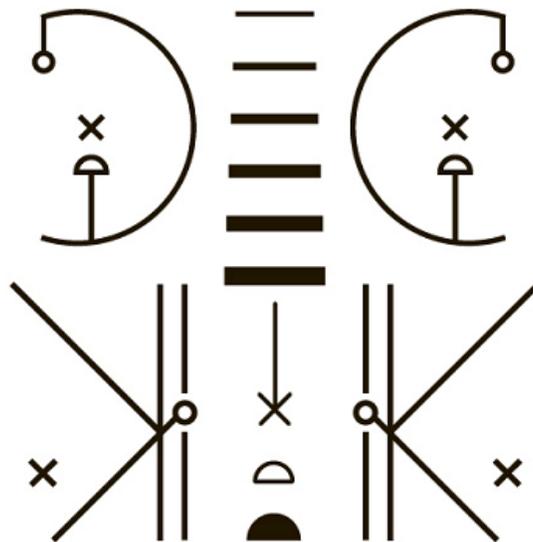
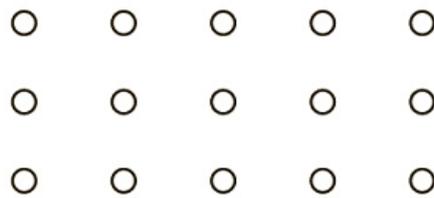


Raven(ous)

FOR LOVERS OF THE MYSTERY

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Where All Circles Vanish

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Working with Water Spirits

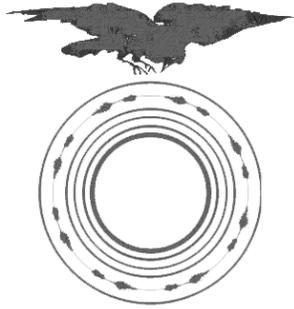
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Seasonal Meditation

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You're welcome.

The Raven(ous) Society 'Zine

Branch for Paranormal Research



Volume CVII, December, 2019

Member Business

We are taking up a yarn collection for our Aid Society, which is knitting the kraken holiday mittens. See the Vicar for details.

Introduction

by the President, Horace Bickersnapp

Not long ago, a few of us in the Raven(ous) Society's branch for Paranormal Research published a pamphlet on interdimensional incursions. We were pleasantly surprised by that pamphlet's positive reception and vowed to continue publishing any future research by our members.

So, when we were honored by a lecture from the (only, as far as I can tell) metaphysical detective, Riga Hayworth, we requested and were granted her permission to publish it. The text of that lecture follows, with some slight edits for function and flow.



Where All Circles Vanish - Riga Hayworth

Good evening. Thank you for inviting me to speak tonight. I am awed and amazed by both your hospitality as well as by this castle. A real, stone castle in California! It's a treat for me to be here. And thank you to your Society secretary, Brigitte. Without her, this lecture would not have been possible.

Recently, a TV show about a society much like your own popularized the phrase, "where all circles vanish." In our own lives, we either go around and around in circles, or, if we're lucky, move in spirals, getting closer and closer to the answers until - hopefully - we reach the end of our quest, and the circles vanish.

As a side note, I noticed that the logo for The Raven(ous) Society also prominently features a circle - a symbol for friendship, the infinite, and much more, as I'll soon explain.

As a metaphysical detective, I often feel that I'm chasing other people's circles - some tragic, some comic, and in a recent case of mine - both tragic and magic.

It was the night before the winter solstice. My husband and I had been invited to a shamanic/alchemy song performance mashup. Normally, I'd go, especially as the singer was Estonian. (Estonia is a fascinating country with a rich shamanic history.) But as it was snowing outside, we'd opted to stay in for a quiet evening beside the Christmas tree.

Our evening was shattered first, by our twins breaking into the Santa cookie jar and rampaging through the house on a festive

sugar high, and second, by a near-incoherent phone call from our friend Shari Stone. She owned the metaphysical bookstore where the performance was being held. Shari shouted something about demons and murder and hung up.

My knuckles were white on the phone as I pocketed it. Shari was not the type for hysterics. So, I abandoned my husband to our terrible two's and drove along the now slushy highway that encircles Lake Tahoe.

I finally reached the metaphysical bookstore, in a timbered, two-story mini-mall, but no police cars were in the lot. In a burst of misplaced hope, I wondered if I'd misheard her shout about murder.

The parking lot was full, though all the shop windows save that of the metaphysical bookstore were dark. The latter glittered with fairy lights, blurry golden globes behind the windows' condensation. I crunched through the deepening snow and rattled the locked front door. A woman shrieked from within, and something crashed, but the steamed windows revealed nothing.

Shari opened the glass door and incense wafted into the frigid night air. She poked her curly head out, and her normally cheerful expression sagged. "Thank God," she said. "I've called the police, but they haven't arrived yet."

Warily, I entered. I should perhaps describe the bookstore's layout. My friend had gone for a light and airy feel, with pale, wood-plank walls, and a stone fireplace on one side of the room. The latter had been turned into a makeshift altar, with dripping candle wax, offerings, and in a nod to the season, more

fairy lights and holly. A log inside the fireplace crackled merrily.

Empty rows of folding metal chairs had been arranged around the fireplace. People stood as far from these as possible, against the walls in groups of twos and threes, and muttered uneasily. A middle-aged woman picked up the pieces of a broken mug. Two younger women, however, stood out. They were dressed entirely in black, and with dyed ebony hair. They stared with a sort of intent impassivity at the lit fireplace.

I tracked their gaze and rocked as if my boots had been nailed in place. On the floor before the fireplace, a large red circle had been painted on a canvas. The circle was circumscribed by another circle of pine boughs and five red pillar candles, their flames flickering. And inside their center, a man with thick white hair and a short beard lay curled in a fetal position. This mockery of a holiday wreath, however, was not the most startling part of the scene. The man's face was the color of chalk, save for his lips, which were smeared with crimson liquid.

I forced myself to step closer.

"We checked," Shari said. "He's dead. I just can't believe it. This was the last stop on his three-month tour. Do you think he did it on purpose?"

Since his eyes stared blankly, I didn't doublecheck his pulse. I would only be disturbing evidence.

"What happened?" I scanned the area around the body. Inside the circle had been drawn fourteen smaller circles. Inside *these* circles were magical symbols, or sigils. three copper bowls and a thermos sat to one side.

Since I'm quite certain you're *not* interested in stories of murder, I'll get to the important part – the magic circle. Magic circles serve multiple purposes, and one such purpose is to create a sacred space. The idea is an ancient one that crosses cultures. Not only does setting sacred space “cleanse” the magician's work environment, but it also symbolically – or perhaps not so symbolically – takes the magician between worlds. By casting a circle, the magician symbolically places himself or herself at the center of the world. (And since the world is globe-shaped, technically any point one picks is the “center”).

This sacred, center space, this between world of elements and angels, creates an opening both upward and downward to what the shaman's call Upper and Lower Worlds, as well as to our own mundane world of the here-and-now. These different levels of reality are joined at the axis mundi, the universal pillar, which connects worlds. Inside a ritual circle, the magician – or in this case, the shamanic singer – becomes that axis mundi, the cosmic pillar at the center of this multiverse.

“This singer,” I said. “Isn't he something of a big name?”

“Ye-es. We were lucky to get him.”

“How *did* you get him?”

She flushed. “We dated in college. He was a business major then. That doesn't make me a suspect, does it?”

I forced down my rising nausea. She was indeed a suspect, and though I didn't want her to be a killer – I couldn't *see* her as a killer – I'd learned the hard way people don't

always behave the way we want or expect. True, she'd called me to the scene. But had she asked me here to find the real killer, or to devise a solution that would clear her?

“What happened next?” I forced myself to ask.

Shari swallowed. “He was singing from his book, and either pretending to go into a trance or actually going into one. His songs are based on Estonian sacred music and are all about shamanic visions, so... he was visioning. It was all rather lovely, even if none of us understood Estonian, until...” She faltered.

I nodded for her to go on.

“He was about a third through his songbook when he set it down, and his assistant—” She gestured toward a young man in a blue Oxford shirt who stood in the corner, one hand paused midway through clawing his thick brown hair. “—turned on the speakers. A recording of his song continued, and the shaman knelt for the ritual. In time to the beat, he dropped herbs into the first bowl, and then filled it with liquid from the thermos. From another bowl, he took a smear of white face paint and spread it over his head. From the third, he took some of that red liquid – I really hope it's *fake* blood – and smeared that on his mouth and chin. And then he began going into a sort of trance. When he started writhing around on the floor, we all assumed it was part of the act. Even when he began foaming at the mouth, well, he had really thrown himself into the performance earlier. We just all sat and watched while... he died.” She drew a deep breath. “It was a minute or two before I finally realized something was very wrong.”

It was obvious he'd been killed by a human rather than a supernatural agent. I repressed a shiver. It was equally obvious the killer was still in this room, pretending not to watch me. Perhaps I shouldn't have come here alone.

I focused on the case. It interested me that during the victim's spasms, he'd managed to stay entirely within the magic circle. Not a single pine bough or candle had been disturbed. Perhaps subconsciously the shaman believed the circle contained *him*.

"Who could have added something to those bowls?" I asked.

"Anyone. We had the lights turned down low when people came in, and several guests walked up to the, er, stage to take photos."

"Who are those two women?" I angled my chin toward the women in black. Their gaze hadn't shifted from the corpse.

"Local witches from Truckee. They come every Friday for the Reiki shares. They take themselves a little too seriously, but they're not killers."

Witches who take themselves too seriously can be dangerous indeed, but I only said, "Where were they sitting during the performance?"

"The front row," she said.

I calculated the number of chairs vs. people. Every seat had been filled, which meant the women had arrived early to get those seats, and they would have had easy access to the bowls in the dark.

Shari would have had access too. She always assisted with the preparation at events like these.

"And the other guests?" I asked.

"All locals," she said.

The skin prickled between my shoulder blades. Casually, I turned and scanned the room. The witches were now staring at me. "You say the singer was Estonian?" I said, trying to ignore them.

"Well, ethnically, but he's from Salem."

That raised the hairs on the back of my neck. "Massachusetts?"

"Maine," she said. "I'm worried - well, I'm worried about all sorts of things. But I'm mostly worried for my guests. I don't think his protective circle was a real magic circle. If he called *something* in, could it have escaped?"

A magic circle is an energetic construct that a magician builds with their mind and their will. It not only serves to protect the magician as they cast spells, but also acts as a container for the magical energy the magician conjures. The smaller circles around the sigils contained and focused the energy in the sigils. The question was, had this circle been empowered with real magic?

I reached my hand toward the circle and felt an unmistakable tingle of energy. "It's real," I said. "But why do you think he might have called something in?" We were speaking in euphemisms, but she'd mentioned demons in her phone call. I knew that was what she was thinking of now.

She raked a hand through her hair. "At the point where things went... bad, it seemed like he was invoking some sort of dark entity. And those creepy symbols." She pointed at the sigils and briefly closed her eyes.

I studied the smaller circles and the symbols inside them. “Maybe, but the sigils are the names of archangels. It’s unlikely one would have caused him harm.”

But they hadn’t been enough to protect him from the poison he, or his killer, had brought into the circle.

Shari wrung her hands. “I almost wish something supernatural *had* killed him.”

“No,” I said. “It’s obvious who’s responsible.”

The police arrived, and I had a word with the chief, who I was friends with. He took the assistant in for questioning. Although none of the audience would have known something had gone wrong with the performance, the assistant who’d worked at these performances for three months most certainly would have.

The Truckee witches eyed me thoughtfully as they departed.

Yes, they would bear watching. But it was late, and my family was waiting, and that is a story for another day.

Over breakfast the next morning, the twins no worse for wear from their sugar high, I read in the newspaper the assistant had confessed. He’d become convinced that the singer had gone to the “dark side” and become locked in some unholy occult bargain.

That is the danger of the occult. It is wise to take the occult seriously, but when practitioners take *themselves* too seriously, all sorts of things go wrong. But perhaps three months in hotel rooms is also enough to drive anyone mad.

And that brings us back to circles. The assistant and the singer had been locked inside a deadly loop, conducting the same outré performance week after week.

Ultimately, that cycle had been the undoing of both men. Magic circles *can* act as protection. But they can also be prisons for whatever is summoned into them and for ourselves, if we linger too long within. And so, fellow magicians, I ask – what circles contain you? And more importantly, what are you going to do about it?

Thank you.



Your journey begins here...

The Raven(ous) Society is a convivial society of mystery lovers (hence the raven), food lovers (hence the “ous”), and lovers of the paranormal. All sincere seekers of mystery are welcome. Learn more at: kirstenweiss.com

Working with Water Spirits

By Sr. Martina

Deep in our hearts, we know what elements we respond to best – earth, air, fire or water. If you’ve ever called yourself a water baby, or caught yourself declaring you absolutely must live within sight of water, you most likely have an affinity for water. (Magic is often much simpler than we try to make it).

How then, can we children of water work with water spirits? First, we must firmly set in our mind that we are working with spirits and not elementals. Elementals are magically

“big” and capricious beings, with little regard for or interest in man, save when man interferes with their homes.

Focus your intent, then, on water spirits — called sometimes undines, sometimes devas.

Next, as in working with any spirit, understand that a successful relationship is not transactional. How would you like it if your annoying neighbor, who ignored you for years, suddenly started asking you for favors? Start slowly, with gestures of gratitude for sharing space with you — perhaps by adding a fountain or other water feature to your own dwelling, or by picking up trash you find at the beach or riverside? You may also leave small thank you gifts of flower petals or jewelry in water spaces sacred to you. (I prefer the former for ecological reasons, though mermaids *do* enjoy their shiny objects).

When you enter a space with water, assure the spirits out loud that you mean no harm, and ask their permission to enter. You'll know if your heart lifts that they've granted access.

A I R

F I R E

E A R T H

W A T E R



Letters from our Members

I enjoyed Lenore Bonheim's essay on scrying with black mirrors, and issue 1052 sent me running for my Dion Fortune books. Being somewhat short on obsidian, I made my own black mirror using a clear glass plate and spraying the black with matte black paint, and have been enjoying scrying with it beneath the full moon. Thank you for the inspiration!

- Frater Pankblossom

I'm so glad you found inspiration in our 'zine! Be sure to regularly charge your mirror with white light, using the visualization exercises in issue 1051.

Thank you for last quarter's article on making your own luck. I've been paying more attention to synchronicities and opportunities, and last month I got the job of my dreams! Who knew that luck is mostly a matter of a positive mindset?

- Soror Button

You're very welcome, and congratulations on your new position!

Your article on grounding was brilliant in its simplicity. Stand barefoot beneath a tree and just feel! Who would have guessed something so “basic” could be so effective?

- Soror Pennyworth

Indeed, sometimes the simplest magic is the best!

America's Fairy Trail

By Sr. Weiss

If America has a fairy path, it's the Natchez Trace, a 10,000 year-old footpath wending 444 miles from Natchez to Nashville.

Traditionally avoided (because fairies are not to be crossed), these footpaths generally follow straight lines, running along ley lines and/or between sacred places – particularly mounds. The Natchez Trace breaks the straight-line rule of the fairy path. But like the British fairy trails, the Natchez Trace links multiple clusters of sacred mounds.

I think that counts as a fairy trail.

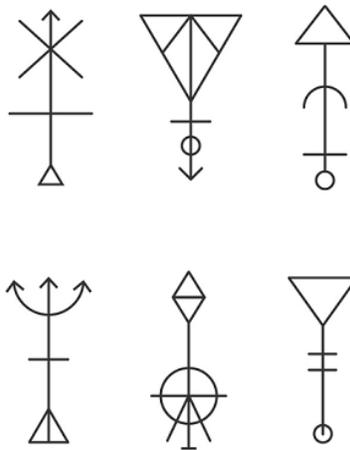
The Emerald Mound at mile marker 10.3 is the second largest temple mound in the United States, built by the ancestors of the Natchez Indians. Further north, the eight Pharr burial mounds, built from 1 – 200 AD, are the most important archaeological site in

Mississippi. (Milepost 286.7) Mind you, these are Indian and not fairy mounds. But the fairy mounds in Britain weren't built by fairies either. They're mysterious and lovely and were created by a people lost in the mists of time, and so we call them fairy mounds.

And perhaps it's just my out-of-control imagination, but the mounds along the Natchez Trace have the same fae feel. There's something uncanny about the sites, a sense of timelessness. So, I wasn't completely surprised when a photo I took at the Bynum mounds just as the sun set turned up several orbs.

Only bits of the original trail still exist for you to wander. Occasionally, one drives over or beneath a bridge to the outside world, catching a glimpse of everyday traffic and bustle. One is rarely alone for long on the Trace. But it retains the feel of a place apart, another world, a winding, sacred path.

Your meditation glyphs for the season...



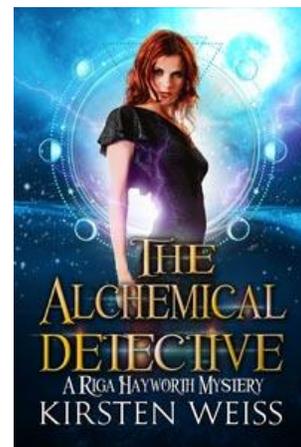
K E E P
B A L A N C E

Note from Kirsten

I've recently become mildly obsessed with magical 'zines - informal publications, usually in the form of booklets, having to do with some aspect of magic. My favorites are filled with folklore, magic spells, or magical philosophy. I've toyed with the idea of creating my own, but that would involve things like shipping and running to print shops, neither of which I really want to deal with. But when I began thinking of this Riga Hayworth short story, the idea of writing it as a 'zine was irresistible, especially since the Raven(ous) Society would make an ideal publisher.

Riga's lecture is based on current and very old magical cosmology. Just one example comes from "A Compleat History of Magic, Sorcery and Witchcraft," (circa 1715) on using circles to summon spirits. The author writes: "...several kinds of Circles, and Conjurations added to them, will raise several kinds of Spirits." (Just so you know I'm not making this stuff up. The murders and characters, yes. The magic, no.)

You can read more Riga starting with book 1, *The Alchemical Detective*, at kirstenweiss.com/the-alchemical-detective



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This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously (Shari Stone won the right to include her name in this story in a contest in December, 2019). Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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