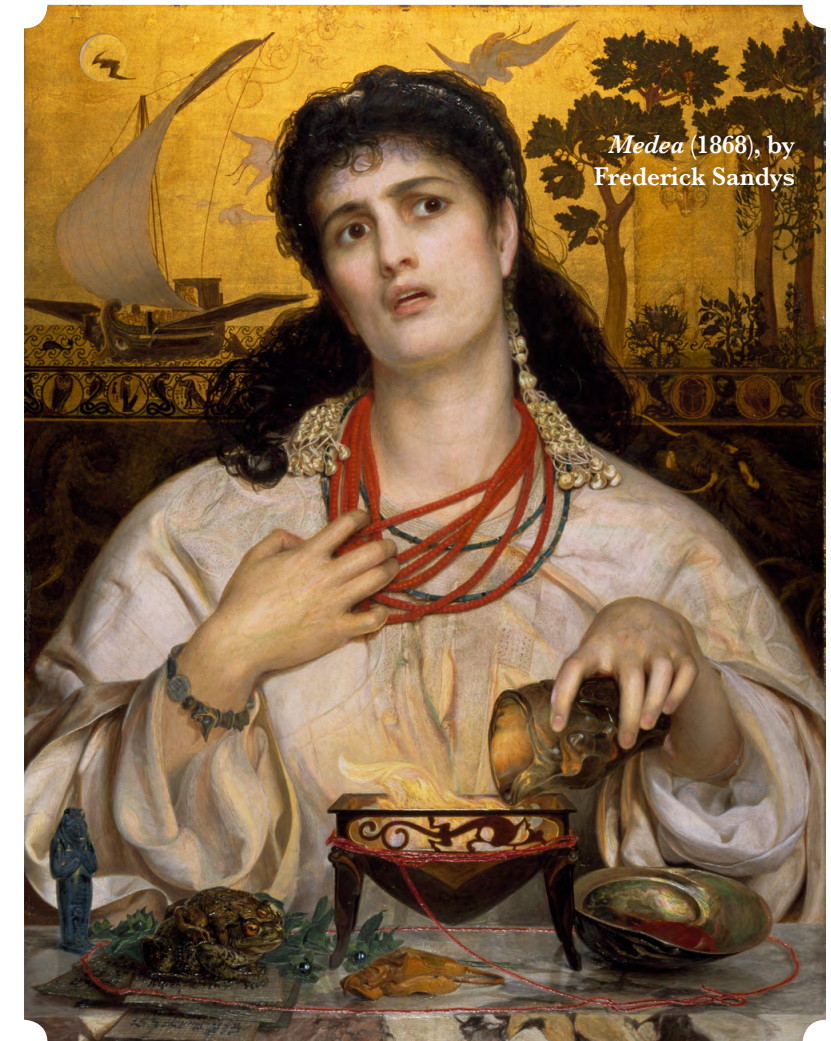


FIRE BURN *and* CAULDRON BUBBLE

by Kirsty Stonell Walker

Witches and flames: That is a complex partnership if ever there was one. One minute we're bubbling up some spells together on a blasted heath, the next someone has been accused of witchcraft and is being burned at the stake. There is no doubt about it, though: Fire and witchcraft go together in more ways than you would have imagined. Edward Brewtnall's 1882 painting *A Visit to the Witch* gives a very traditional image of the witch-fire partnership. The wise old crone has a cauldron going, no doubt filled with something magical that seems to have lured in two young women. Maybe they're seeking a love potion—or maybe something far more deadly. The witch and the fire are working in perfect harmony, woman and element creating something otherworldly, stretching against the laws of nature. In a way, it is as subversive for the fire to be breaking the rules as the witch, but then fire has always been the bad boy of the elements, and the most human: It can do great, awe-inspiring stuff, no doubt, but it can also destroy, pointlessly and mercilessly.

Something about this vision of witchcraft acts as a perversion of the hearth-and-home ideal. Fire should be heating up dinner for the family, but here it's actively cooking up mischief instead. Another very saucy example is from John Collier's 1887 painting *An Incantation*, in which a naked sorceress flamboyantly pours magical elixir into a cauldron as flames lick the bulbous sides. That witch is as hot as the fire and no doubt as dangerous, with little consideration for her own health and safety.



Medea (1868), by
Frederick Sandys

It's rarely seen as positive when a woman takes ownership of fire beyond the family hearth. Women tinkering around with flames make men very nervous. Fire is power; it can be used to progress to greater heights and wiser deeds. It's linked with religious authority, as when a burning bush can be the mouthpiece of God or flames rain down from the heavens to destroy the unholy. But it has been taken for granted that women, especially wizened old spinsters or naked flibbertigibbets, should not aspire to such power and should not be allowed to progress without the help of men.

The sorceress in John William Waterhouse's 1886 masterpiece, *The Magic Circle*, has nurtured a glowing pyre for her golden bowl, the light of the flames reflecting

in its gilded belly. As darkness encroaches on the witch, she draws a circle seemingly made of thin white flames around herself, a partnership of opposites. Despite her pale, smoky dress, Waterhouse's sorceress is shrouded in the darkness of her hair and thus linked to the night and Hecate, goddess of moon and magic. Her powers are mysterious and unseen, unlike the light and certainty of the fire. The fire in the magic circle defies the darkness but abets the magic; it will transform the witch's knowledge into actions and change the world.

In Henry Meynell Rheam's 1898 *The Sorceress*, we're faced with a figure who might as well be a pagan priestess with her golden headband and robes. The oracle's fire seems to drip in the lining of her sleeves as she proclaims the future. We are among the croaking ravens that watch this commanding

Fire Burn and Cauldron Bubble

Kirsty Stonell Walker

woman, seemingly unfazed, and therein lies a problem: If the fire is power and a woman controls that, then what is the point of men? And if fire is stronger than man, what business does a woman have in forming this partnership with her flickering friend?

In Victorian art, the bond between woman and fire starts young, with the temptations of flames drawing in girls like moths. The pareidolia of flame gazing, as illustrated in Arthur Elsley's *Fireside Delights* (1913) or Arthur Hacker's *Fire Fancies* (1890), shows children seeing visions in the flickering shapes that jump and dance from the fireplace. Interestingly, the faces in these scenes of harmless idle fancies are predominantly female, no doubt forerunners for the countless images of *dolce far niente*—lounging women filled with sweet nothingness—so beloved by the art market. These young girls are wistfully wasting their hours, apparently being entertained by nothing, but what if they can see visions that we cannot? These young ladies by the fireside are like oracles, watching for messages in the elements. Their delights and fancies are a gateway to blasted heaths and cauldrons and far more autonomy than society is otherwise willing to allow them.

In many ways, fire and women of a witchy persuasion share some unhappy attributes. The instability and unpredictability of fire resonates with the madness of magical women. In Frederick Sandys's *Medea* (1868), the erstwhile lover of Jason (of Argonauts fame) looks as if she is catching fire from the magic she is casting in her golden bowl. She pulls at her coral beads, her eyes wild and intense as she speaks the incantation that will ultimately kill Glauce, the woman for whom Jason has abandoned her. Women and fire destroy, and you should never underestimate either, as they can easily be the death of you and everyone you care about. Medea not only kills Jason's lover, but her rage catches their two children as well, devastating the family with her jealous, spurned fury. It was her magic that attracted Jason and enabled him to achieve his goals, but you can't turn your back on a fire and expect it not to burn you.

Similarly, *Morgan Le Fay* (1864), also by Sandys (who obviously had a thing for an angry, flamey lady), shows the half-sister of King Arthur cooking up a magical storm surrounded by her



The Sorceress (1898), by Henry Meynell Rheam

pagan paraphernalia. Her back is to her loom, something that society would perceive as a more positive use of her time. Instead of weaving demurely, Morgan the Fairy is licking flame around a robe from her golden lamp. The cursed garment was meant for the king, who is smart enough not to trust the unexpected gift. Like Medea, Morgan is a sorceress hell-bent on destruction, using fire for nihilistic purposes. Her ambition drives her, with her lust for the throne hinted at by the figure of a king on top of her magical cabinet.

I'm intrigued by the owls that look down on her from the loom. They are usually symbols of wisdom, so is the implication that Morgan has turned her back on wisdom to follow the foolish path of magic? In some cultures, owls symbolize death and darkness. For example, they make the list of "omens drear" in John Keats's poem "Hyperion" (1818-1819). There is something unsettling about Morgan's owls, and their wide-eyed observation of the flaming scene seems to offer tacit approval.

John Charles Dollman's *The Unknown* (1912) epitomizes the concern about women, sexuality, and power. A beautiful topless woman kneels in front of her fire, commanding an uncomprehending group of apes to do her bidding. Like

an outtake from Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Dollman's forceful female attempts to impose her will on presumably male animals. Is she meant to be Circe, the sorceress renowned for turning hapless men into pigs? Given the date, could this possibly be an allegory for women's suffrage and the fear that once women have the ultimate power in a democracy, nothing will stop them from deciding to rule themselves?

For women, gazing into the flames started early, and they saw a future in which they could determine their own path and power, aided and abetted by their fiery partner. Once raised by the flame, they would not stop until they had burned that establishment down.



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.



Morgan le Fay (1864), by Frederick Sandys



BABA YAGA'S GINGERBREAD HUT

by Must Love Herbs

The Slavic tale of the child-eating witch Baba Yaga and her magical hut has always fascinated me. Who wouldn't like to live in a cute fairy-tale cottage, conveniently built on chicken legs, that can spin and relocate on command? It's a lazy witch's dream. And what better way to pay homage to such a fantastic domain than with a gorgeous and delicious gingerbread confection that has its own faux chicken legs?

Re-creating Baba Yaga's iconic home as a fabulous dessert was tricky. It's all in the feet. And faux chicken feet of the right size to support a gingerbread house are not as easy to acquire as I'd first thought! After what seemed like ages of searching, I walked into a local craft store and there it stood: A perfect little pillar candleholder perched above forged metal chicken feet. The top was much too small hold my Baba Yaga's magical, edible hut, but thankfully my woodworker husband was eager to create a larger one. I feel that Baba Yaga herself was looking out for me!

What follows is a recipe for delicious gingerbread that may or may not make a lovely home for a ferocious folkloric witch with a bad reputation. If you want the full effect, I suggest keeping your eyes peeled for chicken-clawed candleholders or figuring out a way to fashion your own ... and, of course, when dealing with Baba Yaga, always keep your children safe!

Baba Yaga's Gingerbread Hut

Must Love Herbs



CONSTRUCTION GRADE GINGERBREAD

1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick) at room temperature
2/3 cup light brown sugar
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 1/2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/8 teaspoon baking powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 egg, at room temperature
1/2 cup molasses

Sift the flour, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a large mixing bowl. Sift again to combine. Set aside.

Cream together the butter and the sugar with your electric mixer until just blended. Scrape down the sides.

Add the egg and molasses, and mix on a low setting until well incorporated. Add in the flour mixture slowly. I like to use a large spoon and add a spoonful at a time until there are no dry ingredients left. Stop periodically to scrape the sides of the bowl to make sure everything is blended evenly. The dough should be dry but not crumbly.

Pull dough out of the mixer and divide into thirds. Wrap each third in plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

When Ready to Bake

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Make or purchase a template for your house parts. You can find gingerbread house templates online with a simple search. I made mine out of cardboard that I can cut around with a knife.

Place the chilled dough on top of the floured surface. Roll side to side and up and down until it's an even quarter-inch thick and makes a rough square shape. Lay your template pieces out on the dough and cut as many pieces as you can. Place the excess dough to the side.

Carefully slide a floured spatula under each piece and transfer to a parchment lined cookie sheet. Don't be afraid to add more flour if anything is stuck.

Roll out and repeat the process with remaining dough until you have all the pieces you need. Place the cutouts in the fridge to chill for 15 minutes before baking.

Bake the house pieces for 8 to 12 minutes (depending on size) or until just set. Allow to cool thoroughly on a fresh sheet of parchment.

GINGERBREAD HOUSE GLUE

3/4 cup egg whites (about 6 large eggs' worth)

1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

4 to 5 cups powdered sugar

Food coloring, optional

Add the egg whites and cream of tartar to the bowl of your stand mixer. Using the whisk attachment, whip together until light and frothy.

Slowly add in the powdered sugar a half cup at a time until 4 cups are incorporated.

If the mixture appears too wet, add in more powdered sugar until you get a gluelike consistency.

You can add brown food-safe coloring at the end so that the glue matches the color of the house if desired.

Alternatively, you can melt down marshmallows over low heat to use as glue.

I used cake crumbs to make the moss on the roof. I simply colored a white cake with green food-safe coloring before baking. Once the cake was baked and cooled, I broke it into moss-like crumbs. I then brushed the glue on to attach the cake crumbs to the roof.

Using the glue, connect the house pieces. Work level by level, starting with the lower walls. Wait until the glue has completely hardened before moving on to the next level, and work your way up to the roof.

Then decorate! I bedecked my house with homemade marzipan mushrooms and edible flowers and herbs. Have fun and make it your own!



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The WITCH of the WINTER WOODS

by Brittani Jenee' Cal
Art by Jana Heidersdorf

When I was a child, I strayed too far from the path and was eaten by a wolf. A woodcutter saved me, splitting the beast open before I'd run out of air. The people in my village blamed me for what happened.

"It's her fault," they said. "She should never have been wearing red in the woods."

Unable to stand the whispers any longer, I went to live with my grandmother deep in the forest. She taught me how to sing a song that brought foxes to our garden and how to brew wildflower tea to bring rain.

We spent many years together, until one day we woke to red flames devouring our home and the cries of cowardly men running back toward the village. The smoke took hold of my grandmother, and she fell into a deep sleep from which she would never wake.

I ran deeper into the woods, to where snow kept the trees always bare and men and women dared not travel. My bones ached from the cold, but I pressed on as the flames that had taken everything from me raged in my heart. When I could walk no farther, I fell into the snow and waited for winter to take me.

Wishing to see something beautiful before I left the world, I sang the song my grandmother taught me, but instead of a fox appearing, a red rose sprouted up from beneath the snow. I reached for it and pricked my finger on one of its many thorns. Three drops of blood bloomed from my fingertip and fell.

A finch called to me from a barren tree, and from its branches hung three beautiful dresses. I took them to a frozen lake where I could see my reflection and tried on each one.

The first dress was the color of sunlight sparkling through ice.

The second dress was the color of the coldest night in winter when the moon mourned for spring.

The third dress was the color of false promises made by poison berries to hungry wanderers lost in the snow.

She should never have been wearing red, they

had said.

Now, I would wear it always.

The voice of winter carried across the icy winds that stung my cheeks.

"You will sing for me," it said.

The wind reached down into my chest and grasped my heart. It beat only once more, for the spell that saved me from the bitter cold had turned my flaming heart to ice.

More years passed. Those who returned home from the winter woods spoke of a voice that lured lost travelers deep into the snow. A voice so beautiful, they returned to the woods in hopes of hearing my sweet song once more.

They were never seen again.

One day, a child fleeing from a nearby kingdom found herself lost in the endless winter. She had hair as black as night and eyes that danced like snowflakes. When I found the child, I felt no desire to sing winter's song to her. For it was not so long ago that I too had been a child alone in the woods.

"I can never return home," said the child. "I have been promised to a king and I am to be married in the spring."

I thought my heart would crack. "You can stay here as long as you wish."

"The king's men have followed me into the woods. I cannot outrun them."

"Fear not, child. For I am the voice of winter, and you are safe with me."

The child laid down to rest. As she slept, I found each of the king's men and lured them deeper into the snow with my song. When their hearts were stilled, I returned to the girl and built her an ever burning fire to keep her warm.

"You may stay in the winter woods for as long as you wish," I said to the child, and she was grateful.

Together, we searched for owl feathers that told us the secrets of the stars and we braided each other's hair with red ribbons. I loved the girl more with each passing moon, but the longer I kept the fire ablaze for her, the more my frozen heart began to thaw. When my heart was frozen no more, the winter winds led me away from the flames, took me in their cold embrace,

and placed me gently in an ice coffin so delicate it looked as though it were made of glass.

I had not seen that the girl had become a young woman. She braved the cold to weep beside me, not knowing I would never leave her. My breath no longer rose and fell from my chest, it was all around her, riding upon the winter winds. I had always been too fearful to teach her the song, but now I knew the strength of her heart, and I was not afraid.

The young woman heard the song from winter's breath, and when she sang it aloud, apple blossoms flowered from the dormant branches above her. She wept, knowing the song had been sung to her by her mother. As two of her tears fell, a red fox emerged from the trees. Its bright red fur glowed like a candle in the morning light. She followed it to the frozen lake where two dresses lay on the ice.

The first dress hung loosely around her waist. She twirled and it came up and around her like snow angel wings, flowing up, and then down again to her ankles. It was lovely, but when she tried on the second dress, it made her eyes glow with animal secrets.

As the ice and wind, I kissed her cheeks and spoke:

"You are so fair. The fairest of them all."

It was the coldest night of winter, but the moon did not mourn as my daughter filled her basket with golden apples. I did not weep as a raven pulled the last red ribbon from her hair. Her heart carried the warmth of an ever burning fire and the secrets of the stars. She would take this magic back into the world beyond the winter woods, and she would bring spring with her to every village and kingdom she traveled.



Find fantasy and horror illustrator Jana Heidersdorf on Instagram @checanty.

Follow Brittani Jenee' Cal on Instagram @brittanijeneecal.



Cat and the Moon
by Jana Heidersdorf



Witch o' the Hills
by Jana Heidersdorf



SOUL+SELENE

by Carolyn Turgeon

For nearly a decade, photographer Ken Miner has used collodion wet-plate photography to capture witch Brianna Shambrook and document the evolution of her craft. This historical process involves exposing an image onto treated glass or metal and developing it on the spot with a mixture of wet chemicals.

The result is haunting, as in the photo to the right, where Shambrook holds the first broom she handcrafted and wears the outfit she once wore to handfast a fellow witch on the previous new moon. She's standing on the land that she's been restoring for four years, turning a junkyard on Vancouver Island into an enchanted forest. When her family purchased this land in 2019, it came with more than 10,000 pounds of dumped garbage. Now flowers, grass, and moss are growing again. The forest is filling with green along with foxgloves and other plants. Taken with a twenty-five-second exposure on glass, this image symbolizes the integration of Shambrook's shadow self and the reclamation of her—and her land's—power. It's a “portrait of a witch standing her ground,” she says.

“To me, witchcraft means becoming my own healer so that I can reclaim my personal power and magic,” Shambrook explains. “It also means creating a relationship with nature and recognizing that nature is my mirror. My spiritual practice is leading me to a greater understanding of my higher self and of the universe.”

Being a witch is often also about having a familiar—that is, as

Shambrook describes it, “a spirit guide that will manifest as an aspect of nature, like an animal, and have a consciousness.” The familiar will show up within divine time and be your partner as it supports and assists you along your magical path. Not every witch will have a familiar, Shambrook says, but if you do, it will surely assist you in your growth, your spiritual awakening, and your expansion of consciousness.

On page 84 you'll see a wet plate on tin of Shambrook and her third familiar, Binx, who died just over two years ago. “This particular plate holds a really special place in my heart,” she says. “Binx was an incredibly special and unique familiar; his soul shined so bright that he left an imprint on everyone he met. He had a profoundly spellbinding connection with nature, and getting to witness that really opened my heart in ways I didn't know were possible. Binx taught me how to lead from love and use my heart space as my compass.”

With the help of his mobile darkroom, Miner has been able to take wet plates of Shambrook (and her familiars) throughout her journey, in every season. For those who wish to dive deeper into the wet-plate process and witness the creation of even more photos, check out Brianna's YouTube channel @Briannashambrook.



To learn more about Shambrook and join her online coven, visit soulandselene.com.

Learn more about Ken Miner at kenminer.ca.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEN MINER





“To me, witchcraft means becoming my own healer so that I can reclaim my personal power and magic.”

TO GROW A WITCH

by Ember Markussen

Vintage illustration by Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

Millennia after the burning of witches commenced, after they were hunted, burned, drowned, exiled, and pointedly ignored, the age of the witch is at hand. Flocks of women, and men, are gravitating toward the magic. While many are just learning their runestones from their crystals, other witches have held their craft close to their hearts for years and are now coming out of the broom closet. No longer considered neighborhood oddities, they can proudly own their witchiness. They can share pictures of their spell jars (or sell them on Etsy). And witches can at last openly give their children the magical education that they themselves were denied in their childhood.

But how to do it? How do you grow a witch?

Like everything else witches do, it's a combination of ritual, ingredients, tools, and of course, power. You begin with children who are just beginning to see the world.

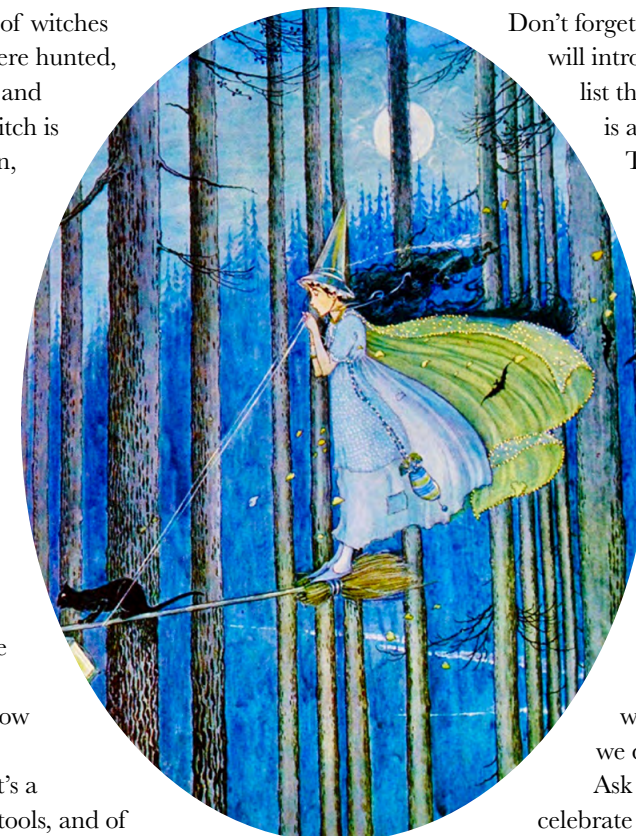
First, ask the witchlings to notice. Simply notice. Notice the sunset. Notice the water on leaves and the sun on dirt. Notice the way the wind sounds and the flowers taste. Witchcraft is about being in tune with our surroundings, allowing them to move through us like music. When we can hear the music, we can begin the dance.

Ask them what they see. Hear. Feel.

Next, find what the witchlings are drawn to. Do they collect the shiniest rocks? Do they run for the water whenever they can? Perhaps they acquire an animal following wherever they go, or grow plants with ease, or reach peace by gazing into a candle's flame. Look through the lens of power at your child and watch what comes to them without effort. Give them the words for their specialty: Storm witch. Green witch. Water witch. Remind them it can change with time.

Remind yourself too.

Give them tools that make them feel powerful. Gather tiny bottles and great handfuls of herbs, and candles in every color.



Don't forget the crystals. Show them books that will introduce Artemis and the Green Man, list the moon phases, or tell them basil is a protector while roses are for love.

Then explain that they can determine meaning for themselves. Children love to make things, and their creations carry their energy, so have them fashion their own wands, amulets, and altars. Decorate hats. Let them decide what a witch looks like.

Feast! Dance! Scream in terror and passion and wild abandon. True witches let themselves be moved in accordance with the energy that courses through them, something children have not yet learned to suppress. Encourage them to feel the extremes of the world, that they may never fear them as we did. Teach them to exist on the limits. Ask the witchlings how they would celebrate each season, each day, each hour.

When do dreams come true? When do we love?

When do we rest? Ask them when they would give thanks and when they would ask for more. Ask them how they would honor death and life. Teach them the circle of life and show them how the earth lives and dies. Watch the cycles of the heavens and feel the same power coursing through stars and snails. Laugh. Cry.

Ritual is a cornerstone for all of us, but especially the young. Let them help you in your rituals. Have them salt doorways. Leave out moon water. Light fires. Cleanse a room with smoke. Chant a word, a name, an invocation. Close your eyes together and breathe in the divine connection of the witch and the earth.

And finally, ask them to create a spell.

A child's spell is the strongest, for there is nothing standing between them and the magic. They are the magic in everything, including themselves. The witchling that is truly present is nearly unstoppable, yet pure of heart. They will nearly always choose to act in the space of love.

Perhaps all our children should grow into witches.

Ember Markussen practices ritual breathwork and shadow work while raising her witchlings in the coastal canyons of Southern California. Find her and visit her forest of fancy at thestorypriestess.com.



CRAFTING A MAGICAL YULE LOG

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

Yule is one of the oldest winter solstice festivals. Its roots can be traced back to the ancient Norse, thousands of years ago. Today, modern pagans and witches continue to observe and enjoy this special holiday. Yule is all about celebrating light. We revel in the scant natural hours of daylight, knowing they will increase daily till Midsummer. And we make light of our own by burning candles, hanging twinkling lights, and sharing the warmth and good cheer of the season with our loved ones.

Although Yule is considered to be a minor observance for witches, many (including myself) embrace it wholeheartedly as it is a time to slow down amid the bustle and flurry of the holidays, be present, and enjoy the magic of winter without the distraction of holiday materialism. Witches mark Yule with earthy, spiritual rituals that embody the sentiment of the season—being grateful for life and all its blessings.

One of my favorite traditions is the Yule log ceremony, a Norse practice that predates medieval times. A giant log or tree would be burned in a fireplace for twelve days and the ashes retained for good luck in the coming year. Nowadays, folks have simplified the ritual (often substituting a Yule log cake, since burning a wood log is impractical for most), and witches in particular love to come up with creative ways to weave herbs, crystals, and color magic into their Yule log ceremony.

A few days before Yule, I take a walk through our woods in search of the perfect Yule log on the forest floor. I look for a fallen birch branch, which I then cut down to a ten-to-twelve-inch piece. (I avoid cutting from a live tree, as there are plenty of fallen branches to choose from.) If you don't have access to a forest, a store-bought log works just as well.

Next comes the dressing of the log, and feel free to indulge your creativity here. Traditionally, white, green, and red candles are used, but witches take it a step further by appreciating the magic correspondences among these colors: White signifies new beginnings, peace, and harmony; green is for good luck, prosperity, and health; and red connotes confidence, strength, and courage.

As a green witch who works with plants, I like to dress my Yule log candles in ground, dried herbs from our harvest. I include the herbs' bounty in my gratitude; they are a reminder of the returning light, and their traditional magical correspondences become part of the ceremony (mint, for example, is associated with good luck, prosperity, healing, and happiness). I make the log fancy with traditional red ribbon intertwined with gold cord to represent the radiant energy of the sun; glitter, which is symbolic of magic and energy; clear quartz crystals, as they're associated with the sun and will amplify Yuletide energies; and plant matter associated with Yule, like evergreens, winterberry, moss, and pine cones.



YULE LOG CEREMONY

You can use the log as a centerpiece for your Yule or winter solstice feast. Light the candles and after dessert write wishes for the coming year on small slips of paper and roll them into bundles. Place the mini scrolls on the log and, if possible, burn the log and wish-filled papers at the end of your celebration in a woodstove, fireplace, or bonfire, sending out the energies of your wishes into the universe where they will manifest. (You'll want to remove the candles, crystals, small ornaments, etc. prior to burning.) If burning your log is not practical or possible, you can burn the paper wishes in a heat-proof vessel instead.

Safety tip: Never leave burning candles, a Yule log, or wish papers unattended.



Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo

MAKING THE YULE LOG

Supplies:

- A log of found or store-bought wood
- A roll of ribbon or cord (red ribbon is traditional, but you can also use jute, hemp, cotton, or wool cord)
- Scissors
- Permanent marker
- Craft glue
- Glitter or glitter glue
- Paintbrush for painting on glitter glue or craft glue for loose glitter adhesion
- Hot glue gun
- Three candles (small spell candles work well; the traditional colors are white, green, and red), plus an additional candle for creating an adhesion seal
- Crushed, dried herbs for candle dressings: Herbs like garden sage, rosemary, thyme, mint, unsprayed rose petals, and lavender are safe

to burn, though some herbs emit toxic fumes when burned, so be cautious and do your research

- Olive oil (or any type of cooking oil) and a citrusy essential oil like orange, lemon, or bergamot
- Log dressings: fresh evergreens, pine cones, moss, berries, dried mushrooms, cinnamon sticks, holly, mistletoe, rosemary, dried citrus slices
- Small crystals or crystal chips, tiny ornaments

Instructions:

Begin with a clean log.

With the cord or ribbon, start at one end of the log and weave back and forth across it in a crisscross fashion. Adhere the fiber with dots of hot glue, leaving portions unglued to create pockets

beneath which greenery can be tucked. (Greenery can also be glued atop the cord or ribbon.)

Dress your candles by rubbing them with olive oil infused with a few drops of essential oil and rolling them in a heap of your crushed, dried herbs.

Using a permanent marker, mark off the placement of your candles. You can make holes with a drill or drip wax from your extra candle onto the log, place a candle in it, and hold it in place for about a minute until it solidifies.

Get creative and decorate your log with dressings like evergreens, herbs, berries, glitter, and crystals. You can tuck greenery under the cord or ribbon, or adhere it on top.

Susan Ilka Tuttle is a green witch, herbalist, spirit medium, author, and photo artist living in rural Maine. Enjoy her book *Green Witch Magick*, in which she explores thirteen essential herbs for the witch's cupboard through herbalism and magick-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.



Model and stylist (red dress): Yasemin @dooleydooleywoahh
 Model (green dress): Sophie @sophiedituri
 Location: Olalla Forest Retreat @olalla_forest_retreat

Photography by
 VAL GLEASON
 @vallerina01



Snow Moon
by Ed Org
@ed_org_art

THE WITCHES WHO RULE THROUGH WINTER

(Should You Invite Them to Yule?)

BY SUSANN COKAL

It is time to make plans for the long Yuletide festival, which starts around December 21 and ends on New Year's Day. A traditional ancient Nordic version of the holiday involves making sacrifices and smearing your great hall with blood, but you will probably take a more modern route and use a nice red tablecloth, some evergreen boughs, and a few bells, and serve eggnog and a wassail of hot spiced cider.

The guest list sets the tone, so you need to give it some thought. As chronicled by writers from Hans Christian Andersen and C.S. Lewis to P.L. Travers, George R.R. Martin, and Amy Schlitz, the witches who rule through winter are not generally known for generous gifts and warm hugs, but they do want to be included. Villainesses can make for entertaining conversation, if they are well placed among witches with better manners—or at least somewhat more human qualities.

Everyone has a story to tell. You might ask what your guests could be celebrating, and how. Then plan your own feast and rituals accordingly.

The Celts: Cailleach and Brigit

On behalf of all winter witches, consider paying homage to a couple of archetypal Celtic goddesses of ice and fire: Cailleach, the crone of winter, and Brigit, whose inspiring flame breaks through the pre-solstice darkness.

Stern and implacable, Cailleach creates the landscape and governs the winter weather. Her name originally translated as “the veiled one,” but in modern Gaelic, it has come to mean “the hag.” Unsurprisingly, she fights spring and the idea of rebirth as hard as some of us fight ageism. In Scotland, where she is known as Beira, the Queen of Winter, she is responsible for the creation of mountains. The rocks fell from her basket as she hiked, and she is still hammering them into shape. She carries a staff that freezes the earth, and she brings on winter by washing her great plaid in a whirlpool off the Scottish west coast. When it is pure

white, snow blankets the land.

Brigit (a.k.a. Brid, Brighde, and the like) is not just the goddess of fire; she is also the patroness of healing, wisdom, and poetry, and the inventor of a whistle that calls through the night. In short, she is the goddess of stories that add dimension to the long, dark hours. Pour her a libation and invite your literary guests to tell their own tales.

The Fate: Andersen's Snow Queen

The beloved Dane's Snow Queen is the face of impersonal fate in a cold universe. She does not give a fig who you are or what happens to you once she has collected you, and yet she is irresistible.

When young Kay hooks his sled to her sleigh's runner, you might say he gets what he deserves, but the formerly sweet little boy has been afflicted with a shard of a devil-goblin's evil mirror in one eye and can no longer see the beauty in what he once loved. The Snow Queen's frosty kisses go “to his very heart, which was already more than half ice; he felt as if he were dying.” After that, Kay does not feel fear or the cold anymore, and he develops a sudden and no doubt handy ability to do math in his head.

That's all to the good, but the Queen is a fickle mistress. She enjoys Kay's company on the long trip to her castle, then leaves him arranging tiles of ice into “Puzzles of Reason.” His task to form a word that she promises will win him “the whole world and a new pair of skates.” Capriciously, she takes off to whiten the volcanoes of Etna and Vesuvius.

The story's true hero is Gerda, a young neighbor girl whom Kay has scorned. Her quest to find Kay leads through a witch's flower garden, a princess's castle, a robber's castle, and the homes of Sami and Finnish peasants. Turns out that Gerda has everything she needs inside to prevail. Her considerably warmer kiss shatters the splinter in Kay's eye; the shards fall into the shape of *eternity*, and Kay and Gerda are home.

Or are they? Andersen is not known for happy endings, but he did trade in illusions ...



Studio publicity still from *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*
 Tilda Swinton, Skandar Keynes © 2005 Walt Disney Pictures
 Photo by Phil Bray

What happens to the Snow Queen, we do not know. When a volcano turns white, that usually means it has erupted and caked itself in ash. Would that be good or bad in the world of the story? Neither—the Snow Queen will not be judged in those terms. And she probably won't stay long at your party; she has a rather short attention span. Just don't let her kiss you goodbye.

The Goddess: Her Imperial Majesty Jadis, Queen of Narnia, etc.

If the Snow Queen had a daughter, or stole one, she would be the White Witch, who wreaks havoc on Narnia in C.S. Lewis's novels *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. She will be one of your most difficult guests, for she is not only cruel but also a prideful braggart. One example of her hubris: She tries to outwit Aslan himself.

When Polly and Digory (the eponymous nephew of the first book) stumble into a castle in the dying world of Charn, they are fascinated by a museum of sculptural portraits. One is very special, especially seen through Digory's eyes: "very tall . . . , with a look of such fierceness and pride that it took your breath away. Yet she was beautiful too. . . . You could see at once . . . that she was a great queen."

This is Jadis, onetime warrior princess and future White Witch. The French word *jadis* means "formerly," and once Digory strikes the bell that awakens her, she is a version of the formerly all-powerful primeval Goddess, cruel and self-serving and accustomed to getting her way.

Like most megalomaniacs, Jadis becomes a comic figure when taken out of her home context. So when she hitches a ride back to the children's world, her grandiose idea of herself is deflated in the London of 1900. She is no longer magically strong, and her bare arms and stolen jewelry attract the wrong kind of attention. Londoners pass judgment as if she is a demimondaine, calling her both "a dem fine woman" and "a shameless hussy." Alas, the old gods cannot survive the modern world.

It is no wonder, then, that our girl looks for a new one to conquer. When Jadis seizes control of Narnia, as documented in the second book, she casts the land into a Cailleach-style winter, and any creature who might even potentially protest her regime is sent to her castle to be turned into stone . . . until she sweeps one Edmund Pevensie into her sleigh and plies him with Turkish delight. Then the rest of the Pevensies step through the wardrobe to look for him and to force Jadis to face something the Snow Queen never will: consequences.

The upshot: Anything Jadis wants to celebrate will be short-lived at best (worst). If she shows up with a box of Turkish delight, thank her graciously and put it aside in your pantry; it's probably not something you want to serve. Do not set her place with sharp knives.

Blood and Ice and Fire: Maggy and Melisandre

The witches of George R.R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* series—on television, in case you haven't heard, as *Game of Thrones*—possess powers that work in all kinds of weather. But

some of them qualify as snow-and-ice sorceresses because, you know, "Winter is coming."

If you want Maggy the Frog to tell your fortune, you'll have to pay in blood, because she sucks on a cut to get her visions. Use caution, though; as she croaks to the prospective Queen Cersei, "Everyone wants to know their future, until they *know* their future." To wit: A cut-the-moral-corners Cersei will get some of what she wants but not in the way that she wants it.

For sheer evil ruthlessness, Maggy (and Cersei) cannot compare to Melisandre, known as the Red Priestess, Red Witch, and Red Woman. Red hair, red clothes, a magical necklace, and a habit of prophesying through flames cannot warm her cold heart. For example, after engineering several horrible deaths, Melisandre tries to free Stannis's winter-bound army and win the war. In a move straight out of Greek tragedy, she promises that the snow will melt if Stannis sacrifices his beloved daughter, Shireen. She has it on good authority from the god R'hilor, Lord of Light.

Poor Shireen! In a story world where everyone is cruel and corrupt, sometimes relatable, but always very, very violent, she stands out as the one sweet character. She even tells Stannis, without knowing what he's contemplating, that she wants to help with any plan he comes up with for getting the army back on the road.

The sacrifice is ultimately fruitless, as Stannis is plagued with more problems. It seems the Lord of Light is about as reliable as Melisandre herself. In another memorable moment, a crestfallen Red Witch takes off her enchanted necklace to look at herself as she "really" is—and of course she is not young and beautiful on the inside; she suffers from all the physical failings of extreme old age. (So, too, does the Maggy of the books, though not the television show.)

I would happily send Melisandre suppers in bed, if that will keep her from casting a pall over the party. She doesn't have much to celebrate now anyway. You might, however, invite Maggy for after-dinner drinks and sweets. She really needs to put flesh on her bones, and people do love a fortune teller . . . until.

The Good Conversationalists

It's true: Buried under the snow and in the cracks and fissures of the glaciers, or flying through the air above them, you can find the occasional benevolent practitioner of magic, plus a few with multivalent intentions. To quote the classic *White Witch of Kynance*, a good witch wields her bright magic "against all the fears, the terrible dark things that moved in the empty countryside and stirred at midnight inside one's own heart."

The benevolent witch will probably attend your feast in order to rejoice in the solstice and the hope born in the new year. Create lively pockets of conversation and debate by pairing sympathetic enchantresses with devotees of the dark arts, but keep in mind that a good witch is typically not as powerful as her wicked counterparts.

To get things going among seers, try putting Maggy the Frog next to one of the Clayr from Garth Nix's *Old Kingdom* series. The Glacier where the Clayr live also houses their Great Library—

almost a cabinet of curiosities, with all sorts of unusual *objets d'art et de vertu*, some of which have magical properties still waiting to be released. Include Lirael, one of the series's main characters, who is a "pallid" misfit with a morbid imagination; when she finally comes into her Sight, she is able to reconstruct the past accurately, which can be maddening party fun. Have her bring her dog, a former statuette she has magicked to life, and she'll celebrate living her best life. Just be aware that Lirael's insecurity might tempt Maggy to mess with her.

"The winter was long and the possibilities were endless" in Genevieve Gornichec's *The Weaver and the Witch Queen*. It is especially so after a trio of friends receive an ominous but not entirely specific prophecy from a traveling *völva*, a sorceress who spins predictions from an iron wand: "One of you clouds the futures of the others. For better or worse, your fates are intertwined.... I dare not say more." Which one will do what to whom, and how bad will it be?

Time scatters the three friends. Gunnhild flees her cruel mother to learn witchcraft. Oddny's dream of a quiet life ends when a raiding party lays waste to her farm and captures her sister, Signy, as Gunnhild watches in the guise of a swallow. Gunnhild eventually marries the king of Norway to help rescue Signy, but Oddny isn't so sure of her intentions, and anger breaks the last bond among the three of them.

Most immediately important: Which of these women belong at your table? The fortune teller can give Maggy a run for her money. Gunnhild, the future witch queen, is also a definite must; she can sit at the royal end. We know that hurt people hurt people, so even though Oddny isn't a witch *per se*, including her and Signy seems like a Yule-friendly thing to do. If you run out of seating, save space by asking Gunnhild to shape-shift into a swallow again.

Be careful where you place the aged Cassandra of Amy Schlitz's *Splendors and Glooms*. She is the Dickensian heir to Narnia's Jadis—slightly less archetypal, very much more human, and persuasive to tender hearts. She has been unlucky in love again and again, being incapable of inspiring it without the magic of the fire opal that she once stole from a friend. She has a plan to trick Clara Wintermute and two other hapless children into stealing the opal and setting her free, although the stone will no doubt curse them as well. She must work fast before her former lover turns her rescuers into marionettes—again ...

Cassandra isn't exactly a sweet witch, but we understand her. Maybe Jadis could eat her alive—but then again, Jadis would not need to be tricked into stealing jewelry, so a few problems might be solved with one matchup. Failing that, the children's predicament might spark a game of "Would you rather": Would you rather be turned into a statue doomed to stand in Jadis's hall, or a manhandled marionette inside Cassandra's snowed-in castle? Just don't trust her endearing deathbed confessions. As she tells young Clara, "Love is always a trap!"

Age and Beauty and Kindness: Serafina Pekkala

In Philip Pullman's series *His Dark Materials*, the clan queen

of Sami witches proves you can get on in years and still have it all, including a voice that sounds like the Northern Lights. Three centuries old and a powerful presence in the snowy North, Serafina Pekkala is the witch many of us aspire to be anywhere, anytime. In fact, she is one of the very few entirely positive characters in a series whose principal heroine is frankly bratty, the kind of second self you occasionally want to throttle.

When the series begins, Lyra Belacqua (plucky, sulky, and brilliant at lies) embarks on a steampunk-adjacent quest through parallel universes to rescue a kidnapped friend, find her uncle (but is he really her uncle?), and deliver the mysterious Golden Compass to him. Not so incidentally, she investigates the nature of "Dust," an enigmatic substance that is the essence of humanity. She finds in Serafina the angelic nurturer that she might have hoped to find in her intimidating scholar-adventurer father and Snow-Queen-in-the-making mother, Mrs. Coulter.

Later, when Lyra's new friend Will Parry is wounded by the Subtle Knife, they go to Serafina for help. She shows a special affinity for daemons, the animal companions who are outer embodiments of their humans' inner selves.

But will Serafina actually be an asset to a party? She's very confident, or rather she rises above others' opinions: "How can you insult a witch?" she asks rhetorically. "What would it matter if you did?" Some of the most beautiful language in the series clusters around her and the witches she leads—but that might matter more to us than to her, for she will always remain herself.

It's possible that Serafina is just a little *too* self-sufficiently virtuous. You might find your guests pasting on a frozen smile and sidling away in search of someone with more grit. Try seating her next to someone more fallible, or even downright wicked, to inspire a piquant conversation.

To that end, your celebration will be at its best if you include P.L. Travers's Mary Poppins, whose voice in the books occasionally "seemed to come from the North Pole." With a Goddess-like ability to work her way into any scenario, including those created by other people, Mary can talk to just about anyone and celebrate every moment. Her vanity makes her, too, impervious to enchantment or insult. You might send her around from one evil, insecure, or incommunicative witch to another. She'll sort everyone out, spit spot, and be off on the next West Wind.

With so many egos and interests to balance, do you even want to host this Yuletide? Well, if you don't, your lack of courage may haunt you. Consider it a challenge, like the poem that awakens Jadis and a world of trouble in *The Magician's Nephew*:

*Make your choice, adventurous Stranger;
Strike the bell and bide the danger.
Or wonder, till it drives you mad,
What would have followed if you had.*

Go ahead—make the season an adventure. Strike the bell and celebrate yourself.



Visit Susann Cokal online at susanncokal.com.



The Snow Queen illustration originally commissioned for The Folio Society edition of *The Pink Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang © Debra McFarlane 2007. www.foliosociety.com



Vasilisa at the Hut of Baba Yaga (1899), by Ivan Bilibin

WINDWITCH

by Katharyn Howd Machan

From Russia I have tumbled.
 Baba Yaga rides my tongue
 like a deep sweet never tasted.
 Skulls of fire? I defy them,
 blowing away before they can burn
 the essence of who I am.
 This whole country knows my name—
 or the name I pretend to share.
 Thistle bitter to the throat,
 a licking beast alive with dust,
 red and violet in the veils
 that keep me living, wildly aware.

after GemmaRose Nethercott



Vasilisa and the White Horseman (1899-1900), by Ivan Bilibin

SIX BIRDS ONE WAY, THREE THE OTHER

by Katharyn Howd Machan

She watches, the owl, beneath
 the owl moon, out early
 because the wild rustle of wings
 disturbed her tree's cold branches.
 Was it a stag that made them flee,
 some to the west, some to the east,
 antlers of snow a threat to sleep
 this close to winter solstice?
 More likely the young witch walking fast
 away from her father's fairy tale,
 her long braids tangling in holly's bract
 despite her cloak of rainbow colors,
 despite her call to the great white beast.

Katharyn Howd Machan lives in a town in central New York resplendent with gorges and waterfalls. Author of forty published collections of poems—most recently Dark Side of the Spoon (Moonstone Press, 2022)—she teaches creative writing in fairy-tale-based courses at Ithaca College.

WINTER
Beauty Magic

BY ALISE MARIE, THE BEAUTY WITCH®



The Ice Queen

With the splendor of autumn a bittersweet memory and the whirl of holidays nestled in their sugarplum beds, winter takes it upon herself to settle into our bones and, uninvited, burrows even deeper into our spirits. There is a sigh of reprieve, yes, but also a yearning, a mad ache. Stillness is a sword, really: powerful, protective, and yet that blade ...

When the cold wind that blows through your heart becomes too much to bear, you must ask yourself: Why am I disconnected? It's all too easy really to detach from the body at this time of year, and yet our flesh and bones is *where our power lies*. Is it witchcraft? Oh, who knows. I say it's more of a universal truth of the feminine divine. Find your way back to yourself, and you reclaim that divinity.

The way home, every *single* time, *mes amours*, is through beauty. The ritual and the potions. Inside and out.

Beneath too many layers of wool, the air that bites, and the far too fleeting sunlight lies that gorgeous creature who was lolling about half-dressed just a few months back, blissful and wild. You haven't been lost, only perhaps forgotten. Your whole being needs care right now and all the way through to those damp spring days, to stay strong and beautiful.

Winter is the time of rest, but it is also a prime time for *plotting*. What buds in spring has everything to do with what we seed now, and that requires us to be in our light, our power. I say it's time to reclaim that. We can begin with the simple pleasure of conjuring a few beauty potions in the warmth of home, surrounded by an energy of nurturing and love.

As you conjure, keep a strong visual of what you would like to see appear from the ground in a few months, and what you need to create that. Even more important, *feel* how it feels to have it! One of the first things that will likely come to you is a smile—then you *know* you're on the right track. Entwine that vibe with intentions of beauty, love, potency. This will give a great energy to your potions and ensure your success.

My wish for you is to feel fed and protected, but also vibrant and full of the returning light. I've called in a few of my winter loves to lend a hand, all expertly watched over by Freyja as these potions were concocted.

Vanilla is on hand as one of my signature ingredients. This gorgeous and lusty Venusian vine is one of my all-time favorite cohorts. Heavenly scented, vanilla is rich in copper to promote collagen and elastin production and has noted aphrodisiac powers.

She is joined here by another one of my loves, so especially exalted this time of year: **pomegranate**. With fire and Mercury at the helm, pomegranates are great bringers of money, while their abundance of juicy seeds denotes their creative and fertility magic. They symbolize the blood of life and therefore have a special place in youthful beauty potions, both internal and topical. Here, we use an extract that helps strengthen the proteins that form collagen and elastin and are full of fatty acids that lock moisture in and keep debris out. Pomegranate is also rich in vitamin C, which also helps stimulate collagen and can lighten age spots.

Cardamom helps with weight loss and maintenance, quells anxiety, fights disease, treats skin allergies, and improves complexion with antioxidant superpowers. It is a gift of Venus, infused with the magic of love, lust, beauty, and protection.

Cinnamon brings love and money magic, alongside a heightened sense of psychic awareness. This lovely fall and winter favorite is loaded with antioxidants and boasts anti-inflammatory benefits, sure to keep you well during the changing seasons.

Solar-powered **walnuts** are filled with protection magic and a wealth of beauty benefits, including minerals, iron, folate, and calcium.

Avocado oil is always my cold and dry weather savior for the rich, nutritive nectar that deeply moisturizes and cloaks the skin in the lush gifts of Venus.

And not to forget lovely **maple**, a low-glycemic, mineral-rich sweetener that also reduces inflammation in sensitive skin, banishes blemishes, and hydrates. The magic of the tree is of course present, with love and money magic enhanced by Jupiter.

THE ICE QUEEN Facial Exfoliant & Masque

The first of my potions for this season will set you right again! First, let's just mention her *scent*. From the winter forest comes her hidden treasure: a waft from the revered maple, blended with the rich sensuality of walnut flour, gifting a sublime ritual of the face that immediately gets you out of any cold weather grump and straight to heaven. It smells entirely edible, and it is. So when you're treating your beautiful visage to the gifts of the earth, do enjoy the pleasure of every second. You'll feel as if you are indulging—and you are—but not in the way that saps your beauty (read “sugary carbohydrates”). The results? Breathtaking. Your skin will thank you over and over again as your confidence soars and your energy returns. I especially love this on a new moon, but feel free to enjoy it anytime your skin or spirit needs a lift.

Conjures two treatments

2 tablespoons walnut flour
1 tablespoon pure maple syrup
1 teaspoon avocado oil
1 teaspoon pomegranate extract
Pinch cinnamon

**Please note: Cinnamon is highly active yet safe for even sensitive skin, especially in such small increments. It will bring a bit of rosy glow, but if you are in fear, please omit.*

Beauty Witch Secret: A lovely addition to this blend, should you like, is a dollop of **coconut** crème, which I suggest for all three potions. The crème adds beauty fats, plus the magic of coconut for heightened spirituality, psychic awareness, and cleansing.



The Cold Moon

THE COLD MOON Exfoliant & Bath Soak

Next, let's get into a full moon soak that you can escape to all winter. This soak can be enjoyed any time, but it is wildly potent on the night of a peak lunation. It restores, revives, moisturizes, and manages to add potency while soothing your soul.

Conjures one treatment

½ cup Celtic salt
1 teaspoon pomegranate extract
1 to 2 tablespoons avocado oil
Seeds of one vanilla bean
½ teaspoon cinnamon
Pinch cardamom

Beauty Witch Secret: Add a container of **coconut** milk to your bath to enhance the ritual. This adds a sexy creaminess, immense silky moisture from beauty fats, and the watery, lunar magic of coconut.

In another beautiful bowl, combine the Celtic salt with the other ingredients.

If you haven't seeded a vanilla bean, here goes.

You're going to want to master this process if you haven't already—the vanilla bean is one of nature's most glorious treats. Place the bean on a cutting board, and with a sharp knife—be careful, *évidemment!*—slice it lengthwise. Carefully open the pod to reveal the tiny black seeds within. Take the tip of the knife and scrape the seeds into your potion. Make sure to get *all* the precious magic.

Now stir the mixture in the bowl clockwise, and get ready. Massage into clean skin in circular motions, then in raking motions toward the heart. You can either shower it off or, much better, settle into a glorious bath to soak in her light.

❧ HOT NIGHTS ❧
Beauty Brew

And to spice up an otherwise perhaps too cozy winter's night, let's conjure this brew to ignite passion, be it your own lust for life or an adventure under the covers with a saucy friend. This one is warm and wicked, just as I intended ...

Serves Two

- 1 cup coconut milk
- Seeds of one vanilla bean
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 cardamom pods, crushed
- Pure maple syrup to taste

In a saucepan, scrape the seeds into the milk, add the cinnamon and crushed pods, and gently warm on a low flame. When it's hot—be careful not to boil—strain and add maple syrup to taste. It's fabulous.

Beauty Witch Secret: Why not add a splash of spirits? Bourbon, cognac, or even a nice whiskey will take this one even deeper. It's winter. Get warm.



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.

“To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake it is necessary to stand out in the cold.”
—Aristotle

Winter is a meditative season. Spending time inside provides occasions to reflect on the beauty within. At the same time, the season's chill, along with indoor heat and cozy fires, can sap every drop of moisture from the skin and hair.

When the climate is harsh, your beauty regimen must be gentle and nurturing: Switch to a cream-based cleanser (unless your skin is oily) and exfoliate several times per week so that the cream absorbs better into the skin. Try a natural plant-based body oil to counter flaky skin, use a hand cream to avoid alligator claws, and deep-condition your hair every two to three weeks to moisturize. Applying a face mask every week or two is a beautifying ritual that will help keep the skin supple and soft and conjure the divine goddess within.



Vintage illustration by Florence Harrison

VANILLA

Meow Meow Tweet Vanilla Bean Stick Deodorant

With a soft vanilla scent reminiscent of creamy vanilla bean ice cream, this baking-soda-free deodorant is perfect for sensitive skin and comes packaged in a biodegradable tube. In addition to yummy vanilla, it features a delicate floral scent.

MAPLE

INNBeauty Project Down to Tone Life Changing Toner

Especially effective for normal, oily, and blemish-prone skin, this resurfacing toner brightens and smooths and leaves skin glowing. It is formulated with six acids—malic, phytic, lactic, salicylic, gluconolactone, and citrus—as well as niacinamide and sugar maple to exfoliate clogged skin, reduce the appearance of pores, and even out skin tone.

CINNAMON

Aura Cacia Cinnamon & Ylang Ylang Foam Bath

Perhaps the best bargain in beauty, this sensual foam bath is a heady blend of sweet orange, ylang-ylang, allspice, and spicy cassia bark essential oils. Luxuriate in a long, languorous soak that will call up the goddess in you.

WALNUT

Konjac Walnut Shell Exfoliating Body Sponge

This handy little hybrid is one of the best things you can bring into the shower. One half is made from konjac sponge, while the other half is a gentle walnut-shell exfoliant. The naturally antibacterial hand-harvested Asian konjac root lathers up beautifully and gently exfoliates dry winter skin. Unlike traditional plastic loofahs, this will not breed bacteria. Plus, the results are obvious and immediate!

POMEGRANATE

One Love Organics Vitamin E Balm

Perfect for winter, this luscious nourishing eye balm softens and smooths with vitamin E, sea kelp, shea butter, and pomegranate. Use lightly in the morning and more generously at night to refresh, moisturize, and restore the sensitive skin around the eyes.

CARDAMOM

Spa Ritual Citrus Cardamom Hand Salve

This rich, absorbent salve makes even the driest hands become soft, smooth, and touchable. Formulated with shea butter, marula oil, and honeybush extract, it is infused with citrus and cardamom, which makes it smell delicious and divine!



Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg



COYOTE SEASON

by Briana Saussy

Winter is a lesson in magic because it is a season of paradox. It is the time of hustle, bustle, and busyness. It's the season of gathering and giving, of seeing family members that we rarely see and taking time to connect with friends whom we miss throughout the year. It's the season of school concerts and office parties and frenetic baking in the kitchen and grabbing last-minute gifts.

And at the same time, winter is a season of quiet. It's curling up by the fire with a book, watching the movements of the heavens in cold clear night air, lighting candles in the deep night hours.

And herein lie the paradoxes: Winter means returning to loved ones, but it's also statistically the loneliest time of the year for many. Amid all the joy and merrymaking, the Yuletide holidays are known for boasting the highest suicide rate in the U.S.

For some people, depression arrives because winter is a closing—of the seasons, of the year, of another 365-day journey around the sun. But winter is also an opening: It rings in the New Year, the new journey, the new seasonal cycle. It is in winter that crass commercialism and thoughtless consumerism seem to win the day, but it is also in winter that the Wild Hunt rides through the wood, when the midnight dark is peopled with ghosts and spooks, fae and familiars. The veils may thin during those last days of October and the first days of November, but the veils seem to drop completely in the winter so that the mundane and the amazing are in constant communication.

The character of Coyote has always helped me understand the winter best—Coyote as he is known, loved, feared, and laughed at by the First Nation Tribes in the Southwest. Coyote is a trickster and troublemaker par excellence, changing his story, his mood, and the weather on a dime. Winter is Coyote season. Coyote stories are told only in winter because his fundamental nature is a liminal one, dancing along the threshold of what divides the sacred from the profane, the mundane from the magical. So too with winter.

I am about to begin teaching a yearlong class on magic

with an emphasis on folk magic traditions. There are two fundamental understandings—not beliefs but understandings—that I want my students to grasp.

The first is that we live in an inspirited world. This is an old idea, one that our ancestors knew: that you and I and a rock, a tree, and a bird all possess spirit, all possess soul.

The second understanding is that the beginning of magic relies on our relationship to an inspirited creation. Relationships are hard. They can be gloriously messy. They are often paradoxical just like magic, just like winter. I think perhaps magic's greatest teaching is an idea that the season of winter seems to curl around and re-center again and again: It is the teaching that miracles are found in the most unexpected places.

This is illustrated in many winter traditions through the emphasis on light and life emerging from the darkness. For winter is a time of long and dark days; it is the time of the great dying back, and yet it is also the season when we collectively remember the light—the light of the returning sun, of candles lit in a dark window, of tiny babies being born, taking their first lusty gulps of breath and uttering their first cries for joy against all apparent possibility, for how can life thrive in a time of death? But it can, and it does, all the time.

It seems to me that winter is a reminder that the world needs right now, a reminder that in the darkest, coldest, numbest of times and places, hope is ever present, under the surface, waiting to emerge once more. I look at the celebrations of light and life that weave through these months and I want to say even more: Hope is easiest to find in these long winter months when we should rationally least expect to see it.

What greater magic *is* there than hope?

Keep it close to your heart over the next cold months and share it with your loved ones, for here is another paradox: Hope, like story, increases and is strengthened in the sharing. Coyote knows this. It's why he is standing by the pinyon fire right now, beckoning you closer, inviting you to sit down as he does a funny old-man shuffle dance ... and begins to tell a tale.



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, “WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE WINTER RITUALS?”

I go out into nature and talk to the trees barren of leaves. I thank them for their life, their leaves and branches that provide shelter to the small animals and shade for us humans. There is an apple orchard tourist spot about two hours away from me, and I walk up and down the rows of trees there whispering to them. I often wonder what the security at the place thinks of me. But it doesn't stop me from doing it every year. Then I go inside to get hot apple cider.

—@theorganizationmaven

Winter solstice celebration is so beautiful and quiet underneath the silence of the trees. Here at my cottage in the woods, I make outdoor ice candles with red berries, pine sprigs, and cones in gallon-size milk jugs. I place them at the four corners and walk a spiral dance inside the circle. —Patricia Manley

Others turn to the warmth returning at Ostara and the birdsongs of spring and summer. My spirit brightens in the Yuletide, when my silver hair blends and sparkles with the ice forming on windows and the snow that brings a glow around porch lights. The smell of pine and cedarwood weaves through the air, and the only warmth I desire is my grandchildren's hugs and the brightness of my daughter's smile as she watches the joy of being together flow around us. I am a Winter Witch. —Ivy Kelly

Going outside at night when it's snowing and twirling in the falling snow under an outdoor light while I look up into the pouring snowflakes! —Debra Wilcox LeMaster

Walking through the forest and feeding the woodland creatures. —@gales_garden

My favorite winter “ritual” involves my couch, my girls (Sammi the dog and Wonder kitty, which, as her name implies, is my cat), a cup of my favorite herb tea, a good book, and whatever music strikes my fancy that day! It's made even better by a big fuzzy blanket and watching the snow fall. Retirement does have its privileges! —Richard Buie

On the longest night, I light a large candle and spend some time in contemplation. I try to be grateful for winter as a chance to rest (I hate the cold), and think about my creative projects for the new year. I can't stay up all night because I have a daughter to care for, but I try to leave it lit at least until past midnight. —Helen E. C. Schubert

Making homemade vanilla extract on the winter solstice by candlelight. The rich, warm scent pervades the entire house for days. It's such a cozy feeling while watching the snow fall outside. —Rachael Bain

My favorite winter ritual is to make a steamy mug of *anijsmelk* and go outside to sit and look at the night sky at least once a week. The crisp beauty of the stars and moon in winter is absolutely enchanting. —Amy Berlin

A cup of tea, my pups, a cozy blanket, and a good book by a roaring fire. —Heather Lanphear

Snuggling up by the fire and releasing that which no longer serves me. —@duellmom

On the winter solstice I make an ice lantern with pretty bits of plants, berries, and cones that have hung on. Then I light a candle inside and write down an intention for the coming year on a little piece of paper and burn it in the lantern, sending my intention out to the universe on the wisps of smoke. —Jody Manning

My favorite winter ritual is to get outside for a walk every day. With the right gear, the weather is not an issue. I live in the mountains of Colorado, and winter mornings are nothing short of magical. Frost on the trees, animal tracks in the snow, quiet, solitude, and many other surprises that you might miss by trying to avoid the cold. Adopting this ritual has changed my relationship with winter, and I now fully embrace the magic of this restorative season. —Suzanna Simpson

I always look forward to the winter solstice! I always do a twelve-day ritual starting the night before the solstice where I predict the year ahead, with every day representing a month—the first day equals January and so on. I contemplate the dream I had the night before and certain signs and symbols from the particular day, and perform a tarot reading for the month it represents. —Lene Woxen

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