

# SPECIAL SAMHAIN & EDITION



## A Message from Zehara, Founder of Pagans Behind Bars

Dear Community,

As we turn toward Samhain, we honor it not only as a time to remember our beloved dead, but also as the turning of the Wheel of the Year—the Pagan New Year. Samhain teaches us that death and endings are not to be feared, but embraced as part of the sacred cycle of transformation. Just as the trees release their leaves to the wind, we too are invited to let go of what no longer serves us. In doing so, we create space for new beginnings, new growth, and renewed strength. This season reminds us that change is not only inevitable, but necessary for our spiritual evolution. May this Samhain bring you clarity, courage, and the blessing of fresh starts as we step into the New Year together.

With blessings,

Zehara Nachash, MACJ

Founder, Pagans Behind Bars

## A History of Black Cats

Zehara recently adopted her beautiful black foster kitten Sabrina! So she wanted to share some history on black cats and witchcraft!



Cats have long held a special place in the lore of witchcraft, their mysterious nature and nocturnal habits making them natural symbols of the magical and unseen.

**Ancient Roots:** In ancient Egypt, cats were revered as sacred to the goddess Bastet, protectress of the home, fertility, and women. Their keen hunting abilities and enigmatic presence made them guardians against both pests and evil spirits. **Medieval Europe:** During the Middle Ages, cats—particularly black ones—became entangled in fears of witchcraft and the devil. Church authorities and popular folklore spread the belief that witches could transform into cats, or that cats served as their familiars—supernatural helpers who aided in spellcraft. Cats seen lurking about were sometimes thought to be demons in disguise. This fear grew so strong that cats were often persecuted, especially during witch trials. Ironically, this mass killing of cats in parts of Europe may have worsened plagues, as rodent populations thrived without their natural predators. **Witch's Familiar:** Despite this dark history, cats endured as powerful symbols of witchcraft. In early modern magical traditions, they were believed to be vessels of intuition, spirit messengers, and protectors who could travel between worlds. Black cats, in particular, came to embody mystery, independence, and the liminal space between luck and misfortune.

Today: Modern Witches often view cats as sacred companions and spiritual allies. Their independence, sensitivity, and quiet wisdom reflect the qualities many practitioners seek in their magical practice. Cats remain enduring icons of witchcraft, linking us back to ancient reverence and medieval fears alike.

## Goddess of the Month

### PERSEPHONE

Persephone, Queen of the Underworld, is the goddess of death, rebirth, and transformation. Her descent into the realm of Hades marks the dark half of the year, while her return to the earth heralds spring's renewal. At Samhain, she reminds us that endings are never final—they are the fertile soil from which new life grows. Persephone teaches us to embrace the cycles of darkness and light, finding wisdom in both.



## Tarot Card of the Month:

### THE MOON

The Moon reflects mystery, illusion, and the shadow self. At Samhain, when the veil between worlds is thinnest, this card invites us to explore our subconscious, face our fears, and walk the liminal path between seen and unseen.

## Celebrating Samhain Behind Bars

Samhain is the turning of the Wheel, the time when we honor our ancestors and step into the dark half of the year. Though we may not have bonfires or gatherings, the spirit of Samhain lives within us. Light a small candle in your mind's eye, speak the names of loved ones who have passed, and give thanks for the wisdom they share from beyond the veil.

This season is also the Pagan New Year—a chance to release old habits, regrets, or burdens, and to set intentions for the path ahead. Even in confinement, we can embrace transformation.

Samhain teaches us that endings are beginnings in disguise, and that true magick begins within.

### A Simple Samhain Ritual:

1. Sit quietly and close your eyes.
2. Take three deep breaths, imagining the air as cleansing energy.
3. Picture yourself holding a small flame. Let it represent your connection to Spirit and your ancestors.
4. In your heart, speak the names of those who have passed or simply say "I honor my ancestors."
5. Now imagine handing that flame to the coming year, releasing what no longer serves you and asking for guidance on your new path.



6. End with the words: "I honor the past. I welcome the future. Blessed Samhain."



### Spotlight: ALEXANDRIAN WICCA

Alexandrian Wicca is a modern tradition of Witchcraft founded in the 1960s by Alex and Maxine Sanders in England. It shares many similarities with Gardnerian Wicca, such as initiatory degrees, coven structure, and reverence for both the God and Goddess. However, Alexandrian practice is often described as being more eclectic and ceremonial in flavor, weaving in elements from ceremonial magick, Kabbalah, and ritual drama. The tradition places strong emphasis on balance—male and female, light and dark, life and death. Rituals are usually performed within a sacred circle, and initiates progress through degrees of training that deepen their knowledge of magick, ritual, and mystery. One of Alexandrian Wicca's hallmarks is its openness to adaptation. While rooted in tradition, covens often encourage experimentation, seeing Wicca as a living, evolving path. Today, Alexandrian Wicca remains one of the most influential branches of modern Witchcraft. It honors the cycles of nature, the power of ritual, and the spiritual growth of the individual within a supportive coven.

## God of the Month

### HADES

Hades, the Greek god of the Underworld, rules over the realm of the dead with fairness and dignity. Far from being a figure of evil, Hades is a guardian of balance—ensuring that every soul finds its rightful place after death. As consort of Persephone, he embodies the mysteries of transformation and the unseen cycles of life. At Samhain, Hades reminds us that death is not an end but a passage, and that honoring the ancestors connects us to the eternal rhythm of the cosmos.



### The Magick of Pumpkin Spice

Pumpkin spice is more than a cozy seasonal flavor—it's a potion of ancient spices, each brimming with its own magickal energy. Together, cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, ginger, and allspice weave a blend of warmth, protection, and abundance—perfect for autumn and Samhain. This aromatic mix holds the keys to money magick, protection magick, and love magick all in one. Simply stir your pumpkin-spiced coffee or tea clockwise, focus on your intention, and watch your wishes begin to manifest.



# Tea Leaf Reading



Tea leaf reading, or tasseography, is a simple yet powerful form of divination. After finishing your cup of loose-leaf tea, swirl the last sip three times, then flip the cup upside down on the saucer. Once the leaves settle, look at the shapes and symbols inside—they become a map of messages, guiding you with insight into the present and future. Trust your intuition: what you see first is often the truest message.

The Meanings of Common Tasseography Symbols



## FORTUNE OF THE MONTH

The winds of October whisper of endings and beginnings. This month brings a closing of old doors and the opening of hidden paths. Trust your intuition—it will be sharper than ever as the veil thins. Messages may come through dreams, signs, or sudden insights. Release what weighs you down, for transformation waits on the other side. If you embrace change with courage, October will gift you with clarity, renewal, and unexpected blessings.



Wheel: inevitable change, progress

Dashes: brief travel, busy

Mountain: journey

Heart: love, romance, home

Fish: good news

Spiral: creativity, energy

Anchor: stability, difficult to change

Lines: change

Arrow up: yes, good direction. Arrow down: no, wrong direction

Chain: responsibility

Scissors: arguments

Knots: anxiety, stress

Sun: energy, success, new beginnings

Apple: long life

Owl: sickness, poverty

Tree: happiness

Pear: wealth, social status

Cat: gossip

Umbrella: difficulty

Squares: comfort, peace

Hammer: challenges overcome

Horseshoe: good luck

Star: excellence, success

House: business success

Crescent moon: prosperity

## What Is HOODOO?

Hoodoo is a traditional African American system of folk magick and spirituality that developed in the southern United States. Rooted in African spiritual practices, it blended with Native American herbal knowledge and European folk traditions. Hoodoo focuses on practical, everyday magick—using roots, herbs, oils, candles, charms, and prayer to bring about healing, protection, love, luck, and justice.

## The Vodou Witch

Aside from being an initiated High Priestess, Zehara is a Vodou Priestess. So what is a Vodou Witch? A Vodou Witch blends the path of Witchcraft with the practices and spirits of New Orleans Vodou. Unlike those formally initiated into Vodou, a Vodou Witch walks a devotional and eclectic path—honoring Vodou spirits (Lwa) alongside the God and Goddess of Wicca or other Pagan traditions. This path often includes working with spirits such as Maman Brigitte, Baron Samedi, or Papa Legba, while also drawing from Wiccan tools like the circle, the elements, and seasonal celebrations. A Vodou Witch respects the traditions of Vodou while weaving them into a personal practice of spellwork, ancestor veneration, and magick. At its heart, being a Vodou Witch is about walking between worlds—standing at the crossroads where Witchcraft and Vodou meet, and finding empowerment, protection, and transformation in that union.

So what is Vodou?

New Orleans Vodou is a spiritual tradition that grew from West African religions, carried to Louisiana through the transatlantic slave trade. Blended with Catholicism, French folk practices, and Native American influences, it became a unique tradition rooted in the city's history and culture.

Central to New Orleans Vodou is honoring the Lwa—powerful spirits who guide, protect, and aid practitioners. Ancestor veneration, ritual drumming, singing, and the use of sacred symbols called veves are also key elements.

Famous figures like Marie Laveau, the legendary Voodoo Queen of New Orleans, helped shape the tradition into one of resilience, community, and spiritual empowerment. Today, New Orleans Vodou continues to be practiced as a living, evolving tradition that honors both the ancestors and the spirits.



## Magickal Journal

Keeping a magickal journal is more than just writing down your thoughts—it's a sacred practice of recording spells, rituals, dreams, and spiritual insights. By putting pen to paper, you create a living grimoire of your journey, track your growth, and uncover patterns in your practice. Your journal becomes both a mirror and a map: reflecting your inner world while guiding you toward deeper self-discovery and magickal empowerment.



Here are three Magickal Journal Prompts for October:

🕯️ Shedding the Old – What habits, fears, or patterns am I ready to release with the turning of the year at Samhain?

🕯️ Ancestor Connection – If I could speak to one ancestor tonight, who would it be, and what would I ask them?

🕯️ Walking the Shadows – How do I embrace the darker half of the year as a source of wisdom, rather than fear?

## Samhain Chant

Spirits near, the veil is thin,  
Ancient voices, let us in.  
Circle turning, dark to light,  
Guide us through this sacred night.



We'd love to hear from you!

Do you have a poem, story, spell, or piece of artwork you'd like to share with the community? Send it our way—we'd be delighted to feature your work in the next newsletter! ✨