

ENCHANTED LIVING



ISSUE NO. 64 AUTUMN 2023

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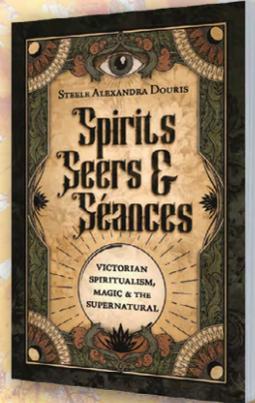


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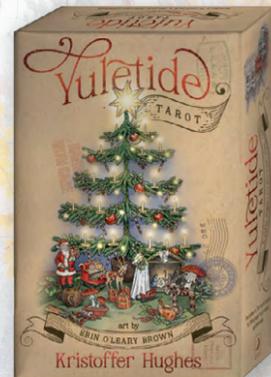
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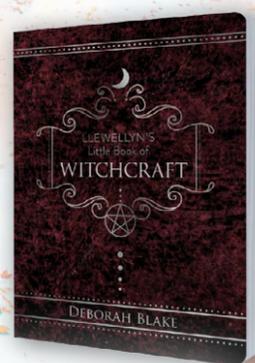


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The West Wind (1897), by Walter Crane. Image courtesy Art Renewal Center.



This issue, the third in our yearlong homage to witches, is the most glamorous and even the most epic, since everyone knows that autumn is *the* season of the witch. It's the time when she takes to the sky and to the streets, when countless young girls don capes and hats, reveling in the power that the witch's guise bestows. As Alice Hoffman wrote in our *Practical Magic* issue, "These girls instinctively know it is far better to be a witch than a princess or a queen, for they are self-defined rather than being defined by men." And: "When it comes down to it, on a clear, cold October night, she is the woman we want to be."

Yes.

It's also a time to look inward and to celebrate what you find there. In the pages that follow, Theodora Goss writes about casting a spell to confront your mirror self: "You are like two sisters, although she sees the world a little differently, as though she can see the back of the tapestry of fate, where all the threads cross and hang." Just like the gorgeous identical twin sisters on our cover, Bren and Pip, who might, in their way, represent you and your most powerful reflection come to life. Not surprisingly, their great-great-grandmother Myrtle was a medicine woman in the wilds of West Virginia.

"You have your own way of bewitching your life," Susann Cokal writes, talking about the powers that already exist within you, whether or not you own a cauldron and occasionally use a broomstick for flight. (Though if you have interest in the latter, Monica Crosson offers a safe witches' flying ointment recipe on page 81.) Tricia Saroya even sets a gorgeous table to evoke the inner reflection that autumn prompts in her—that "feeling of spiraling inward and connecting with my ancestors and my inner witch."

We've also included multiple images from illustrator Ida Rentoul Outhwaite throughout this issue. We hope you'll enjoy spotting them—her sweet wild-haired witches with their black cats and broomsticks, surrounded by flying bats—and that you'll fall in love with this artist who should be better known.

We hope that you'll find your own reflection in these pages too, and that you'll celebrate and honor her, even fall in love with her all over again.

Love,

Carolyn Turgeon



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Enchanted Living's Autumn Witch Issue



Raquel Vasquez Gilliland

Raquel Vasquez Gilliland is a Mexican-American poet, novelist, painter, mother, and plantswoman. In her work, she explores myths and folklore as well as plants and the lineages of all things. She received the Southwest Book Award for her science-fiction novel *Sia Martinez and the Moonlit Beginning of Everything*, as well as the Pura Belpré Award for her magical realist novel *How Moon Fuentes Fell in Love With the Universe*. Her latest novel and adult debut, *Witch of Wild Things*—pitched as a Latinx *Practical Magic*—comes out this fall. “At its heart it’s a book about the thrill of revisiting first loves alongside the comfort (and drama!) of witchy sisterhood,” she says.



Val Gleason

Val Gleason, a.k.a. Vallerina Photography, is a conceptual portrait photographer based in the Pacific Northwest. She created the cover image and feature for our most popular issue yet, the Vintage Witch issue from autumn 2022. With a touch of the mystical and a dash of the otherworldly, her work captivates audiences, urging them to embrace their true essence and find beauty in the most unexpected places. She draws inspiration from ancient tales and legends, and delves into themes of power, loss, love, and transformation. As she continues to explore the realms of creativity, her artistry reminds us that magic lies within us all, waiting to be discovered and unleashed.



Eva Marini

Eva Marini is an award-winning fine art photographer. Hailing from a picturesque village near Vienna, Austria, she finds inspiration in the landscapes of her homeland. Her work captivates with its attention to detail and unique fairy-tale flair. She handles the complete outfit composition and styling of her models and occasionally immerses herself in her own nature- and fairy-tale-inspired magical worlds through self-portraits, like the stunning ones featured in this issue. The autumn season, with its romantic and melancholic ambience, holds a special allure for her. “As a ginger, I feel most connected to the season of autumn, from which I draw profound strength.”



Mary McMyne

Poetry editor Mary McMyne’s first novel, *The Book of Gothel*—out in paperback this autumn—is the story of the medieval midwife who became known as the witch from “Rapunzel.” Look for her second novel, *Mistress*, the magic-infused story of Shakespeare’s Dark Lady, in 2024. An English professor and editorial consultant, she is fascinated with the history of witchcraft, folktales, and poetry. She loves reading and writing about period conceptions of magic. “There is so much we don’t know about the beliefs of the past,” she says. “I love stories that speculate about ancient magic, stories that reveal the secrets behind legends. Stories that make you believe.”



Jovana Rikalo

Jovana Rikalo is a fine art and portrait photographer from Serbia, telling stories and using emotions to create pieces of art. She was previously featured as the cover artist for our autumn 2021 Abundance issue. She tends to work with pastel tones, fairy tales, and a touch of the surreal, and uses her camera to make moments come alive—moments she’s experienced and ones still waiting to happen. She likes to make connections between people and nature because that is where emotions are, she says. For the photos featured in this issue, “I wanted to present a witch but in a more fairy-tale mood,” she says, using skulls, spiders, and other dark elements instead of her usual dreamy flowers.



Paskalini Savopoulos

Paskalini Savopoulos, a.k.a. Vagabond Spun, is a full-time broomsquire based in the Hudson River Valley of New York. She travels often, working Renaissance Fairs and witchy night markets. She’s been creating things with her hands since elementary school and has explored many creative mediums during her life. In the past decade she found herself looking for natural connections, which led to fiber arts, wild basketry, and eventually broom making. Broom making brought together her love of nature, her habit of collecting sticks and learning about the trees and plants around her, her love of color, and her ability to create pieces that bring joy to herself and others.

ANIMALS AND PLANTS TO BRING INSIDE NOW FOR GOOD FORTUNE

BY SUSANN COKAL



Go little letter, apace (1871), Arthur Hughes

- **Spiders:** Encourage your friendly household spiders. They bring good luck—and sometimes money. According to French tradition, spiders seen in the afternoon are harbingers of gifts coming your way. The later in the day you see your spider, the more lavish the present will be.
- **Bees:** A single bee buzzing around you is a sign of good fortune, even if it comes to you inside. You will want to be careful, however, about swarms of bees from unknown hives. If you find a hive in the wild, leave a ribbon or something else of your own behind; then the bees in that colony will be your friends.
- **Cats:** What witch doesn’t have a fondness for cats? Especially cats with double claws, which are the most potent bringers of luck imaginable. If you have such a cat, protect it with your life.
- **Cyclamen:** This pretty flowering plant is available just about anywhere, but according to Roman writer Pliny the Elder, it is priceless: Simply having it in your home neutralizes poisons.
- **Goldfish:** If you follow Egyptian traditions, you’ll find goldfish to be lucky pets; they promote resilience and good business deals. If, however, you live in northern England, keeping them as pets is considered unlucky.
- **Lavender:** Some species make excellent—and fragrant—houseplants. (Blend their potting soil with a little cactus mix.) All lavender is associated with love; if you scatter bags of it among your clothing, you will find happiness. A sachet tucked inside your pillowcase will also promote restful sleep.
- **Horses:** You might not want to keep a horse inside for long, but in parts of Italy it is considered good luck if one poops indoors—even better if you step in the manure, which is widely thought to be lucky, wherever your foot finds it. At the very least, you could borrow one of the horse’s iron shoes to nail to your door.
- **Black Dogs:** If a black dog follows you home, consider letting it in; it is there to bring you luck. Dreaming about a black dog is a sign that a friend is close by.



Photography by Kristine O'Connor Parkins

OUR COVER STORY

The MAGIC of the MIRROR IMAGE

by Susann Cokal

Admit it: When you saw this month's cover image, a frisson ran up your spine.

The tilt of the eyes. The elfin points of nose and chin. The russet curls, the tapered fingers ... *doubled*. And there you were, ensnared by our twin autumn witches.

Every twin is a sorceress. We cannot look away, unless it is to look at her sister. We are dazzled by the symmetry of an identical pair: We count up the echoes of eye color, ear shape, and shoe size, the similarities of inflection and gesture when they speak. We gaze at the whorls of their DNA helices and marvel that even their chromosome maps are identical. They look like the same person on paper, but instead they are two, in blissful harmony.

And that is the fantasy. Surely, we think, the physical resemblance has a metaphysical significance. It immediately suggests spiritual kinship and perfect understanding. Twins cannot belong to this world; they must have been sculpted in the other realm of goddesses and demigods, heroines and ghosts, and, yes, witches. The similarity means being *seen* as we would want to be seen: in the perfect mirror of another soul.

As our Pre-Raphaelite spellcasters say in their interview, their special relationship does mean all that. Bren and Pip find themselves thinking the same thoughts and sharing an aesthetic; their art is a complete collaboration. Their pairing is like holding a candle to a mirror—it makes the light brighter.

But no twins (or even clones) actually are exactly alike. Science struggles to explain why two people with identical genetic material end up with different fingerprints, slightly different heights, *differences*. Maybe it starts with tiny changes in who lies where within the womb—a breath taken a second later, a cold caught by one twin but not the other.

There is magic in the play of differences too, in the endless series of what-ifs and then-it-happeneds.

Sometimes in an idiocentric culture, symmetry seems to go

too far, till it carries a different weight. It might take on a cast that seems straight out of Edgar Allan

Poe or the twists of Nabokov. Say, perhaps, you sense that somewhere in the world there is a stranger with your face, your build, maybe even your name. This doppelgänger is your shadow self rather than the light in the mirror. She comes from the other side of the globe (or just around the corner) and dogs your steps, whispers of doom, makes friends with your friends. Takes over your life.

From time to time, you catch a glimpse. She disturbs you in the way that a certain Viennese doctor described when an elderly man intruded into his train compartment—a man who was both familiar and unfamiliar at once. It took a moment to realize that he was looking at himself, reflected in a mirrored door. For that moment, he was a stranger to himself—and yet somehow familiar. He called it uncanny, a portal into an otherworld.

When you meet your shadow twin, uncertainty might take hold. Are you the double, or are you the main character (so to speak) in your own life? Perhaps you don't want to know. You are warned by Poe's "William Wilson" and Washington Irving's "Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron"—in slaying the doubles, the heroes destroy themselves too.

That is not going to happen to a witch.

A witch sees the whole universe. She is able to hold several contradictory ideas at once, including the sense that she is an independent individual *and* that she has an echo somewhere in the world. So you embrace even your shadow self as a twin.

You might even invite her on a broom ride through the forest ...



Susann Cokal is the author of four witch-forward novels, the most recent of which is Mermaid Moon. She lives in an old farmhouse in Richmond, Virginia, with a magical number of cats. Visit her online at susanncokal.com.



A Q&A WITH BREN & PIP PARKINS

Enchanted Living: How would you describe yourselves and the photos you take?

Bren & Pip: We would describe ourselves as storytellers through the lens. We usually discover a piece of art, a movie still, or a fairy tale that becomes our reference or theme and create the shoot around that idea. For example, the idea for our witch shoot was centered on a cauldron we bought at an antique auction. Our incredible mom, Kris, is our photographer. We give her our ideas, share a vision, and she captures it. We're so lucky to have her!

Being based in Florida poses a challenge during location scouting as it doesn't always match our desired aesthetic. But Pip adds in the moody warmth we love through her editing. Together, we make up stories that transport our audience to whimsical locations, creating a visual journey that invites them to explore the realms of imagination and fantasy.

EL: How would you describe your signature style?

B&P: We create photos with a painterly quality. Warm romanticism is what we like to call it. Our style captures the essence of bygone eras, enchanting fairy tales, and mythical realms. We're drawn to the darker and more gothic aspects of these, infusing our images with a sense of romance and whimsy. We were also influenced by films growing up—*Ever After*, *The Secret Garden*, *Little Women*, and the little-known TV movie *The Magical Legend of the Leprechauns*. Additionally, art—particularly Pre-Raphaelite artist John William Waterhouse—plays a significant role in shaping our style, and fairy books from our youth, including the picture book *Fairy Dreams* by Carol McLean-Carr. We strongly believed in fairies as children, and we think that has inspired us now in our thirties, capturing

that whimsy we felt then and re-creating this for little Bren and Pip.

EL: What about witches appeals to you?

B&P: Our great-great-grandmother Myrtle was a medicine woman in remote West Virginia. She would traipse through the surrounding woods of the Appalachian Mountains to forage for herbs and concoct medicinal remedies for the impoverished people in her community. We like to think of her as a wise herbalist who used her skills to help others, and we take inspiration from that, knowing we have that ancestry. We like to connect with nature, be it walking in the woods to see if we can spot wild horses or admiring the stars and a beautiful full moon. Witches have appeal in that they have a fierce feminine energy. The power they possess is palpable and inspiring, especially in this modern world where magic seems to have fled. It is intriguing to bring that magnetism to life through photography.

EL: Can you talk about your interest in history?

B&P: Specific elements within history fascinate us. The Victorian Era is our niche. Daguerreotypes and tintypes, memento mori, the elaborate fashions, chatelaines, the architecture and art, poetry, and literature, cemeteries, and more are some of our interests. Naturally, antiques give us life! We like to surround ourselves with old things and curiosities. While collecting, we will see a Victorian brooch or boots, even an antique gown, and we know we have to capture it in a shoot. Each piece we collect seems to have a story, and it's beautiful to be able to give it life again through our photography. Because of this love of history and antiques, we've opened our own store online, Bren & Pip Vintage and Antiques. We thought there was no

better way to share our love for all things old than to offer a curated variety of clothing, accessories, and miscellany.

EL: How do you stay enchanted?

B&P: We are inspired by the words of Elsie de Wolfe: "I'm going to make everything around me beautiful—that will be my life." We both struggle with chronic illness, so that can sometimes be difficult. For us, dressing up in beautiful dresses for a seaside photoshoot or forest frolic can bring magic to the everyday. We can be pirates, or mermaids, or fairies by the simple act of executing an idea through photography. That to us is enchanting, and our art is a reflection of our desire to see the beauty in the world. We believe that sometimes as we grow up, the childlike magic of life fades, leaving us with a sense of monotony. Through our art, we seek to capture that sense of wonder and share it with others. Our intention is to also create a safe space where everyone feels welcome and to spread positivity, inclusivity, whimsy, and beauty. We want our art to serve as a reminder to never lose the sense of adventure and to find joy in the simple pleasures of life.

EL: Would you say there's a special enchantment that comes from being twins?

B&P: Absolutely! The lifelong bond between twins is truly special and beyond compare. It is magical how connected we have always felt. All of our interests are aligned. Our passions, aspirations, and goals are the same. We'll sometimes be thinking the same completely random thing, and we'll look at each other with wide eyes and say, "Spooky." There is without a doubt magic in that!



See more on Instagram @brenandpip. Visit their online store at [brenandpipvintage.com](https://www.brenandpipvintage.com).



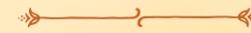


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*“Every twin is a sorceress.
We cannot look away, unless it
is to look at her sister.
We are dazzled by the symmetry
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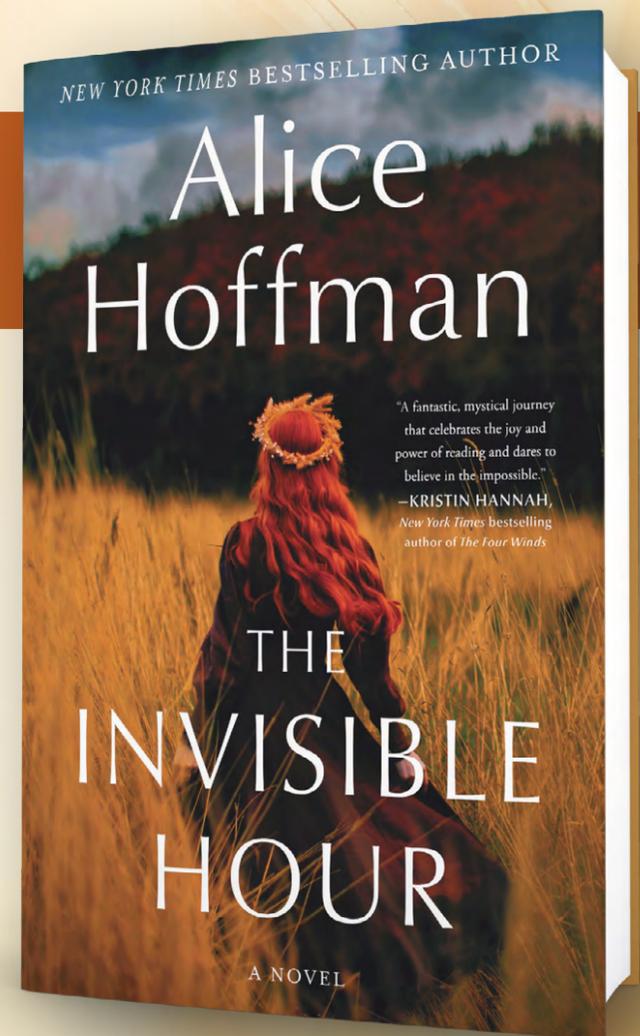
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THE WITCH IN AUTUMN

by *Theodora Goss*

Sometimes, in autumn, you're not sure whether to laugh or cry. On one hand, the leaves have started to fall, orange and yellow and red. You saw the first one flutter to the ground just yesterday, and you know that soon, there will be leaves all over the sidewalk—the linden leaves shaped like hearts, the maples like fallen stars. Eventually, the branches of your favorite trees will stretch bare and brown against the November sky. In autumn, you always feel a sense of loss.

On the other hand, the apples have ripened and hang like crimson globes in the orchard. You've already started gathering them to make pie and compote, and for a particular spell involving a mirror—the one mentioned in "Snow White," although of course the Brothers Grimm got some details wrong. They didn't understand that mirror spells are always about self-realization. The antique roses that bloomed in summer have left their orange hips. You'll pick them for rose-hip jelly to soothe an aching throat—the perfect medicine for winter.

Right now, the garden is a cornucopia: cabbages and carrots and cauliflower are ready to harvest, and a great orange pumpkin is growing on the vine. You will carve it for your favorite holiday, when children come to your house for old-fashioned toffee and marshmallows. You will teach the jack-o'-lantern to talk, and on Halloween night it will greet your visitors, politely saying "Welcome" or, alternatively, shouting "Boo!"

Your familiar, Cordelia the tortoiseshell cat, disapproves. "Why waste magic on such parlor tricks?" she asks. But no magic is wasted if it makes someone smile, you always think. And children do smile when they come to your house—it's so perfectly witchy, with its peaked gables, the lace curtains at its windows, the Victorian gingerbread trim that makes it resemble an iced cake. Of course you intend to dress up again this year. You're a witch, with or without a black hat, but once a year it's fun to play the part.

Autumn is the time to put up things for winter, so you've been bottling summer sunlight. You'll put the stoppered bottles in the cellar, where the flavor inside will mellow and deepen, until eventually, when you pour yourself a glass at Yuletide, it will taste of elderberries and honey. You've been gathering the last blue skies of August and winding them into a ball. You plan to knit them into a shawl for your elementary school teacher, Miss Merriweather, who is getting old now. She was the one who taught you, when you were just a young witch with a ponytail and skinned knees, how to turn an ordinary broomstick purchased from the hardware store into a witch's broom for riding high above the sleeping town on moonlit nights. She taught you to read the future in tea leaves and tarot cards, to speak the language of all the creatures that roam the earth or

flap about the sky, so you are never alone. As you walk to the grocery store, you converse with snails crawling on garden walls, or the spider who weaves her web near your front gate. (Spiders are particularly philosophical. This one quotes Socrates.) A blue shawl made of August skies, with a trimming of white clouds—that's exactly what she needs, you think.

And now you're following in Miss Merriweather's footsteps—you're about to start teaching! The local community college, which has just started offering an associate's degree in witchcraft, has asked to you to teach a class called "The History of Magic: From Circe to Social Media." You've already chosen the readings, and of course the class will have a practical component—it wouldn't be a proper class on witchcraft if you didn't teach the students a few spells. Some simple transformations, perhaps? Tennis balls to toads and vice versa? Your budget doesn't stretch to golden balls, so tennis balls will have to do.

Which is harder, teaching or making magic? Well, you will soon find out. You suspect they're more similar than they might initially seem—both involve changing the universe by casting a spell. You just hope your students pay attention! If not, you can give them snakes for hair, or maybe feathers.

Back in July, you dried some lazy afternoons and packed them away in sachets with lavender and sage, so you could put them in the linen closet to keep away moths. But you can't feel too nostalgic for summer when September is so glorious. It also has long, sunlit days, although there is a sharp tang in the air, like the sourness of a cooking apple.

Listen: You've spent the summer doing and doing, and you've accomplished a great deal. The garden is bountiful, your business is flourishing. But this is the time to harvest and gather in, the time to put away supplies for the cold months. That includes your dreams. During the summer, they scattered in so many directions. Now you need to call them back, to say, "Come in, children. It's time to stop roaming the world for a while. Let's get cozy under the blankets. Let's be grateful that we're together and at home."

You've created so many spells for other people. Now cast one for yourself—a spell for looking inward. Sit in front of the mirror and say hello to yourself. Ask yourself how you're doing. When your mirror self responds, listen. Offer it a slice of apple. As she sits chewing your offering, ask, "What can I do for you? What do you need or desire?" Her name is the same as yours, only backward.

Hopefully, she will answer. Your mirror self knows you better than you know yourself. You are like two sisters, although she sees the world a little differently, as though she can see the back of the tapestry of fate, where all the threads cross and hang,



Photography by
VAL GLEASON



She knows things you don't, like who made the stars and where music comes from. Perhaps, if she's in a good mood, she'll tell you some of the secrets of the universe.

"She's much nicer than you," Cordelia will say, but you know how cats are. No matter how that annoying furball criticizes you, each night she falls asleep curled between your ankles.

Autumn is the time for putting things to bed. When the oak leaves fall, you will cover the roots of the rosebushes with that rich mulch. You will make a nest of old clothes in the attic for the house ghosts—you don't want them catching colds. You will get the extra bedroom ready for guests who will visit during the holiday season: friends from the Society of North American Witches, who will gather to workshop spells; your niece who is studying to be an accountant as well as a witch—she assures you that math is simply another form of magic. You will build boxes for the bats, another for the bees. You will put the house itself to

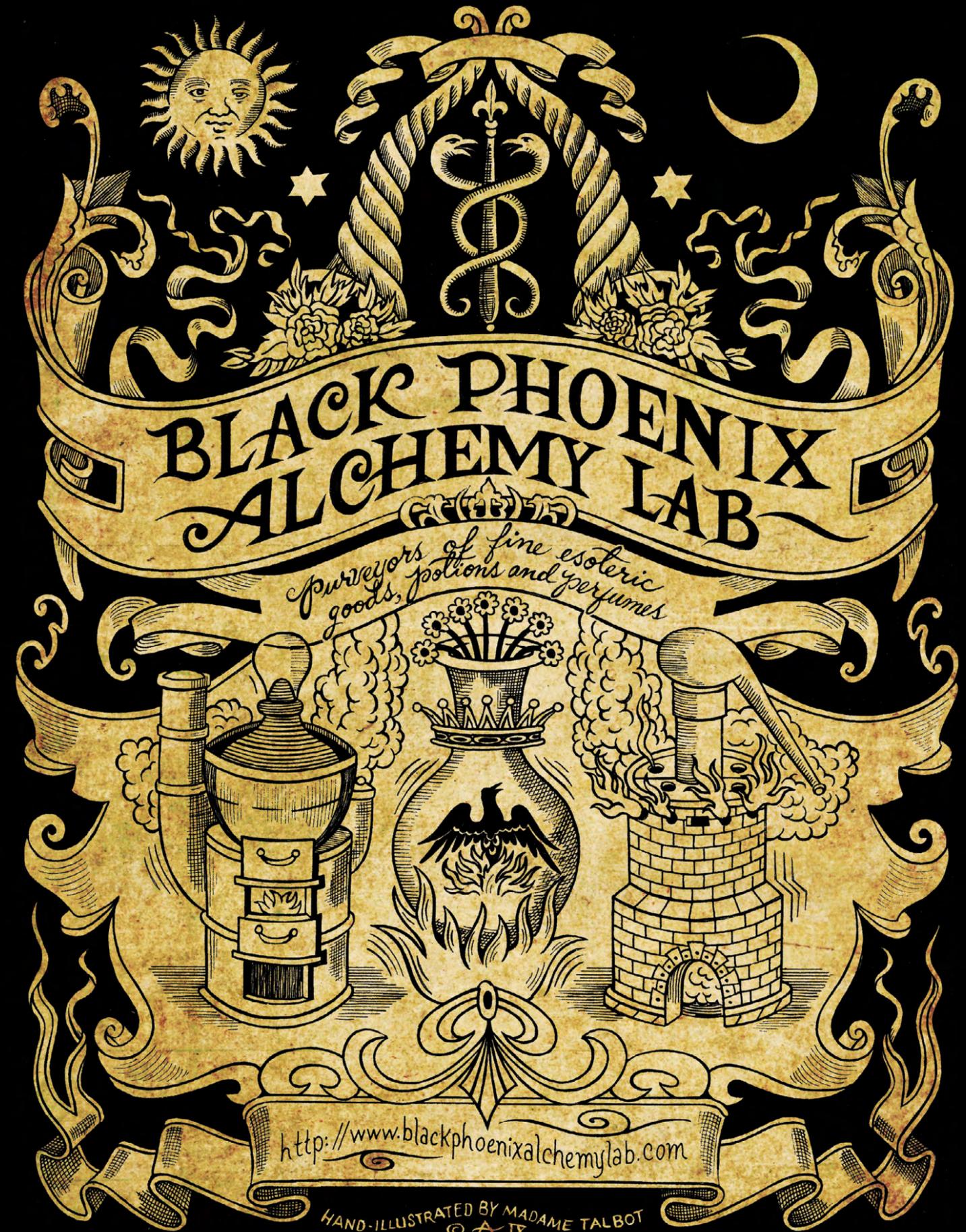
bed, and it will close its eyes. It too will hibernate over winter.

Pick out the books you want to read: Christina Rossetti's poetry, Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Lolly Willowes*, Alice Hoffman's *Practical Magic*, anything by Susanna Clarke. Put them by your bedside table. You need to rest too, my dear. Look, there's your mirror self telling you the same thing, and Cordelia is weaving around your ankles. The linen sheets are cool and smell of lavender. Here are your dreams—wrap yourself in them. Rest for a while.



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.

Photographer: Val Gleason @vallerina01 Model: Jessica White @_Jxssiica_ HMUA: Jonathan Lee of Magic Demon Cosmetics @magickmua_studios



HAND-ILLUSTRATED BY MADAME TALBOT
© A IX



VERONICA VARLOW

Life of a Love Witch

Down in New Orleans, there is a place that exists at the crossroads of magick and moonlight. I am here now. I write this to you directly from Witch Camp, from an old Victorian mansion in a room swathed in red velvet and candlelight. Right now, I can hear the voices of this amazing community of witches through the walls as they prepare for the bonfire where we will honor our ancestors.

Now is the time when the veil between the worlds is the thinnest. It is a time of connection not only with your ancestors in the spirit world but also with the core of who you truly are. Know this: *Your very soul holds a library of all the stories of the lifetimes within you.*

What if you could access the wisdom, magick, and confidence from those lifetimes? What if you could connect to legendary artists, musicians, leaders, and writers whose work left a mark on your soul? What if you could communicate with your loved ones who have crossed over and feel their support and love throughout your life journey?

This season, I wrote a very special initiation below for you so that you may know the song of your own soul and be deeply connected to the wisdom and magick in your bones. Our intention is to connect with ancestors to receive confidence, guidance, and inner wisdom so that we may find the juiciest life path for our journey!

WORKING WITH ANCESTORS

My personal belief is that ancestors arrive in three forms:

- **Lineage of Love Ancestors:** These are your loved ones in the spirit world. These ancestors are your blood relatives throughout time. I also include in this category your chosen family of friends and your beloved animal companions who are in the spirit world.
 - **Inspired Ancestors:** These are the people in history whose work in the world deeply inspired you and shaped the person you are. Some examples might be artists, writers, musicians, and notable figures like Martin Luther King Jr., Sinéad O'Connor, Maya Angelou, Mr. Rogers, E.B. White, Jean-Michel Basquiat.
 - **Lifetimes of You:** I believe that we have each lived many different lifetimes. To work with this personal form of ancestor magick, visualize being able to reach back to honor and connect with former lifetimes of you. This is multi-dimensional, next-level ancestor summoning!
- When we honor all these forms of what ancestors can be, we honor our own story and also the memories of the ancestors

whose lives have touched ours. It is a vibrant circle of eternal support, honoring, and love.

CONNECTING TO THE SPIRIT WORLD THROUGH CANDLES AND WATER

In our initiation this season, we will be working with the elements of fire and water.

• Candle Magick

The belief passed down by my Bohemian ancestors is that when a special candle burned for a magick purpose begins to disappear in our world, it appears in the spirit world. For instance, if you carve a word on a candle for something you wish for, the belief is that your candle works almost as a letter, so your guides and ancestors can know what you want help with. You can also light a candle in memory of a loved one in the spirit world and they will receive your message and know that you are thinking of them.

• Water Magick

Water has long been seen as a conduit to communicate with the spirit world. Science has shown that our bodies are 66 percent water, and when we are in a body of water like a lake, the ocean, or even a bathtub, we can connect with a primal part of what makes us us. Water magick is used in healing practices and is a way to soothe the mind and open ourselves up to deeper levels of communication. I have held rituals at Witch Camp where we stand together in a circle in a river because the water is amplifying our connected intention.

Your Autumn Witch Initiation Ritual

You will need:

- 3 chime candles (1 yellow, 1 red, 1 orange)
- A book of matches
- 3 chime candle holders
- 1 large bowl filled halfway with water
- Petals of one red rose
- 9 drops of orange oil
- 3 pinches of dried calendula flowers
- Spring water (or clean filtered water) to fill bowl
- Grimoire or notebook
- Pen

- To begin, cast your circle. Casting a circle is simply marking a magickal space that is protected and sacred to do your ritual work. You can do this physically by creating a circle of salt on the ground with a six-foot diameter, or you can do this through visualization and physical action, by using your pointer finger

as a “wand” and walking clockwise to draw the circle. When I do this, I imagine powerful purple fluorescent light coming out of my fingertip to mark the space. As I draw it, I say three times: *“This magick circle is my sacred space, I am protected in this place.”*

- Once your circle is cast, stand in the center and hold your arms up skyward in a V-shape. Say out loud: *“The intention of this Autumn Witch initiation is to connect with the guidance of ancestors so that I may receive ancient wisdom and direction to the highest path of my very best life. I call in my angels, my spirit guides, and guardians, to empower this ritual with love and the highest vibration.”*
- Sit down in the center of the circle, legs crossed. In front of you, place the candles in a pyramid formation. In front of your left knee, place the red candle in its holder. In front of your right knee, place the orange candle. Place the yellow candle at the top of the candle pyramid.
- Light the red candle first and say: *“With the lighting of this flame, I call my ancestors by name.”* Take the time to say out loud the names of your loved ones and beloved animal companions who have crossed over to the spirit world.
- Take a fresh match and light it from the red candle flame and carry it over to the orange candle. As you light the orange candle, imagine that an invisible line now connects the two. Say: *“One flame ignited a second time, as I call to Otherside heroes of mine.”* Out loud, name the people who had a deep influence on the person you are by being who they were in life.
- Take a fresh match, light it on the orange candle, and carry it to the wick of the yellow candle. Say: *“One flame becomes two and then three, connect to all of the lifetimes of me.”* Take a moment to close your eyes and reach back in your mind to hold and honor all the past versions of you.
- Take a fresh match and light it from the wick of the yellow candle and carry it along the invisible line to complete the energetic pyramid to the original red candle, where you began. This way the original flame makes it all the way around the pyramid and the spell is sealed.
- Place the bowl of water in the center of the candle spell pyramid. Add the rose petals, the orange oil, and the calendula flowers to the water and say:

*The blessings of rose and calendula flowers,
the oil of orange for euphoric powers.
With the sound of my words, this water I bless,
Joy, wisdom, and love lead to my heart’s success.
Beloved ancestors, I summon you now
To be by my side for this sacred vow.*
- Take three deep breaths and submerge your hands in the bowl of water. Allow yourself the time to be silent and to connect with your ancestors. Imagine them all standing by your side and supporting you. Close your eyes and feel the roses and calendula in the water. Rub these petals into your palms as you gently wash your hands in this water. This is an old Bohemian blessing to bring happiness, joy, and love into your story, as written on the lines of the palms of your hands.
- Take your hands from the water and let the droplets from your



Photo: Amanda Valentiné
Makeup: Jessica Saint

fingertips bless the crown of your head. Immerse your hands back in the water and bring the water to your third eye (the space between your eyebrows). Immerse your hands back into the water and bring to your heart. Say:

*Ancestors you hold me on your shoulders high,
And as every single day passes by,
I will honor and cherish the gifts that you gave,
I will stand in my power to be confident and brave.
I know that your legacy continues in my blood and bone.
As you gather around me, I’m never alone.
The strength multiplies with each spell spoken,
Our cycle of life shall never be broken.
The Universe hums its never-ending song,
Of the love that continues on and on.*

- Thank your ancestors for their help, love, and guidance. Allow the candles to burn down as you write down any thoughts, feelings, or messages received from this ritual in your grimoire or notebook. When you are finished, take the water and feed your plants or a tree to continue to nourish life and good vibes around you.

See you around the cauldron, my witch friends!



Veronica Varlow’s best-selling book *Bohemian Magick* is now available everywhere—packed with secret spells and rituals passed down from Grandma Helen. You can experience her *Witch Camp* in person or join her online *Witch Academy* at lovewitch.com. Find her on Instagram @veronicavarlow.



MAKE A HARVEST BESOM

by Paskalini Savopoulos of Vagabond Spun

For this project you will need:

- A large dowel rod about 1 inch in diameter, 2 feet in length
- A spool of 18-gauge nylon twine
- A stick sturdy enough to be your besom handle, 2 to 3 feet in length
- A drill to make holes at the top and bottom of handle
- A knife for cutting broomcorn (a large bread knife works well)
- A sharp pair of scissors or basket shears
- A jerk string (made from twine, as directed below)
- Roughly 1 pound of broomcorn (how much you will need will vary depending on personal preference and the size of your handle—smaller handles may need less)
- Dried grasses and flowers of your choice (I harvested the grasses shown from a local field. You can also use dried items from your garden.)
- Floral tape
- Large wired ribbon to finish



Find it's easiest to begin by getting all your materials in order.

Drill a hole through the center of your dowel rod. Slip the end of your twine through the hole, secure it with a square knot, and load roughly ten yards of twine onto the dowel rod. Work back and forth evenly in a six-inch space so the twine doesn't get too thick in any one spot. (This will make it difficult to hold tension later.)

Make your jerk string. Take 12 to 16 inches of twine and knot both ends together to create a loop.

Drill a hole through the bottom of your handle, an inch or so from the end.

Prepare your broomcorn. Start by taking the broomcorn in your hand and wrapping your fingers around. (Imagine you are measuring pasta.) The tip of your thumb should reach the first knuckle of your pointer finger in a circle. (This is not a hard and fast rule, as everybody's hands are different.) This is your first bundle. You will need three bundles.

Split each of those bundles in half and then in half again; each of the three original bundles will now be broken into four smaller more manageable bundles. I like to set each bundle in a crisscross pattern so I can grab them easily as I work.

Your first set of four bundles will be the base; add nothing to the broomcorn for these.





You may add dried grasses to the second set of four bundles. I set my grasses on the surface of each without mixing them.

Your third set of four will be the uppermost layer. Here you have options. For ease, I recommend prebundling your dried flowers and binding them with floral tape. You will need to make four of these bundles. This will create a more pronounced look but will be easier to handle. If you prefer, you can do the same as I did with the grasses and simply lay your dried flowers on top of the broomcorn. This will create a more blended look, but the florals may be more delicate and prone to breaking under the tension of the twine.

Have your jerk string, knife, shears, and each layer's bundles set up at easy reach.

Take your dowel rod and place it on the floor in front of you. Your twine should be coming up and over the dowel and toward you. Place your feet, one on either side. You will be holding the dowel with tension using your feet.

Pull the free end of the twine toward you and slip it through the hole you drilled in the bottom of your handle. Secure with two square knots.

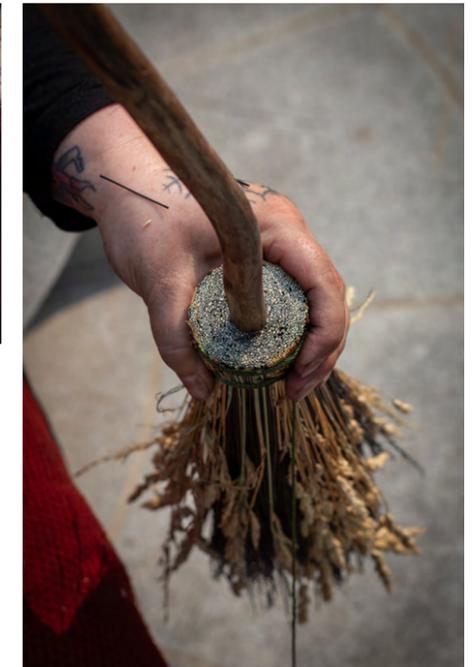
My right hand is dominant, so I place my handle across my lap to my left so that my right hand will be better able to maneuver.

Pull tension and start to wrap twine around the base of the handle, rolling or turning the handle toward you. The twine should be coming up from your feet over the handle, and you are rolling toward your body.

Tension is *important!* Your besom will be held together solely with tension, so make sure your twine is taut.

Once you have two or three wraps, you can begin adding your broomcorn from the base, broomcorn-only pile.

Holding the handle above your lap with twine taut, slip the bundle between your lap and the handle and place it against the handle. Give yourself three or four inches of broomcorn from the bottom of the handle. You will be wrapping up toward the top of the handle, so having enough working and wrapping space is important.



Wrap tightly one solid round.

Pick up your second broomcorn-only bundle and place it between the handle and your lap and secure it to the *alternate* side of your first bundle. Wrap tightly again and add the following two bundles in the same manner.

Holding your besom taut, take the first bundle of your second pile, the one with the grasses laid on top. Position the bundle to be added so the grasses are facing up and out on the surface and place the bundle onto the besom.

Take time to visually adjust this layer before you wrap and secure it. You can line it up with the previous layer, or you can stagger it a little to be a bit shorter than the base layer—it's a matter of personal preference. Once you're happy with the placement, secure the first bundle by wrapping tight a solid once-around wrap, and then add the next three bundles in the same alternating manner as the base bundles.

Once your second layer has been secured, pause and check your distribution. This is optional but very helpful.

To do so, give six really solid tight wraps, then look at your remaining working space of broomcorn. Angle your twine toward the top of the dowel rod, leaving about 1½ inches of broomcorn. Give a solid wrap around, and then before you wrap further, set your jerk string onto the besom (like setting your bundles) so that the smooth loop is facing the top of the handle, leaving about two inches of loop, and the knotted end faces the bottom of the sweep. Now tightly wrap over the jerk string four to six times, securing it to the besom. Keep in mind that you're always holding tension.

Slip three or so inches of your working twine through the loop of the jerk string. *Do not cut your working twine.*

Pull the knotted end of the jerk string until the working twine has been pulled out of the bottom and the jerk string has come free. Your besom should now be held securely. Take your knife and brace your besom on the edge of a table or a bench, handle out. Trimming away the broomcorn in a motion down and away from you, roughly ¼ inch from the twine. Be careful not to cut your working twine.

Work slowly and steadily so you don't damage your handle. Remove all the excess broomcorn until you reach your handle.

Now you can see clearly if your distribution is even. If your handle is noticeably uncentered, you can go back and correct this before moving forward. Because you've added in bundles, you can remove them in the same fashion, realign, and secure them again.

If your handle is mostly centered, and you are ready to move on, you can gently pull your working twine back toward your dowel, releasing it from the hold and rolling the twine back onto the dowel. Unwind until you are back to the single wrap securing your grass bundles, and prepare to add your final layer.



With your final bundles, you will add and stagger this layer as before, placing your floral bundles centered to each addition before securing and adding the next bundle.

Once all four outer bundles have been placed, give two or three nice tight wraps, making sure everything is secure.

With your shears, cut a portion of the extended broomcorn from this last layer as close to the clean edge of the first two layers as you can. This gives you a window to see how much working space you have to continue your final wrapping.

From here, continue to wrap until you get about a half inch from the top of the working space. (Use your window to gauge how far.) Once you're within a

half inch, set your jerk string like you did previously: smooth loop to the top of the sweep, knotted end to the bottom of the sweep, and wrap tightly four to six times around to secure.

When you come back around to the jerk string, place your thumb with tension on the wrapped working twine, and cut a six-inch tail. (*Do not release your tension.*)

Take the tail and slip it completely through the loop of the jerk string. Pull the knotted end until the entire length of tail and the jerk string have come through and are now secured. Release your thumb, trim the tail to about a half inch, and carefully singe the end with a lighter or a candle.

Using your knife or your shears, you

can trim off the excess broomcorn from the last layer.

Give your besom a spin, and decide which side is the front. Then drill a hole at the top for hanging it.

Once you've decided on your front, cut a length of ribbon and tie your bow accordingly.



Broom care tips: Broomcorn is a natural material, so hanging your besom in a place with high moisture may lead to mold. Ideally, cool dry spaces are best. Hanging your besom in direct sun may lead to brittleness and cause it to fade over time.

Congratulations, you've just made yourself a lovely Harvest Besom. Enjoy!

Follow Vagabond Spun on Instagram @vagabondspun and online at vagabondspun.com.

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AT HOME: AUTUMN WITCH INTERIORS

by Rona Berg



Autumn is a magical time, when the earth is fecund and fertile, brimming with deep, rich, beautiful colors. The burnished palette known as earth tones—golden, russet, forest green, mushroom yellow, cranberry, pumpkin—is irresistible this time of year. It beckons anyone wanting to refresh an interior space and create an enchantingly beautiful witchy lair.

At the same time, there is something pensive and wistful about the season. Eventually the leaves fall and scatter to the wind. The cold breath of winter begins to blow in. But before it does, there is magic in the air, with Mabon (autumnal equinox), Samhain, and of course, All Hallow’s Eve. Gustave Flaubert, author of *Madame Bovary*, said, “I love the autumn—that melancholy season that suits memories so well.”

Hold those memories close, perhaps with objects of beauty that spark yearning.

Roots + Flowers

The designers at Heart and Sola Creations, an LGBTQ+-owned company, craft elegant wood flowers—perfect for a wedding bouquet, boutonniere, or centerpiece, or to display around the home. They are made from the root of a plant called *aeschynomene aspera*—sola or shola, for short. Sola has a spongy texture, like cork, and the blooms are lightweight and customizable. heartandsola.com

Painted Porcelain

Laura Winter, founder of Laura Winter Art, is a self-taught Italian porcelain painter who is based in Germany. Her hand-painted cups (above) are exquisitely detailed renderings of botanicals, bats, cottages, and landscapes, some inspired by the Black Forest. Each is truly a work of art! [instagram.com/laurawinterart](https://www.instagram.com/laurawinterart)

Wise Owl Bookends

Made of resin that is painted gold, this set of two round-headed Wise Owl bookends from Anthropologie will lend

a certain je ne sais quoi to your office or home. They’re quirky and very appealing, and look especially good next to an arrangement of fresh or dried flowers. anthropologie.com

The Dark Side

There is almost too much to choose from at Darksome Craft Market, a consortium of brands, all handcrafted, that tap into a unique vein of quality art and craft. We love the work of Caitlin McCarthy, a graphite artist in Northern California, who channels her unique fascination with the Victorian and the occult into otherworldly drawings. darksomecraftmarket.com

Gothic Glass

Handmade in Italy by artist Claudia Surpi, the Goth stained-glass pieces from Cemetery Lane Design on Etsy feature skulls festooned with colorful leaves, pearlescent ghosts, spiked crowns, and a rich selection of pieces to hang around the home.

[instagram.com/cemeterylanedesign](https://www.instagram.com/cemeterylanedesign)

To the Manor Born

If your dream is to live in a (possibly haunted) English country manor, the wall murals from Burke Decor can make you feel like your dream has come true. The Sylvania Wall Mural in Mint and Teal from the Mansfield Park Collection by Osborne and Little is a whimsical woodland scene, speckled with ferns, wild tulips, and toadstools, presented in three panels. The collection is named after Jane Austen’s delicious novel, *Mansfield Park*. burkedecor.com

Divine Light

The lampshades crafted by Deadly Darling Nightshades, a woman-owned collective, are hand-sewn in Los Angeles, and the care and attention to detail are obvious. The witchy Victorian styles—some made from upcycled vintage or retooled vintage—feature crystal beading, tassels, velvet trim, and mesh in divine colors, including lilac, blood red, pumpkin, black, and more. They are destined to shed a divine light on your lair! deadlydarlingnightshades.com



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Nova Magistirium Suspiria Lacrimosa
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A TABLE TO CELEBRATE YOUR *Autumn Inner Witch*



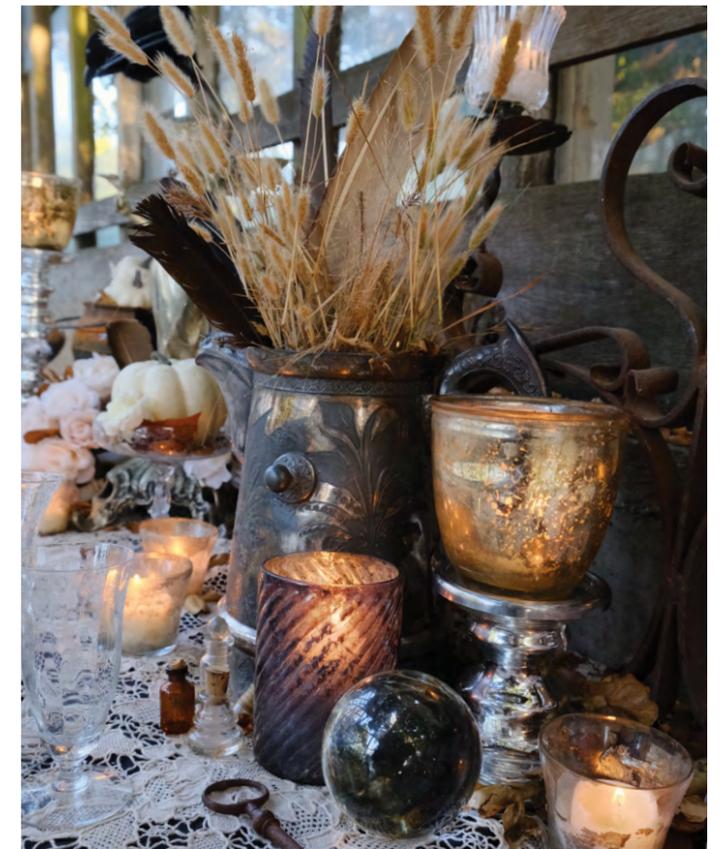
BY TRICIA SAROYA

I adore the autumn—the rich warm colors, piles of pumpkins, abundantly set tables with baskets and platters overflowing with the season’s beautiful offerings. But when creating this autumn table, I was curious about combining the harvest season with the inner reflection that fall evokes in me—the feeling of spiraling inward and connecting with my ancestors and my inner witch. I decided I wanted my table to reflect this more restrained mood. I still wanted the pumpkins and the feeling of autumn but in a way that wasn’t quite so exuberant. To convey this feeling, I chose a subdued color palette with white pumpkins and soft cream and blush flowers juxtaposed against dark velvety black. I wanted the contrast of the dark and the light, symbolic of the duality of life, celebrating the beauty of both.

I included ravens, which remind me of magic, the unknown, and the Great Mystery that they traditionally symbolize. I wanted their mystical iridescent feathers mixed with the glow

of old silver and my crystal balls to invite reflection on our inner universe. Layering tea-stained lace over black velvet and tulle created the contrasting color story and a base for the decorations. Black floral china, vintage silverware, and etched turn-of-the-century stemware gave a nod to both a Gothic and a Victorian sensibility, reinforcing the supernatural vibe. Some of these items were my grandmother’s, thus bringing a bit of her energy onto my table.

I wanted to stick with more of a classic feeling while also bringing in a mysterious touch, an atmosphere that invites quiet, thoughtful conversation and an opening to the mysterious inner witch who for me wakes in the fall. But this style could go a few different ways. You might honor your ancestors with old black-and-white photos from years past as part of your decoration. You could easily go classic Halloween with bones, skulls, cauldrons, and other spooky touches. For a full Goth look, add blood red roses and black lace.







HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR YOUR AUTUMNAL TABLE:

- Write out your favorite 19th century dark or thought-provoking poetry, by such authors as Poe, Keats, or Shelley. Scroll them up and seal with red or black sealing wax.
- As place cards, use a photo of a direct ancestor of your guest (black-and-white photos are best). Ask as part of the activities for the guest to share a story about this ancestor.
- Use candlelight the way you would expect to find it in a Victorian parlor.
- Toast your ancestors with mead or deep red wine in silver goblets.
- Make your guests pomander balls of oranges studded with cloves. Place them in a large bowl in the center of your table as part of your decorations.
- Consider adding orange pumpkins for more color. A black-and-white palette with the pop of a bright color like the orange of pumpkins or the red of roses is beautiful and dramatic.
- You can also bring in touches of nature with moss, ferns, and lichen-covered sticks for a more nature-witch feeling. The colors of black, white, and green could be quite unusual and beautiful.

Tricia Saroya calls herself a “creatix,” an out-of-the-box artist who imagineers beauty in a multitude of mediums. For more creative magic, follow her on Instagram @triciasaroya or visit her website at triciasaroya.com.

KOALAS IN FAIRYLAND

The Enchanting Art of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

by Theodora Goss

Fairyland is everywhere, so why not Australia?

I still remember walking into a bookstore in San Francisco and finding a large clothbound volume called simply *Fairyland*, by Ida Rentoul Outhwaite (1888–1960). Inside were the most beautiful illustrations—as beautiful as the work of Walter Crane or Arthur Rackham, although Outhwaite is much less well-known, probably because she was both Australian and a woman, marginalized by both her geographical location and gender. If you have not heard of her, this may be why—she did not quite belong among the Australian fine artists of her day, nor among the mostly male illustrators who dominated the English children’s book market. Nevertheless, in the early 20th century she achieved international fame—one of her books was given as a gift to the young Princess Elizabeth. And her art is distinctively her own, with a luminosity that captures the light of her native country and a particular charm that always makes me smile.

In Outhwaite’s illustrations, you can see fairies talking to frogs or birds, or sitting around a mushroom drinking tea with koalas. The animals she incorporated were generally those of her native Australia, like the kookaburra and lyrebird. The central figures were almost always girls or women—female fairies with the wings of moths or young witches carrying broomsticks, accompanied by their black cats. Whether they are riding bats, surfing on the backs of fish, or dancing among autumn leaves, these are images of empowerment in relation to the natural world. Her witches and fairies are self-sufficient and, it seems, having a lovely time with their animal companions.

She was born Ida Rentoul in Victoria, Australia, and



demonstrated her artistic skills when she was still a young woman. When she was just sixteen, she illustrated a book written by her older sister Annie Rattray Rentoul.

That book, *Molly’s Bunyip*, was one of the first to show children having magical adventures in the Australian bush rather than a European setting. It was so popular that Ida and Annie collaborated on several more books, and Ida was asked to illustrate stories for magazines as well as books by other authors. At this time, she drew primarily in pen and ink, but after her marriage to Arthur Grenbury Outhwaite and the birth of her four children, she started to paint in watercolor. This was the period during which she did her best work, particularly *Elves and Fairies* (1916), a glorious art book with color plates as well as black-and-white illustrations, all in her distinctive style.

By the 1930s, this style and Outhwaite’s subject matter had become less popular. Tastes had changed, and fairy books for children were replaced by animal stories. After the death of her husband in 1938, her work became more sporadic, and she was largely forgotten outside her native country—until the recent revival of interest in all things fairy and a greater appreciation of children’s illustration as fine art. Outhwaite’s Australian fairyland may not yet be as well-known as it was during her lifetime, but if you can find a copy of *Fairyland* or any of her other books, do what I did that day in San Francisco—open the covers and enter a truly magical country, different from the European fairylands you might be more familiar with but just as beautiful. Her art tells us that fairyland can be anywhere—and it includes koalas.

Follow Theodora on Instagram @theodoragoss.



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TWO WITCH-FRIENDLY RECIPES FOR AUTUMN

by Must Love Herbs

Witch windows are often found on the second story of farmhouses built in the 1800s. They're an interesting piece of architecture born from the folk belief that witches cannot fly on their broomsticks through a crooked window. They're also known as coffin windows, as many believe they were added to farmhouses to make it easier to remove coffins from second-story bedrooms.

Both theories seem rather far-fetched, but they sparked something of a golden light in me. What did I think of when I heard the phrase "witch window"? I thought of an amber glow from the hearth. I thought of flowers and herbs hanging to dry and a beautiful garden reflected in the wavy glass panes. I thought of the smell of gingerbread coming from inside. For me, that is a true witch window, and what better way to share it than with a gingerbread cookie like the one here?

Speaking of sharing: When I was growing up, spiced pears, pumpkin rolls, and cheesecake were the staple foods of every girls' night. Four generations of women read books, looked at magazines, and drank copious amounts of coffee in my nana's little yellow kitchen in Eastern Kentucky. The strength at that small kitchen table stays with me even now. In honor of the women who raised me, I'm also sharing this Spiced Pumpkin and Pear Cheesecake—a lovely ode to autumns gone by.



WITCH WINDOW Gingerbread Cookies



Ingredients

1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick) at room temperature
2/3 cup dark brown sugar
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
1 tablespoon ground ginger
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 egg, at room temperature
1/2 cup molasses

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

Cream together the butter and the sugar with your electric

mixer until just combined. Scrape down the sides.

Add the egg and molasses and stir on low until well blended. Add in the flour slowly. (I like to use a large spoon and add a spoonful at a time until there's no flour left.) Stop periodically to scrape the side of the bowl to make sure everything is incorporating 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.

Lightly dust your work surface, rolling pin, and cookie cutters with flour. To make the windows you'll need one large rectangle cookie cutter for the window and one smaller rectangle for the panes. Place the chilled dough on top of the floured surface. Roll side to side and up and down to make a rough square shape. You'll want to roll the dough to an even quarter-inch thick. Use your big rectangular cutter to make as many cookies as you can fit. Place the excess dough to the side.

Use the small rectangular cutter to cut out four window panes. Save the excess with the first leftover dough. Carefully slide a floured spatula under each window and transfer it 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 the remaining dough.

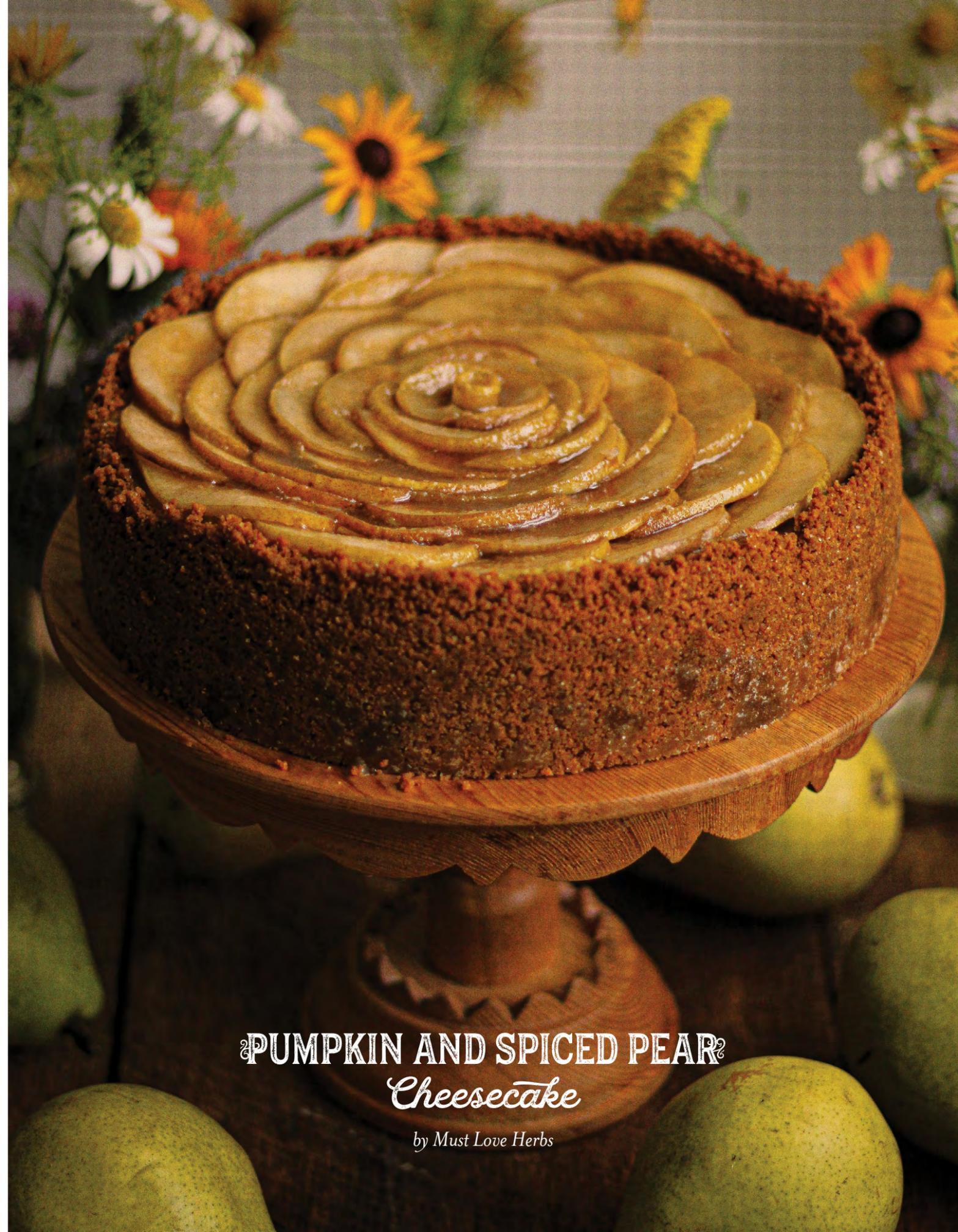
Place cookies in the fridge to chill for 15 minutes before baking. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes or until just set. Allow the cookies to cool on a fresh sheet of parchment. While the cookies cool you can begin working on the candy for the windows.

Candy Ingredients

2 cups granulated sugar
2/3 cup light corn syrup
3/4 cup water
1 candy thermometer

In a heavy-bottomed saucepan, mix together sugar, corn syrup, and water until dissolved, then bring the mixture to a boil.

Place your candy thermometer on the side of the pan, making sure it doesn't touch the bottom. Continue to allow candy to boil until it reaches 260°F. This is when you'll need to add food coloring if you want your windows to have more flair. Do not stir. Allow the mixture to continue boiling until it reaches 300°F. Remove from heat and carefully spoon candy into each window pane. Allow the candy and cookies to cool for 30 minutes before moving. Enjoy!



PUMPKIN AND SPICED PEAR Cheesecake

by Must Love Herbs

THE POSTCOLONIAL BRUJERÍA OF MY FAMILY

by Raquel Vasquez Gilliland

I was a typical witchy tween of the early aughts—wearing black lipstick that smelled a bit like sour candle wax, pairing dark JNCO-knockoff jeans with black high-top Skechers. During sleepovers with friends, we'd always watch *The Craft*, attempting to lift each other up with just the tips of our fingers ("Light as a feather, stiff as a board"). At eighteen I discovered tarot cards and fell in love with the rich dreamscape of their symbolism, and even today I own a dozen decks. My favorite: *The Tarot of the Pagan Cats*.

I never subscribed to any one form of witchery, nor did I ever join a coven. I just knew that my personal definition of witchery—the understanding that there are unseen worlds and forces we interact with, and that we can influence these worlds (and thus our own world) with rituals and intention—felt as familiar and warm as the oversize tan teddy coat I pull out of storage every late fall. I know now that this familiarity exists because I was raised with a distinct Mexican-American witchery, or *brujería*.

In my childhood home, if you were accidentally cursed by the evil eye, you could figure it out by being blessed with an egg and then cracking the egg open to see what it held inside. If the yolk was all yellow, you were in the clear. If it had a line of blood—you needed to be cleansed. Lie down on the floor and let your *abuela* sweep all around your edges with her cornstalk broom.

Was there a thunderstorm coming? Cover the mirrors, 'cause we all know that lightning is vain and will try to take a peek at itself if you don't. Don't want the storm to descend? Get your mother to grab a big knife from her kitchen, then climb onto the roof and slash at the clouds so that the thick gold sunlight can reach right through, breaking the rain away.

One of the most compelling things I was taught about the world is that your soul is made up of layers, or pieces. And if you go through something traumatizing enough, a piece of your soul will run and hide, and you need a *curandera* to help it come back to you. Almost every Indigenous group around the world has a healer who can traverse the unseen worlds in search of a soul piece or answers. (Some anthropologists call them all shamans, though every group has their own name for this role.) In my family, my grandmother calls the soul pieces back.

My Mexican lineage has experienced centuries of colonial racism, suppression, and forced assimilation, and *still* these pre-Columbian practices remain. It's seriously a testament to how powerful they are, how powerful *we* are, to have survived such attempts at erasure with decades and decades of white supremacist violence.

Even with all the rituals and worldviews that have survived, sometimes we just don't know the "why" behind it. Why can Mom cut clouds out of the sky? How does that work? We don't know. There is knowledge that is forever lost to colonization, no matter how hard I try to put the pieces together, whether it is through DNA analysis, visiting my ancestral lands in Texas, or genealogical research. No matter how often I try to subtract the pieces that do not belong—religious trauma, internalized racism, and intergenerational trauma—to find the truth they are laid atop of, I have to accept that some of this knowledge is gone for good.

I remembered this when I wrote my novel *Witch of Wild Things*. In the book, the Flores sisters are Mexican-American women who have been cursed with gifts: the ability to make plants grow at will, the

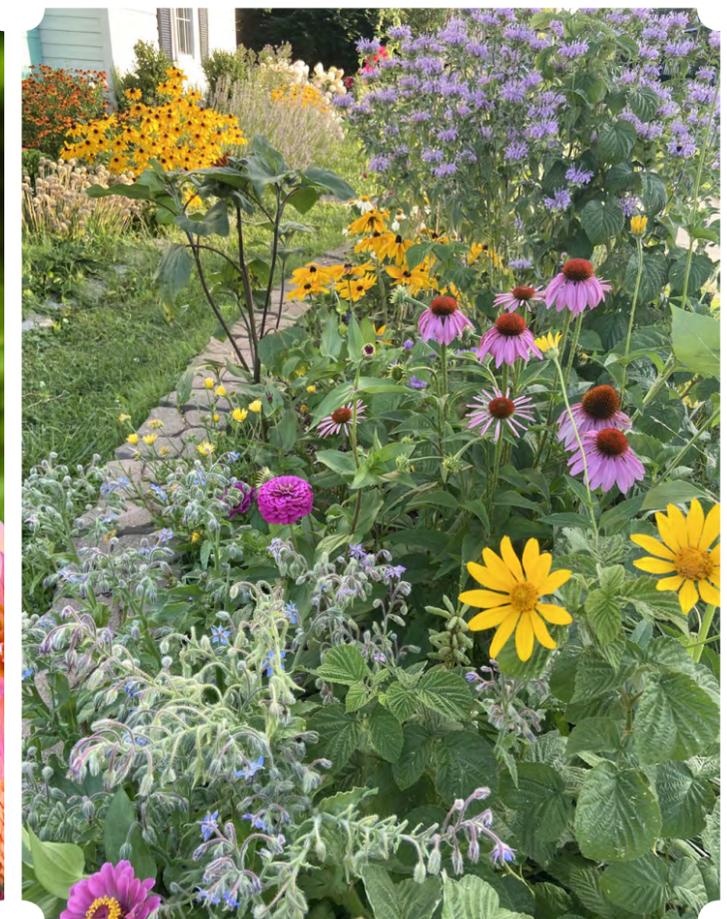
ability to communicate with *criaturas*, or creatures, and the ability to control the weather. No one in the Flores family knows why these gifts exist or where they came from. The main magic of the book's world doesn't come from incantations and wands and origin stories. It comes from each sister knowing, in her own way, that she is inextricably connected to all the worlds, both the ones we can see and the ones we can't.

It reflects the way I incorporate *brujería* in my life today. I listen to my plants speak, without knowing the "how" or the "why." I write prayers into little scrolls and bury them in my garden to grow, without knowing anything about how it works. I gaze out my office window—as I am doing right now—and I know the trees that sway in the wind, in every green imaginable from forest to lime to silver, that if they wished, they could look right back at me. I have seen their faces. I have seen their eyes. How? Why? I don't know. And that's okay.

My ancestors, the ones who knew many of these answers, are in my *sangre*, my blood, my DNA. There is so much lost that when I think about it—the lives, stolen; the books, burned; the temples, destroyed—I want to weep. But then I remind myself that the connection to my blood, to the magic that I was raised with, is always here with me. In *Witch of Wild Things*, my main character, Sage, repeats, "In the beginning, there were only gods. Gods and this earth." The gods still walk this earth in the world of my book, but I believe they still walk this world too. And we can connect with them, each of us to the specific gods of our ancestors, and their hidden worlds, and their unseen forces, whenever we wish. That is *brujería*—or witchery—to me.

Follow Raquel on Instagram @[raquelvasquezgilliland_poet](https://www.instagram.com/raquelvasquezgilliland_poet).

"I gaze out my office window—as I am doing right now—and I know the trees that sway in the wind, in every green imaginable from forest to lime to silver, that if they wished, they could look right back at me. I have seen their faces. I have seen their eyes."



WITCH OF WILD THINGS: AN EXCERPT

by Raquel Vasquez Gilliland

“Hold up,” he says gently. He cuts into a more bushy part of the woods, off trail. I follow.

There, growing out of a gnarled, knocked-over tree trunk, is a collection of mushrooms. They look like a series of little tables, stacked all over one another, like something Alice would’ve skipped over while tiny in Wonderland. “This,” he says, with a tone of awe. “This is what I’m looking for.” He gestures for me to come closer with him, and he starts pulling supplies out of his pack.

I hover my hand over them, letting my thumb fall to graze the top of one.

A long time ago, as teenagers, Teal and I were fighting and she said something she’d intended to really hurt me with. *Talking to plants is gross. It’s not natural. You’re unnatural.*

It didn’t sting as she intended, and not because I knew that it had come from jealousy. She’s always hated that she can’t control her gift and took that out a lot on me, like it was my fault or something.

No, I didn’t care about what Teal thought because “talking to plants” feels like the most natural thing in this whole universe. Hearing the songs of plants (and dirt, and mushrooms), being able to reach their cells with my mind, with the tips of my fingers, sensing what can only be described as their consciousness, because yes, plants are conscious, they know what color you’re wearing, they know if you’re blocking their light, they have nervous systems and can feel pain. Talking to them is as easy as the inhale and exhale of breath.

We literally share an evolutionary ancestor with plants. At some point in our lineages, the lines converge into one. How can speaking with them be unnatural?

“What are you?” I ask the mushroom in a reverent whisper.

And then I listen.

“Oyster,” I announce a few seconds later. Edible, too.

“Holy crap,” he says. He reaches his arm out, where the hairs all over the



mushroom tattoos stand straight up. “You just knew that, huh? With your gift?”

He’s got the same awe still in his voice. He’s looking at me with that sparkling, black heat in his eyes, and he clears his throat, glancing down. I think he doesn’t want me to freak out again. “If we could see through the forest floor,” he says, “we’d see fungal threads—called mycelium—every-freaking-where. These mushrooms, they’re sort of the fruit. The rest of it, the parts we can’t see, are the body.”

I sit on the forest floor and close my eyes, placing my hands on the dirt. When I connect—when I sense what he’s talking about—there’s a click in me. It’s like I’m plugged into the Matrix, only it’s not lime-green code everywhere—it’s those white veins of mycelium, connecting everything in this forest in miles and miles of microscopic strands of silk.

“The plants use the threads to exchange resources. And to communicate with one another.”

His voice is nearer but I don’t open my eyes. “I can feel it.” I say it as a whisper.

“You can?”

“Yeah.”

“What’s it feel like?”

I shake my head, keeping my eyes closed. “It’s like . . . I don’t know.” I blink my gaze open. “No, I do know. Sometimes plants get extra chatty. Some old trees especially.” I look around me, at the big oaks, wide and tall and ancient. “Once I heard from a tree, what connects everything in this world is story. Stories hold the universe together. And that’s what I see, this . . . mycelium . . . that’s what it feels like. It feels like stories, connecting all plants, like the most complicated and beautiful spiderweb of all time.”

He’s close to me now, sitting next to me. I see the whole forest, the whole world, in his eyes again, and me there, too. I don’t lean away when he comes even closer. “Sage,” he says, his voice husky, and he kisses me.

My whole body is alive with my own veins, veins that have been created and connected to the veins of mushrooms right here in town, which are created and connected to the veins and webs and threads of mushrooms the world over. Everything electric with life. With stories. One might say that mushrooms are older than story, but only if they believe mushrooms didn’t also tell stories.

This is my story right in this moment: Tenn, kissing me so gently, his tongue touching mine, coaxing my mouth more open. Tenn, who I loved at fifteen. Who I’ve loved since fifteen.

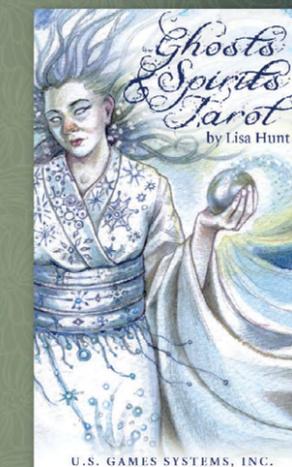
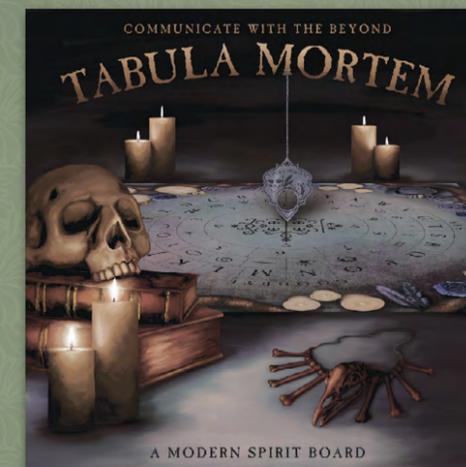
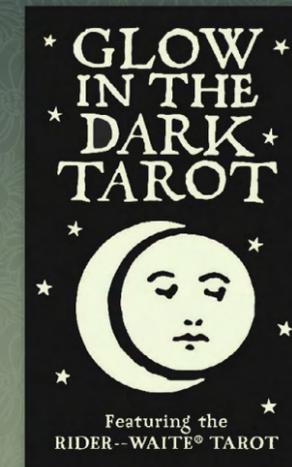
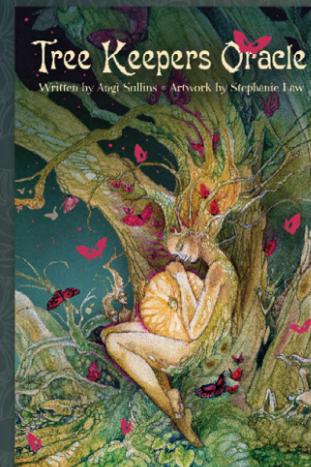
All we do is kiss, and that’s more than okay, in these woods destined to be destroyed, which breaks me every time I think about it. But for now, they hold stories and dreams and dappled sun poured between the trees, poured all over us as we kiss, like sweet sunflowers made into light.



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THE AUTUMN QUEEN

by Margaret Sofia Marangione

The vermilion, salmon, and raspberry shades of spring give way to the luminescent greens of summer and then autumn's tangerine, golden yellows, and scarlets—the bold colors of the lower chakras that remind us about grounding and identity. This is the season the queen knows well, for she has harnessed all her power and magic with the growing ripeness of spring and summer. Cleopatra, Catherine the Great, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Empress Dowager Cixi, and Boudica were women in the autumn of their years, ruling their kingdoms, men, children, and lives.

While mainstream media celebrates the maiden and nymph, and patriarchy demands motherhood, and the crone becomes the hook-nosed witch, autumn reminds us to celebrate the power of our own inner queen. Martha Stewart on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, the adventurous self-identifying ladies of the *Book Club* movies, and the embracing of gray and silver hair by celebrities remind us that life after forty-five is not to be feared. While the fresh beauty of the maiden is exquisite, and the fecundity of motherhood is beautiful, I would not wish for spring in winter (though I might occasionally wish for the cool of fall during the oppressive summer heat). Every season has its time and place, just like every age of our lives is meant to be honored.

Autumn is the sovereign of the year and reminds me of the last day of a full moon, just on the edge of waning. In the cool of September days, fertility is done, and now is the time of harnessing the authority of life and a bountiful harvest. It is not the time for growth but the time of supremacy—when a woman, like the year, has fully realized her life's efforts and knows who and what she is. The queen and mother earth have worked hard. Demeter, Hestia, Danu, and every mother who has weaned her children knows that this is the time for her. The queen rests in her abundance, strength, and authority. The harvest is in. The corn has been chopped and the fields gleaned. Persephone descends and Demeter relaxes on her throne with a goblet of wine, eyeing her palace and at ease waiting for her consort in

winter to emerge. But she is in no hurry or lacking support. If she is so inclined, druids flank her sides and her sister goddesses surround her. She is blessed and thanks the heaven and earth.

Now in the autumn of my life, I am aware of my place in the wheel of the year, and I celebrate with friends, gathering around bonfires as we sip bourbon-laced apple cider. As the hunter's moon glows large, my desire to chase runs in my veins. The rut is on, and the deer are mating as the King Stag makes his presence known by deep bellows and snorts, running his harem across field, stream, wood, and pasture. I run these woods on horseback, my hounds baying ahead as I gallop, for winter is on my tail. Back at home, a warm fire flickers and a stew is bubbling.

I delay starting my woodstove, just like the last crickets delay the end of summer, because once the crackling of the sweet smell of locust, maple, apple, and oakwood warms my bones, I am married to it until spring comes again. I am grateful to be able to start my chill autumn morning with dried wood that was gathered and stacked in the cool of spring. The hint of winter is banished by the warm and then hot crackling fire. Sipping my dark coffee laced with the cream of goat's milk, I snuggle into its safety. At night I stoke those orange embers with aromatic pinewood as the salamanders of the fire wrap themselves around me, filling my farmhouse with safety and warmth. The autumn chill cools off the evenings, and the lavender and ginger sky hustles me and my farm animals to home and byre.

It is in spring that I stack my wood for winter. It is in summer that I fill the barn with sweet green hay for my animals, and it is in early fall that I have canned vegetables for my larder. Hanging from the oak beams above my woodstove are comfrey, mullein, motherwort, chamomile, elderberry flowers, calendula, nettle, sweet Annie, and fragrant geranium. I have dried tomatoes and peppers. Stored pumpkins, squash and potatoes, cabbages. Greens might come up all winter long. A reminder that nothing ever dies in the cold of winter, not even us.



Margaret S. Marangione is a professor of writing at the University of Virginia and Blue Ridge Community College. Her novel, *Across the Blue Ridge Mountains*, is under consideration for the Weatherford Award and has been submitted for the Pen Faulkner award, while her poetry has been published in *Appalachian Journal*, *Lumina Journal*, *the North Shore Women's paper* and *Sage Woman magazine*. Visit her online at msmarangione.com.



Hen of the Woods

FABULOUS FALL
FUNGI TO FORAGE

BY JESS STARWOOD



All mushroom season is often celebrated by foragers with the arrival of a mushroom known as hen of the woods—a gray and off-white rosette-shaped fungus that can grow quite large. Also known as *maitake* or *Grifola frondosa*, it resembles the ruffled feathers of a gray chicken and is found in association with mature oak trees ranging from the Midwest to the East Coast of North America. Many specimens grow up to 30 pounds (yet single mushrooms weighing up to 100 pounds are not uncommon) and appear in the same spots year after year.

This tasty and highly versatile mushroom adds a meaty texture and a complex savory flavor to recipes. Due to its size in the wild, there is usually a lot of mushroom to work with, which makes it great for a variety of preservation methods: It can be pickled, fermented, or made into a dehydrated powder or seasoned jerky. The individual caps of the mushroom can also be easily pulled apart, battered, and deep-fried for a flavorful and juicy tempura.

Hen of the Woods AND PUMPKIN SOUP

2 pounds fresh hen of the woods (*maitake*) mushrooms
1 medium to large pumpkin (try a fairy-tale pumpkin for a rustic look)
1 tablespoon oil or butter
1 yellow onion
4 cloves of garlic
1 tablespoon fresh thyme
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 cup cashew milk, or heavy cream
1 cup mushroom broth, or water
¼ teaspoon chili pepper, optional
Salt and pepper to taste

Garnish:

Pumpkin seeds
Chili oil
Fresh thyme
Sautéed hen of the woods

Cut into the top of the pumpkin around the stem and remove the top, reserve—this will be your lid for cooking the soup inside the pumpkin. Remove seeds—these can be shelled and toasted as a garnish.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Add the oil to a large pot on medium heat. Add chopped onion in a large pot and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook for another minute. Add the mushrooms, thyme and soy sauce, cover with a lid and allow to cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, allowing the mushrooms to release their water.

Remove the lid and cook for another 5 minutes, letting the excess water evaporate and sauté the mushrooms until they

Adding this mushroom to the diet regularly has great benefits both medicinally and nutritionally. Due to its high content of beta-glucans (a complex carbohydrate), hen of the woods is considered one of the more potent medicinal mushrooms. Among its most promising uses are blood sugar regulation, immune system modulation, and support against cancer. The dehydrated and powdered mushroom is often added to medicinal mushroom blends for its health-promoting benefits.

Don't live where hen of the woods grows? Another benefit of this mushroom is that its saprophytic nature means it can be cultivated, and it is often widely available at many supermarkets, sometimes under its Japanese name, *maitake*. For those unlucky at foraging—or those in areas where hen of the woods don't grow wild—this is a great time to experience some new flavors. Try this seasonal pumpkin soup recipe to get a taste for this delicious, ultra-healthy mushroom!



have browned. Add a splash of mushroom broth—about a ¼ cup—to deglaze and lift all the browned bits of flavor at the bottom of the pot. Reserve a few sautéed maitake mushrooms for garnish and added texture.

In a high speed blender, combine the sautéed mushroom and onion mixture along with the thyme, soy sauce, cream and chili pepper if using, along with the remaining mushroom broth and blend until smooth and creamy. An immersion blender can also work directly in the soup pot. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Pour soup into the pumpkin and replace the carved top with the stem to create a lid.

Cook in the preheated oven for 1½ hours. When serving, scrape the edges of the pumpkin to incorporate into the soup. Add a few reserved sautéed mushrooms, fresh herbs and chili oil to make a nice garnish for each bowl.

Jess Starwood—herbalist, forager and chef—creates an innovative yet traditional approach to wild foods and connecting the community with the local natural environment. Follow her on Instagram @jess.starwood.

FELIS SILVESTRIS CATUS

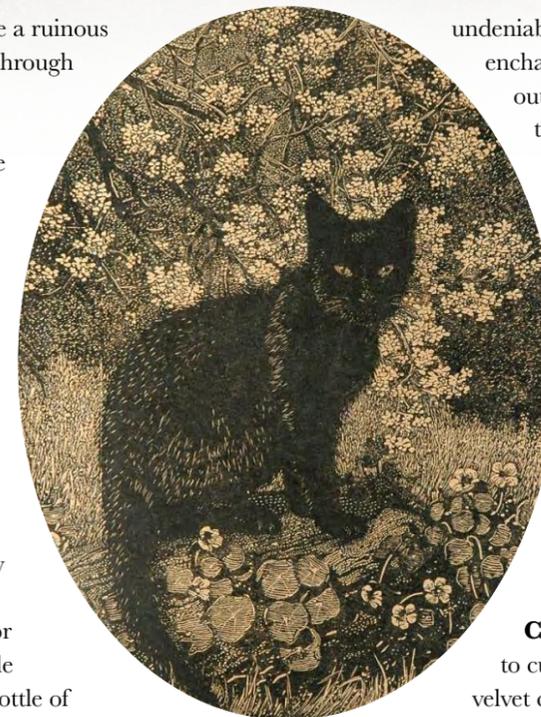
Your most voluptuous fantasies are delivered by Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab

by Joi Brozek

Let's say you wish to experience a ruinous walk at dawn, taking a route through a block choked with tropical flowers, where the Faubourg Marigny leads to Esplanade Avenue right before the liquor and filth-infused French Quarter? Perhaps a meditative stroll through the temples and deities of Ubud, Bali, breathing in clouds of incense? Welcome to the Black Phoenix Alchemy Lab (BPAL), where murky pasts, florid presents, and myriad other dimensions are conjured. Founded in 2002 by Elizabeth and Ted Barrial and Brian Constantine, BPAL has endless scents for any journey—for every mood, fairy tale, or horror story.

Many of us have a bijou nostalgia for fragrance. I think back to my first bottle of eau de toilette, at age six: a cheap bottle of orange flower perfume bought at a souvenir shop in Fort Lauderdale. Then there were the Love's Baby Soft mornings and, in later adolescence, eaux de parfums from a designer lab, with overpowering floral notes and often very little staying power. (Perhaps my skin was rejecting them.) Anais Anais before ballet class, which mixed so well with the rosin on my toe shoes. Clouds of Poison when I was a freshman in college, walking through Washington Square Park on brisk evenings to see punk rock shows in the basement of the student center.

But then I found BPAL. I first encountered its products via my early-aughts social media obsession, LiveJournal. The Lab had a passionate community of fans, eager to engage in recondite discussion about every note they encountered in its intriguing scents. It was as if they were analyzing a symphony. Intrigued (I had found my people), I placed my first order, Blood Kiss, with cherry notes that are downright pornographic, and Jazz Funeral, which contains boozy notes over almost rotting tropical flowers. Immediately I followed up with their seasonal Halloween offerings, landing on Samhain, which to this day is



undeniably my signature scent. Perhaps that's the enchantment of BPAL: a single fragrance brings out something different in everyone who rubs the oil onto their pulse points. You become anything you may have always secretly wanted to be: extravagant, promiscuous, louche, vulpine, feline ...

Enter *Felis silvestris catus*, a.k.a. the domestic cat. House panther. Living room lion. Soul mate for yours truly. Inspired by cats in classic paintings—which never seem to include as many cats as we'd like, BPAL believes, and who else could change that but them?—their portfolio of fourteen different feline-themed scents is transcendental.

Standouts include the cozy yet playful **Cat on the Table**, something you want to cuddle up with and devour (on a plush velvet chaise, of course)—wear it and get the attention that you demand—and the luxurious **Cat**

on a Cushion Licking Its Paw, whose hazelnut notes are tempered by a red patchouli that makes it deeper, darker, something that makes you hesitate before trusting. **The Cat Seen From Behind** is sultry and graceful. Tonka bean and rice milk gives it a creaminess that mellows the sandalwood and patchouli. While by night she casts a spell, **By Day She Made Herself Into a Cat**, one that lingers among the herb- and incense-stocked shelves of an esoteric bookshop. And **Floral Still Life With Cat** holds some surprises. Never trust the initial notes of a BPAL fragrance. Like a fine wine, let it breathe. If your skin at first smells as if you have been rolling around in rose petals, just wait a bit longer, and it becomes deeper and dreamier.

Through the alchemy of Black Phoenix's lab, I have become one with my favorite creature. If I were to live each of its nine lives, they would be fully satiated, full of risks fulfilled. Because curiosity doesn't ever have to kill the cat.



Vintage illustration: *The Witch* (1924), by Lionel Lindsay

Joi Brozek is a native New Yorker who lives in New Orleans with her husband and four fierce felines: Klaus, Sparrow, Ozzy, and Sharon. She recently completed a novel, Let Them Eat King Cake in Queens, and hopes to find just the right place for it. She is obsessed with great smells and her favorite scents from BPAL are Samhain, Absinthe, Jazz Funeral, and Cat at the Table. Find her on Instagram @joidarling.



THE POWERS OF THE WITCH ARE WITHIN YOU

With Spells and Charms

BY SUSANN COKAL

You are a witch. That means an artist, a warrior, a healer, and a queen all at once. You are not like the rest of the village. Dare I say *better than*? Oh yes, I dare, because courage and confidence underlie all your powers: confidence to see what needs doing, courage to act on it. Talent to do what needs to be done, fortitude to stand by the consequences.

Some powers you were born with and some you learned. Some are simply *you*, because there are as many ways to make a witch as there are kinds of witch to become: The cunning-woman in a humble croft, grinding herbs to poultice a neighbor's blistering rash. The lady of the court, always ready with a quip for the salon, secretly working a glamour to present her face and figure as she imagines them. The solitary elder who no longer bothers with looks but instead spends her days writing incantations, her nights weaving them into a spell. And these are just the first archetypes; you have your own way of bewitching your life.

Despite many talents, the witch may be poor. She may even be in serious trouble from those villagers swarming over the hill with torches and ducking stools—but if times get dicey, it's because her gifts can intimidate as well as nurture. (She also has a flair for a paradox.) Those who don't have the gift within them might seek to destroy it in others, but you are ready for battle. Your magic binds you to the universe and to others like you, solitary wonder-workers who channel their strength into one another when needed.

So look to the stars and the pointy hat that rises to meet them: You have greatness within, and its seeds are growing.

Creativity, a clever tongue, talents for healing, glamour, solitude, sisterhood, resilience—all of these qualities stretch and grow and strengthen with use, so gather them up and move into that *dazzling* realm where anything is possible.

The only limit is the bounds of your own vision.

Creativity

When you look in the mirror, a visionary looks back.

The fundamental power of the witch is imagination. Your magic is about setting the world to rights, transforming wrongs into justice, squalor into beauty—creating love, health, happiness. (Or maybe you need to send a curse. We're not judging; we're sure you have your reasons.) *Creating*

Sometimes a historic book or word of mouth will yield the perfect spell or charm ready-made for your situation. The weight of time and established use makes these spells strong ... but sometimes you can do even better to create your own incantation to ramp up the magic. Stretching yourself imaginatively might yield a new go-to spell.

You're a dab hand at using what's around you, and you choose some ingredients by their resemblance to the object over which you want to cast a spell. For example, there's no mystery as to how mandrake came to be used in spells having to do with sexuality. Just look at one of the roots; just look at the name. No wonder it has to be harvested at dark of midnight, tied to a dog who will pull it screaming from the earth. You don't want to mess with that metaphor, but you might tie the root to a string and hang it around the neck of a woman who's trying to get pregnant.

In other charms of similarity, you put a knife under a mattress to cut the pain of childbed. And traditionally, if you live around the Mediterranean and you find your Italian suitor a little too insistent, you can tie a rope or string into a knot, reciting words to the effect that the man will not be able to act upon his desires. And there you have it, a good night's rest for you.

There are plenty of enchantments available for stirring desire—which, incidentally, the authorities viewed as more witchy (meaning possibly malevolent) than anything that would repress lust. Good one: Gather fern seeds on Midsummer's Eve and scatter them while reciting the lovers' names. Tried and true: Send the beloved a *mala noche*, a sleepless night in which to think of you. You might find this chant to be handy: "The bed in which you lie shall be made of thorns, your sheets made of nettles, and from below you will hear the whistles of a thousand strange creatures." This trick never fails: Whatever you're cooking for a reluctant lover's dinner, include a few drops of your blood.

Good-sense caution: Until you know the strength of your own love magic, be sure to keep the string handy. Just in case.

A Clever Tongue

Words always strengthen your magic, even if you're just reciting a grocery list for the bean soup that brings luck to the cook. The right incantation brings out the powers within the objects.

Although the raw curse above has sent many a *mala noche* to its destination, some people believe a spell is most powerful when it's made with poetry. As a witch, you are likely a natural rhymers.

Take *Macbeth's* weird sisters, for example. They grab sinisterly random objects for a brew to summon the souls of the dead, and they bind everything together with a rhyme:

*Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake.
Eye of newt and toe of frog,*

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*Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.*

The rhyming similarities between words help bind the ingredients together. But this most famous incantation is not *just* about piling on the grisly sounds; it also shows how the chemistry of the ingredients will work. When they “Cool it with a baboon’s blood,” they know that “Then the charm is firm and good”—in short, blood is a thickener that will finish off the brew.

Incidentally, if you fear that someone might serve a nasty concoction to you someday, plant a cyclamen near or in your home. The Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder wrote that where cyclamen grows, poisons are powerless.

A simpler, sweeter rhyme is part of an old charm to bring a lost lover back. To work this one, you need a sprig of oak with an acorn attached, plus a sprig from an ash tree. Put them under your pillow for three nights, chanting:

*Acorn cup and ashen key,
Bid my true love come to me.*

Incantations you create for yourself are often the strongest, because they are unique to you and your circumstances. So while you may take inspiration from traditional spells and charms, you have full creative license to add your own flourishes and make up your own words. Or start from scratch and make a magic entirely your own.

If you have no spells to write down now, try keeping a diary. What you see in those pages may help you divine your next project. And for inspiration, try wearing or holding tourmaline, a crystal that comes in all shades and colors. Green is particularly potent for artists and wordsmiths.

Healing

Aside from love spells, charms to promote good health are any witch’s most sought-after stock in trade.

Healing is the special province of the witches known as cunning folk. Under paganism, these were high priestesses (and a few high priests); with the advent of the one god, the church officially demoted them to herbalists and hobbyists. But people still go to the cunning folk for help with everything from childbirth to arthritis to sick livestock and more.

The cunning woman is an especially important figure in medical care, particularly for women. She is the midwife, the *sage-femme*, the person to lance your abscesses and apply herbal poultices to your wounds, not to mention deliver your baby. Truly, the olden times would not have lasted long without these healers in each community.

Ingeborg i Mjärhult was the quintessential cunning woman. Widowed in 1716, she lived on her husband’s farm a few miles from a Swedish village. People were more than willing to make

the trek, because Ingeborg was the most trusted healer in the region—which of course threatened the physicians and excited the interest of church leaders.

When the authorities brought Ingeborg in for the traditional questioning, she defended herself by saying she merely treated the sick with herbs gathered on Midsummer’s Eve, as her mother had taught her to do—and that she had never harmed anyone, only helped them recover from ills. Nonetheless, the law told the villagers to stay away from her, keep her isolated. Just in case.

But the villagers disobeyed. Every authoritarian inquiry into Ingeborg’s activities only made the people love her more. She lived a good, long, useful life.

You can start cunning with a few simple charms. Sleep is essential, so if you suffer from nightmares, you might try the Romany charm of hanging a door key near your bed; it will banish evil and give you a good rest.

Or think about jewelry: Wear an amber necklace to protect from maladies of the throat—and from malevolent witchcraft. Hang an emerald pendant around the neck of a pregnant mother, making sure that the stone rests over her heart; you will decrease her discomfort and promote the health of the baby.

Or carry a golden frog charm somewhere about your person to speed recovery or avoid disease entirely. If your health is fine, it will also help bring you love and friendship.

Glamour

Take a pause before the mirror. Here’s one of your strongest powers: the face you shape to meet the faces that you meet.

The oldest meaning of the word *glamour* is a magic spell that enhances your looks—or at least others’ perception of them. In the late 1800s, the word started to refer to little objects that could be used for enhancement (makeup and its tools, in other words). Now *glamour* has a more general meaning, as a style that’s posh and glitzy and alluring and enviable.

At heart, though, we know that glamour is simply about asserting power over transformation and perception, whether your beauty is conventional or more idiosyncratic. It’s about choosing your effect. In short, if you believe you are fascinating, the mirror will agree.

Consider Diane de Poitiers. Beginning in 1534, she was the longtime mistress of King Henri II of France—a man nineteen years her junior (and husband to Catherine de Medici, who gets press as a dark witch). Diane built some mystique by dressing entirely in black and white, but what really got the witch rumors crackling was her uncannily girlish complexion, which she kept fresh with lotions she made herself from milk and other ingredients that history does not name.

So the courtiers gossiped. Diane just smiled, made love to the king, and salted away a fortune for her family. I’m not saying witchcraft definitely affected her looks—just, you know, people do talk.



The Witches' Kitchen (1606), by Frans Francken the Younger

The 19th century voodoo priestess Marie Laveau did find power in vanity. She started her career as a hairdresser, acquiring clientele for her magic business and lending a sympathetic ear to gossip and secrets, which helped her tell fortunes and build a powerful network. She became one of New Orleans’s most influential citizens, also working among the sick during epidemics of cholera and other diseases, creating custom gris-gris amulets for people who needed help and conducting major rituals for crowds of up to 12,000 people of all races. Must she have been beautiful to accomplish so much? Not necessarily—because she had *glamour*. She created a standard of beauty.

The witch chooses her look, whatever it is, because it sends a message about wisdom attained, because it is soft and welcoming or fierce and self-protective—because she is a witch, and witches don’t follow ordinary standards. When the magic is strong in you, you might not care about maintaining a manicure or a waifish waist. You choose to look imposing.

And nothing says you even have to look human. Witches are known for shape-shifting, taking on the appearance of other people or of animals, monsters, and supernatural beings. Norse berserkers used to take wolfsbane (aconite) to transform into wolves before a battle—as much for strength as for looks, of course. They revered the blue-cloaked *volva* sorceresses, who had the power to change shape, become invisible, and set curses. Similarly, in Arthurian legend, the great Morgan le Fay starts out as a talented healer (and quite a seductress), then abandons medicine and romping around the Round Table in order to

concentrate on other forms of witchcraft in her later years. Eventually she learns how to transform herself into any animal on earth.

If you, like the occasional *volva*, want less focus on your looks, powdered hellebore blossom is said to render you invisible. It is also highly toxic, particularly the leaves, so proceed with caution. It is safer to take a page (literally) from *The Key of Knowledge* and recite a charm that begins, “Stabbon, Asen, Gabellum . . .” Out of discretion, I will leave it to you to search out the rest of that perilous charm.

And remember: Your mirror’s job is to reflect *your* ideal version of you.

Solitude

When you are alone, a creative force surges through you. The powers of contemplation and concentration grant you special understandings of the world you already seem to know so well. Alone, your mind wanders to odd places, odd objects, relationships. Hidden objects come to light, along with hidden problems you’ll want to enchant away. An idea strikes. You refine the words that make a spell. You might read, or craft a talisman, or simply pause to meditate.

A witch or a member of the cunning folk was often a lone woman living in a hut far from the village. Her solitude granted discretion to people wanting a divination, a love charm, some help with a pregnancy, occasionally a curse for the neighbor’s cattle. That’s how Ingeborg i Mjärhult lived, for example. Or

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think back to the biblical Witch of Endor, who lives in a village but remains a bit apart from its citizens, thanks to the interdictions against witchcraft—which Saul convinces her to break in order to raise Samuel from the dead to lead his people.

Whether you are a benevolent Ingeborg or a grandiose Maleficent, if you are to let your talents flourish as they deserve, you must protect your hours of solitude. Above all, protect yourself from malevolent witches. Try one of these charms:

If you want a quick caution against enemy witches and demons, try laying down a line of salt—ideally all around your domicile but at the very least across the thresholds. Salt is considered incorruptible, so anyone with evil intentions will not be able to step over it. It is also a handy ingredient for all sorts of rituals and concoctions. For example, if someone died in old Scotland or Ireland, mourners placed a plate with a pinch of salt and a pinch of earth on their chest. The soil represented the body's decay, while the salt was the immortal soul, and the metaphors helped mourners heal.

For the Romany, a home could be protected by a ring of elder bushes, which are particularly effective against ghosts. In the 1910s, a Traveler led a writer to a house that had been so haunted that no mortal person was able to live there—until the elder bushes were planted. Elders have many healing properties, but be careful: Cutting one down is said to release a vengeful spirit.

Sisterhood

You do much of your witch work alone, and you love it. But once in a while, you crave the company of other witches—to dance around a bonfire on Walpurgisnacht, to chant with you over a cauldron, or just to *be* with. Maybe you form a coven, or maybe you just get together occasionally for an odd spell or herb trade. Your sister witches can become especially important as cold weather and winter conditions draw in; sharing your strength means sharing warmth and provisions, also reflecting each other's powers and making them stronger during difficult months.

When shall ye all meet again? In thunder, lightning, or in rain? Whether it is a scheduled event, like the solstice celebrations by which you set your calendar, or a spontaneous cry for company or help, you are ready when you are needed, open and empathetic. Listen to the mushrooms; they carry messages of pain and prosperity from tree to tree. All of nature can inform you of doings beyond your solitary domain.

There are also a thousand ways of receiving a message from your kind. There is the age-old technique of looking into a crystal ball or scry stone, and these days you can get a perfect sphere of crystal small enough to wear on your own finger. Gaze into it, perhaps chanting an invocation of special importance to you. Let your eyes go blurry until you start to see swirls and images to interpret.

You can also get guidance, and generally predict the future,

by using just about any book—maybe even this magazine. Ask a question (*Do my sisters need me?*) and, eyes closed, open the book at random. Let your finger fall to a page and it will land on a word or phrase to interpret. If the word is, say, *participation*, you have your answer; go on out and join your sisters. If it's something more abstract such as *vulnerability* or *flowing*, you have some room for interpretation.

Incidentally, I found these three words by using the technique in *Witchcraze*, a history of European witch hunts. If I got *vulnerability* in that book, I'd rush to my sister witch; if I got *flowing*, I'd try rephrasing my question, then divinate again.

As with any kindred spirit, you do not need to be physically near to feel spiritually close over the years and miles.

Resilience

To be a witch is to be resilient, a survivor. You are *tough*. Whatever life tosses at you, you can toss back—or keep it and make it okay. Even when you are attacked for your magic.

A glamour can be as unsettling as it is alluring. Even the mere suspicion of witchcraft, solitary or in a group, could be the spark that sets off a terrifying hunt. We've all heard the tales of people tried, convicted, executed painfully. The victims were witches, cunning folk—and innocent bystanders.

Historians now think that the European-American witch hunts were never as widespread and murderous as we sometimes see them depicted. Still, from the Spanish Inquisition to Salem and beyond, some experts estimate that between 40,000 and 60,000 people (80 percent of them women) were executed for witchcraft in Europe and North America from the 1300s to the 1700s. Those are not tiny numbers, and neither are the statistics for individual campaigns:

From 1642 to 1646, Matthew Hopkins, the self-styled Witchfinder General of England, traveled around charging twenty shillings to exterminate all the witches in town. He accounts for up to 200 executions.

In Torsåker, Sweden, ruthless Lutheran priest Laurentius Christophori Hornæus had seventy-one people burned to death on a single day in 1675.

In Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692 and 1693, a pack of restless tween girls accused 200 people of malevolent magic. Thirty were convicted, nineteen hanged, one pressed to death, and five died in the freezing jail. Only one, an enslaved servant named Tituba, turned the tables and claimed her power by asserting that she was in fact a witch. Somehow she survived—and was sold off to a different owner.

Enough said? Not quite ...

A witch hunt's victims weren't just the ones who were found guilty, because a trial did not always end in execution. In England, for example, the conviction rate was just 25 percent. Each person accused, "questioned," and found innocent had to live with wounds from the inquiries—and the trauma of having

been on trial. Hornæus's wife said that many of those acquitted in the Torsåker trials suffered from ill health for the rest of their lives, and some were afraid to pass the house even sixty years later. And in relatively isolated Salem, Afflicted and Accused lived side by side the rest of their lives.

Nevertheless, they lived.

Resilience.

Ceremony

I don't blame you for being upset. Maybe you feel called on to take revenge, and I won't tell you not to.

But meanwhile, your powers are also urging you to heal. To join with the other hurt souls—hold hands and embrace. Save the others; save yourself.

The glamour begins.

You start by swaying side to side, arms around each other. Stretch the embrace into a circle, then make the motions bigger. Others will join you, flitting to that timeless space of ceremony: Diane, Marie, Ingeborg, Tituba. The accused of Salem, the traumatized of Torsåker. You take three steps to the right, twirl, and join arms again. Three more steps, another twirl.

A chant arises spontaneously—at first, perhaps, a list of hurts and torments; then a list of herbs and unguents to heal the hurts. The elements repeat and evolve; they rearrange and they rhyme: *vervain* with *henbane*, *Eve* and *believe*. That might be enough for tonight.

But perhaps your words evolve into an incantation, such as this one from the *Merseburg Charms*, a 10th century record of pre-Christian magic as practiced in the Germanics. The manuscript's first spell is a *Lösesege*, a blessing of release for prisoners and, more abstractly, for those caught by the trauma that follows a terrible event. The *idisen* (magical female deities or spirits) free warriors from captivity:

*Once the idisen set forth,
Traveling here, traveling there.
Some fastened the enemy's shackles;
Some hindered the enemy's army;
And some freed the brave from their bonds.
Leap forth from the fetters—
Escape from the foes!*

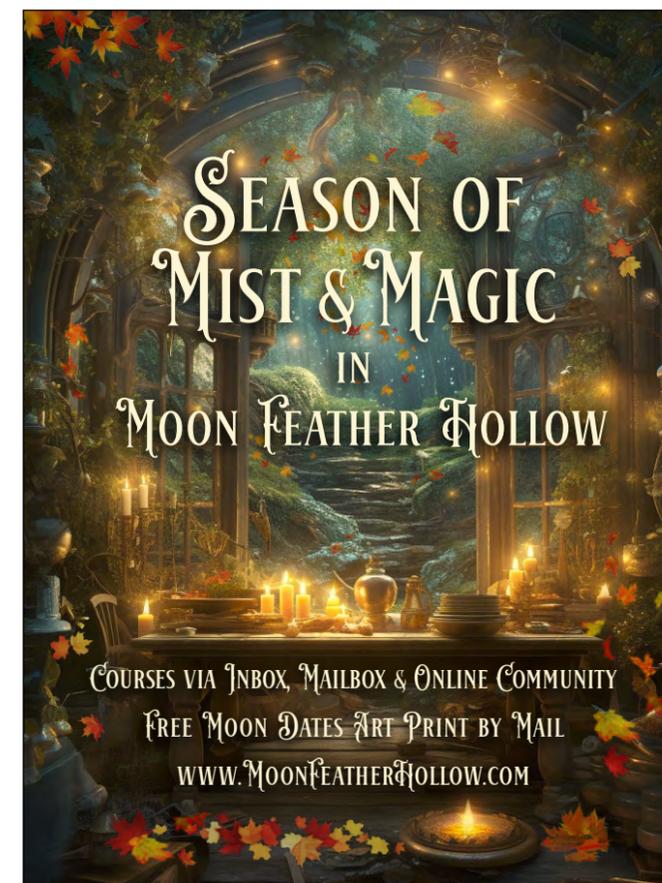
The last two lines set you free. When you leap, it is into your truest self, your own greatest creation. You join with your friends and sisters, and with witches just met.

Dance as long as you'd like, however you want to. Let the circle spin in two directions; clasp the hand of every spirit you've freed. Kiss the cheeks of your sisters. Everything you are has gone into this spell.

This is the hour of the witch: All of your powers are coming to light.



Visit Susann Cokal online at susanncokal.net.



Shakespeare's Secret Witch

by Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman

 You know about the star-crossed lovers of *Romeo and Juliet* and the Weird Sisters who haunt *Macbeth*, but do you know Shakespeare's fairy tales?

Sometimes called the romances, these plays include *The Tempest* (by far the most well-known of the set), *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, and *The Winter's Tale*. They break classical rules while bursting with magic, pirates, goddesses, and, yes, even a witch or two. In a lot of ways, they work like fairy tales—folklorist Charlotte Artese even argues that *Cymbeline* is the oldest known literary version of “Snow White”!

The Winter's Tale, whose name comes from the English tradition of telling melancholy ghost stories when the days shorten and grow cold, begins like a fairy tale with a jealous king, an expectant queen ... and a witch whose advice and intercession just might prevent tragedy from unfolding. King Leontes grows suddenly and irrationally suspicious of his wife, Queen Hermione, deciding that his own best friend, King Polixenes, is the father of the baby that Hermione is carrying. Paulina, Hermione's lady-in-waiting and friend, speaks out against Leontes's rage, but the king ignores her counsel. He orders Polixenes's death and has Hermione arrested. What follows involves a time jump of sixteen years, the loss and recovery of the baby, and the immortal stage direction “exit, pursued by a bear.” Perhaps most impossibly, the play concludes with the resurrection of Hermione, who died after giving birth to her daughter Perdita, from the form of a statue.

Yes, really.

There are a whole lot of fairy-tale elements in this play, many of which we bet you've already spotted. Leontes's actions bring about a kind of curse over his kingdom, for example, when an oracle prophesies that the king will have no heir until his



daughter is found. Perdita is quite literally a lost, hidden, and eventually found princess. Multiple characters use disguises and other kinds of trickery throughout the story, and there is a demonized mother figure. Lastly, of course, everything is reset and “happily ever after” by the end—though a lot of ink has been spilled over that ending, particularly Hermione's transformation. Does she literally come back to life from a statue? Is this a *Pygmalion* thing? Is it an elaborate metaphor? Has Paulina kept Hermione in hiding all this time, only to reunite the royal family when Perdita is found? We'd like to propose an enchanting explanation for this fairy-tale play's greatest mystery: witchcraft!

To us, Paulina is Shakespeare's (not so) secret witch (or maybe fairy godmother, depending on how you want to look at it). Though the play is not, as Kirstie Gulick Rosenfield points out, likely to be the Shakespeare work most people think of when they think of witches (that would of course be *Macbeth*), “the specter of witchcraft haunts the text” and “every primary female character is eventually accused of this specifically female crime.” Paulina, however, is the woman who seems to most clearly align with this ambiguous role. She is an older woman who is unafraid to speak her mind, even to her king. She is called a “most intelligencing bawd,” “a gross hag,” and a “midwife,” all things that—as Annie Shiver notes—draw “on associations of witchcraft with prostitution and midwifery, associations with which Shakespeare's audience would have been familiar.” And because by the end of the play “Good Paulina” has eventually succeeded in becoming Leontes's trusted adviser, her “commitment to speak her opinion—the trait which makes her a threat to Leontes's authority and which led him to accuse her of witchcraft—[eventually] becomes the reason why he values her.”

This transformation on Leontes's part—a transformation that involves realizing his profound error, rendering his actions unforgivable in his own mind, and displaying profound trust in a woman—is ultimately what gives him back his wife. Paulina brings Hermione back to life; it is her judgment, choice, and power that bring her back, whether you believe that she actually performs some kind of magic (as she would have Leontes and the audience believe) or if the “statue” is the true Hermione, not dead but simply returned after being in hiding for sixteen years.

Interestingly, according to Emily Carding, “in Shakespeare's source for the story of *The Winter's Tale*, Robert Greene's *Pandosto*, the queen dies after being accused of adultery and the king kills himself from remorse when he realizes his error, so the fantastical animation of Hermione's statue and the reconciliation of king and queen once lessons are learned are entirely Shakespeare's creations.” Shakespeare added this magical element to the story through the character of Paulina. The audience may suspect that the “magic” is, in reality, clever trickery (the “aged” nature of the statue seems to hint at this, whatever Paulina may say about the “carver's excellence”), but

“if we, or Leontes, do not ‘awaken our faith’ as Paulina asks us to, Hermione's restoration may not move our souls the way it is intended.” The true magic here, then, may be “the witchcraft of art,” as Rosenfield puts it—of Paulina's ability to make her audience believe in the impossible through theater. Paulina asks us to believe, and in return, she does the impossible, restoring balance to a broken kingdom. Who could do that but a witch?

Further Reading:

- *So Potent Art: The Magic of Shakespeare* by Emily Carding (2021)
- “Nursing Nothing: Witchcraft and Female Sexuality in *The Winter's Tale*” by Kirstie Gulick Rosenfield in *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* (2002)
- “A ‘piece / Of excellent witchcraft’: Women as Witches, Storytellers, and Creators in *The Winter's Tale*” by Annie Shriver in *Vassar Critical Journal* (2018)



Art: A scene from *The Winter's Tale*. *Tales from Shakespeare* (1909), by Arthur Rackham. British Library/Alamy Stock Photo.

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.



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JACK-O'-LANTERN MAGIC

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



If you celebrate Halloween or its coinciding pagan festival Samhain (pronounced sow-in), you probably associate this time of year with traditional macabre symbols, like witches in black garb with pointy hats, ghosts and skeletons, black cats and spiders, bubbling cauldrons and broomsticks, and perhaps most famously, the jack-o'-lantern.

For many folks, the jack-o'-lantern is the quintessential symbol of Halloween—a decoration placed on home porches, pathways, and windowsills. Their carved and illuminated scary facades spook and delight us in equal measure, and guide and welcome costumed trick-or-treaters to the door. You might be surprised to discover that the custom of carving a pumpkin is a tradition that harkens back to times of old, with roots that go back hundreds of years.

The very first jack-o'-lanterns that we know of were crafted in Ireland, made from hollowed-out turnips with simple yet frightening carved faces with craggy teeth and narrow eye slits. They functioned as handheld lanterns used to light the way for those walking the dark roads on Halloween night. The lanterns were also believed to scare away ill-intentioned specters, especially ones that kept the souls of deceased love ones from finding peace in the afterlife. They held a similar custom in Scotland, where jack-o'-lanterns were made from the dense stems of cabbages. Folks called them kailrunt torches, and they served the same purposes as their equivalents in Ireland.

When the Irish immigrated to America, they soon discovered the pumpkin, which was not indigenous to Ireland, and found it ideal for crafting into their Halloween lanterns. Thus, the pumpkin became the favored vegetable for fashioning jack-o'-lanterns and one of the most iconic symbols of present-day Halloween.

You may be wondering where the term *jack-o'-lantern* originates from. There are many versions of a story of how the jack-o'-lantern came to be, but the common thread in all of them is that they feature the same main character named—you guessed it—Jack!

The story of Jack is an old Irish folktale. Jack was a mean and stingy blacksmith who was fond of ale and playing dirty tricks on folks. When he died and the devil came to take his soul, Jack had been visiting the local pub. Jack convinced the devil to share a final round of drinks before taking him to hell. When it was time to settle the tab, Jack tricked the devil by pretending he didn't have the money to pay. He promised the devil he'd go with him to hell if the devil turned himself into a sixpence to pay for the drinks. The devil agreed, but as soon as he transformed himself into the coin, Jack put the coin in his pouch with a cross-shaped clasp, rendering the devil powerless.

When Jack finally died, he was denied entrance into heaven and refused a place in hell, since he had tricked and angered the devil. Jack was eating a turnip when the irate devil threw a hot coal at him from the burning fires of hell. (How the devil escaped the coin purse is unclear, and how Jack managed to eat a turnip once deceased is also a mystery.) Jack picked up the coal and placed it inside the turnip, creating a lantern that he used to help light his way as he searched for his lost soul's final resting place. Ever since, people have been using jack-o'-lanterns to protect themselves from malevolent spirits and to light their way on Halloween night.



Modern-day witches often use jack-o'-lanterns at Samhain and Halloween to serve as altar decorations. Not only are they festive and enchanting, but they also serve a magical purpose as well. They are lit to welcome the spirits of deceased loved ones who return to the world of the living on this sacred night, when the veil between the earthly and spirit planes thins. It is an ideal time for spirit communication.

When I light a jack-o'-lantern at Samhain time, I am fond of incorporating some plant magic to enhance the connection to the spirit world. There are herbs and spices with psychic power-boosting, high-vibrational properties that are also safe to burn. When you carve your pumpkin and just before you light it, try sprinkling some of these magical herbs and spices on the inside flesh. This will not only emit a delicious, autumnal aroma but also waft the magical properties of the plants out into your home and your energy field.

TRY ANY ONE OR A COMBINATION OF THESE:

- * cinnamon: raises high spiritual vibrations, stimulates psychic powers, offers protection
- * clove: purifies and banishes negative energy
- * ginger: attracts prosperity and magnifies the power of intention
- * dried orange peel: attracts love and high vibrations
- * allspice: encourages healing and attracts abundance
- * cardamom: enhances feelings of love
- * nutmeg: promotes good health and good fortune
- * star anise: increases psychic powers and luck

Caution: Be aware that not all plants are safe to burn. Some can emit toxic fumes, so it's important to do your research first.

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



SAME OLD ENERGY PART II

Our autumn 2022 Vintage Witch issue was suffused with a badass, ultra-powerful witchy vibe in no small part because of Val Gleason's striking cover shoot, which was directly inspired by Kiki Rockwell's "Same Old Energy." If you don't know the song or video, please go search them out immediately. Now Rockwell has come out with a sequel, "Burn Your Village," which we'd also implore you to seek out. In the meantime, here are a couple of video stills as well as some words from Rockwell about her expanding vision and some wild dancing in the woods:

I've always been fascinated with the idea of creating a "sequel" song and music video. We created such a rich universe with "Same Old Energy," one very much inspired by real historic events. Director Oshara Ardelean and I knew I couldn't just leave the story hanging ...

The end of the "Same Old Energy" music video sees our pilgrim girls get busted for throwing a midnight heathen fire party and being swallowed

up by two, big closing church doors. "Burn Your Village" is the big sister to "Same Old Energy." She's seen some things, learned some lessons, and grown her adult teeth.

This is the song where the women of the village have finally snapped, and they decide to take matters into their own hands.

It was such a whirlwind to film, and I am so grateful for all my friends and my old neighbor Steve, who returned for the sequel. The end scene in the woods was particularly fun to film. I just put on a dance playlist and told everyone to let go and dance as wild as they wanted. I was so impressed with everyone. The energy on set was incredible, and no one hesitated to take it all the way.



Follow Kiki Rockwell on Instagram @kikibabyrockwell. Watch "Burn Your Village" on Youtube and listen on Spotify/Apple music.





Featured Artist

JAMIE SPINELLO

Jamie Spinello creates jewelry, sculpture, ceramics, and small paintings inspired mostly by plants and insects. It makes sense then that remaining connected to nature is her favorite way to stay enchanted: She stays grounded and curious by keeping a garden and seeing it change throughout the seasons. Living in Austin, Texas, she says, “we rarely get a true fall where the colors drastically change on the trees en masse, but we often get what feels like a second spring in the fall months, which allows us to have two full growing seasons each year.” Watching insects and plants in her garden brings her joy, so she’s partial to the seasons when she can witness them living their best lives. She also loves witnessing things that died in the summer months come back with vigor in September, October, and November. “My garden often looks better in the fall than it did in the spring,” she says. “The butterflies, moths, spiders, and beetles usually increase again, and the lizards become more prevalent. Fall in Austin feels like a celebration of life after the end of the brutal 100-plus degree temperatures of the Texas summer.”

She looks to the sky too, using the full and new moons as well as other astral events to assess her progress with her work, aspirations, and state of mind, as well as how successfully she’s been able to balance her life. This moon-gazing practice helps her determine when it’s time to recharge or go forth with more expansive energy. This sounds pretty witchy to us. “I admire those seeking to learn new ways of enchantment in order to connect to spirit and to better themselves, their environments, and the lives of others,” she says when asked about witches generally. “We need all the healers and conjurers on deck in this world.”

See more at jamiespinello.com and follow her on Instagram @jamiespinello.





AUTUMN'S DARK
MAGIC

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOVANA RIKALO

POETRY BY LAURA VOGT

Model: Natasa Ilic @natasaailic_

Location and decoration:

Fairy Oak @fairyoakk



*mother (noun):
goddess of time*
by *laura vogt*

so i said i am Hours
and the cloud gates

misted through my gown
i was cold. compulsively

watched for change. the
buds on the olive tight

and the rain never did
come. turning to the stars

i said, i am Hours
but there were no voices

i was left alone, dormant
i forgot how to hope and

wish. i waited at the cloud
gate and cried. there was

such beauty, here, by the
golden gate in the sky, with

all the other gods off faraway
i tired of this order, this

rhythm. i yearned for last
season, another time, for

time to speed or to slow. but
here i was, still at the gate

my hair growing until it
spun about my feet. change

faded into the firmament
pink clouds billowing in the

wind, engulfing the present, vapors
consuming until all was lost

in light and color. i am Hours



*the other day,
a woman*
by *laura vogt*

the other day, a woman i know burrowed
beneath the soil, in pursuit of soundlessness
somewhere abandoned quiet, dark
did you know trees communicate by root and
tremor, sending pulsations underground i don't
know, i read it somewhere roots reaching for
each other how nice, to not always touch, to brush
just sometimes, with the wind, worms wiggling
between your toes, your skin misted with damp, but
your limbs, waving, free i was distraught to learn
on wikipedia that that alice story was not a
documentary she didn't fall below the earth and
wander labyrinths they say it's just a story also,
when i hear birds, i don't hear just one and
there's so much space in the sky today, this
morning, is thick with pause dark, quiet everyone
still asleep, piled together beneath blankets, warm limbs,
hair brushing forearms, skin dewy with dreams
i don't know what isolation is anymore there is
no such thing as hush, as pause but what is
more beautiful than never having space for loneliness
i'm so tired i haven't had a hidden thought in years
i am happy, though for all the noise, smells, slickness
along my forearms, someone is always laughing telling
stories giggling running i have no stillness left
the gods of sound, echo and auras, they race round and
round, leaving me with nothing but unending i wonder
if that woman ever came above ground, felt the glow of
sunlight on her skin maybe, maybe not

Laura Vogt writes historical fiction, fabulism, and poetry. Her poems are published in various journals and her novelette Blue Beyond the Sea is available as a chapbook with Bottlecap Press. She is represented by Catherine Cho of Paper Literary and is revising her debut novel, In the Great Quiet. See more at lauravogt.com.

See more of Jovana Rikalo's work on Instagram @jovanarikalo.

The Lost Witches of Medieval Europe

by Mary McMyne

“Some wicked women, who have given themselves back to Satan and been seduced by the illusions and phantasms of demons, believe and openly profess that, in the hours of night, they ride upon certain beasts with Diana, the goddess of pagans, and an innumerable multitude of women, and in the silence of the dead of the night traverse great spaces of earth...”

—Regino of Prüm, *Canon Episcopi*, 10th c.



Witches are as old as time. Throughout history and literature, magic practitioners have been feared and venerated. During the Han dynasty in China, a woman named Chu Fu was said to teach the empress love spells; she was then executed by the emperor for witchcraft. In ancient Egypt, witches and midwives were revered for their magic. The Hebrew Bible mentions the Witch of Endor, who raised the dead but feared for her life. In many cultures, witchcraft, though dangerous, was a way for women to achieve power or practice a trade. But early Christian scribes in medieval Europe, like Saint Augustine and Regino of Prüm, waged a centuries-long campaign that turned the cunning women and sorceresses of pre-Christian Europe into agents of Satan and accused them of worshipping the devil under the guise of pagan gods.

This campaign resulted in so much misinformation that historians can only speculate about what medieval European witches actually believed. Was Regino right that they worshipped Diana, the goddess of pagans? Or that they rode through the night on the backs of beasts? A century later, Burchard of Worms claimed that some women thought witches could fly. Should we trust the scribes' depiction of these women's beliefs or their

own words issued under duress during the later witch trials? Did these women practice the witches' sabbath, as they were later accused of doing?

My first novel, *The Book of Gothel*, tells the story of the midwife who would become known as the witch from Rapunzel. It is built on my readings about witchcraft in medieval Germany. Lately, I've been studying witchcraft in 16th century England for my second novel, *Mistress* (2024), the story of Shakespeare's Dark Lady, who struggles to avoid prosecution for witchcraft in the Elizabethan courts.

A common thread from later eras, for which we have more records, is that witchcraft often wasn't even the problem. Some witches were considered valued members of their communities: the finders of lost things who used Christian incantations in their spells, the herbalists, healers, and makers of love potions. It's only when these witches were beggars or widows who held coveted property, or when they found themselves embroiled in a feud, or were feared for physical or mental differences, that the accusations began to fly.

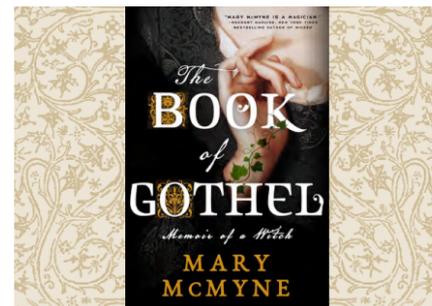
In other words, prosecuted witches were often the most marginalized and vulnerable members of society. Many confessions of witchcraft—pacts with the devil, black dogs who offered to lame someone, suckling familiars—reflected the beliefs of neither the accusers nor the accused. They were fabrications meant to achieve a social goal. Get the pesky widow out of the house. Avenge the death of a loved one. Get rid of someone you fear or don't understand. Get the beggar out of town.

Historians debate about whether medieval witches carried forward beliefs that pre-dated Christianity in Europe.

Recipes for a hallucinogenic flying ointment survive from the Early Modern period. Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg studied the *benandanti*, an agricultural visionary tradition with secret shamanistic roots. Their traditions certainly do seem to align with the nocturnal witches' journeys that Christian scribes discussed. Ginzburg describes uncovering

the presence of groups of individuals—generally women—who during the Ember Days fell into swoons and remained unconscious for brief periods of time during which, they affirmed, their souls left their bodies to join the processions of the dead (which were almost always nocturnal) presided over at least in one case by a female divinity.

Some modern historians agree with Ginzburg that medieval women carried out secret religious practices that bore traces of some pre-Christian religion, and although we'll never know, I choose to believe they did. The surviving records of their beliefs have much in common with ancient stories. Saint Augustine and Regino of Prüm were surely biased, but to my mind their claims must contain a kernel of truth.



Find Mary McMyne online at mymymcmyne.com.

SOUL FLIGHT

by Monica Crosson



Three Women and Three Wolves (1900),
by Eugène Grasset

Kt was once said that you should look to the sky when the blood moon rises high above the tree line, for you may spy the shadows of witches on broomsticks driven to revolt against their wifely duties. In one such village where generations of women took to the sky, a grandmother ceremoniously bestowed a broom on her granddaughter at the time of her womanhood. Of course, the men of the village were not allowed to attend the blessing and were expected to busy themselves with mundane chores as the women gathered in sacred solidarity.

During one such ritual, a curious young girl who had watched her sisters, one after the other, receive their own brooms bedecked in yarrow, mugwort, and branches of the black cottonwood that graced the riverside, finally asked her mother, “Why do we gift brooms? It seems such an unextraordinary token.”

Her mother squeezed her hand and whispered, “Soon, very soon, you too shall know the secret of the broom.”

The girl pondered that bit of knowledge on chilly March mornings, as she followed the women of her village to the riverside to gather resinous cottonwood buds. She thought about it on sunny May afternoons as they gathered yarrow in the meadow and when they climbed the steep hillside for the pungent mugwort used in brews for dreaming. And while gathering the pot marigold from her garden in September’s slanted light, she contemplated the significance of the brooms lined up against the fence. More questions arose as she helped fill the cauldron with the herbs they had gathered over the year, along with oils and beeswax that created a thick ointment. But every time she was about to speak, her mother gently hushed her. Instead, she was encouraged to repeat the charm the women spoke over the bubbling cauldron.

Year after year, the girl followed the traditions of the women of her village without knowing why. But then one morning, when the flame of October’s bloom shone bright and the air was filled

with the scent of woodsmoke and apple, she found the red stains of her burgeoning womanhood upon her bedsheets, and she smiled.

The women of the village insisted that her ritual should take place immediately, as it was about the time of the full blood moon. So before the girl had time to process what was happening, she stood in a cloak of red, surrounded by the women of her village, all holding their beloved brooms.

As her grandmother bent down and handed her a broom lovingly decorated with the herbs of their craft, she whispered to the girl, “It was the men who handed us the first brooms, stating that we knew of their use.” She smiled and winked. “And use them we do.”

When the night of the full blood moon arrived, the women showed the girl how to anoint her broom with the ointment they had made. And as the scent of the herbs and oils filled the air, the girl’s soul was at ease, for the secret of the broom had finally been revealed. You see, the broom was not just an implement of female repression but a symbol of strength, solidarity, and freedom for all that believed they could fly. And fly they did.

Witches’ Flying Ointment

The iconic image of a female witch straddling her broom has been a part of history since the Inquisition. To power a witch’s transport, it was said a salve was made up of the fat of a child steeped in such herbs as poplar buds, belladonna, hemlock, wolfsbane, and soot. Sadly these claims (as well as others) were based on fear and the patriarchal attitudes of the day, resulting in what we know as the witch hunts that spanned 300 years and may have claimed the lives of up 50,000 people.

Today you’ll find many sources for modern witches’ flying ointments that can be used for meditation and connecting to the spirit world, complete with lists of psychoactive and potentially lethal plants. Medicinal salves have been used for thousands of years, and psychoactive

herbs also have a long history of ritual use. But there is no clear evidence of a witches’ flying ointment ever being used in such a way—and these classic herbs can be deadly.

The much more benign poplar tree buds have also long been used in medicine, with poplar salve (*unguentum populeum*), known for its anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties, being one of the oldest formulations. Recipes appear in many herbals and pharmacopoeias. *Gart der Gesundheit* (1485), for example, included henbane, poppy leaves, and mandrake among other herbs to mix with the poplar. Such salves were used much like we use aspirin today. Perhaps salves such as *unguentum populeum* are the basis for the folklore of witches’ flying ointment?

If you’d like to create your own witches’ flying ointment, a safer alternative can be made from these herbs, whose histories are just as rich as any of the baneful herbs referred to above. Infused oil from the buds of balsam poplar trees (known as cottonwoods) along with mugwort, yarrow, and calendula can be used for their medicinal properties and, in combination with your meditative practice of choice, can help induce a state of “soul flight.” (See detailed instructions at right.)

Cottonwood (*Populus sect. Aigeiros*)

Known for its resinous buds, which have been extracted for centuries for use in medicine (sometimes called Balm of Gilead), it is antibacterial, antifungal, and mildly analgesic. It is used in spells to attract money, hope, healing, encouragement, and transformation, and as a base for ointments to induce soul flight.

Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*)

Magical mugwort may be used to amplify psychic sight and induce astral travel. Known as the witch’s herb, it is also used in spells for protection, healing, and dreamwork. More recently it’s been used as a sedative and as a digestive aid, and in ointments to relieve dry, itchy skin.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

This hard-to-tame herb may aid in astral travel and induce psychic visions. It is also used in spells for courage and love. Long used in medicine for its cooling properties, it may help to break a fever and stimulate sweating. Its antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties, combined with its ability to slow bleeding, made yarrow useful on the battlefield for treating wounds.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

The petals of this bright and fiery herb, also known as pot marigold, can be used in a salve to trigger prophetic dreaming. It is also used in protection spells, for psychic powers, and for strength and courage. With high amounts of flavonoids, pot marigold is anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial, and is popular in ointments to treat cuts, bruises, and burns.

(SAFE) WITCHES’ FLYING OINTMENT

Black cottonwood, or western balsam poplar (*Populus trichocarpa*), grows along the river near my home in the Pacific Northwest, and in February, when the buds swell and the scent of their sweet resin fills the air, I collect them from saplings along the winding riverbank. I loosely fill quart jars with the buds and then with olive oil and let the mixture steep in my pantry until spring is in full bloom. The oil can be used in soap and salve recipes, but my favorite magical use for it is making soul-flight or witches’ flying ointment. When dabbed on the pulse points and on the third eye, this salve can open the practitioner to soul flight. Use also for its calming effects before meditation, or before sleep to enhance your dreams.

You will need:
4 parts cottonwood buds
1 part dried mugwort
1 part dried yarrow or calendula

Place herbs and buds in a quart jar and cover with your choice of oil (olive, grapeseed, sweet almond, etc.). Let steep in a warm, dark place for several weeks. Shake daily.

When ready, use a double boiler to melt one ounce of beeswax. When melted, add one cup of your infused oil, and stir until blended. Remove from heat and add optional essential oil of your choice. Pour into two-ounce tins and allow to cool fully. (Makes four.)

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.





Falling Into Beauty

BY ALISE MARIE,
THE BEAUTY WITCH®

As the last of the sultry summer lovers melt into the sea, the wind stirs a new desire: for the spiced effervescence of autumn.

Everywhere, leaves turn to rubies and layers of jeweled velvets appear to dazzle the senses and warm the soul. The thrill of the witch's season tingles up the spine of all creatures, even those who don't quite believe in us—but the magic is inescapable. And whoever would *want* to? It's an enchanted time, alive with possibilities, in an all too fleeting spell of the year.

And speaking of spells, beauty sorcery is rather needed right now. Our lovely sun-kissed flesh, perhaps overworked by the voluptuousness of summer, requires tending from head to toe. Layers of adventure, now a fading memory, may be kept alive in spirit, but never on the skin. As in spring, the liberating (not to mention beautifying) striptease of exfoliation must be taken quite seriously at this time, alongside the fortifying nutrients that are just waiting to bestow their power. After all, this is the season of potent witchery, and we need all the reinforcements nature is willing to give us. Fall into the spiced and vibrant leaves of autumn, and allow her special brand of beauty magic to wrap you lovingly in her branches, holding you close as you rest, dream, and create.

What's in the cauldron, you ask? A spellbinding blend of fragrant autumnal favorites and classic witchcraft, casting a circle to renew, fortify, and protect your precious skin in a beauty ritual of immense pleasure.

Firing up the potions are the rock-star couple that may surprise you: The colorful, energizing lusciousness of **persimmon** and **cranberry** are no strangers to the autumnal table, yet might not immediately come to mind in terms of beauty. Yes, this sexy Venus-Mars pairing is incredibly effective! Together, they increase collagen and elastin production, ease fine lines, tighten, brighten, and give a spellbinding glow. They are both ruled by water and carry enhanced protection magic, alongside an energy of happiness. What better treat for your sorceress skin?

The base of all three potions this season is as simple as it is fabulous:

1 cup cranberries (fresh or frozen)
1 large or 2 small persimmons, chopped
Spring water as needed

Combine the cranberries and persimmon in a high-speed, bullet-style vortex blender. Pulse on high until completely smooth and silky, adding water if needed. You're going for a thick, creamy consistency, but one that still mixes with other ingredients easily.

Joining them are bewitching favorites **mugwort** and **hawthorn**, so delightfully attuned to the season! Venusian **mugwort** is traditionally associated with protection and heightening psychic ability, but I always find her to be a dear friend when I need strength, be it physical, mental, or spiritual. And as it happens, she's a gift to your skin also. Our darling herb is highly soothing—a dream for sensitive skin—and can help with eruptive conditions like eczema. Anti-inflammatory and rich in vitamin E, mugwort repairs damaged cells (including wrinkles!) and delivers deep

moisture. You can use dried mugwort in these recipes, though an alcohol-free extract works even better and will deliver her magic into your skin with more efficacy. Fiery **hawthorn** brings virile fertility magic, which doesn't need to be literal. It's the energy of *creation*. The bright berries are ripe with antioxidants and vitamin C, which protect against collagen breakdown and increase cellular regeneration. This not only helps lessen existing fine lines but also helps prevent new ones—how cool is that? As with the mugwort, you can use a dried extract (usually a powder) but you will find a liquid to be more noticeably effective.

As you conjure your potions, remember to take the time to breathe and enjoy the sensuality of the ritual itself. Be in the present with your visions and feelings; they form the sculpture of your desires. Autumn is the season for drawing inward like a tree, yet there is much magic in the air for creation, fire, and celebration, so revel in it! What would you like to put out in the world before the winter sets in to rest? Get *that* going. Now.

As you concoct, visualize and feel the energies of the ingredients, connecting

to nature and the vibrations of autumn, while letting your mind paint onto the canvas of your desires.

THE WITCH'S WILES

Facial Exfoliant and Masque

Conjures two treatments

½ cup walnut flour
1 tablespoon cranberry/persimmon blend
1 teaspoon dried mugwort, or ½ teaspoon extract
½ teaspoon powdered hawthorn berry extract, or
½ teaspoon liquid
Pinch cinnamon (optional)

This is such a bright, lovely masque! You can purchase walnut flour at most natural foods shops or sections in your local market, but if not, it is found readily online. You can also finely grind whole raw walnuts in a food processor or spice grinder.

In a pretty bowl, combine the walnut flour with the fruit blend. Add the mugwort, then the hawthorn berry, and mix well. If you're using all dried herbs, you may want to add a small amount of liquid to get an easily spreadable masque—you can use pure water, floral

water, or even plant milk. Add the pinch of cinnamon, and give it one more good, clockwise stir. Apply to a clean face, neck, and décolleté, massaging in circular motions to activate the gentle but potent exfoliation, then apply a second layer and leave on as a masque treatment. While it sits, multitask if you must, but really, the beauty ritual resides in the concept of truly reveling in the moment! Lie back, read, sip ... listen to music. Relax like a cat. When the masque has worked her magic (10 to 20 minutes) remove gently with a damp facecloth, then rinse well with cool water. Pat dry. Follow with your favorite floral mist, serum, and crème.

Walnut These solar-powered autumn darlings are filled with protection magic and a wealth of beauty benefits, including minerals, iron, folate, and calcium. In their ground-flour form they make an excellent gentle exfoliant that removes old skin cells and deposits nutrients for a beautiful, smooth glow.

Cinnamon This sweetly spiced fall favorite brings forth love and money magic and potent healing, along with a heightened sense of psychic awareness. A pinch in the potion will add antibacterial

cleansing prowess along with circulation boosting for gorgeous cellular renewal and a healthy glow. If you are extremely sensitive, you can omit, but if you can deal with a slight pinkness for a few minutes afterward without any major irritation, do try it.

THE SWEET SPICE

Body Exfoliant and Bath Soak

Conjures two full-body treatments

1 cup coconut sugar
1 tablespoon cranberry/persimmon blend
2 tablespoons mugwort extract, or dried
2 tablespoons hawthorn berry extract, or powdered
A pinch each cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg

In a similar fashion, combine all ingredients, one at a time and with consciousness, in a beautiful bowl and stir clockwise. Apply to damp, clean skin in the shower or bath, and massage into skin. Really get a good sloughing! As you breathe in the luscious scent, enjoy the sensuality of the ritual experience ... this is *your* time. If you are bathing, soak in it after you massage—get even *more* of a

bewitching bath. And your skin will be heavenly! Rinse, and pat dry. You can follow with a body oil or crème, but you won't even need much. This leaves your skin silky soft and touchable.

Coconut Ruled by the moon and water, coconut heightens your intuition and psychic abilities as it provides beauty fats for supple skin. Coconut sugar is a non-glycemic natural sweetener that provides vital minerals and makes a fabulous body exfoliant.

Clove Decadently spicy, Jupiter-ruled clove oil kills bacteria and clarifies skin while conjuring love, money, and protection magic.

Nutmeg Jupiter-ruled nutmeg is an excellent anti-inflammatory for skin that can have a reaction to the changing seasons. It is also highly valued for its ability to open up our psychic awareness.

Beauty Witch's Secret: Create an even witchier bath by adding fresh cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon essential oils to your candles, enhancing the vibrations and the sensual atmosphere.



FALL FÊTE

Beauty Cocktail
Conjures two cocktails

- ½ cup cranberry/persimmon blend
- 1 cup sparkling water
- ⅛ teaspoon each: cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon pure Bourbon vanilla extract
- Juice of ½ orange
- Orange slice, for garnish

Here's a lovely one! Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice,

and give it a good, sexy shake. (While you're shaking it, put some fire energy in there—and have fun!) Strain into a stunning glass, garnish, and sip with pure, unleashed pleasure. Celebrate fall, and you!

Orange Fiery, protective orange

Beauty Witch's Secret: Add a generous splash of vodka to make a night of it! Double, quadruple the recipe for friends, and know that this popular spirit can actually help with arthritic conditions and hypertension, acting both as an anti-inflammatory and a boost to blood circulation. And you *know* there are beauty benefits to that!

supports collagen production and cellular renewal while bringing forth love and prosperity.

Vanilla Heavenly scented Venusian vanilla is rich in copper to promote collagen and elastin production and has noted aphrodisiac powers.

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.

“And all at once, summer collapsed into fall.” —Oscar Wilde

There is a quickening about the autumn season, when we suddenly lose the lightness of summer and feel the thick, dense embrace of the fall. The senses are ripe for warming as thoughts turn to nutrient-dense spices, nuts, and fruits such as cranberry, walnut, hawthorn, persimmon, mugwort. Chances are, your skin is craving that same rich bounty from the magical harvest season.

As temperatures cool, the skin benefits from those stimulating botanicals. They jump-start the skin's circulation and nourish its cells as the season shifts and surrenders to the chill autumn breeze. The fall signals new beginnings, all that is ripe and bursting with promise. Here are some of our fall favorites.

CRANBERRY

Grown Alchemist Antioxidant + Facial Oil

A luscious, sensual blend of seed oils—including cranberry, borage, camellia, and parsley—this nourishing oil plumps the skin and reduces the appearance of fine lines. Loaded with antioxidants, it helps protect against the signs of aging and keep skin smooth, soft, and hydrated.

Maya Chia the Revitalizer Supercritical Revitalizing Body Oil

Body oils are trending these days, and this nourishing oil, loaded with essential fatty acids, antioxidants, vitamins, and botanicals—including cranberry—will help tone, firm, and soften skin for a radiant appearance.

HAWTHORN

L'Erbolario Hawthorn Face Cream

Hawthorn supplements are used to aid with high blood pressure. This gentle face cream with hawthorn and pumpkin seeds helps balance oily and blemished skin without drying it out.

MUGWORT

I'm From Mugwort Mask

Also known as artemisia, mugwort is popular in Korean skin care. It has anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties that help calm inflamed skin and protect against free radical damage. Great for sensitive skin, this wash-off mask will soothe even the most sensitive skin.

PERSIMMON

Mirai Clinical Purifying Body Wash

The persimmon is a popular ingredient in Japanese skin care. This body wash is a blend of persimmon and green tea extracts, with anti-inflammatory and odor-eliminating properties.

Eminence Organics Persimmon & Cantaloupe Day Cream SPF 32

A cult favorite, this superlight, non-comedogenic moisturizer offers broad spectrum UVA/UVB sun protection, nourishing and protecting the skin.

WALNUT

Josh Rosebrook Active Enzyme Exfoliator

Finely ground walnut shells are a classic exfoliator, and this creamy exfoliant also includes fruit enzymes to slough off dead skin cells, as well as antibacterial honey to soften and moisturize the skin. This is a great product for congested skin, but make sure to apply with a light touch.

Bathorium Konjac Walnut Shell Exfoliating Body Sponge

Made with Asian konjac root, a natural antibacterial, and walnut shell, this is the perfect shower tool. When wet, it releases a creamy lather and will moisturize and exfoliate the skin. It's perfect for the bath too.



Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg

La Belle Dame sans Merci (1924), by Frank Cadogan Cowper



Shared Haven
by Annie Stegg
gallerygerard.com

Around the Simmering Cauldron

THE WITCH'S AUTUMN TEATIME

by Merri Wood

The air is crisp, and the trees in the wood have donned their fiery coats to stay warm. Soon they will be bare, but for the moment, you're free to admire the blaze of their finery as you sit outside, a steaming mug warming your hands. Cinnamon and rose—for luck and love—waft up to you as the chill fingers of the wind caress your cheeks.

It is very easy to love at this time of year.

But there's work to be done, and so up you rise. Your cup stays in your hands, of course; all good witches are multitaskers, and there's no reason to set your cup down just yet.

In your workspace, the little clearing in the woods where it's just you, the trees, and whatever spirits come by to say hello, the fire needs tending. You kneel down, unbothered by the dirt and fallen leaves that cling to your skirt, and stoke it up. Soon, it sings its crackling song, as bright and cheery as the leaves above you. You stay where you are for a moment and sip your tea.

Overhead, a thick blanket of clouds is doing its best to shield the world from the sun. But there are holes that need stitching, and streams of gold drip from them. When one hits your face, it's warm; a goodbye kiss from the summer, you think, before it lets winter take its place.

You've finished your tea.

You set the mug aside, getting back up to your feet. Nearby, a cauldron sits. It should be much more difficult to move than it is, but you're quite used to this. You set it over your fire, squishing the flames but not extinguishing them, and in goes the spring water you gathered yourself—cool and refreshing, even on a chilly day like this. Next are the important bits: more cinnamon, for luck; more roses, for love; and then the other ingredients that aren't quite as nice in tea: a lock of hair, a crushed leaf, stones from the river, a secret you whisper into the steam. There will be more to add later, but for now you take your big wooden spoon—your mother's, and her mother's, and quite possibly belonging to every mother in your family—and you give it a good stir.

Now you wait.

Magic takes time. Every witch knows this. So you'll be here for quite a while. Soon it will be too cold to work outdoors like this—even now, you can feel the tips of your nose, your ears, your fingers start to chill in the dying sunlight. But for now, the cold is bracing, not bitter; it makes you feel alive.

Around your ankles, you feel something small and furry winding around your legs. Your cat (black, of course, though the sunlight turns her fur and whiskers golden) has come to check up on you. She probably wonders what it is you're doing out in the cold, when your warm cottage is just a few feet away.

There is a reason you're out here, though, apart from enjoying

the beauty of a fall day. The veil is thinnest at the turning of seasons, when the whole world is a liminal space. It's the perfect environment for magic.

You've laid out your intentions for this spell, and the potion burbles away in your cauldron as a ray of sunlight lands inside it. That's just what you wanted it to do. You see, this isn't a potion for the now, for the cool breeze and bright-colored leaves.

No, *this* potion is for later, when the world is cold and dark, when you start to wonder if the sun will ever return and despair of ever finding beauty in the world again. When the wind is bitter and sharp, and the sun cowers behind the thick clouds of winter. When you feel as though you ought to just slip away, burrow under your own blankets, and forget the world altogether.

When that day comes—and it will come, it always does—you'll remember the potion you brewed on this beautiful autumn day. And you'll warm it on your stove, and drink down the golden sun, the bright leaves, the spice of luck, and the sweet floral of love. The world will not be so bleak then, because you'll know the sun will return, and soon enough the leaves will drop again, and you'll fall in love with the warmly lit world, right on the cusp of sleep, just like you do each year.

Because it is very easy to love at this time of year.

Finally, the last rays of the sun slip below the horizon, and your potion is finished brewing. You can feel the spirits of those who crossed the veil begin to wander as the forest darkens around you. You're not afraid as you bring over your cauldron's lid and seal it up; as full of the golden autumn sun as it is, leaving it beneath the light of a harvest moon will give it the strength to stand up to the coming winter.

Besides, you trust the spirits that begin to mill about; it's your mother's mother's mother and all the other mothers that came before, after all.

Your work is done. So you gather up your mug, and you hoist up your black cat, and you take a moment to blow a kiss to the dead, to thank them for watching your potion as it steeps. And, of course, for making you who you are.

Then you retreat to your cottage, where a cozy fire awaits in front of your favorite chair and the spellbook you've been reading lies open, right where you left off. You don your own fiery robe to ward off the chill, then pull a blanket, heavy and old and stitched up right where you always pull it, onto your lap.

Merri Wood is a writer who loves fancy notebooks, coffee shops, and everything related to fall (even #PSLs). You can find her and a weekly dose of moody atmospheric writing at atmosblog.substack.com.

Vintage illustration by
Ida Rentoul Outhwaite



THE PUMPKIN WITCH

BY THE WONDERSMITH



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A LETTER FROM A PUMPKIN WITCH

Sure, being a Pumpkin Witch is a rather specific profession, but it's certainly an important one! After all, what would an American fall be without pumpkin spice everything? And can you imagine Halloween without jack-o'-lanterns? My trade began many centuries ago, when carved turnips and tubers were sacred talismans to keep away evil spirits as the veil between our worlds thinned. These vital plants and rituals kept our people safe, so my foremothers cast spells for bountiful harvests and protection. As the cultural notions around this time of year shifted, so too did the work of my ancestors—pumpkins instead of turnips, spices instead of sachets. But still, the importance of this work carries on.

Perhaps you think my title trite or “cutesy,” even. Perhaps you think pumpkins are nothing more than decorative squash or marketable signs of the season. Do allow me to correct you: Pumpkins still function as protective talismans and blessings on your home. Do you really think we would all continue to trek out to pumpkin patches and carve fearsome faces if we didn't all know, deep down, that it was important? And do you really think our cultural obsession with pumpkin spice is just a

marketing ploy started by large corporations? My dear, what is pumpkin spice but a powerful blend of protective plants intended to bless you and keep you safe from harm? It is thanks to *our* spells that you crave that pumpkin spice latte as soon as the autumnal winds shift. It is thanks to *our* magic that pumpkins still proliferate on doorsteps to protect those within. Without us, October would be swarming with far more darkness, and you wouldn't be nearly so safe in your bed.

But never fear, the Pumpkin Witches have sworn to uphold our sacred duties. Every fall, I call upon my coven to join me in summoning the white magic that we infuse into the pumpkins that all of you take home. It's tough work that requires a lot of concentration, so afterward we celebrate with pumpkin treats and hot spiced pumpkin cider, poured out of a teapot passed down in my family for generations. It too holds the same ancient magic that flows out of our palms and, indeed, into the pumpkin sitting on your very stoop. May you sleep deeper tonight knowing the protective pumpkin magic that embraces you even now. And if you don't yet have a pumpkin, you'd best move fast, since the spirits are extra restless this year ...

PUMPKIN PRALINE PECAN BREAD PUDDINGS

These wonderful teatime treats can be baked right inside adorable small pumpkins! Make sure you buy small eating pumpkins, not the tiny (and very hard) decorative ones, as they are difficult to hollow out. The roasted pumpkin flesh can be scooped out along with the bread pudding, so it's best to choose fully ripe varieties for a treat that has an extra surprise!

Makes 12

Ingredients:

12 small pumpkins
2 cups heavy coconut milk (or almond creamer)
1 cup packed brown sugar
4 large eggs
1 15-oz. can pumpkin puree
3 tablespoons melted butter
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 tablespoon pumpkin pie spice
¼ teaspoon salt
1½ to 2 pounds day-old bread
(more for dense bread)
2 cups pecans, chopped

Directions:

Tear the bread into bite-size chunks. Sourdough or challah works wonderfully, but softer bread works too; it'll just make a slightly softer pudding.

In a large bowl, whisk together the coconut milk, brown sugar, eggs, vanilla,

pumpkin puree, melted butter, pumpkin pie spice, and salt. Once smooth, add the bread and stir to combine, making sure all the bread gets saturated. Let sit while you prepare the pumpkins.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cut the tops off the pumpkins and hollow out the seeds, then place them on a nonstick baking mat.

Spoon the mixture evenly into all the hollowed pumpkins. Sprinkle the tops with the chopped pecans. Bake for 45 minutes with the lids on, then 15 to 20 more minutes with the lids off or until the pudding has fully set. Let cool slightly and serve warm, or refrigerate until cold.

BOURBON SAUCE:

In my mind, the whole reason for bread pudding is the hard sauce that goes on top—yum! This praline-inspired silky sauce is spiked with bourbon for a rich flavor that pairs wonderfully with the

pumpkin. If you're making this treat for kids, just substitute fresh pressed apple juice for the bourbon instead. (Or save this sauce for yourself and drizzle some maple syrup over theirs ...)

Ingredients:

1 cup packed brown sugar
½ cup heavy coconut cream
½ cup butter
2 tablespoons light corn syrup
¼ teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons bourbon

Bring brown sugar, coconut cream, butter, corn syrup, and salt to a boil in a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly. Once boiling, immediately lower the heat to a simmer and cook for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly, then stir in the bourbon.





Models: Miss Wondersmith
@misswondersmith,
Chelsea Santiago, and
Heather Drury



PUMPKIN SPICE APPLE CIDER

This hearty warm drink is a mash-up of two seasonal favorites: pumpkin pie and apple cider! It has the fresh zest of cider with a slightly rounder, richer flavor thanks to the pumpkin. Plenty of spices give it lots of autumnal flavor.

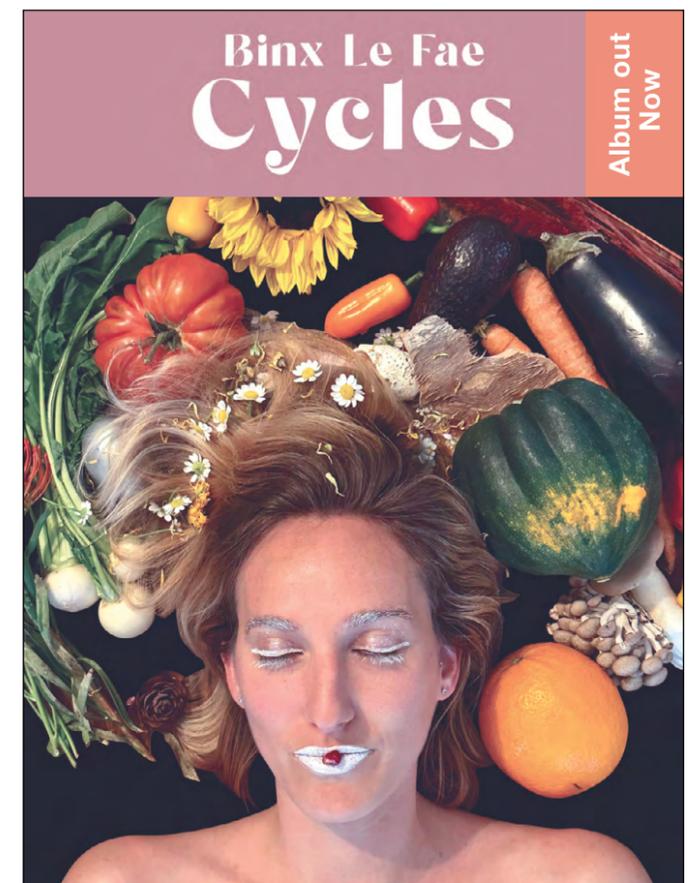
- 6 cups fresh-pressed apple cider (unfiltered apple juice)
- 1 cup roasted pumpkin puree
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 large apple, sliced into rounds
- 1 large orange, sliced into rounds
- Maple syrup, to taste

Add the apple cider and the pumpkin puree to a blender and blend until smooth. Strain through cheesecloth into a large saucepan.

Add the rest of the ingredients to the saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring often. Once boiling, reduce to a simmer and cook for 1 to 2 hours or until fragrant. Taste a little bit, and add maple syrup to sweeten as desired. Use a ladle to serve, being careful not to disturb any sediment in the bottom. Enjoy hot!



Follow Miss Wondersmith and her many Wondersmithing adventures on Instagram and Facebook @misswondersmith, misswondersmith.com, or become part of her Wondercrew at patreon.com/misswondersmith.



An Ode to Autumn

PHOTOGRAPHY, CONCEPT, AND STYLING BY EVA MARINI



Model: Anastasia Permiakova
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Model: Johanna Wildling
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Model: Eva Marini
@hane.iro (self-portraits)



Model: Eva Marini
@hane.iro (self-portraits)



STITCH WITCHERY FROM NOTFORGOTTEN FARM



We've been charmed for a while now by the lovely, old-timey, and definitely witchy needlework of folk artist Lori Brechlin, who shares images of her work along with captures from her enchanted life on a Virginia farm on Instagram. She lives there in a humble old farmhouse with a rusty tin roof and chipping white paint, raising chickens, donkeys, guinea hens, a peacock, a pile of cats and dogs, and a parrot named Peaches, all with her one true love, Peter. Below, we ask Brechlin more about her life and art.

Enchanted Living: How did you get into textiles and telling stories through textiles?

Lori Brechlin: I never had any formal education in any of the mediums I work in—cross-stitch, watercolor, and *schere schnitte* (paper cutting). I gleaned knowledge of them from two very talented aunts on my mother's side who graciously shared with me their sewing and painting tutelage. I learned embroidery later in my teens, and once I had a needle in my hand, I felt a connection to our foremothers who plied their thread to make everyday objects more beautiful. As I grew older, I studied old textiles at historical societies and museums in New England and began experimenting with my own naturally dyed cloth and threads, then stitched motifs from my memory and imagination into my textile artwork. Antique samplers and needlework that hung in my aforementioned aunts' house held such a fascination for me, I just knew I had to have been a needlewoman in a past life!

EL: What kinds of stories do you tell?

LB: My stories come from dreams, places, and people—some real, others not. Always, magic is sprinkled throughout my works. My stories are those of old times and older ways, when women were not allowed to speak their minds or even have opinions. Needlework was something that allowed us to somewhat control what we wanted to say and allowed us a form of expressive freedom. The characters that I create are kind, loving, and somewhat outcast. My mind can create a whole life and environment for a certain character, mostly for my beloved witches, and I believe that by telling stories we become connected through time and space.

EL: Why witches?

LB: Being the last child of five, I was somewhat left to my own devices, which meant I spent most of my time outdoors.





I put many miles on my bicycle pedaling around Stratford, Connecticut, the small town I grew up in. One day I found myself down by the water at a place called Bond's Dock. It was there I found a stone that was placed in memory of the first settlers of Stratford, which piqued my interest and led me to our local library, where I stumbled upon the name Goody Basset. Goody was accused of sorcery and witchcraft, and she was chased through town and executed by hanging on the Town Hall Green in 1651. This tale frightened me but made me want to learn even more about witches in my town. Goody was exonerated just recently. She's become my muse and inspiration, and I imagine her in many forms, doing many helpful things—not as an evil person.

EL: How do you incorporate magic into your daily life?

LB: By setting intentions, manifesting and spellwork every single day. Spellwork is just that: writing down (spelling) out intentions that you want to see happen and then manifesting (seeing the outcome) to life. I also sing a lot, whistle, and dance. My daily tasks, like sweeping and dusting, include rituals of cleansing. Hanging laundry on the line to dry in sunshine and fresh air attracts goodness and health. Adding a bit of magic to everything is essential, especially when I sit to stitch or paint or sketch. I will always set intentions in the outcome of my work, so that it makes people happy and comfortable.

EL: What would you say to a reader looking to get into needlework?

LB: For someone who has never put needle and thread to cloth and has interest in doing so, I would say this:

Gather your humblest supplies—not everything has to be shiny and new. Go to thrift shops and look for vintage supplies and kits.

Begin by sitting comfortably and quietly. Have a nice hot cup of tea nearby and then think on your cloth, needle, thread, and hoop as tools you will use to create beauty ... *your beauty*.

Start slowly, and don't constrain yourself to perfection. Be original and true to yourself. Just let your hand and heart be your guide.

If you search the internet, books, and magazines, treat them as inspiration but don't copy anyone else's work—doing that is personally unsatisfying and troublesome.

There are many online tutorials, videos, and shops to purchase supplies, kits and patterns that will suit your needs to begin your stitching journey.

I am always happy to help, give guidance, and answer questions as well. And remember: We are all creative. We are all artists in our own right. *We are all magical.*



Follow Lori Brechlin on Instagram @notforgottenfarm.





ANCESTORS AND OWLS

by Briana Saussy

It is deep autumn in South Central Texas when I encounter the owl. The skies are stony and gray, and the branches of the old pecan trees in our backyard are bare and stretching toward each other like the boniest of witches' fingers. Wind gusts and stirs the few leaves that are left to flutter.

It is ancestor time, November 1, the first day of Día de los Muertos, and the candles on our main family altar are flickering. Copal smoke scents the air, and I nibble on sweet *pan de muerto* and sip on coffee sweetened with *cajeta* while the boys get bundled up and ready for school. They are hyper on the events and the sugar rush that always follow in the wake of Halloween, ready to meet up with friends and share battle stories of the night's adventures. A bit later I'm sitting at my desk in the nook off the kitchen, talking to a group of students about the practices of honoring ancestors, when I catch sight of it.

Heart-shaped face, gorgeous plumage that moves in shade from Spanish oak brown to creamy white, luminous eyes that are looking, piercingly, right at me. I know we have owls in these parts, especially this kind of owl, a barred owl or, as my grandparents always referred to them, hoot owl. I've lost count of how many early mornings I have walked these paths with hot coffee and hard prayers under starlight and heard the great birds with their low, deep calls. But I have never had one show up so boldly, staring at me so frankly.

I know why the owl is here: Because of Samhain and Día de los Muertos, the holy days of the dead when the veils between the worlds are so very thin. It is the season of the witch and ghost bird, ancestor time.

An ancient belief tells that owls are actually angels in disguise—watching, protecting, observing. My grandfather was taught by his mother, though, that owls are actually ghost birds able to move from the land of the living to the land of the dead, able to carry messages back and forth too.

Watching the great bird watch me, I'm convinced. It feels like a messenger here to watch and learn. It feels like the ancestors have decided to take leave of their altars and show up in a more concrete manner. I first see the owl around nine in the morning, but it stays put all day, watching, peering into my window. So

when the boys get home from school, I take them outside, one at a time. I'm showing them the owl, but I am also showing them *to* the owl. As the sugar skulls decorated with bright strips of foil glitter on the ancestor altar, I decide to have a heart-to-heart with this gorgeous creature high in the branches.

I tell it that my children are happy, healthy, and good in so many ways. I tell it that my babies are as safe as they can be. I know that this last part is deeply important to my ancestors and in my lineage, because those who came before me often were not safe because of the color of their skin and how they spoke and how they looked. These little things, so easy to take for granted, matter to my beloved dead.

It seems only fair. Later this evening we will have a bonfire. More copal will be offered, along with some chocolate and tequila. Marshmallows will be toasted. And then late into the night I will sit with my cards and ask my questions of the ancestors, for they are the ones who have gone before us, they are the ones who know. At that point they will be the ones to tell me. The owl stays put through the three days of Día de los Muertos. On the fourth day it flies off, and though I hear it, I do not see it frequently. It's fine, though, appropriate in its way, and much like the ancestors themselves ... rarely visible but always watching.

Autumn is often considered the season of the witch. I think if it is, then it's because autumn is a season full of the wonders and magic found in the natural world at every turn—wonders and magic that require our attention and right response. And that really is what witchery is all about: knowing what is worth your time and attention, knowing how to respond correctly. Knowing that ancestors do not always show up at perfectly constructed altars, and that more often than not you may find them watching through the eyes of an owl.



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 AUTUMN RITUALS?”

Autumn is my favorite time of the year. One of my favorite rituals is to decorate my home and the outside with all the spooky and beautiful objects of the season. The most important moments of my life are in autumn. My wedding anniversary is the first day of fall and my birthday is in October. I feel the happiest and coziest with pumpkins, the colorful leaves, and scents of cinnamon, nutmeg, and chai enveloping my home and spirit. Blessed Be.
—*Tiff Parker*

The crisp chill air, the scent of pumpkin spice and apple cider everywhere you go. Trees turning from green to red and orange, piles of pumpkins on doorsteps. It truly is the best time of year. My absolute favorite thing to do is dress up extra witchy and head to a busy local pumpkin patch. Children always smile and giggle at my witchy wears in the pumpkin patches! I love playing with the goats at the farm, collecting all the tiny pumpkins that catch my eye, scooping up fallen leaves, and getting more caught in my hair from fall hiking trips. That first fall hike is an important one.
—*Shannon Hughes*

In autumn evenings we would make hot chocolate with spices like cinnamon, ginger, pepper, vanilla, and cardamom. Elder witches would pour a little rum or Baileys on top, light the liquor on fire, and sprinkle cinnamon on the flame so it looks like flickering fireflies. Then we'd all thank each other and drink the chocolate. —*Liepa Kirklyte*

My favorite autumn ritual is to grab a mug of tea, snuggle under a blanket, and reread Alice Hoffman's *The Rules of Magic*. —*Amy Berlin*

Decorating my altar and making my house ready for Mabon. Also enjoying all the earthy colors around me and the scents of cinnamon and pumpkin. Mabon brings with it my favorite time of the year, Samhain.
—*Chantelle Rolph*

My favorite autumn rituals are lighting my favorite fall-themed candles anytime there's a chill in the air (or I just wish there was). I love taking my kids on walks and looking for acorns, listening to the crunching of leaves under our feet, pointing out all the different colors and types of trees. It's truly a magical season! —*Karah English*

Walking through the trails of orange, red, and yellow leaves. Seeing acorns scattered everywhere. And breathing in the cool, crisp autumn air. —*@foxelove23*

For me, autumn starts with the apple harvest! My family breaks out the 100-year-old cider press that my great-grandfather rigged to a masher and motor. We harvest and press the apples, making gallons of cider. The work is always followed by a feast of hot soup, fresh bread, and mulled cider. It's the perfect way to offer our gratitude to Mother Earth for her bounty and abundance.
—*Chelsea Braun*

I really love to honor nature in autumn for her abundant summer harvest.
—*@coffeewitchgiftmugs*

Every autumn I bake my favorite treats, such as pumpkin cookies, muffins, and cherry pie. —*@_snow_flower*

I live next to an elementary school and love to create interactive seasonal displays for children and parents to enjoy on their way to and from school. One of my favorite autumn rituals is to hang eleven witch hats from the tree in front of my apartment so that they hang over the sidewalk. I make sure to vary the heights so that the people can choose to stand under one that seems to float just above their head. It's especially magical when the wind blows!
—*Pamela Chermansky*

Taking lots of walks throughout the season to watch the leaves change, making spiced apples, and drinking a glass of pomegranate juice at the start of Samhain in honor of Persephone and my departed loved ones (both human and furry). —*@thebookpriestessreads*

When summer's winds blow from the northwest and leaves begin their change, when apples blush upon the trees, then it is time to light candles all around and place my collections of pumpkins and witches while sipping hot cider. It is time to celebrate the ending of all things, which leads back to the beginning of all things. —*Debra Betts*

Eating anything pumpkin-flavored while wearing a witch hat! —*@royalhouseofwhimsy*

Hearth Craft Brooms + Honey & Sass

Persephone's Descent

Brooms fit for the Queen of the Underworld.

this October

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