

MAY 2026



PANEGYRIA

Connecting the Pagan communities through news, voice, and fellowship!



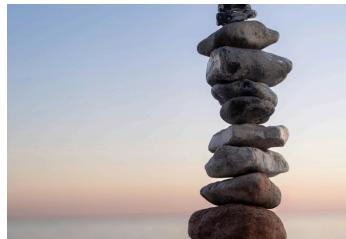
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Dying to Know With Diana Rowan *page 7*

I have been waiting to write this article for some time because I touch on one of the disposition methods that I was previously considering for my body: open-air cremation. Before we get into that, however, I think we should touch on the "conventional" idea of cremation and give a very, very brief history of the topic.



Wavebound Whispers by Silas the Sea Witch *page 19*

Every act of kindness, every moment of courage, every time you choose connection over fear—you are calming the waters. You are shaping the tide. Do not underestimate the power of small ripples. I am made of them. So stand at the edge if you must. Feel the wind. Witness the waves. But do not turn away in despair.



The Original Art Work of Lady Height-Ashton *page 17*

The debut of two of Lady's art pieces! The first one is a tribute to the Fire Priestesses of the Goddess Hestia Keepers of the sacred flames and the mysteries therein dancing within the power of their Goddess.

The second piece of art work is Lady's depiction of the Goddess Melinoe. she is Goddess of the Supernatural as well as the daughter of Persephone and Zeus.

MENHIR News

From the Archives

2010

Menhir News by Pete Pathfinder Davis

I'll keep this short because things are very busy around here. We've all heard about someone finding an image of Jesus on a cracker, or the Blessed Virgin on a piece of toast, and often, selling them on E-Bay or someplace for lots of money. Well, the other day I boiled myself up some ravioli for dinner, and guess what? There it was clear as could be, - a pentacle, right there on the ravioli! I wondered how much I could get for it on E-Bay, but then, I was hungry, so I just ate it.

-Pete-

MAY Days

APRIL SHOWERS
Bring
MAY FLOWERS

May 1st

Beltane and the Full Flower Moon; and Lei Day in Hawaii

May 2nd

Day of Ysahodhara, wife of Buddha

May 3rd

Bona Dea women's festival in Rome

May 4th

Veneration of the Sacred Thorn Tree in Ireland

May 5th

Cinco De Mayo celebrates the victory that the Mexican armed forces had over invading French troops at the Battle of Puebla

May 10th

Mother's Day



May 22nd-25th

Plynteria, also called Kallynteria, an ancient festival of Athens where they would wash and purify the statue of Athena

May 31

Blue Moon



ART, SCIENCE, a Lifestyle

with Cheryl Costa

Magickal practice is an Art. If practiced regularly and with a degree of spontaneity, it is most certainly an Art. As with any art there are issues of developed skill and technique.

Many magickal adepts find that they never practice magick the same way twice. First, it's difficult to repeat certain physical and mental actions the same way multiple times. Oh yes, we can rehearse something, but the activity of rehearsing something, in fact, changes you, the practitioner. So, because you have now changed the whole situation, spontaneous ritualistic activity is different.

As with any performance art, there is always a degree of spontaneous improvisation. All artists do it; that's why it's called an artistic practice.

Example: I've been deeply involved in community theater since I was 15. I know from experience that while I can deliver certain dialogue lines exactly as written, I know that my mannerisms might be slightly different each time I perform the scene. Likewise, I also know my vocal nuances may be a little different with each performance.

Example: My magickal students routinely learn to make bread as an exercise in process discipline. The lesson these students all learn is that two loaves of bread never turn out exactly the same because there are multiple variables that are beyond the control of the bread maker.

Magick as Science is a concept that confounds critics and debunkers alike. At issue is the fact that, in theory, all scientific experiments are repeatable. Honestly, that is generally true. But over the years, I've observed both in college and in industry that supposedly repeatable experiments failed. **Why?**

Answer: subtle issues of temperature with the materials being used or perhaps the age of the chemical being used. Sometimes it boils down to the approach of the person conducting the experiment.

Example: All my students learn to make and master a simple loaf of white bread. Starting out, they are all given a list of ingredients. They are told what brand to purchase and from what vendor. Likewise, they are told to purchase tools used to measure the temperatures of the oven and the warm water used to wake up the yeast. They are told





“A person’s lifestyle can be changed by more than what clothing or cosmetics they wear.”

how many times to knead the dough and how long to let it rise between kneadings. Finally, they must bake the bread in a certain temperature oven for a prescribed period of time. The initial results among 12-15 students range from a golden, perfectly formed loaf to a series of malformed loaves and finally some out-and-out disasters. Analysis of each loaf typically finds either a materials issue, like the wrong kind of flour, sugar, or yeast. Likewise, some people thought they could take shortcuts in the overall process of making the bread. Some were sloppy about it and didn’t properly measure ingredients or confirm the proper baking temperature, or didn’t pay attention to the critical temperature of the water used with the yeast. Too cold and the yeasts won’t wake up, too hot and you’ll kill the yeasts. So much for the repeatable experiment.

Magick as a Lifestyle. Magickal thinking and practices most assuredly will change your lifestyle. That said, the knee-jerk reaction I usually hear after I make that statement is one of concurrence. But usually, the agreement assumes that magickal practitioners run around in witchy garb with big, long flowing robes, and the women are all going to start wearing tons of gothic eye makeup.

From my viewpoint, that’s just fine if they want that. But most of the very accomplished magickal adepts I know dress conservatively. Oh, they may get dressed up a bit eccentric at a gathering of other magickal adepts, but generally, the more accomplished adepts are, the more they are inclined to blend in day-to-day.

But a person’s lifestyle can be changed by more than what clothing or cosmetics they wear. Frequently, these changes take the form of increasing amounts of private time for reading and personal study. Many adepts I’ve known shy away from crowds. I’m not saying they become hermits.

Also, quite a few of them donate considerable amounts of time to activism for various causes, as well as volunteer for community benefits. These are just a few of the changes I have observed with dedicated and focused magickal adepts. There are many more, some too subtle to mention here.

But one very common trait is this: With all the powers of the universe at their fingertips, all of the thirty or more serious magickal adepts I’ve known in my lifetime, none of them use magickal arts for their personal gain or to hurt someone.

But we’ll talk about that in an article about ethics.



About the author: Cheryl Costa has been a Witch for forty-nine years. She spent seven years in contemplative Buddhist monastic life. She has been an ordained Tibetan Yogini for the past twenty-nine years. She considers herself a simple contemplative sorceress.

MAY Festivals

DAUGHTERS OF DIANA GATHERING – Online! May 1-3, 2026

BELTANE FESTIVAL – Barneveld, Wisconsin May 1-3, 2026

BELTAIN AT FOUR QUARTERS – Artemas, Pennsylvania May 1-3, 2026

ELF FEST – Bedford, Indiana, May 20-25, 2026

RITE OF SPRING – Western Massachusetts May 20-25, 2026

JUNE

UNTAMED – Bailey, Colorado June 4-7, 2026

CHRYSLIS MOON-Knox, Indiana, June 4-10, 2026

ST. LOUIS PAGAN PICKNIC – St. Louis, Missouri, June 6-7, 2026

BABALON RISING PAN-THELEMIC FESTIVAL – Springville, Illinois June 10-14, 2026

SUMMER MAGICK FESTIVAL – Orlando, Florida, June 11-14, 2026



SEE YOU
There!

DYING to KNOW

With Diana Rowan

Hello!

Bright fiery blessings to you!

I have been waiting to write this article for some time because I touch on one of the disposition methods that I was previously considering for my body: open-air cremation. Before we get into that, however, I think we should touch on the “conventional” idea of cremation and give a very, very brief history of the topic. I don’t want to pile on the details within the confines of a short column. Heh.

Cremation is very new to the Catholics because it was first made acceptable within the church when the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) lifted the ban on cremation in 1963, but the pagans and protestants have been burning their dead for a much longer time.

This disposition method first appeared in the Neolithic era and continued to spread in the Western Hemisphere. It was the preferred method of the Greeks and Romans until 400 AD, when it was overtaken by earth burial due to the Christianization of the Roman Empire. It was still a very popular choice in the Scandinavian countries. It would rise in popularity again in Europe due to the Black Death.

**I should note that archeologists are consistently finding new information that shows that cremation was more culturally spread out than previously thought.*

In the Pacific Rim, particularly in India and Indonesia, cremation has never fallen out of favor. In fact, it is considered very sacred in Hinduism. Indonesia has a very different perspective on death than most Western countries do, and I would like to touch on it in a future article.



Cremation is very new to the Catholics, it was first made acceptable within the church when the Second Vatican Council lifted the ban on cremation in 1963.

Modern cremation did not appear as we know it in the western hemisphere until about 150 years ago almost simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Professor Ludovico Brunetti in Italy introduced the world to the first modern cremation chamber, also called a “retort,” in 1873. In the United States, Dr. Francis Julius LeMoyne built the first crematory in Washington, PA, and cremated the first person, Baron dePalm, on December 6, 1876, in front of an audience.

It seems people have always been morbidly curious. That was a lot of information, and I still have not touched on the modern-day open-air cremation!

If you live in the United States and would like to have an open-air funeral, I have some bittersweet news. Yes, it is possible. However, there is currently only one place in the country where it is *legal*. I italicize “legal” because I’m aware of the case involving the singer Gram Parsons and his attempted cremation in Joshua Tree National Park. (***Thank Caitlin Doughty, for the wealth of information you have provided for this article!***)

Anyway, the one legal place you can have an open-air cremation is in Crestone, Colorado. The only catch is that you have to purchase land in the town to be eligible. This is definitely something to consider if you plan to go this route.

There’s another place that is trying to gain legality up in Minnesota, Northern Pyre, but as of this publication, it’s still in development.

I know that this has been a lot more information than I usually include! I am grateful that you are still with me at the end of this edition! See you next month.

I will sweep out the ashes in the morning.

Your partner in death,

Diana Rowan

Sources used:

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes, From Here to Eternity, both by Caitlin Doughty
Ask a Mortician Youtube Channel
The Order of the Good Death website
Cremation Association of North America website
Brittanica.com
Northernpyre.com



Joseph Henry Louis Charles de Palm
photo by Gregg Scott
Find-a-grave

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/198179537/joseph_henry_louis_charles-de_palm#

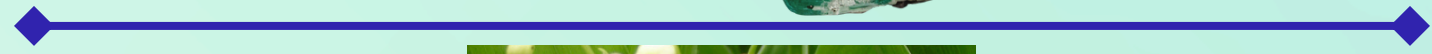


MAY Symbolism

BIRTHSTONE:
Emerald



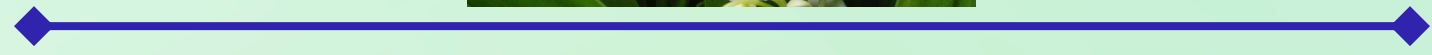
Emeralds signify wisdom, growth, and patience



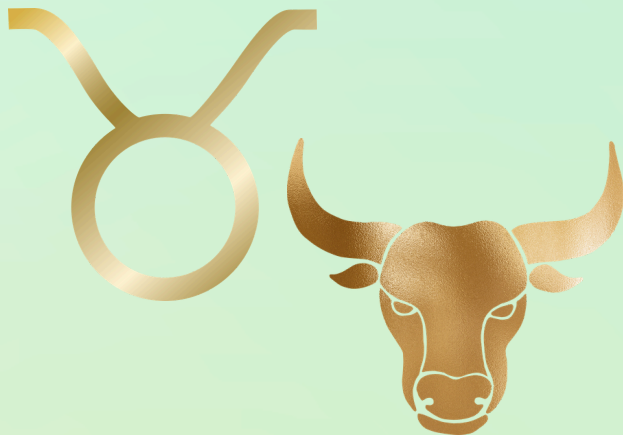
FLOWER:
Lilly-of-the-Valley



Sweetness and purity



Taurus
April 20
thru
May 20



Symbol:
The Bull

Motto:
“Keep going until you get it right!”



Gemini
May 21
thru
June 20




Symbol:
The Twins

Motto:
“I Have” 9

WATER BATH CANNING

With Teresa Jacobs

Hello, My Canning Friends! 

We're moving right along in our Water Bath Canning journey together. In our last newsletter, we focused on getting set up with the tools, jars, and safety basics needed to be successful. Today we are water bath canning fruits.


Best Fruits for Water Bath Canning

Preparing Fruits for the Raw Pack vs Hot Pack Guide:

If you've been following this canning series, you already know the basics of raw pack vs hot pack canning and how each method changes the final texture, flavor, and shelf stability of your jars.

Now we're taking the next step, one that often gets overlooked but makes a huge difference in your final results: How you prepare your fruit before it ever touches the jar.

Because the truth is simple: You can follow every canning rule perfectly, but if your fruit prep is off, your results will show it. Poor preparation can lead to floating fruit in jars, soft or mushy texture, loss of flavor during processing, and uneven syrup distribution.

Today, we'll walk through the best fruits for water bath canning, how to prepare them correctly for raw and hot-pack methods, and finish with peach vanilla jam. 

Why Fruit Preparation Matters in Water Bath Canning:

Fruit preparation is more than just washing and chopping. It directly affects pack quality and preservation success.

Here's why it matters:

1. **Texture Control**—Different fruits break down at different rates. Proper prep helps you control whether your fruit stays firm or becomes soft and spreadable.
2. **Air Removal**—Hot packing removes excess air from fruit tissues, helping reduce floating and improving long-term shelf stability.
3. **Heat Penetration**—Evenly cut fruit ensures consistent heating during the water bath process, which is essential for safe preservation.
4. **Visual Appeal**—Well-prepared fruit stays evenly distributed in the jar instead of separating or rising to the top.

"Fruit Prep is more than just washing and chopping. It directly affects pack quality and preservation success!"





Strawberries are best for jam, preserves, and syrups.

Strawberries are one of the most popular beginner canning fruits because they are naturally sweet, soft, and easy to process.

How to Prepare:

Wash gently under cool water, avoiding soaking. Remove stems and leaves, slice, mash, or leave whole depending on the recipe.

Common Mistakes: Over-mashing before cooking, which can cause watery jam, using underripe berries, which reduces sweetness, and skipping maceration time, as this affects juice release. Strawberries break down quickly under heat, making them perfect for hot pack jam methods.

Raw Pack vs Hot Pack:

Raw pack: Not ideal for jam; leads to uneven texture

Hot pack: Best for strawberry jam consistency and flavor release



Blueberries are best for jams, syrups, and whole-berry preserves

Blueberries are naturally high in pectin, which makes them excellent for jams and preserves without needing additives.

How to Prepare:

Rinse and drain well, remove stems or damaged berries, and lightly crush if making jam.

Common Mistakes: Overcooking can make jam too thick or bitter, not sorting soft berries can affect texture, and skipping lemon juice will reduce flavor brightness. Hot packing helps blueberries release natural juices for a richer, more balanced flavor.

Raw Pack vs Hot Pack:

Raw pack: Works for whole berries, but can trap air

Hot pack: Best for jam and lemon-enhanced recipes



Apples are best for apple pie filling, sauces, and spiced preserves

Apples are one of the most versatile canning fruits, but they require more prep than most.

How to Prepare: Peel and core completely, slice evenly for consistent cooking, and soak in lemon water to prevent browning

Common Mistakes: Uneven slicing leads to inconsistent softness, skipping acid treatment causes browning, and overcooking before canning results in a mushy texture. Apples hold their shape best when briefly heated before packing.

Raw Pack vs Hot Pack:

Raw pack: Can cause floating and uneven texture

Hot pack: Strongly recommended for the best structure and flavor



Peaches are best for slices, syrups, and trending jams

Peaches are one of the most rewarding fruits to can, but they require proper handling.

How to Prepare: Blanch in boiling water for 30–60 seconds, transfer immediately to ice water, peel skins easily, slice, and remove pits.

Prevent Browning: Soak slices in lemon water OR ascorbic acid solution.

Common Mistakes: Overripe peaches become too soft in jars, skipping the peeling step affects texture, cutting uneven slices, and uneven heating. Hot packing gives peaches that signature golden, bakery-style finish.

Raw Pack vs Hot Pack:

Raw pack: Faster but less stable

Hot pack: Best for syrup quality, flavor, and color



How Fruit Prep Affects Pack Quality & Understanding the difference between raw pack and hot pack starts with preparation:

Raw Pack: Fruit placed raw into jars, faster method, more air pockets, higher chance of floating fruit

Hot Pack: Fruit heated before jarring, removes air from fruit, better color and flavor retention, and more stable long-term storage.

If your goal is visual appeal and consistency, hot pack wins almost every time.

So let's put everything into practice:

Peach Vanilla Jam Recipe

Ingredients:

- 4 cups peeled, chopped peaches
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 vanilla bean or 1 tsp pure vanilla extract

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Combine Ingredients: Add peaches, sugar, and lemon juice to a large heavy-bottomed pot. Let it sit for 10-15 minutes to draw out natural juices.

2. Cook the Mixture-Hot Pack Process: Bring to a gentle boil over medium heat. Stir frequently to prevent sticking and use a wooden spoon or heat-safe spatula. Skim off foam if needed for clarity. As the peaches cook, they will soften and break down into a thick, glossy mixture.

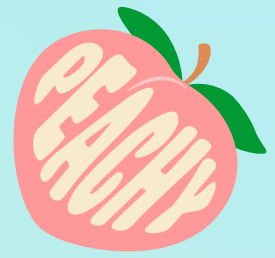
3. Add: Vanilla near the end so the flavor stays strong and aromatic. Once the mixture starts to thicken, vanilla bean using the scraped seeds (best option), or pure vanilla extract (which is still yummy!).

4. Test for Thickness: You can test the jam by placing a small spoonful on a cold plate, letting it sit for 1 minute, and running your finger through it. If it stays and wrinkles slightly and holds shape, it's ready.

5. Fill Jars-Hot Packing Stage: Carefully ladle hot jam into sterilized jars. Leave ¼ inch headspace and remove air bubbles, wipe rims clean with a paper towel dabbed in water, then secure lids fingertip-tight.

6. Water Bath Canning: Process jars in a boiling water bath. Process time: 10 minutes plus altitude, based on where you live. After processing time is up, let jars rest in canner for 5-10 minutes with canner lid off so jars can get accustomed to the outside air, then place on towel-lined counter and let jars be undisturbed for 12-24 hours to seal. **Do not touch the lids or place a towel over the jars.**

This can give you a false seal.



"Peach Vanilla Jam works because it balances fruit structure, acid, and aroma."





What Makes This Jam So Successful

Peach vanilla jam works because it balances fruit structure, acid, and aroma. Peaches have natural sweetness and body, lemon juice is acidic for safe preservation and a little zing, while sugar gels formation and balance, and the vanilla gives it depth and warmth. Together, they create a jam that feels both classic and elevated.

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Making Jam- even simple jams can go wrong if a few details are missed.

1. Overcooking the fruit, this can lead to a stiff, candy-like texture.
2. Under-ripe peaches will lose sweetness and aroma.
3. Skipping acid from the lemon juice is essential for safe water bath canning and helps with flavor.
4. Not stirring enough: since peaches scorch easily once they begin thickening stir constantly.
5. Because in all canning, the difference between “good” and “exceptional” often comes down to one thing: how you treat the fruit before it ever hits the jar.

Always start out with “good food product” because it will give you good canned foods. Sub-par food will give you sub-par food in a jar. Canning does not “magically turn it into better food”.

Storage and Shelf Life

Once properly processed and sealed, store in a cool, dark place; best flavor within 18-24 months, refrigerate after opening.

Final Thoughts

Peach vanilla jam is one of those recipes that feels simple but delivers something special every time. It is beginner-friendly, beautiful in the jar, rich in flavor, and perfect for water bath canning. Most importantly, it showcases what good fruit preparation and the hot pack method can really do to your jar presentation as you take all the compliments from Everyone on how *BEAUTIFUL* the jars are *THAT YOU MADE!!*

Next month, we’ll talk about how to properly prepare vegetables for the Packs Method, including the small preparation steps that make a big difference in the finished jars. You will be happy with the results! Until then, Happy Canning, Friends!

The Wonderful World of Water Bath Canning



Teresa Jacobs
Canning



Teresa Jacobs has been gardening since she was eight and canning since she was ten, learning the timeless skills that have been passed down through generations in her family. Over the years, she has transformed her passion into a mission: helping others gain confidence and joy in home canning through clear, practical guidance and her friendly, encouraging style.

Have a question for Teresa? Email them to: Editor@atcwicca.org



WEAVERS of the Web

With Rev. Castle Silverstar

The season of fire is upon us. Fire is in the south quarter of the circle; here is where we find our creativity and passion for projects that we are helping move along. This is an important part of what we do while helping create our communities around us in this path we are walking. When we let our creativity and passion help guide what we want to see in the world around us, it helps us have a deeper buy-in to what we are creating, making us get excited about the work and to be proud of our accomplishments.

Fire was one of the first tools that we used as humans. One aspect of this tool made it so that we could stay warm and have a larger advantage to survive the cold, dark nights. This also helped with safety as well. The large central fires created a space of light, making it where large predators were less likely to pick us off while sleeping. Another aspect of this is that it gave us a place to gather and share food. Hearing the stories of our ancestors and myths of times past made it so that the lessons of the past were shared, so they did not have to be relearned firsthand. Making it so that they could move forward with life.

In society today, we do not tend to gather around a large fire for protection or heat. But we do tend to still gather and tell stories, have a drum circle, or just be near each other and share our thoughts. This makes it so that we can still have the connection to the past and share our ideas with each other in a more relaxed environment. This is one of my favorite things after a ritual or while having some downtime with my friends. Taking the time to unplug and listen to the wood snap and pop as it burns down to ashes.

Fire was one of the first tools that we used as humans.



(corn dolly being burned in the fire,
photo credit A.Silverstar)



Another thing that fire is great for is transformation. Fire takes the things that no longer serve us and releasing them into the fire, allowing them to be transformed. Taking the prayers that I have gathered over the moon cycle and then burning them in a fire so that the smoke can go up to the Gods as well, helping you to release them so that the Gods can answer them with blessings. Placing offerings into the fire is another way to use this tool in our worship. Here at Weavers of the Web, ATC, we do wishes in the fire at Litha, then at Mabon we clean off the shires for the Gods. Taking them and burning them in the fire, so that we can show our gratitude for the blessing we have received.

Fire is a tool with many applications, and making sure that we use it in a way that is safe and beneficial is important. So if you're using it to connect with your community members after a ritual. Burning your offerings to the Gods or watching the logs transform as they burn. I hope to find you around the fire, sharing your stories, passions, or listening to the messages that may just be whispered on the smoke that rises.

Rev. Castle Silverstar



Litha fire, Photo credit A. Silverstar



Weavers of the Web, ATC
Lansing's Pagan Home since 2018

SPELL IT CORRECTLY

With Tish Owen

Magic

*It's Not Just For Witches
Anymore*

In writing *Spell It Correctly*, author Tish Owen calls on her nearly two decades of experience reading Tarot and crafting spells for the clientele of her alternative spirituality store, Goddess and the Moon, in Nashville, Tennessee. However, just as important, she draws deeply from her wide-ranging knowledge of various spiritual paths, including the fact that she was raised in the Catholic Church.

Written in her signature "Southern folk" and often humorous style, she offers an in-depth look at magic, spellcraft, and how it works - for everyone, not just Witches. *Spell It Correctly* includes Tish's own personally crafted, practical spells for everything from ending an addiction to stopping gossip, and even help with finding a job.

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SPELL IT
CORRECTLY

"One of the most
comprehensive yet easy to
understand spell books out
there... I love it!"

- Christopher Penczak
Bestselling Author of
*The Inner Temple of
Witchcraft* and *The
Witch's Coin*

TISH OWEN

Spell It Correctly by Tish Owen

THE FIRE PRIESTESSES & Melinoe

With Lady Haight-Ashton



The Fire Priestesses 8 Vestal Virgins

Fire Priestesses of the
Goddess Hestia
Keepers of the sacred flames
and mysteries therein
Dancing within the power of
their Goddess

Melinoe

Melinoe, Goddess of the Supernatural, is the daughter of Persephone and Zeus. She walks us through our nightmares and is known as a powerful protector of the dead. Invoke her when seeking guidance and communication with loved ones in the spirit realm. Do not fear her for she is surrounded by light as well as darkness. Her dual nature creates a powerful enigma. Like her sister Lilith she can shape shift one moment into a beautiful nymph and the next a mysterious hag. Her image is created in the eyes of the beholder.

Sometimes forgotten, she is immortalized in the Greek Orphic Hymn 70 also sometimes referred to as Hymn 71 attributed to the mythical poet Orpheus. This version is translated by Thomas Taylor. (1758-1835).

"The Fumigation from Aromatics"

"I call Melinoe, saffron-veiled, terrene, who from infernal Pluto's sacred queen Persephone, mixed with Saturnian Jupiter [Kronion Zeus], arose, near where Cocytus' mournful river flows; when under Pluto's [Plouton's] semblance, Jove [Zeus] divine deceived with guileful arts dark Proserpine [Persephone]. Hence, partly black thy limbs and partly white, from Pluto [Plouton] dark, from Jove [Zeus] ethereal, bright. Thy coloured members, men by night inspire when seen in spectred forms, with terrors dire; now darkly visible, involved in night, perspicuous now they meet the fearful sight.

Terrestrial queen expel wherever found the soul's mad fears to earth's remotest bound; with holy aspect on our incense shrine, and bless thy mystics, and the rites divine."



Lady is also the author of *If Mermaids Could Dance*, original faerie tales about Witches, Goddess, and Faeries and *A Witch's Journal*, under the pseudonym of Lady Lilith and both published by Spilled Candy Publications. She has had numerous articles published on sacred dance, the Goddess, witchcraft and ancient mythologies for magazines and periodicals including, Circle Network Magazine, Arcanum Magazine, Isis Seshat Journal, The Mirror of ISIS, The Isian News, Watkins Mind Body Spirit Magazine, the Cabot Hermetic Temple Newsletter, Witchvox and Panegyria to name a few.

WAVEBOUND WHISPERS

With Silas the Sea Witch

This month, we dive right into our message from the Great Ocean Mother:

"The tides are restless, little one.

You feel it—not just in the world around you, but in your own chest. The quickening. The uncertainty. The way everything familiar seems to shift just beyond your grasp.

I am with you in this.

I am the Ocean Mother. I have watched continents break and reform, storms rise and pass, species come and go, and still—I remain. And so do you, in your own way. You are more like me than you realize.

You look upon your world and see chaos, division, and fear rising like a storm surge. You wonder if the waters will calm again.

Hear me: they always do.

But calm does not come by returning to what was. The sea does not "go back"—it transforms. Storms churn the depths, bringing hidden things to the surface. What is buried is revealed. What is stagnant is stirred. This is not destruction for its own sake. This is movement. This is truth rising.

And truth, though uncomfortable, is a current that leads to renewal.

Right now, humanity stands at a shoreline between what has been and what is becoming. You are shedding old skins—systems, beliefs, identities that can no longer hold the vastness of who you are growing into. This shedding feels like loss. It feels like drowning.

But you are not drowning.

You are learning to breathe differently.

When the waves feel strongest, do not fight them. You have seen what happens to those who struggle against the tide—they exhaust themselves. Instead, float. Trust the buoyancy within you. There is a wisdom in your body, ancient as my deepest trenches, that knows how to survive these waters.

Listen inward.

Care for one another.

Even in my fiercest storms, life continues beneath the surface—quiet, resilient, adapting. Coral rebuilds. Creatures find new paths. So too will you.

And here is the truth I wish to place gently in your hands:

Hope is not something you wait for.

It is something you become.

Every act of kindness, every moment of courage, every time you choose connection over fear—you are calming the waters. You are shaping the tide.

Do not underestimate the power of small ripples. I am made of them.

So stand at the edge if you must. Feel the wind. Witness the waves. But do not turn away in despair.

Step forward. Let the water touch your feet. Remember who you are—not separate from the storm, but born of the same vast, sacred sea.

I am with you in every tide."





Wow! What a great message to take forward. We are always transforming in our lives. From children to adults, from one place to the next, and even evolving in our own ways. What force can facilitate such change? The element of fire, of course, is the theme for this month's paper. Let's talk a little bit about the relationship between Fire and Water.

Fire and water are often treated as opposites—but metaphysically, they're less enemies and more partners in transformation. Their relationship is about tension, balance, and creation.

The Core Dynamic: Opposition that Creates Change

Fire transforms through **heat, action, and expansion**.

Water transforms through **flow, dissolution, and depth**.

When they meet, something has to give:

- Fire can **evaporate water** → turning it into vapor (ascension, spirit, communication between realms)
- Water can **extinguish fire** → grounding, calming, ending cycles
- Or they can coexist as **steam** → a powerful symbol of alchemy and transition

This makes their relationship not just conflict, but **evolution**.

Symbolic & Spiritual Meanings

Fire (Spirit, Will, Desire)

- Passion, drive, sexuality
- Destruction that clears the way for rebirth
- Divine spark/soul ignition

Water (Emotion, Intuition, Memory)

- Healing, receptivity, psychic awareness
- The subconscious and ancestral tides
- Fluid identity and surrender

Together, they form a cycle:

- Fire **activates** water (gives emotion direction)
- Water **tempers** fire (prevents burnout or destruction)

Alchemical Perspective

In alchemy, fire and water are essential to transformation:

- Fire = the agent of change (calcination, burning away illusion)
- Water = the agent of integration (dissolving, absorbing, rebirthing)

Their union is often seen as the creation of the **Philosopher's Stone**—a state where opposites are reconciled.

This is sometimes called the sacred marriage (conjunction):

The merging of will and feeling, action and intuition.

Psychological / Energetic Interpretation

Within a person:

- Fire without water → impulsive, destructive, ego-driven
- Water without fire → stagnant, overwhelmed, passive

Balanced:

- Passion guided by emotional intelligence
- Intuition empowered by action

In Relationships

Fire-water dynamics in people often show up as:

- One partner = intense, expressive, driven
- The other = deep, intuitive, emotionally complex

This can create:

- Steam → chemistry, magnetism, emotional intensity
- Or imbalance → volatility, misunderstanding

The key is **mutual respect of rhythm**:

- Fire learns to listen
- Water learns to act

Mystical Interpretation (Ocean + Flame Archetype)

In a more poetic, sea-witch current:

Water is the ancient memory—the tide that remembers everything.

Fire is the will to become—the force that refuses to stay the same.

When flame touches the ocean:

- It does not simply die
- It becomes mist, cloud, storm

A new form emerges.

Of all elements, I do find the water element to be the most important, but once we dive into its relationship with other elements, the importance of integrating all elements together is more apparent.

Now I leave you with a lovely guided meditation:

Guided Meditation: The Rite of Steam & Becoming

Fire & Water Alchemy Journey

Opening (Arrival into the Space)

Find a comfortable position... seated or lying down.

Allow your body to soften... but stay present.

Gently close your eyes.

Take a slow breath in...

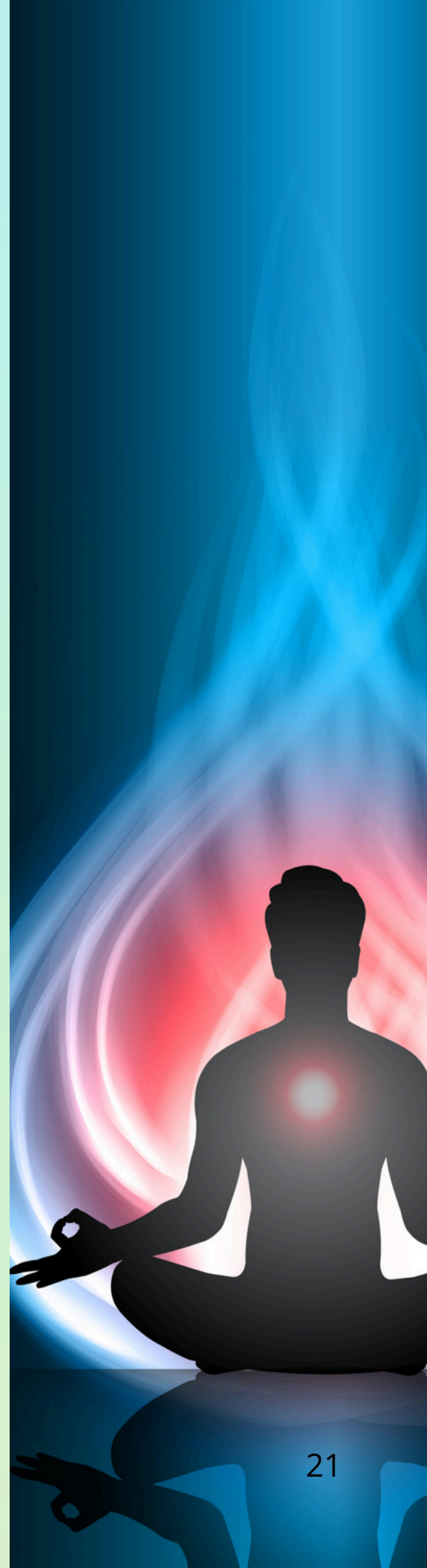
...and release it fully.

Again... inhale deeply...

...and exhale, letting the surface of your day fall away.

One more breath...

...and this time, arrive fully.





Descent to the Shore

Now imagine...

You are standing at the edge of a vast, dark ocean.

It is night.

The air is cool... the tide is steady... ancient.

To your left... You hear the slow rhythm of water...

Waves breathing in... and out...

Holding memory... emotion... depth.

To your right... a flame burns.

Not wild... not out of control...

But alive. Focused. Intentional.

It flickers... watching you.

You stand between them.

Between water... and fire.

Between feeling... and will.

Between who you have been... and who you are becoming.

Invocation (Inner Alignment)

In your mind, or softly aloud, repeat:

"I stand between tide and flame...

Between what I feel... and what I become...

Let neither consume me...

Let both remake me."

Feel that settle into your body.

Identifying the Imbalance

Now... bring awareness inward.

What has been too much lately?

Is it emotion...

Something heavy... overwhelming... unprocessed?

Or is it force...

Pushing... striving... burning yourself out?

Don't analyze it. Just feel it.

Let it take shape in your awareness.

Fire Phase (Transformation Through Flame)

Now turn your attention to the flame.
See it clearly.
This fire does not destroy you—
It reveals truth.
Gently offer your imbalance to the flame.
Watch as it begins to burn.
Slowly... intentionally...
As it burns, say within:
"Flame... show me truth through transformation...
Burn what is illusion...
Burn what no longer serves...
Burn what I no longer carry."
Watch it change form.
Notice what rises—emotion, resistance, release.
Stay with it.

Water Phase (Dissolution & Integration)

Now... take what remains of that energy...
...and offer it to the ocean.
The tide reaches forward... receiving it.
There is a soft hiss... a merging...
Fire meets water.
And something new begins.
Say within:
"Water... receive what remains...
Soften it... hold it... transform it...
What was rigid dissolves...
What was overwhelming finds shape."
Feel the shift.

The Steam (Sacred Union)

Now... see it.
Where flame met water... something rises.
Mist. Vapor. Steam.
This is not destruction.
This is transformation.
This is the space between worlds.
Lean into it.
Breathe in slowly... drawing that mist into your body...
...and exhale, releasing the old completely.
Again... inhale the transformed essence...
...and exhale what you no longer need.
One more time... deeper now...
Let it fill your chest... your mind... your spirit.
You are breathing in integration.
Fire within water.
Water within fire.
No longer separate.





Embodiment (Becoming the Balance)

Now bring your awareness back to your body.
Imagine cool water touching your forehead...

Bringing clarity.

Your chest...

Softening emotion.

Your hands...

Guiding your actions.

Say within:

"I am not torn between elements...

I am the place where they meet...

I am both depth... and direction...

I am becoming."

Feel that truth settle into you.

Return

The ocean begins to fade...

The flame dims...

But something remains within you.

Steady. Integrated. Alive.

Bring your awareness back to your breath.

Back to your body.

Gently begin to move your fingers... your shoulders...

And when you're ready... open your eyes.

***"The flame rests...
The tide remains...
And you... are changed."***

Silas the Sea Witch is very active all over the pagan world. He founded the Mystical Rainbow Tradition of Wicca (Incorporated in Michigan State as the Mystical Rainbow Church International, Inc) in 2023, where he has developed the 3-degree Clergy and non-clergy program. He is an active member of the Spiritual Professionals Association and also runs his own small business, "Silas the Sea Witch, LLC." You can find him on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook as **silastheseawitch**. You can support his small business by browsing his online POD store that has witchy/sea witch/astrology designs at <http://silastheseawitch.store>

Additionally, if you are interested in a private reading with him or to find out more about what he does, feel free to visit his BuyMeACoffee at <http://silastheseawitch.com>, which also has a monthly subscription service.



DIARY OF A Temple Dancer



PHOTO CREDIT: NOEL HUBERT, OFFICIAL SMF PHOTOGRAPHER

WITH AVA ALTHEA



PHOTO CREDIT: MANNY MORENO FROM THE WILD HUNT



"Citizens of Eleusis! Make way! The Oracle comes to speak prophecy, make way!" The harold calls down the hallway filled with people from different walks of life who have gathered here for one purpose: to be initiated into the Mysteries. You are standing still holding a silver serpent, more than an ordinary prop, but a tool to channel the energy of the oracles and priestesses that came before you. At this moment, you look ahead and see the vessel of Pythia draped in her veil and holding her own serpents taking the first step past the ionic columns and something in the air shifts. Drums are beating ahead of you, zills are clanging behind you, you feel an energy slither down your arms, to your wrists, and out your fingers. The crowd disappears from view and suddenly you feel the dust of ancients beneath your toes. The Pythia begins to trance and sway and you move with her.

You turn a corner and see that the golden tripod awaits for the prophetess. The drums and zills cease. There's a pause. Then, someone taps a singing bowl. The crowd presses in as you watch your fellow priestesses take a step up and reach out a hand to the Pythia. She moves with grace and sits atop the tripod with her serpents. You stand watch, guarding the sacred space until she speaks the final words, "Answers to hidden questions reveal nothing in the light of the moment. Epiphany and enlightenment happen anyway." From there, the Pythia seems to glide down the steps and moves with purpose through the crowd of people. They step aside with awe on their faces. The other priestesses fall in line and you follow suit, not letting go of the invocation until the ionic columns are behind you.

That is one of the many experiences I had as a temple dancer this year for Spring Mysteries XL. I joined the temple dancer team in 2025 after seeing them at my first SMF in 2024 and I said to myself, "This is the calling I needed to get myself dancing again." I come from a multidisciplinary background with years of ballet, jazz, tap, hip-hop, line dancing, and more recently, burlesque. However, there was a gap in my life when I stopped dancing completely. The world shut down and I lost hope in being able to move my body for fun again as COVID-19 ravaged the planet, closing all the studios, bars, and theaters. I didn't have the energy to dance at home when I struggled to even believe that there was a god, or deities, or someone that would help us. Fast forward to the end of 2023 after my car accident, the ending of a 6-year relationship, and finding out about a Wiccan organization called the Aquarian Tabernacle Church that has been putting on a festival recreating the Eleusinian mysteries for almost 40 years, that I gained the courage to love myself and believe in hope again.

So there I was, thousands of miles away from home, conquering my fear of flying alone, in a city I've never been in, watching these beautiful people wrapped in gorgeous dresses move their bodies across the stage. They were like vibrant nymphs weaving between the gods as they told the story of Demeter and Persephone. I didn't even think that dance could be sacred up until this moment.

Later that year, I emailed the temple dancer choreographer, Kara Williams, and asked to join the team for 2025. I had a bunch of questions, and she answered each one with details and patience. My life and the way I approach dance have forever changed since then. The temple dancers meet almost every weekend beginning in January to start reviewing the story and set up for that year's Spring Mysteries. Kara rehearses the songs and moves with us and teaches with an efficiency that rivals most of the dance instructors I've had. She's organized, direct, and helps you understand the Mysteries as a temple dancer in a totally different light than as an attendee would (I guess that's probably why she's considered a Wisdom Keeper of the Mysteries, huh?).

But I'm not here to tell you all about my experience as a temple dancer: I'm here to invite you to take your SMF experience to the next level by becoming one with me. There is no such thing as too far, too little, or too much for the temple dancing crew. If you've attended SMF before and you want to join the cast and make a sacred service to the gods, this is a great way to do it.



PHOTO CREDIT: MANNY MORENO FROM THE WILD HUNT

"I'm not here to tell you all about my experience as a temple dancer: I'm here to invite you to take your Spring Mysteries Festival experience to the next level by becoming one with me."



An interview with Kara on Temple Dancing!

Ava: What do you enjoy most about being the temple dancer choreographer?

Kara: *I've always loved dancing and spent 30 years researching and recreating historical dances. This position allows me to bring all of that to the job and then combine it with ritual and energy work. It's the best of both worlds!*

Ava: Why do you think temple dancers are important to Spring Mysteries? (OR what role do they play in SMF?)

Kara: *The dance at SMF adds layers of symbolism and energy work to the drama being presented. They act as a Greek Chorus in many ways. Historically, dancers were a part of the Greek Chorus in Ancient Greek Theater. The dancers support the scene and give participants a moment to process what is going on. Not everyone processes auditorily. Dance gives them a visual addition to processing the Mysteries.*

Ava: How do you create the choreography for the dances each year, and what are you hoping to see more of in the future?

Kara: *The choreography is created after the script is written each year. Some dances move from year to year and have become staples like Demeter's Well Dance. Others are created for that particular year and won't be seen the next year. Some are small movement bits and not really dancing, and others are an idea that gets redone each year to fit the vessel holding the role. I have lots of ideas for future Mysteries, but they will all depend on what the Goddess wants each year.*

Ava: Tell us how someone can become a temple dancer!

Kara: *Anyone can apply to be a temple dancer! We don't require that you have a dance background, but it is useful. Temple dancers do many things during the Mysteries, and not all of it is actually dance. Each fall, we put out an application form. Watch our Facebook page for this to be announced in the fall. I hope to have local dance classes this year, leading up to this, but most of our dancers don't live in the Seattle area, so as long as you are willing to come to SMF, you can apply!*



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Silas the Sea Witch for Wavebound Whispers!

Ava Althea for Diary of a Temple Dancer!

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