



Yes Hello No



A B C E D R I N K J K L M
N O P Q R T A N K W X Y Z



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Goodbye



The Drink Tank 435

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The Occult



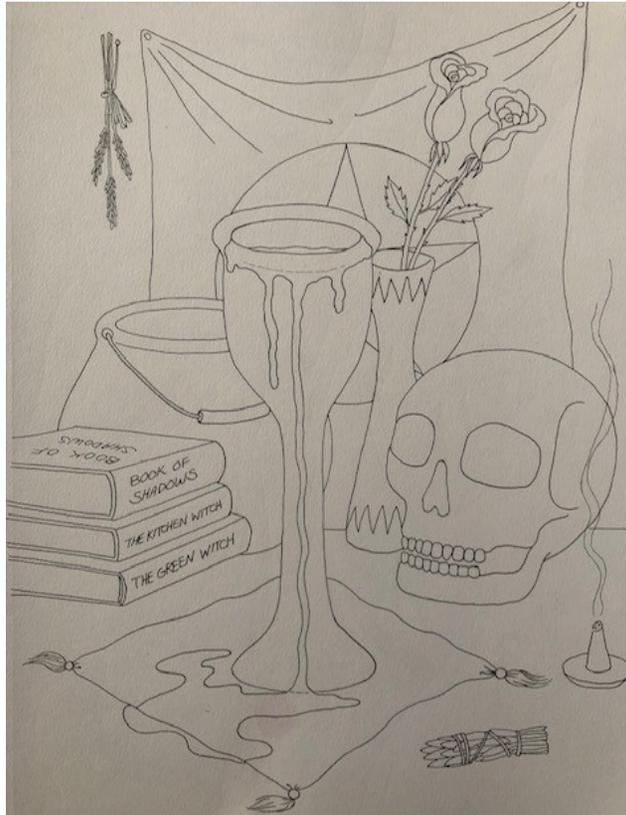
Books for the Occult-Minded . . . with Very Little Time

By Christopher J. Garcia

Let me say this – occultists are not into the whole brevity thing. I have never seen as many wasted words as in the writings of Blavatsky and Crowley, and maybe Lovecraft. They pile it on and on, and really, while what they're saying is interesting, who has time for all that! In the lead-up to this issue, I did a ton of research, and ended up finding books that provided fun and clear summaries, some better than others.

Let's start with the one-stop shop. Lewis Spence's *An Encyclopedia of Occultism* is a bug-squisher of a title, but it's also the broadest, and though it goes in depth on some things, it does illuminate a lot more than reading source material. The entries are encyclopedic, but they're also well written. There are a few errors in spellings, but really, the amount of research but into the thing makes it worthwhile. Originally published in 1920, the version I have is a Dover reprint. The entries on "England," "The Illuminati," and "Compacts with the Devil" are my personal faves.

Anastacia Greywolf has a dope name and is a dang good writer. Her work, *Witchcraft: A Book of Spells and Potions* is pretty and easy to read! It's a hands-on guide, but it has a little bit of history and legend stuff that is nice to read.



“Witchcraft is never cookie-cutter. Like recipes from a book, the recipes are often tailored to individual tastes as long as the general formula and steps are understood.”

Mat Auryn

If you like audiobooks, “A History of Magic, Witchcraft, and The Occult” is a fun listen. The info, while pretty much a series of brief snippets, is delightful and quick, and it's got a great narrator. It's a wonderful listen for anyone who is just coming to look at the occult and doesn't want a lot of overly detailed stuff gumming up the works. This one covers from prehistory up to the Internet age, which is super cool.

There is a classic, *The Doctrine and Ritual of High Magic*, which was from the mid-nineteenth century, but they made a new translation and audiobook on Audible that is not only highly listenable but works in smaller chunks. It's the beefiest book here, but it's also a really good read . . . or listen, I guess.

Lisa Buckland's *Wicca for Beginners* is . . . well, it's basically an orientation manual. A decent one, but still, you've got in with that in mind. It is far better than James L. Thomas's *Wicca for Beginners*. They both pale in comparison to *Asatru for Beginners*, by Mathias Nordvig. They're all okay, but really, pretty ground floor stuff that never really tries to move you upstairs.



Outside The Lodge: Freemasonry Exterior Ornament Explained

by Kevin J. Luck

From the end of the Civil War and well into the early 1900s, fraternal organizations began to see historically unparalleled numbers of new members. Out of an estimated adult male population of 19 million in the United States at the turn of the last century, over five million men claimed some form of fraternal affiliation. The rolls of Freemasonry and the Odd Fellows were bordering on a million men each. In logical response, organizations like the Freemasons began to utilize the available increase in capital from membership dues to build dedicated lodges. This organizational expansion corresponds to a movement in “speaking” architecture being used to reflect building program. Balanced between a need for continued recruitment and the desire to clearly identify lodges to members, the Freemasons carefully chose ornamentation that both attracted the curious and gave clear guidance to the initiated.

The planned building of dedicated lodges resolved several logistical difficulties that had been plaguing the more secretive fraternal organizations like the Freemasons as their roles started to swell after 1880. While physically accommodating the increase in membership and offering more individuals access to different levels of ritual at different times,

building new facilities also allowed for the preservation of the sanctity of the rituals by ensuring they remained available to members only and created an increase in overall revenue generation as the halls could be used for public functions when not in use. This would strangely mimic the origins of many lodges as they initially gathered in the back rooms of public houses. In the transition from the public house to a programmed environment allowed for permanence on several levels, reliance on word of mouth, different locations, and different services available at different facilities. It allowed the order to not only build facilities according to the needs of the order but to also decorate its buildings to the design and tastes of administrators. According to *A Pattern Language*, “The main purpose of ornament in the environment – in buildings, rooms, and public spaces – is to make the world more whole . . .” To the Freemasons, the easiest way to achieve this wholeness was to utilize symbols that had significant meaning to every level of the organization, but also had characteristics that would engage the curious to ask questions.

The Freemasons, while not a deeply secretive or exceptionally reclusive organization, have many symbols associated with the order which have easily discernable meanings in context. Many of the symbols have either letters or numbers associated with them that have deeper associations. As an example, the most common objective symbol associated

with Freemasonry are the familiar compass and square motif (Figure 1) that features prominently on most printed works and correspondence. Usually, the compass and square are featured surrounding or framing an object or letter to give it prominence. The more common letters found in examples are “G” and “S” respectively. “G” for geometry, which is a reference to sacred geometry which is central understanding of the ritual paths, and “S” for service, which is central to advancement in the order and part of the function of Freemasonry as a part of the community. Visually, this framing is both aesthetically appealing and rather expected. To the uninitiated eye at passing glance, it reads as a common Roman typeface letter in a strange diamond shaped frame. To the initiate, this symbol embodied the highest order of knowledge and attainment of ideals.

Figure 1: Compass and Square Example with “G”



The origins of the compass and square as symbols of Freemasonry come from the connection of the teachings of the Great Architect, which is both synonymous with a God, and metaphorically, to the architect Hiram Abif, who was the architect of King Solomon's temple. Often, both Abif and King Solomon are depicted as ornamental additions to Masonic halls, commonly depicted by an unadorned bearded man of middle age and a crowned bearded man of middle age (Figures 2 and 3). The temple of King Solomon was one of the holiest of places in the ancient world and supposedly was both a great architectural marvel and an example of the perfect temple to God on Earth. Abif supposedly understood the sacred geometry of the cosmos, the secrets of the ancient stone masons such as the Egyptians who designed and built the pyramids, and lastly had the ability to experience and express the architecture that embodied God. The Temple of King Solomon was evidentially so holy and so revered that it was recognized by every civilized religion in the whole of the known world at that time. When Solomon's Temple was architecturally reproduced in 1475 by Pope Sixtus IV (more commonly known as the Sistine Chapel) on the grounds of the Vatican, it created a rift between the Catholic church and Judaism that still is unresolved at this time, The act of creating this most holy of buildings anywhere other than the Temple mount in Jerusalem, is forbidden according to the Talmud. Solomon, for his temple and Abif, for his command of the magic and art of the architectural marvels of the ages, are highly revered by the Freemasons.



Figures 2 and 3: King Solomon (L) and Hiram Abif (R)

Another common ornamental element on the Masonic lodge, specifically the Scottish Rite branch, is the double-headed eagle (figure 4). At one time, this symbol was more prevalent to denote a Masonic gathering place than the compass and square combination and supposedly is a symbol that can trace itself back to the Egyptian roots of Freemasonry. It is often seen paired with a triangle containing the number 32 or 33 to denote the degrees or stages that one moves through to become a high master and administrator in the fraternal order, the triangle the symbol of the Egyptian pyramid. There is a large amount of conflicting information as to the actual meaning of the double-headed eagle; some say it is a simplified representation of a Phoenix, with its two heads representing birth and death. Another theory is that it is a representation of Janus, the embodiment of Hermes and Aphrodite and a metaphor for a sacred balance of beauty and intellect. If anything, the myriad of meanings makes this symbol even more appropriate an exterior decorative element as it is visually unusual and would attract the curious passerby to want to know more about its meaning.

“Those without the gate frequently question the wisdom and right of the occultist to guard his knowledge by the imposition of oaths of secrecy. We are so accustomed to see the scientist give his beneficent discoveries freely to all mankind that we feel that humanity is wronged and defrauded if any knowledge be kept secret by its discoverers and not at once made available for all who desire to share in it.”

Dion Fortune



Figure 4: Double Headed Eagle and Pyramid with 33

It is easy to pass through a city without paying attention to specific ornamental building details. In the current economy, with so many buildings of every type and style lying vacant, if a building has had ornament relating to its original program, the program has likely changed, or the ornament has been removed or altered. Likely due to social networking application sites on the Internet and an over-all change in lifestyle focus in the last decade or more, many fraternal organizations are struggling with retaining members and the median age of members is steadily increasing. The supplemental income of offering meeting hall and banquet facilities has also taken a substantial decline in the economic downturn and many fraternal organizations have begun to sell off their real-estate holdings. Perhaps the ornamentation that historically inspired individuals to become members of the Freemasons will still serve its intended purpose to inform and enlighten even if the building that it adorns no longer serves its initial architectural function.

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Pictures are from the Scottish Rite Lodge, now the Capitol Club building, in San Jose, California



Twenty-First Century Ritual Design

by Christopher J. Garcia

You may be shocked to discover that I design rituals.

I don't believe in magic per se, but I do believe that there are ways that we can get in touch with stuff we don't understand. I guess my view of things is somewhere between mind over matter and Dumbo's feather.

That doesn't mean that I don't dabble. That's totally on brand for me, right?

Rituals, as I see them, are convergences of focus, symbol, and sacrifice. You must have the focus to bring out your will, or whatever you prefer to call it, and you need a symbol to focus on.

Sacrifice isn't always bodily, and in my eyes, it doesn't really need to be, but destruction or just withdrawing something from your own use would be enough.

Here are two rituals I designed that I think have some benefit.

“Magick is an art; using reality and the world as its canvas.”
Dacha Avelin

The Weekend Candles Ritual

You will need:

Several long-burning candles

Paper

Envelopes

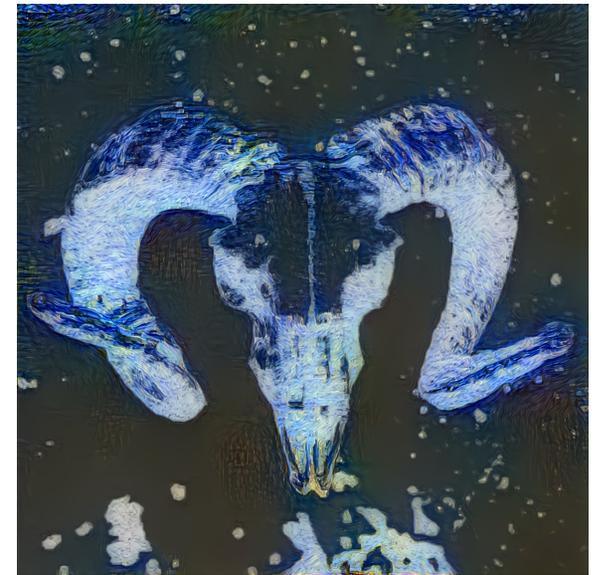
Pen/pencil

Lighter

The idea here is to bring about something wanted from the outside world. Start by writing a letter or a journal entry, or simply a description, of what you want. Let's say you want to get a new job, you might create a faux employment contract, or a thorough job description, or something like that. Now, put it in an envelope and place it where it will be able to get you into it. Like under your pillow, or under the cushion of your favorite chair, or just put it in the breast pocket of your favorite jacket for a while. After you think that you've marinated it in your essence enough, get the candle and put it in a secure location. If you have cats, this might not be the ritual for you. Start by lighting the letter on fire. And then quickly use it to light the candle. Let the letter burn completely, even if you need to light it again with the flame from the candle. Then write the letter again by the light of the candle, or at least where you can still smell it. Keep that letter with you. The candle will burn and burn and when it is obviously nearly dead, get another, light the letter you wrote again and light it on fire, using it to light the new candle. Allow the letter to completely burn, and the

old candle to burn all the way down. Then, write another copy of the letter. Repeat this process for a few days. When you light the final candle you have, write three final copies of the letter. Place one in the way that you got yourself into the original letter. Another letter should go somewhere where it won't be encountered all the time, but it's still present. In my life, it would be either in a drawer I rarely open, or in a box in the garage, or even in the trunk of my car. The final one put somewhere out in the world. Bury it in a park, tape it up under a conference table in a room you rarely go in to at work, or even just drop it in a mailbox without an address.

If you're a sex magician, or just hardcore, you'd probably want to have some sort of bodily sacrifice, and in that case, you'd want to use the sacrificed material in a tiny amount on each letter.





The Ritual of Five Silences

You will need:

4 sound-making device that have timers.

A symbol of what you're working on.

Okay, this is a concentration and productive ritual. Start by creating a symbol of what you're wanting to do. For example, if you're trying to get a zine done, you might take a couple of pieces of paper, fold the in half and staple them in the middle, and write the title on the first page. The make sure you've got the materials you want to be creating with at hand. Then, set all your sound-making devices (iPhones, iPads, CD players, televisions, whatever) so that they are slightly staggered. Then when they are all going, you need to start making noise as well.

Whether it's by playing an instrument, singing, or even just babbling, you need to start and keep going. As the sound making devices stop one by one, you need to keep going, and when the last one has stopped, keep going for just a little longer. When you can't go anymore, start doing the thing you wanted to be able to focus on.

For those who desire bodily sacrifice, the best idea is to imbue the symbol object with a bit of it.

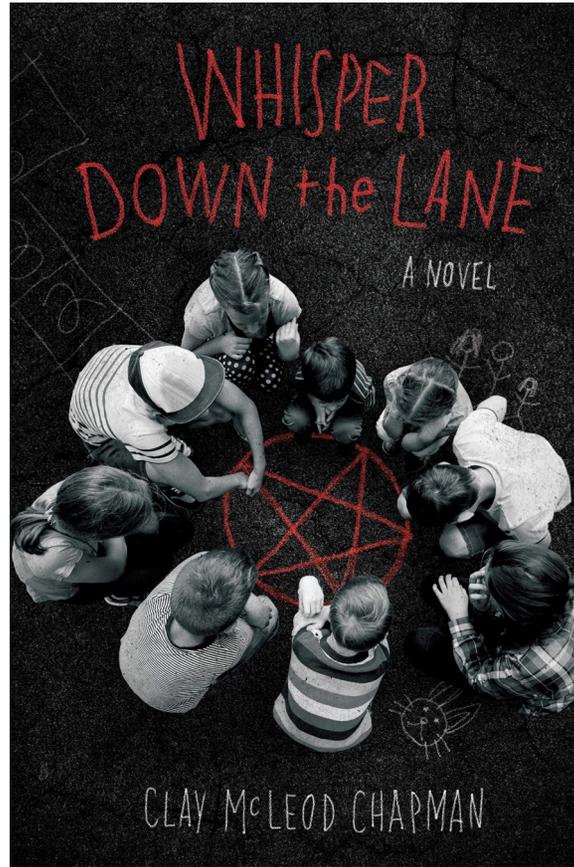
Clay McLeod Chapman's *Whisper Down the Lane*

A Review by Chuck Serface

In 1983, seven teachers from the McMartin Preschool were alleged to have abused more than 100 children. The case lasted seven years and cost \$15 million, making it the longest and most expensive American legal proceeding ever, but no convictions occurred. Bruna Calado, Henry Otgaar, Timothy J. Luke, and Sara Landström with *The Inquisitive Mind* summarize what started it all:

To start, the statement from the first allegedly abused child was made by a parent who later was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. After this statement, the police sent a letter to 200 families. In this letter parents were warned that their children could have also been abused and were also requested to ask their children specific questions concerning the matter. However, research shows that parents often unintentionally ask children questions in a suggestive manner that leads to false reports and might jeopardize children's memories. This is shown by the fact that children can eventually start to believe and remember the suggested events.

The authors cite suggestive interviews conducted by social workers coercing memories presupposing events that never happened:



Interviewer: Can you remember the naked pictures?

Child: (Shakes head "no")

Interviewer: Can't remember that part?

Child: (Shakes head "no")

Interviewer: Why don't you think about that for a while, okay? Your memory might come back to you.

Then children were verbally awarded when they "remembered" situations, and descriptions became quite bizarre. Satanic rituals, underground tunnels, orgies at carwashes and airports, even Chuck Norris was mentioned as a possible abuser. Indeed, escaping relentless coverage surrounding the McMartin case was impossible. To say investigators require training against improperly leading subjects is an understatement, since shoddy undertakings could very well impede situations where actual child abusers need brought to justice.

The McMartin case reflected an overall Satanic Panic engulfing the United States during the 1980s and 1990s. Story after story from media sources displayed "evidence" of satanic messages embedded into rock albums, comic books, popular films, all inflamed by sensationalist reportage, coercive interviewing techniques, and zealous police investigations. Participants were mixed. One party sought to manipulate through fear while others were merely misinformed. A work friend who attended a police seminar on satanic practices showed me materials the seminar's facilitator had distributed. Mostly, these read like introductory texts on Wicca, like Raymond Buckland or Gerald Gardner providing information related to neo-pagan practices but not inherently Satanism.



Our culture can't escape conspiracy theories. John F. Kennedy's second shooter, a cryogenically-stored Walt Disney, ongoing Illuminati or aliens meddling into our affairs, communists, satanic hordes, and more recently Pizzagate and QAnon – it never stops, no matter how many are debunked or how much they challenge societal stability.

With his *Whisper Down the Lane*, Clay McLeod Chapman utilizes these unfortunate real-life tropes -- statutory allegations, exaggerated accusations, conspiracy fears, and the Satanic Panic -- into a compelling thriller that explores aftermaths, the damaged lives left after the heated investigations, distorted coverage, and melodramatic court proceedings have concluded. Indeed, his title refers to a popular party game beginning when one child whispers a phrase into another's ear, and this continues along a circle until finally the final child whispers to the original what they've heard. Invariably, the phrase becomes entirely changed, since each child playing reports what they think they've heard. Or maybe what they wanted to hear? Or maybe what they think you should hear? We are by nature unreliable narrators, mostly unconsciously, but sometimes intentionally.

Chapman deftly portrays how trends have been embedded within our universal psyche. McMartin's plight is just one in a long chain that has made it easier to raise irrational questions. A child comes home with a bruise, maybe from a playground accident, maybe from an abusive teacher, maybe from an abusive teacher who belongs to a Satanic cult, and what if all the teachers are in on it? You might scream, "Who believes such bullshit?" Well, let me point you, again, toward Pizzagate and QAnon, nonsensical stories that still receive serious attention across media outlets, and that have tilted election results from local to national levels. Watching the QAnon and COVID-denying nut Marjorie Taylor Greene occupy a congressional seat may challenge my patience, but I'm not surprised.



Rushkoff and Oeming's *Aleister & Adolf*
A Review by Christopher J. Garcia

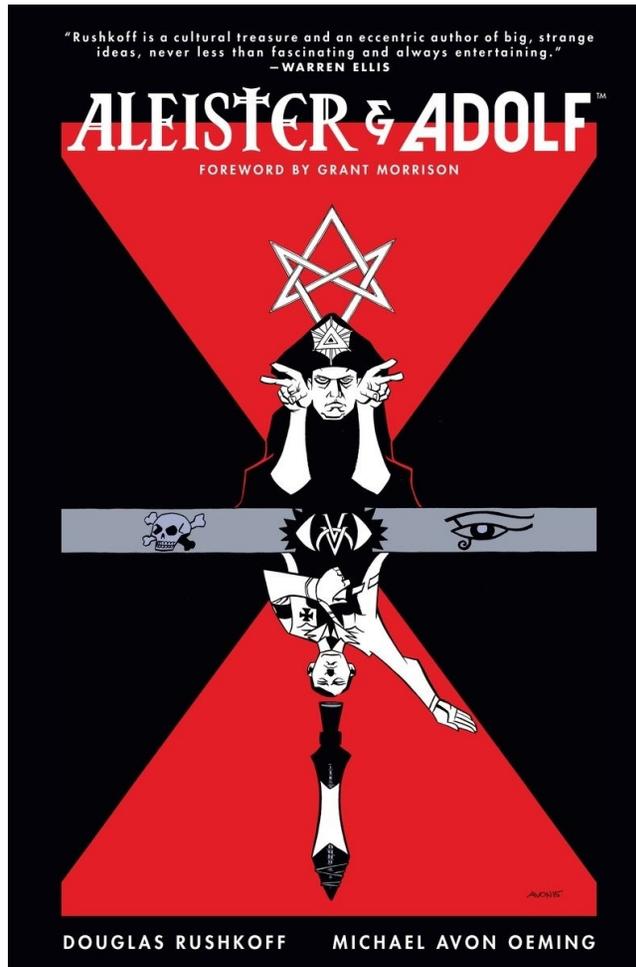
The title tells you what you need to know, except, it doesn't.

The structure of this book absolutely should not work and contains at least two flashbacks within a flashback, and yet it absolutely works to draw you in.

It isn't the story it starts out as, but when it turns into that story, you've already gone on a whole damn journey.

The art style is not conducive to accentuating the kind of work that this graphic novel tells, and yet it not only works, but surpasses the potential for an ornate, perhaps Rick Geary-like, style.

All of this is the perfect set of weirdness for a story that stars the Beast, Aleister Crowley, though not really Adolf Hitler, though he's in the title. The promises that are made are all false until the moment they are not. That's Crowley, and in many way Thelema itself. The more you know about Crowley, about how he often presented coincidence as the created path, how he was an illusionist on the worldwide scale, creating myths that turned to a form of reality that then morphed into actual reality. This does make Crowley sound like a wizard, which he wasn't, but he may have had a preternatural ability to read the room when the room equaled the path of history into the future.



"Many philosophers and theologians have grappled with the question of whether reality is a dream, or whether we are the dreamer or the dreamed. In Hermetic philosophy, the answer is both. We are but the dreams and thoughts of the Infinite Mind, but as microcosms of the Infinite Mind, we are also the dreamers."
Mat Auryn

And that, was not reflected until about ten pages into the story.

It starts off as a simple premise – a web designer is trying to complete an overhaul of the Viceroy webpage, and a graphic keep moving after he's placed it. Anyone who has tried to import a Word document with photos in it will know this well. He must scan old source material because, of course, the image is corrupted, and that leads him to an old employee who sends him to an even older employee, who tells him the tale of his time in WWII, when he was sent to work with the Beast to defeat Hitler.

Now, this is no ordinary mission, and it tackles it in a way that is completely up my alley.

Initially, it is an attempt to bring Rudolf Hess to England by planting fake intelligence in the Fuhrer's astrologer's forecasts. Crowley figures this will lead Hitler to make blunders, and he's right. To make it happen, Crowley must initiate the young American into his fold, and there's a love triangle . . . sort of. It makes things weird, and when our American goes rogue, he ends up enacting the entire scenario that Crowley had put forward, largely despite turning his back on Crowley.

This, when you look at how Thelema came about, it falls along those lines beautifully. There's even a mention of both Jack Parsons and L. Ron Hubbard (who Crowley calls "enterprising.")

The thing is the art, by the legendary Oeming, the man who gave *Powers* such a dis-

tinctive style, is both completely in line with and a total departure from his regular work. There is a flatness to Oeming's work, you won't find the ornate layers of so many comic artists of the last thirty years, but what's incredible is that in this story, where the Rococo and Byzantine could easily dominate, he has maintained that flatness in contrasts, but goes for depth in portions of ritual. The power of those scenes is huge, and in the glorious black-and-white, it is unbeatable.

There are some wonderful callouts to history, including Ian Fleming playing a significant role, but really, this is a story about the line between Magick and just good forecasting. Crowley is presented as a mystical figure, but really, in the story, he simply opens a path and others walk down it. The way that matches up with the actual history of his other endeavors makes this alternate history that much more entertaining. It is a book that rewards pre-knowledge.



Soul Song

by Jay Hartlove

Ronald Toomey popped open the black roadie crate emblazoned with a large white Menoltaph logo and pulled one of his four bass guitars out of the travelling rack inside. He started to tune it when he when he noticed a raven-haired, long-legged young woman walk through the swarm of stagehands, straight up to him as if she knew him. Her smile made him wish he recognized her. “Hello there,” he offered.

She nodded and looked him up and down. “The Deathly Tombs, in the flesh.”

“Do I know you?”

She held out her hand. “Not yet. Sammy Tyler. Probably your biggest fan.”

He shook her hand. “That’s a big claim. We’ve got some pretty hardcore fans.”

“How many of them write new verses for your songs?”

He finished checking the guitar, set it down and grabbed another out of the crate. “I’ve heard of that. You write anything original?”

“I wrote the sequel to ‘Hero’s Paradise’ from Diana’s viewpoint.”

He stopped inspecting the guitar in his hands and smiled. “On the bus over here I just asked Nikki if we were ever going to do that.

That’s like my favorite song I ever wrote.”

“I know. It felt like the other side of the story would complete the myth. His song is in B-flat, so I wrote hers in A.”

He blinked a couple of times. “Could it be staggered in like a duet?”

She rolled her eyes and tilted her head. It was pretty disarming. “Kinda sorta.”

“Come with me,” he said waving her to follow him. As he led her farther backstage, he caught her pump her fist out of the corner of his eye.

Nikki Stone was talking to the concert hall stage manager about equipment placement. The man was dressed entirely in black like all the crew, but for the large word “Manager” across his back under the stadium logo. Six feet in her stockings, she towered over him in her six-inch platforms. She hadn’t gelled up her mohawk yet, so her white mane flopped around expressively as she pointed. He noticed Sammy’s eyes went wide as they approached her. “That’s fine, as long as they can get their drum set straight back here as soon as they’re done. We’re the hometown heroes. I don’t want my roadies having to traffic jam around them in full view of the crowd.”

“I’ll make sure they’re out of your way,” he said with a nod before scurrying off.

Ronald stepped up. “Nikki, you got two seconds?”

“Barely. Who’s this?”

“This is Sammy Tyler. She’s written the rest of ‘Hero’s Paradise’ just like you and I talked about this morning.”

A smile swept away the singer’s frown.

“No shit?”

“I’m gonna get her a pass so we can talk after the show.”

“Fine by me.” Then as if confidentially to Sammy, she said, “If this one puts any moves on you, come see me.”

Nikki Stone traded her guitar with a stagehand for a bottle of water as she rounded the speaker tower and stepped out of sight of the cheering audience. She slugged down some water and noticed her co-lead Peter Juppman right behind her. He was scowling even more than usual. “Jupiter, you look like you ate yesterday’s sushi. It wasn’t that bad, was it?”

“Frank was shit.”

“Tell him.”

“I want to replace him. I could find a better drummer on any street corner.”



“You know we can’t do that.”

“I know,” he spat. “We’ve got to do something. The press is already on our ass. Next we’re going to start losing fans.”

Nikki watched him storm off to the dressing rooms and considered how he was right. Tombs walked up and broke her reverie. He had his fangirl cutie pie with him. Her long, black hair and bangs that framed a broad smile reminded her of that actress Lawless who played Xena. “Hey, you’re back.”



“Congratulations on a great show!”

“Yeah, well, thanks. Come on back and I’ll introduce you around. We’re pretty wiped, so I don’t know if we’re gonna be much company.”

“Really?” the girl said as she followed Nikki off the stage and downstairs. “I would image you’d be pumped.”

Nikki looked over her shoulder and smiled crookedly. “Maybe after the first few shows. That was our last of a six-month, twenty-two show tour.” She walked down a hallway and opened the “Authorized Entry Only” door. “Anybody naked?” she announced. “We’ve got company.”

Marcus Rialto, the sturdy bald lead guitarist with an enormous black beard looked up from his phone and fired back, “Jesus, Nikki, you didn’t bring the press back here again.”

“No boys, I did not bring hate this time – I brought love. Sammy, you know who we are. Everybody, this is Sammy Tyler. She’s a songwriting fan who has some ideas she wants to share with us.”

Frank Fitzsimmons, the tall, skinny drummer with a long red ponytail shook his head and sighed. “So now we’re down to Amateur Hour?”

Jupiter cut him off. “Like you can talk.”

“Save the pissing match for rehearsals,” Nikki said flatly. “We get enough shit from the critics. This girl is invested in us. She sees in us what we’ve forgotten. Take a lesson. Go ahead, Sammy.”

“I...um...wow. Sorry, it’s a bit much

meeting you all at once like this. I’ve been following you for like four years, ever since I heard ‘Hidden Sacrifice’ back in college. I learned the guitar watching you, Marcus. And I learned to sing watching you, Nikki. I dunno, your music just brings out something in me. I’ve seen the comments about not being ‘fresh,’ whatever the fuck that means, but I disagree. It makes me feel like I can do anything. Sorry to prattle on.”

“You’re good,” Nikki assured her. “You told Tombs you wrote something.”

“Yeah. I love ‘Hero’s Paradise,’ but I always thought there was more to the story. I mean, Lexur welcomes all these dangers because it gives him the chance to be a hero and prove himself. But he’s singing his story to Diana, who loves him. I thought maybe we could hear from her, to hear her telling him he doesn’t have to prove himself to her. She’s proud of his heroism, and happy for him finding fulfillment, but he can slow down and enjoy the life he’s won, and she will still love him.”

Nikki quietly clapped her hands together. “When Tombs pitched Diana’s story to me this morning, he talked about her welcoming him home from his wars. At the time I thought Tombs was just tired of being on the road. But you two have a point. Lexur deserves to be happy.”

“Exactly!”

Jupiter stood up and handed her an acoustic guitar. “I’m intrigued.”

“No shit, really? Okay, why not? Hold that for a sec,” she said as she peeled off her

leather jacket. She wore a black tank top which showed the tattoos all down her arms. Most prominent was the band's logo, a goat head surrounded by five gaff hooks forming a pentagram, that covered her entire right shoulder.

"Nice ink" he said as he handed her the instrument. When he turned away from her, he shot Nikki a raised eyebrow nod.

Nikki squinted back, cautioning him.

"Okay, I call this, 'Coming Home.' Here goes nothing." After a couple of bars of intro, she sang earnestly:

"You've returned to me, smell of victory.

And the blood you wear is not your own.

You sought the fight, to prove your might.

And you've bent the world until it groaned.

I knew that you'd win. My faith was as a stone.

Never doubted you would at last be coming home."

Nikki noticed Marcus, Jupiter, and Tombs all nod stiff-lipped at each other. Marcus held up a hand. "Sounds like you actually do understand our music." He smiled cherub-like and added, "Menoltaph would be pleased."

Nikki stiffened involuntarily.

The bearded guitarist covered. "Do you have sheets?"

"Yes."

"Have you played this for anyone else?"

"No. My friends, what few I have, actually hate metal."

"You don't have anybody to share your passion?"

"Nope, just me. I've always been a loner. I don't have to please anybody else that way. I do enough of that at my day job. Metal is my poetry, my refuge."

"Well, your love for the music shows. I really want to hear the rest of that song, and your other songs too. But right now, and I think I speak for all of us, I'm exhausted. Like you just sang, we have finally made it home at the end of this tour. I just want to slide into my own bathtub and soak for a week."

Jupiter spoke to Sammy but looked at Nikki as he talked as if seeking his partner's consent. "We doing a postmortem on the tour next week at our studio. Tombs can give you the address. The public does not know where it is, so you have to keep it to yourself. Bring your sheet music and we can jam your song."

Sammy pushed the doorbell and waited at the unmarked steel door on the side of what looked like a warehouse. When she heard the latch click, she opened the door only to find a large empty room. *Am I in the right place?* There was another door on the far side. As she walked to it, the door opened, and Tombs greeted her with his goofy smile. See-

ing his hulking form off stage and out of context, he was more buddy dad than tough guy biker. "Welcome. Come on in."

She stepped nervously into the music studio and was relieved to have arrived. "That's some cloak and dagger you got there."

"Oh, the outer rooms. It's actually for soundproofing. The studio is surrounded by empty spaces that trap the sound. We can be as loud as we want in here and no one outside can tell."

"Loud is good," she mused as she looked around. Each player's instruments were set up at the point of a huge pentagram on the floor. She knelt down to touch it. It felt burned into the linoleum. She looked up and an enormous banner of the band's logo stretched flat to the ceiling caught her attention. "That's awesome."

"Yeah, a fan gave that to us."

"So this is where you rehearse? It looks more like a performance space. You guys really get into the imagery. Some might say it looks like you believe in this stuff."

He chuckled nervously. "Haters gonna hate. You take comfort in like-minded folk. You know, we've got a big fan base here in town. I'm surprised you haven't hooked up with them."

Now it was Sammy's turn to dismissively chuckle. "Not really into making attachments."

"I take it your family aren't fans either?"

"My parents are dead and I'm an only





child.” Wanting to change the subject, she asked, “Where is everyone?”

“Oh, they’re in the booths in the back going over tapes from the tour. Bitch session, really. You don’t want to see that.”

“Are you working on new material? You just spent six months on stage together. Was that inspirational?”

“Yeah, I’ve got lots of notes to work on. Diana’s song, for example.”

“Oh here.” She pulled out a stack of paper from her bag. “My sheet music.”

“Oh, excellent,” he said as he eagerly took the pages and started reading them.

A door in the back opened and the other band members filed in, led by Nikki. “Hello, you made it. Welcome to our private circle of Hell. Are you warmed up?”

“Ah, no.”

“Let’s get you started.” She walked to a coffee service and poured a cup. “This is my own herbal mix.”

Sammy took the cup and sniffed it. “Licorice like Throatcoat.”

Tombs handed the sheet music to Nikki.

“Oh good. Hey, nice job transcribing the parts. Fellas, come get your sheets.” Turn-

ing back to Sammy, she said, “Let’s get this party started.”

They each moved to their triangular points in the pentagram.

“Where do I go?” Sammy asked.

Tombs rolled her a swivel chair. “There in the middle. We can all hear each other better.”

The ritual arrangement did not escape her. *Amateurs*. She decided to play along and sat down.”

“So, Sammy, what draws you to our music?” Nikki asked out of the blue.

She was ready. “The soul of it. They say James Brown was the Godfather of Soul for the intensity he brought to his delivery. At your best, so do you guys. The scenes you tell in your songs take on a whole new depth when you sound like you’re living the struggles yourself, not just singing about somebody else’s trouble.”

The band members all exchanged glances.

“And your songs can give us some meat to sink our teeth into, something we can bring to life?”

Was she questioning her commitment? “Yeah. I think I ‘get’ you.”

“Cool. I know Tombs wants to jam on your Diana song, but I’m looking at, ‘Excalibur Cracked.’ Can everyone flip to that one? This opening reminds me of Def Leppard or maybe even, The Scorpions?. Old school, huh?”

“Maybe, I guess, but tighter and harder,

with a much bigger bass line.”

“I see that. Guys, whaddya think? Can you play along?”

“Hell yeah, this looks great,” Marcus said. The doubts Nikki had been feeding vanished with her idol’s affirmation. Sammy broke out in a huge grin.

“Okay, whenever you’re ready.”

The bearded lead guitarist slammed into the soaring scale opening and Tombs followed in behind to support him with the pounding bass line.

Hearing her idols playing her music made her head swim with giddy pride. She found herself anticipating the opening lyric and was ready to point at Jupiter to cue him, but the lead singer came in perfectly:

“The Lady of the Lake gave Arthur a sword

So he could administer justice

He and his knights were not perfect men

They made many mistakes along the way

But always the sword guided him
In spite of himself to do the right thing.”

Nikki also came in right on time to join Jupiter in the chorus. Man, these guys are good.

“When the day came to slay his foe
Arthur used the sword of justice
When the day came to slay his foe
Arthur used the sword of justice.”

Hearing the song out loud, Sammy couldn’t help but compare it to how she had always heard it in her head. She loved what they were doing, but it reminded her of her original inspiration. Killing your own son because he was the distilled venom of your sins.
Just like Mom and Dad:

“Arthur slept with his sister Morganne
Their child thrived on his sin
Every vile trait every evil thought
Brought to life from his very birth
Destined to be his father’s demise
The seed of rot from within.
When the day came to slay his foe
Arthur used the sword of justice
When the day came to slay his foe
Arthur used the sword of justice.”

Sammy’s excitement at the performance overwhelmed her and she grabbed her head to stop it spinning. Was it the swivel chair? She stood up to feel more stable, but it didn’t help.
Oh cute, Nikki drugged me with the tea:

“Excalibur was the gift of justice
The rod of fairness, truth and love
When Arthur used it to hide his sins
He broke the promise and cracked the sword.”

Sammy always loved that bridge. She noticed Nikki was focused on her, watching her waver in the middle of the room. If they were

going to try to sacrifice her, they would do it soon.

As they got to the chorus repeat, Tombs changed the bass line. It still worked, but it was different. *Is he improvising?*

“When the day came to slay his foe
Arthur used the sword of justice
When the day came to slay his foe
Arthur used the sword of justice.”

No, it was an entirely new tune. In her fog, it took a moment to realize Marcus was playing it too. They had blended her tune into theirs. It was simple, more of a chant than a song. Frank beat it out with his drums, with Jupiter and Nikki singing. *Ah, the ritual at last:*

“When the day came to slay his foe
When the day came to take our prize
The day has come to take her life.”

Sammy spun drunkenly around the room and laughed. “You need new blood? New life to revitalize your music? Go for it!” She pointed at them in turn, mocking them. “Just remember! Be careful what you ask for!”

Jupiter and Nikki shot each other dubious looks, but the other three continued with the chant:

“The day has come to take her life
The day has come to please our lord.”

“Your lord? You mean OUR lord. Mine



too!” Sammy demanded. “And I’ll prove it to you!”

The lines on the front edges of the musician’s triangles that formed the pentagon around Sammy glowed and burst into flames. The musicians jumped back in shock. The flames subsided to reveal five long rods with gaff hooks on one end, exactly as in their logo. “Whoa!” Frank exclaimed. “That’s never happened before!”

Frank and Tombs bent down and picked up their hooks. “No shit,” Tombs said in wide-eyed amazement. “Maybe this is an upgrade.”

Nikki took a step back. Jupiter and Marcus picked up theirs too. “It’s...solid metal,” Jupiter told her.

“Finish the spell, you idiots!” yelled Sammy.

Nikki looked terrified, but curious enough to try. She knelt down and reached for her hook. The moment she grabbed it, the entire pentagram all around them flared into flames. The banner of Menoltaph peeled off the ceiling and fell over Sammy, who was laughing maniacally. “Finally!” she yelled from

under the cloth.

Nikki reached out with her hook and pulled the banner off Sammy, but the girl now had long, curving ram’s horns and stomped on hooves.

“What the fuck have you done?” the singer screamed.

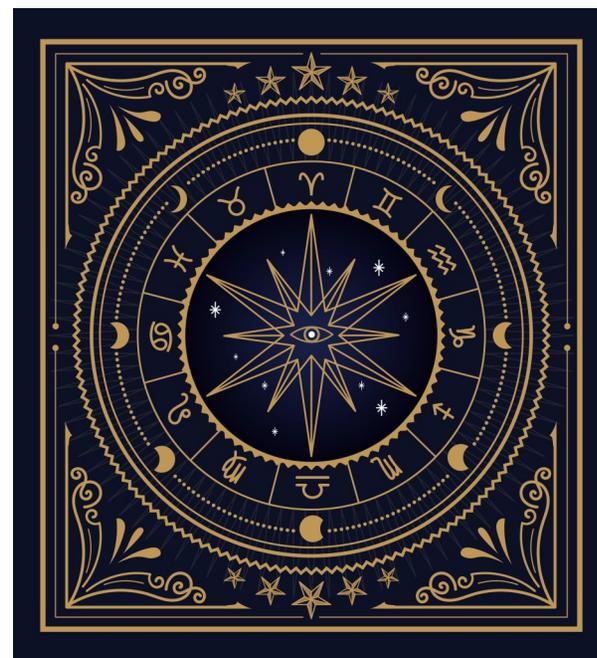
“I know you’ve sacrificed people in trade for the demon’s genius. I sold my soul to Menoltaph when I sacrificed my parents months ago. Now it’s your turn!”

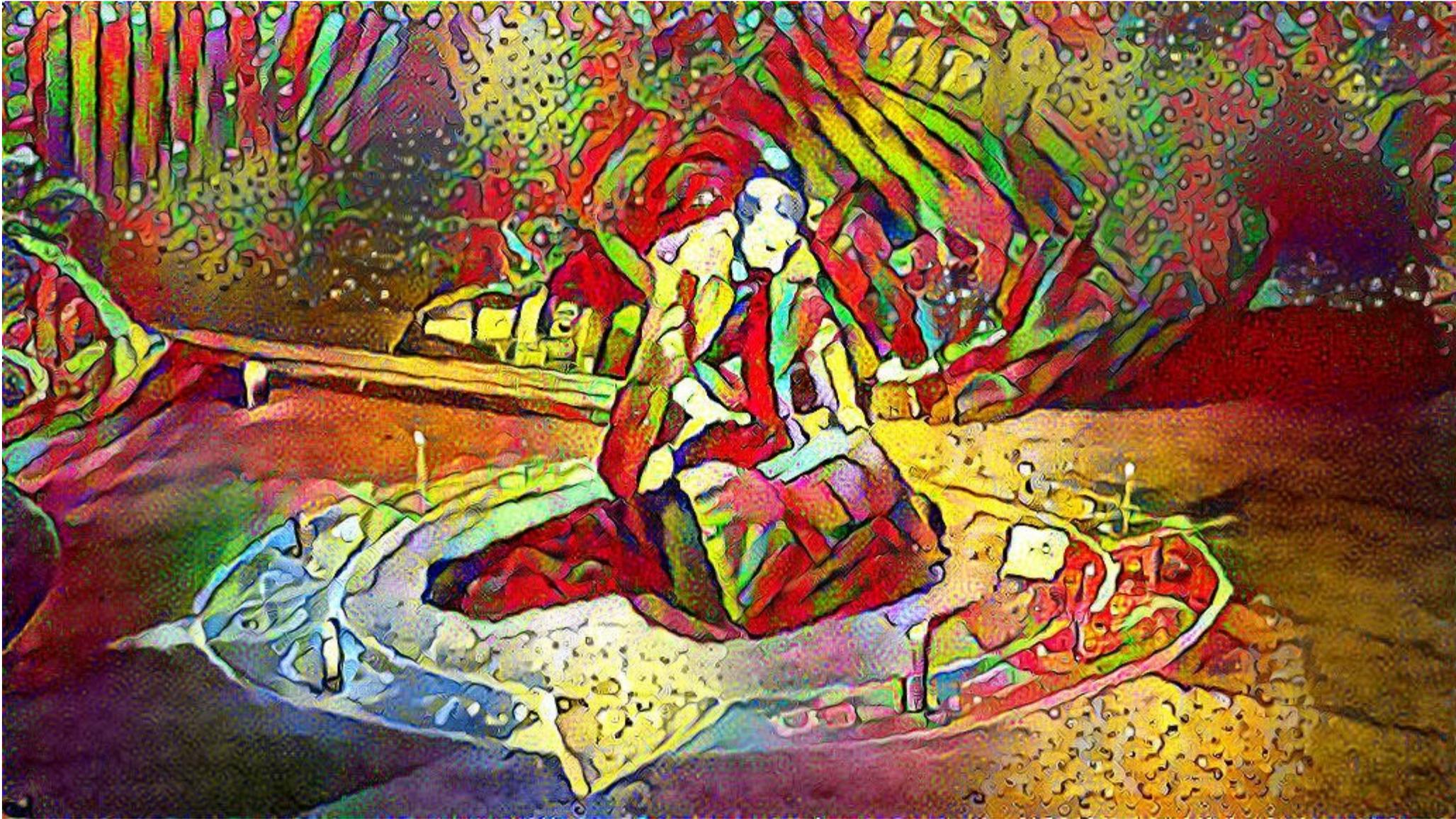
Sammy was thrilled to see Nikki trade terrified looks with her bandmates. But Tombs didn’t look scared. He looked resolved. He held his hook up straight over his head and motioned for everyone else to do the same. When they caught on, he, and then they, all swung their hooks down into Sammy’s body.

“No, those aren’t for me!” she screamed. “You were to be my sacrifice to the Dark Lord!”

The musicians all hauled back on their poles and Sammy’s body ripped open in a flood of blood and gore.

Dateline -- *Decibel Magazine*: Just when we were picking up our shovels to fill in the grave, Menoltaph is back from the dead. Their new album not only has clever fresh ballads but has recaptured the fiery soul of their early albums. We don’t know where they found their mojo, but they’ve got it back, and we are thrilled.





Rocket and Ritual: Babylon Working

by Christopher J. Garcia

You knew I wasn't going to be an Occult issue by Chris Garcia without the presence of Jack Parsons, right?

The man largely responsible for JATO and modern rocket science was also one of the most significant figures in the history of occult practice in America. He was a genius, co-founder of Jet Propulsion Lab and Aerojet, and the one guy that really stood for the idea that a scientist can be an occultist. The paths are somewhat and strangely similar. Performing experiments and performing rituals are not as dissimilar as you might think, as they both require appropriate understanding of your materials, observation, and perfection of technique. They can both go tremendously wrong.

In 1939, Parsons discovered Thelema. He had read some Crowley, and that led him to the Church of Thelema. As far as occult churches went, Thelema was one of the best known at the time. You might count Rosicrucianism among that group, but Thelema had a couple of big-name adherents. As Parsons was a member of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, he tried to get folks interested, including bringing Jack Williamson to a performance of The Gnostic Mass, and having met Williamson towards the end of his life, I would have loved to have been there. Parsons was all-in after experiencing the Gnostic Mass, and he quickly became acquainted with some of the

big names in Thelema, like Regina Kahl, her sister Leona Watson, and the most interesting of them, Wilfred Talbot Smith. They liked him, but they did not jive on his marriage of quantum theory with Thelema as a path for magick. His sci-fi friends didn't climb on board, either. Jane Wolfe, a bigwig in the Agape Lodge, as the Thelemite church was renamed, wrote to Crowley extolling his virtues. He was moving up in the world of Thelema, and Crowley was hearing about it. He became the head of the Agape Lodge in 1942 and was the head through 1944. He inherited a big old house he called the Parsonage, and many very cool people lived there, including legendary SF fan Alva Rogers. Eventually, Parsons got booted from JPL and Aerojet, but he was still a big wig with a lot of money.

Enter L. Ron Hubbard.



Hubbard was . . . well, it depends on what bio you believe, his, reality, or something in-between. The facts that we can point to are after the war, Hubbard decided to ditch his family and move to Pasadena and live in The Parsonage. He was a former Navy man, and by most accounts, a scumbag. L. Sprague de Camp once said that the war broke him morally, and that sounds about right. Parsons was a good guy, and he was INTO Thelema, and especially sex magic. As his girlfriend Sally had basically moved on from him to L. Ron. Parsons was poly as all get out, but according to Alva, it obviously started to get to him. Even though it seemed like it was going to be rough, Parsons decided to stick it out with Hubbard at The Parsonage, for the good of the Order, he said, and they started working on a project that would be the biggest ritual in the modern history of magick, Babylon Working.

“Freedom is a two-edged sword of which one edge is liberty and the other responsibility, on which both edges are exceedingly sharp; and which is not easily handled by casual, cowardly or treacherous hands.”
Jack Whiteside Parsons

Now, Crowley had written about the birth of a “Moonchild” which a lot of folks thought described the Anti-Christ. In *The Book of the Law*, Crowley described him as a “living being in form resembling man and possessing those qualities of man which distinguish him from beasts, namely intellect and power of speech, but neither begotten in the manner of human generation, nor inhabited by a human soul.” To make this possible, they needed a scarlet woman to bring about the beast through a series of ritualistic sex-magic practices. Essentially, they wanted a willing fuck-girl to bear the Moonchild.

The ritual that would be required to impose LRH and Parson’s will over that much reality was impressive, and that made their work to summon Babylon, the occult equivalent of Parson’s rocket tests. Babylon, short for the Whore of Babylon, was the scarlet woman, and they would have to develop the most complicated ritual of all time. They two set about it, with Parsons developing the ritual and LRH adding the razzle dazzle. That’s a good way to look at their relationship.

The ritual was grueling and ornate. It started at the house in Pasadena at 9 PM sharp with Prokofiev’s *Violin Concerto* playing in the background, setting the mood. Parsons was the workhorse. I’m not 100% sure, but I believe part of that process would require a bodily sacrifice, likely semen or blood. He notes he used blood in several of the steps, so I’d

imagine it varied. He would perform rituals, starting with Invoking Pentagram of Air. This one begins and ends with the Qabalistic Cross, which is one of those incantations that you hear everywhere. Along the way, you trace a pentagram in the air, jab a wand or dagger or even just a finger into it and shake while saying stuff. Then you call to the directions and say a few prayers.

Yes, it sounds silly, but having seen a variation of it, it’s actually very dramatic.

This would be followed by the Invocation of the Bornless One. This serves many purposes, the biggest being that it’s more-or-less summoning a guardian angel, and in Crowley’s analysis of it, it turns out the guardian angel was you all along! This ritual is beautiful, especially when it is performed by a magician with a thundering voice. I’ve not witnessed it personally, but have seen video, including, I believe, in a Kenneth Anger film.

Conjuration of Air was up next. I don’t think I know this one, though there are plenty of incantations that serve this purpose. The idea is they are trying to get the element of the air on their side, and once you’ve done that you go on to Consecration of Air Dagger. This would likely have been much more symbolic and showier than the consecration done in the leadup. The poetry involved is pretty.

That is followed by Key Call of Third Aire. By this point, Parsons would have been exhausted. Most of the forms of these rituals



are about 20 minutes long, and they're not just sit around and chant type of rituals. You must invoke, and that means projection, bold and big movements. It's been said by many that ultimately, ritual magic requires showmanship, and I have no doubt that is true.

This begins a long line of invocations, this time Invocation of God and King of Aire, the Invocation of Six Seniors, the Invocation of (RZDA) by *n*n*n and (EXARP), to visible appearance, the Invocation of Wand with material basis on talisman, and finally Invocation with Dagger. These would each require chanting, ritualized movement, calling, and more performance. It would have been exhausting, and remember that he's doing all of this himself, with Hubbard acting as scribe.

The ending, License to Depart, Purification, and Banishing. This is key because people got to go to work, and you don't want demons to follow you around. The structure of the ceremony is a three-act structure, the first of opening of doors and setting of tables, the second calling everyone you want so that when you're done, they'll clear the way for Babylon to appear, and then, "OMG! We better lock this down!"

Parsons did this for eleven nights in a row. In his notes, he noted that at least one of the nights, he retired at 11pm, and we know

that he started at the crack of 9pm. That's two hours of a lot of work, but it also wasn't all of it.

Not by a long shot.

Now he had the scribe writing down everything that happened in the ritual, and he recorded any effects that he thought might have been attributable to Babylon working, especially knocks, weird poltergeist activity, or windstorms. There was a lot of that.

They then took the show on the road, and, apparently, they performed part of the ritual in the Mojave Desert, which a couple of folks have said they think they'd found. This part was a big deal. They stopped the daily things inhouse when Hubbard basically went into a trance and started describing an old enemy of Parsons's that he'd never talked about. That happens, right? They went off on January 18th, the two of them were in the Mojave Desert when Parsons felt something snap. He turned to LRH and said, "It is done."

And that was that.

He went back to the Parsonage and found someone new.

A redhead.

A pretty redhead.

A pretty, strange, incredible redhead.

A pretty, strange, incredible redhead who was down to fuck.

Her name was Marjorie Cameron, and she is one of the most fascinating people of the twentieth century. She was the scarlet woman they had been dreaming of, and Parsons was sure they had invoked her. She was warm for his form, and the two spent two weeks in bed. Parsons saw this as sex magic. She did not. Didn't matter, they were having a good time, and would eventually marry. She would only become a significant occultist AFTER Parsons blew himself up. She would also become an amazing artist, producing Surrealist images that are incredible. She worked on movies and became a semi-legendary Hollywood personality. She started a cult called The Children. She also had a daughter. She was an excellent mom, apparently, and a fun Gramma.

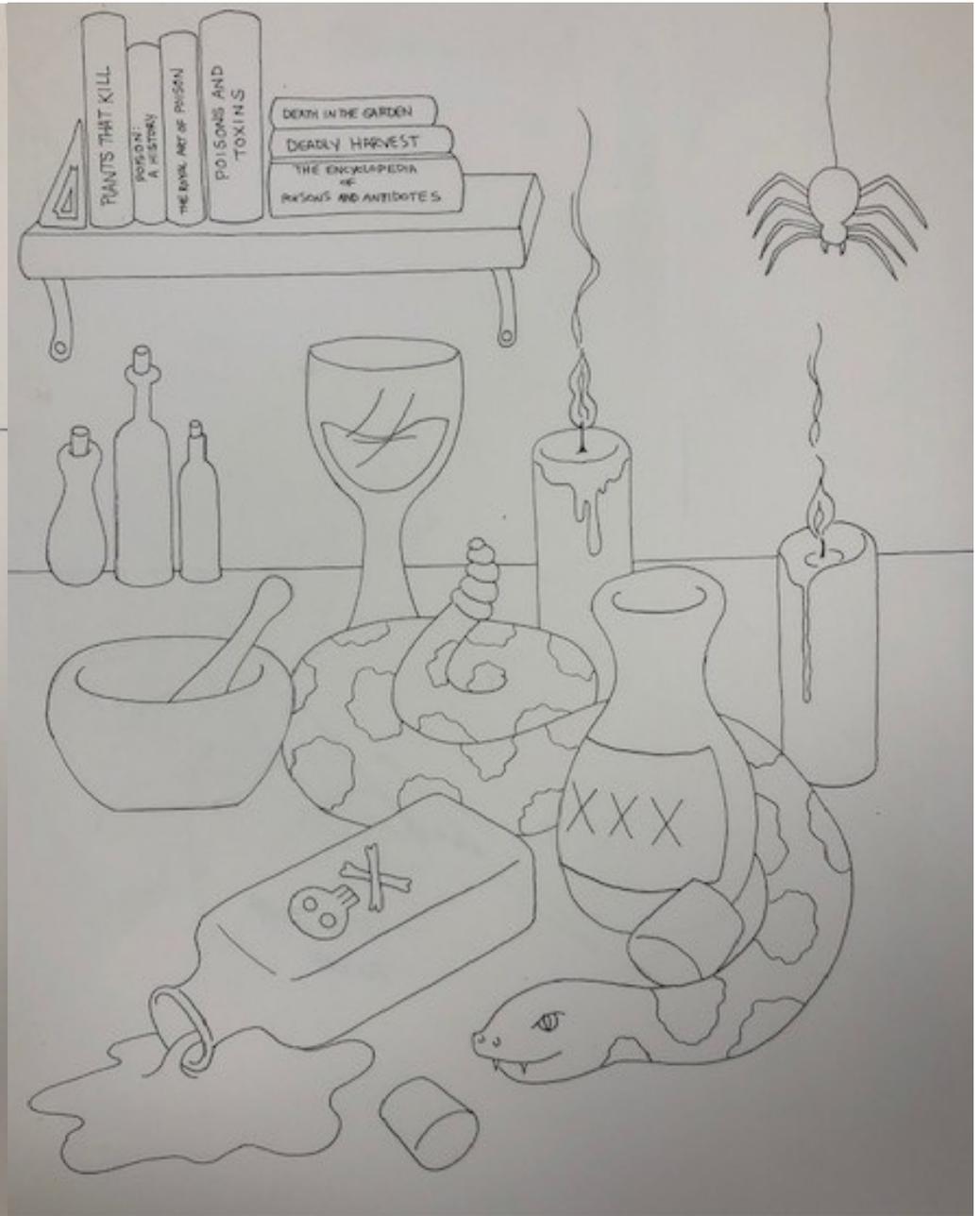
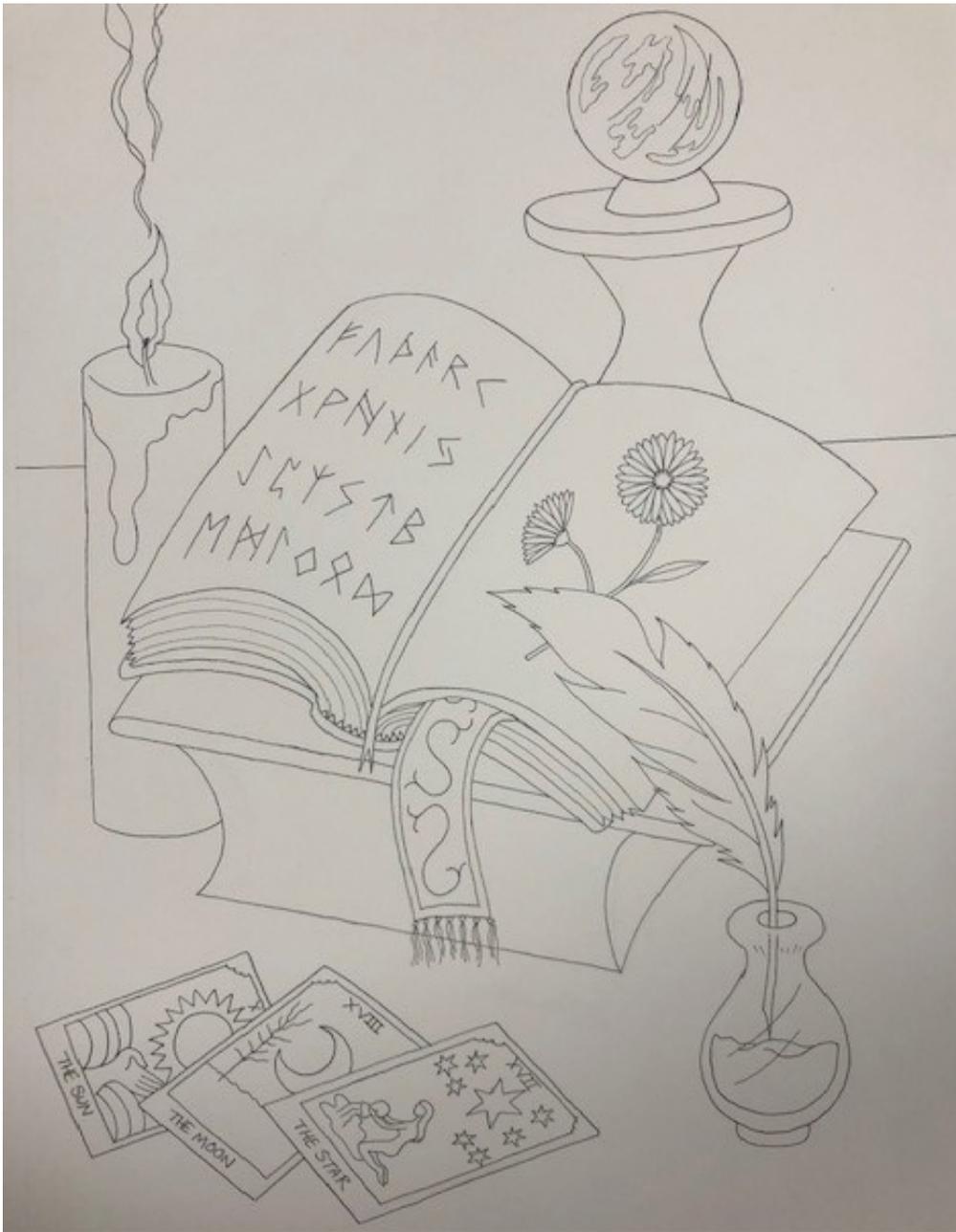
The ritual became utterly influential, and I don't know if anyone has tried it since. I would imagine so, but none recorded it or got the same sort of recognition. Parsons and Hubbard went on to adventures, and LRH screwed him over, took off to Florida with Parsons money, and pretty much broke him.

Go figure.

Crowley thought it was a stupid idea.

"I get fairly frantic when I contemplate the idiocy of these louts," Crowley told Gerald Yorke once.

Sounds about right.



The Occult-Related Crimes Unit
by Christopher J. Garcia

South Africa had its own Satanic Panic. It was far more complicated there because of the long tradition of folk magic and local forms of witchcraft. The Satanic Panic there started towards the end of the Apartheid era and among the white South African community. It wasn't a reaction to traditional forms of witchcraft, but a railing against "satanism" from the largely evangelical Christians who made up a large portion of the white minority. In 1992, they founded what seems like the title of a Charles Stross novel – The Occult-Related Crimes Unit.

The South African Police Service is the national police service for the entire country, and there was a very strong Christian thread running through it. One of the major figures was Kobus Jonker, who had the very cool nicknames of The Hound of God and God's Detective. He was put in charge of the unit with the explicit directive to investigate crimes related to the occult:

Occult-related crime means any human conduct that constitutes any legally recognized crime, the modus operandi of which relates to or emanates primarily from any belief or seeming belief in the occult, witchcraft, satanism, mysticism, magic, esotericism, and the like. Included in the scope of occult-related



“the number of children and adults tortured in the name of mainstream religious orthodoxy historically outweighs onslaught by Satanists”

Valerie Sinason

crime are ritual muti/medicine murders, witch purging, witchcraft-related violence and sect-related practices that pose a threat to the safety and security of the Republic of South Africa and/or its inhabitants.

The thing is, it wasn't really looking into most of those things – it was focused on satanism, or at least what the local Christian community saw as satanism.

Now, while it may seem silly to have an occult-related crimes unit, if you read that definition, you actually see that were areas where there were actual crimes that had been happening in South Africa. There were still witch hunts that happened in various rural parts of the country. It also wasn't completely unknown for people to be murdered for their body parts to be used in medicine rituals. These were actual, honest-to-ghod Occult-Related Crimes!

The thing is, they weren't what they were investigating, or at least that was never their focus.

Well, that's really complicated.

You see, the White South Africans

were losing their grasp on the country. There was great anxiety among the community, and one of the defining aspects was their religion. The loss of status, as it was obvious that apartheid was going to come crashing down shortly, meant they needed to find a reason that made sense for losing that status, and it made sense for it to have to do with the supposed rise of Satanism with the world-wide explosion of exposure for groups like LaVey's Church of Satan. Now, there were cults that were Satanic in nature operating in South Africa, though many more than were Christianity-based.

So, why not have the Occult-related Crimes Unit investigating medicine murders and witch-hunts?

Well, a theory that makes sense is that those are crimes of Black South Africans, and they were not the reason that White South Africans were losing power in the country. It couldn't be: Black South Africans and their strange religions had been around forever and never have done any damage to their status. The focus was attacks on the Christian religion.

It probably didn't help that to be a part of the unit, you had to be a devout Christian: “SAPS members who want to serve in this Unit must acknowledge the supernatural world. They must strongly believe in Jesus Christ because Satanism's main enemy is Jesus Christ. It is not just a job, it's a lifelong mission, involving the body, soul and spirit.”

Now, that first part is important. If you can't acknowledge a supernatural world, you

can't fight it, right? There is some validity to this, even for non-believers. If you're unwilling to accept that there is something beyond our realm, how can you deal with crimes that are being committed to satisfy some aspect of a supernatural world, whether it is real or imagined? The idea of only followers of Jesus being able to serve in the role is, of course, wrong, but I do see value in saying, ‘Look, you either got to be religious or at least open to the idea that there may be something more.’”

This is where this gets weird because there were some crimes they investigated. The abduction of Alison Botha was one, where Jonker came down that he didn't believe the abductors were possessed by demons, but the most famous arguably is the Maurice Smith case. He murdered a homeless man. He claimed that he had done so to obtain a skull for his satanic rituals. So there was some satanism, but really they mostly just acted as a sort of values signal. They created a lot of documents, mostly about the dangers of satanism, but really, by 2000, when Jonker left the force, they lost a lot of power.

Until 2010, that is.

There was another wave of hiring and training, and the purpose of the squad was refined: “Crime that relates to or emanates primarily from an ostensible belief in the supernatural that formed a driving force in the forming, planning and execution of a crime.”

Now, that does make a little more sense, and they even published a list of crimes that they thought were their purview.



- Witchcraft-related offences, including black magic, witch finding, and witch purging
- Traditional healers involved in criminal activities rooted in the occult
- Curses intended to cause harm
- The practice of voodoo intended to cause harm
- Vampirism and joint infringement of the Human Tissues Act
- Harmful cult behaviour that infringes on the rights of members of the movement
- Spiritual intimidation, including astral coercion
- Vandalism/graffiti leaving evidence that the motive is occult related
- Suicide leaving evidence of occult involvement
- Ritualistic abuse in a cult setting
- Allegations of rape by a tokoloshe spirit
- Animal mutilation and sacrifice leaving evidence of occult involvement
- Murder/human sacrifice leaving evidence of occult involvement
- Interpretation of occult "signatures" and paraphernalia at a crime scene
- Poltergeist phenomena (unexplained activities by paranormal disruptive entities)

Look at that list! They're the fucking X-Files!

Now, this unit was much more set towards looking into traditional magical practices, and that set a lot of people on edge as likely to lead to religious intolerance. The unit

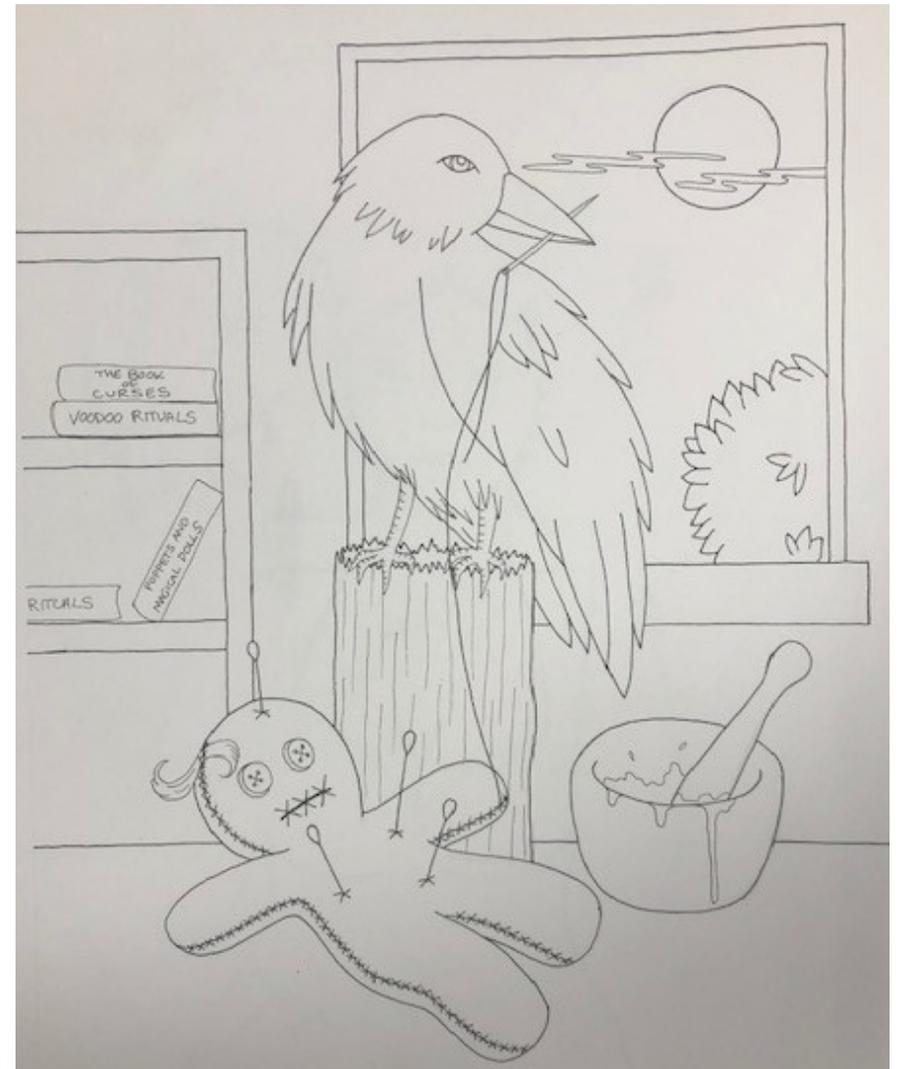
was still based in traditionally Christian grounding, but the country had changed greatly.

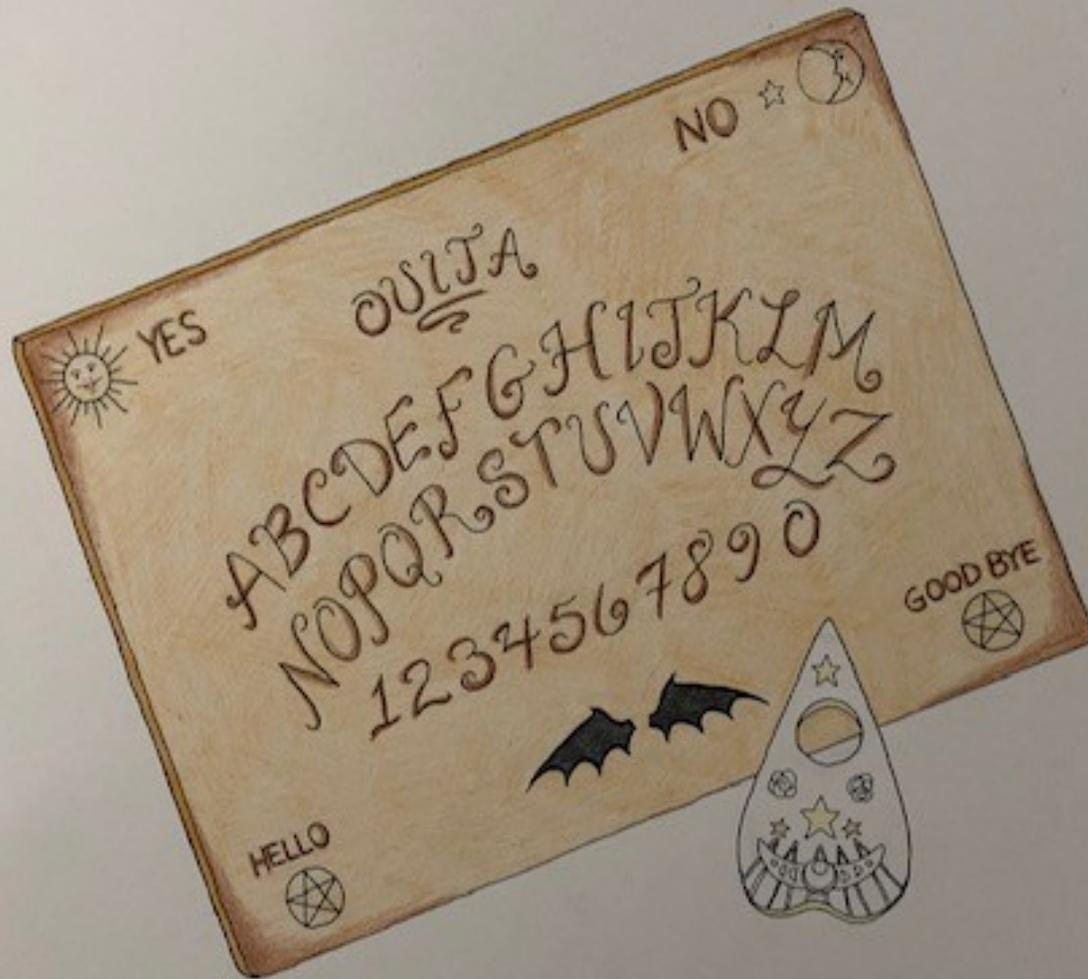
The unit was involved in the investigation of the Overcomers Through Christ murders. These were a series of as many as eleven murders, and one of those killed was Natacha Burger, a former Satanist who helped other Satanist reform and become Christians. This would seem to be right up the alley of the OrCU, and it was, but really, it was likely just infighting among Overcomers Through Christ.

Recognizing the occult is rare in governmental arenas, but there is a place for it. Yes, there are cults that have their basis in occult beliefs, even if they're making them up for the purpose of control over membership. There are murders by those who believe they are being controlled by forces greater than themselves, and crimes that take place to obtain goods for use in ritual. These sorts of crimes are, at least at the surface, the

kinds of things that an Occult-related Crimes Unit could be of use in investigating, if they're going in with a clear mind and little agenda outside investigation to obtain actual evidence of a crime. That's not what happened in South Africa.

Also, I really want that job!





*Hand-drawn Object - Ouija Board
10-7-2018*