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REAL PAGAN PULSE

ISSUE 2 - FEBRUARY 13TH, 2011



AN APOLOGY TO OUR READERS;

THE REAL PAGAN PULSE WAS, INDEED, MEANT TO RUN LAST SATURDAY. UNFORTUNATELY, MY EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE WENT ON A 238 KILOMETRE ADVENTURE, FROM MY COMFORTABLE SUBURBAN HOME, TO THE DUST-WRACKED DESERT OF MID-WESTERN AUSTRALIA, AND BACK AGAIN. WITH IT WENT ALL THE FILES AND ARTICLES NEEDED FOR THIS MONTH'S ISSUE. MEASURES ARE IN PLACE TO STOP THAT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN, BUT I'M APOLOGISING NONE-THE-LESS. ENJOY THE SECOND INSTALMENT OF THE REAL PAGAN PULSE.

- JA1 YUUGURE

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A Call To All Writers.

The Real Pagan Pulse is in need of articles, essays and blogs on any number of subjects. If you'd like to submit an article for the Pulse, please contact Yuugure on Real Pagan, or email it to yuugure@realpagan.net.

All articles will be considered, from all writers. Please maintain a high standard of grammar, spelling and general quality.



CHALLENGING THE MAN IN BLACK

BY ALOREN STEF

I noticed a strange paradox lately. Ever since my formal dedication to Hekate, my skills and magical 'senses' have increased and developed significantly. At the same time however, I found myself amidst a chaos: life, finances, love, everything is turbulent. Largely due to this chaos, my focus, time and actual practice waned considerably to the point of planning religious observances or rituals only to remember them a handful of days *after* the actual date. Needless to say, I started worrying that I was straying from my path more than appropriate. I took a sudden decision to perform a small pathworking exercise: a meditational journey to find a solution to my problem. Since planning ahead of time was continuously thwarted, a random decision and acting upon it was the best course of action.

It was late at night, an hour or so after midnight, when I sat down and started with the four-fold breath. After I had relaxed enough and my mind had focused on the breathing, I begun the visualization. I didn't have anything specific in mind. Before the exercise, I thought about re-using an older theme (the Greenwood) and that did manifest, partially.

I used the method described in Marian Green's *A Witch Alone* to cloak one's self and bar against stray thoughts: I visualized myself shrouded in a woolly, deep brown cloak and held onto that for a few minutes. When I felt focused enough, I started walking in the visualized place. I found myself treading upon a clearly shaped yet perfectly plain path in a forest with tall, indistinguishable trees (if I were to identify them I'd say either cypress or a really slender and tall pine). I walked for a while until I reached a "+" crossroads. I looked around and saw that every branch of the crossroads, except for the one I was walking on, stretched seemingly endlessly in a perfectly straight line.

Crossroads. A not-so-subtle hint. As a devotee of Hekate I am most aware of crossroads and their many meanings. The one in my meditation practically screamed of choice, a choice of change.

I felt a cold sensation on my open palm, almost a breeze, almost a hand. I guess that's how it feels to touch a shadow.

I started calling upon Hekate while I went and stood in the very middle of the crossroads. However, at that point, something manifested in my mind. I wasn't calling upon Hekate. Instead I was to call upon a very special figure that is also connected to crossroads. The Man in Black. It is a funny thing, considering how he is mostly associated with "+" crossroads, instead of Hekate, who's mostly associated with "Y" shaped ones.

I sat down, closed my eyes and kept calling out for him. I asked to be given what he can provide: skill. Skill to cut through the proverbial jungle that is my life right now, skill to separate and illuminate my way, skill to return to my path and walk it. Skill to return to my practice.

It was an eerie sensation. Hekate was there but not in actual form. It felt like a gaze that hovered right above the crossroads, as if a watching cloud had rested upon the tree-tops. I opened my eyes and looked up in the sky. I saw a solar eclipse, not full, forming a crescent of sorts. The sky itself was shifting in shades of red, saffron, crimson and maroon. It was as if the sky was bleeding. I said, without really thinking about it:

"Appear before me Man in Black, dark rider of the night, appear before me below skies clad in blood. I challenge you, I seek you, I ask for what you can give me, Master of Skills. Give me the strength to return to my path, give me the skill to walk it, to practice true."

Then I opened my actual eyes even though I was in the middle of deep meditation (NOT advised!). My room was dark but the ceiling had an odd crimson colour, akin to the sky in the meditation. I looked straight before me and I saw an elusive shadow. It looked like someone was standing a few meters from my position, ever escaping my direct gaze. I extended my hand and whispered "May Hekate, my Lady, observe and protect this deal".

He It demanded for a guarantee, that I was truly worthy of what he offered. I said, in a low voice, visibly irritated:

"It matters not, Shadow, if you really help me. In the very end it is *I* who walks this path and *I* will find a way to return to it. I care not whether you help me or not after all, Man in Black, because I will **MAKE** it work, with or without your aid. I sought you as a help. You're not the decisive factor. Now seal this deal or be gone!"

I exhaled deeply and went to my bed. I fell asleep almost immediately.



This was my meeting and challenge of the infamous Man in Black. Was it really the figure appearing in the lore and myth of many people and systems? I don't know. Was my way the best way to deal with him? Again, I don't know. I don't care though. He, whatever he was, agreed to provide some help. In the end, I think that the help he actually gave me was the strength required to face him. Perhaps that's all I really need to move on.



AN ARGUMENT FAVOURING SACRIFICE

BY SANGRAAL

Perhaps one of the most debatable subjects in both pagan and non-pagan spirituality is the present and historical inclusion of animal sacrifices in its practice. There's neither doubt nor question of its ritual application in ancient cultures; even in the modern world, it remains as a staple act of worship in some areas of present day India and within the religions of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora, such as Santeria and in the Vodou of Haiti. In one form or another, its practice has existed in virtually every religion and culture before the 19th century.

While it remains an unbroken tradition in some religious societies, there is a certain amount of controversy being arisen within both its resurrection or denial in reconstructionist traditions. Reconstructionism is based upon the concept of "reclaiming" an older, often entirely or ethically extinct, religion and thus resurrecting its presence into modern society. We find it in Judaism and its being represented more and more often in various pagan movements across the globe. The often unstructured eclecticism is being traded in for a tradition steeped in philosophical antiquity.

As in any case of bringing the old into the new, certain aspects of the old tradition are difficult, sometimes impossible, to implement in the new world. Others, as with the case of animal sacrifice, present a barrier only hindered by modern societal view and personal preferences, all which too

often manifests as moral argument. I'll now get to the center of the subject and discuss the two major points of opposition against the act of ritual animal sacrifice.

1. Animal sacrifice is archaic, out-dated, no longer applicable in the modern world because we no longer require the meat to survive.

This is one of the most common arguments in opposition to animal sacrifice. While its true that MOST of us are in communities whereby raising our own animals to feed our own families and society is either hindered by urban or suburban living, or that purchasing it is a cheaper convenience, this argument falters on the idea of sacrifice being exclusively for the feeding of the religious supplicant.

Animal sacrifice was once a true sacrifice in some indigenous cultures due to the difficulty in obtaining food for the community, but the meat from the animal was, with the exception of a few cases, was entirely consumed afterward by the people as both a physical and spiritual sustenance. While we are now with the convenience to purchase our physical sustenance at a grocery store, the loss of a spiritual feeding found by offering the animal first as an act of thanksgiving is apparent.

It may have been an archaic device, but so are some of the ideas and practices resurrected in reconstructionist traditions. As Christianity and Islam moved in on previous pagan territories during the Middle Ages, any practices associated with the old religions were abolished. It began to be taught that no god would need to be "fed", that the idols were made of brass and stone and had no other value. This is an interesting point of view since the father of both religions, Judaism, had a common practice of animal sacrifice and the Old Testament includes attempts and successful rituals of human sacrifice ordained by their god. But it was from this point that anything associated with the pagan traditions first became seen as something of the past, and subconsciously I feel that it remains as such in modern pagans.

I would argue that any tradition "reclaiming" an older one that did include sacrifice, can and should embrace its practice. If still thought to be ancient, it should be considered that most of the rituals and beliefs resurrected are much the same. If one is

going to pick and choose which realistic practices are to stay and which are to go, is it really that much of an effort in reclamation? Reconns like Nova Roma, Stregheria and Ethnikoi Hellenes are traditions that have already included it in its practice.

2. Animal sacrifice is a cruel, barbaric practice.

This is the most offensive and least accurate justification against the act of sacrifice. It's quite reminiscent of the argument based upon by Christian missionaries whom, upon visiting indigenous cultures, argued that they were "savages" due to their inconveniences of having farms mass produce their foods. In the majority of traditions that have included the practice in both the past and the few that continue it in the present, nothing could be further from the truth. The animals chosen to be first offered up to the gods were treated with a large amount of respect, often from their birth. In some cases, they were and are dressed in ritual garb and makeup, and upon offering to the gods, are killed in the quickest, least painful way possible.

The typically inedible or unpalatable parts of the animal, such as the head, feet and organs, is often buried or given up as a burnt offering. The animal is blessed by the spirit as the exchange of energy from the kill strengthens both the meat later consumed and the spirituality of the congregants. It becomes an act of thanksgiving whereby both the physical and spiritual body are fed in communion with the gods.

Compare this to the meat farms and factories where our frozen meats are purchased. If not overcrowded in a pen, they're stuffed in tiny cages; they're living in and covered with faeces, urine and vomit. Many of them are covered in boils, blistered and have bacterial infections. With fowl, they're put down an assembly line where a mechanical blade decapitates them with a less than perfect precision. With larger animals, bolt guns send a concussion to the head of the animal, sometimes killing them- other times, it misses. The meat is later mechanically separated, blood washed down the drain and neatly packed into trays and boxes for consumer convenience. The only gratitude given to the meat (in lieu of the complete animal) is based upon the capital worth of the meat.

My argument in retaliation to the 'barbarism' of animal sacrifice remains: If you find the act upon the animal to be brutal, do NOT, in any circumstance, purchase any meat from your grocer. It would be nothing less than an act of hypocrisy if you based

the argument on animal brutality.

This opinion should not be interpreted to suggest that any and all traditions of philosophical antiquity should engage in the practice of ritual animal sacrifice. Some traditions, like the multitude in Wicca, should not feel the need to include it. Wicca is a modern mystery tradition in both how it is practiced and the ethical structure which is generally accepted within each Tradition; it has no real roots in the era where animal sacrifice was prevalent and thus no one should feel the need to include something that would genuinely be "new" to the religion.

On the same note, it should neither be understood as a stab at those who, even in reconstructionist traditions that would had historically included it, opt not to bring it into their practices. If one chooses not to do it, base it upon simple preference instead of arguments based upon either misunderstandings or a faltered sense of moral objection. I can only ask that those who engage in its practice are given the same amount of respect as one who does not. We all have our specific traditions that bring us our own understanding of the Divine and the mechanics of the Universe. If blood is seen as a valid spiritual catalyst for the communion between mankind and the gods, then it is every bit as real as the most pacifist traditions. Paganism has often stood against the status quo; I don't understand the idea of now standing in absolute objection to moral standards that are foreign to our roots.



NO THUMBS UP FOR LARP **BY ARIMESIS**

Chicago, Illinois.

During a hastily called, yet much anticipated news conference today, Dr. Peter Nowacher, a surgical resident at St. Luke's Methodist hospital announced that he had amputated the right thumb of Howard Schmuck, a forty-five year old accountant from rural Hoffman Estates, a suburb of Chicago. According to Nowacher, the procedure took place without complications and Mr. Schmuck is expected to physically recover without the need for further

amputations if he follows the direction of the psychological team from St. Luke's which has been assigned to his case. Crossover Dementia. LARPCD is a disorder in which the subconscious mind, during the dream state, re-enacts the fantasies created in the waking state while adopting fictitious characters created for Live Action Role Play.

Mr. Schmuck has been nationally heralded as the harbinger of a newly dawning yet rapidly growing psychological disorder that is being called LARP.

In the case of Mr. Schmuck, the character he had created for LARP was a nineteen year old paedophile vampire. "During sleep, acting out the crossover fantasy, Mr. Schmuck completely sucked the flesh off of his right thumb," reported Nowacher, "there was no recourse other than amputation."

Litina Loafers, a resident of Hoffman Estates who works with Schmuck told reporters, "I have worked with Howard for many years. He always seemed like such a nice, overtly homophobic and conservative religious man to me. I am shocked that he has a fantasy life and that he could desire to be anything other than what he is. I think he should pray for forgiveness, I will be praying that he can return to reality and get away from devil games."

"This is a traumatic disorder that is taking a toll on the LARP community, people who are so frustrated or bored with their own lives that they feel compelled to create fantasy lives," said Dr. Nowacher, "this is not the first case like this I have seen at St. Luke's."

In a related story, Isaac Benjamin (I.B.) Strange, another LARP player with a vampire character was found dead recently with a used tampon lodged in his throat. The coroner's investigation into his death has been closed and no foul play was determined.



THE DWELLER

BY LEISHA (MARIENNE)

The Dweller.

The Dweller, sometimes called the Dweller on the Threshold, is a part of our being whose goal is to keep us safe at all times. On the surface, this sounds wonderful—we travel through life with our own

personal bodyguard. When the Dweller becomes ruler of you, however, life can become confining.

The Dweller's goal is to keep you safe by preserving the status quo at all cost. Every opportunity for growth comes with a potential for harm. When we start a romantic relationship, we risk heartbreak at the other side. When we pursue a new career, we run the risk of failing in our job responsibilities. When it comes to spiritual growth, the Dweller knows that you will be changed by looking at yourself and engaging in a course of study that encourages growth. Thus, the Dweller may have put roadblocks into your path that challenged you from steps on your spiritual journey.

The Dweller's desire to embrace the status quo at all costs can help to explain why people in bad life situations will continue to be in bad life situations until they make the conscious choice to change their life. This can help to explain why a person who makes poor relationship choices will continue to pick the same type of individual for their next relationship or why a person from an abusive childhood may select an abusive mate. We as humans tend to be creature of habit at times, and the Dweller works through this by convincing us that it is better to be uncomfortable in what we know than to risk seeking a more comfortable life in the unknown.

Because the Dweller is most often apparent when it is standing in our way on the road of growth, it can be easy to ascribe evil to its being. This same Dweller, however, is what prevents you from walking down a dark and unsafe alley at night. As it seeks to protect you from dangers it perceives in the world around you as well as change that comes from within, the Dweller is neither good nor evil. It just is.

Many people when first recognizing their Dweller try to find a way to outsmart it. This is an act of futility, however. You cannot outsmart your Dweller, because your Dweller is as smart as you are. Remember, your Dweller is you. It has all of your knowledge and life experiences and will do whatever it takes to keep you safe. You cannot fight the Dweller, for to do so is to fight yourself. When you fight yourself at every turn, some part of you will lose. As the Dweller is not something that you created, but instead was created with you as a part of you being brought into flesh, you cannot destroy your Dweller without destroying yourself. Only by embracing your Dweller and understanding it for

what it is can you move beyond the confines that your Dweller brings into your life.

At times, the Dweller can be predictable in that it will usually take the path of least resistance to encourage the status quo. When it finds a method that works, it will often use that same method for as long as it works. But the Dweller can also be creative. The Dweller can be seen in the burst water pipes in your house that makes it so that you miss a first date. The Dweller can be the flat tire on the way to the job interview of your dreams. The Dweller can be the unexpected relative who shows up so that you miss a class. The Dweller can be that 24-hour flu that keeps you from going out for a life-changing experience.

Not everything in life that stands in your way is caused by the Dweller, however. It can be tempting to make the Dweller into a scapegoat for everything in life that goes bad. This, too, is a manifestation of the Dweller, for blaming the Dweller for every life situation that comes up prevents you from embracing the change that helps you to grow.

Recognize your Dweller. Learn what faces it wears and how it manifests in your life. When you embrace your Dweller and learn from it, change and development becomes a natural outgrowth of your process. When change becomes your status quo, then you will find that your Dweller can, and will, work with you in development of your true self.



happy hints

How Not To Do V-DAY By DAMOISELLE SHI

Valentine's Day – we all know that Hallmark are milking it, that it's just another "cash cow" of a holiday to them, but that doesn't mean you can't make the day memorable. I mean do we really need an excuse to show the people we care about in this life what they mean to us?

I think not.

So how does one make it a day to remember? Fancy restaurants? Diamond rings? Breakfast in bed? All good ideas, if not a bit cliché, but perhaps we're

over-complicating things as we, as a species, have a tendency to do. How about some originality?

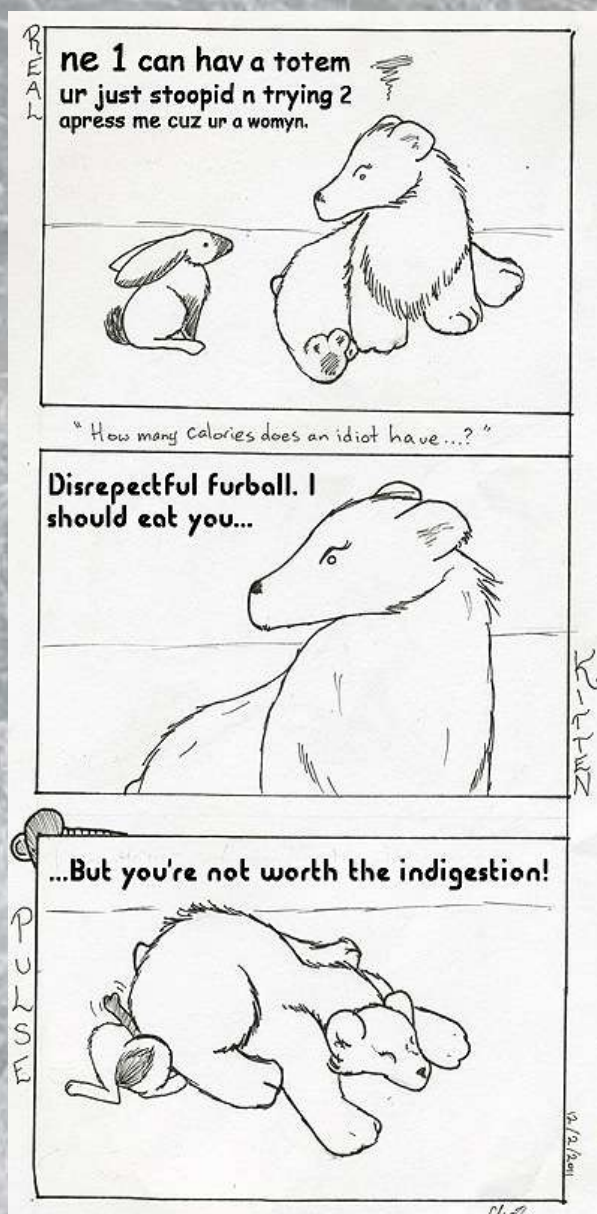
Why not do something that your other half likes as opposed to the general consensus of what's socially acceptable? Why not acknowledge that your partner is unique? Celebrate that difference as opposed to attempting to conform them?

Just a thought.



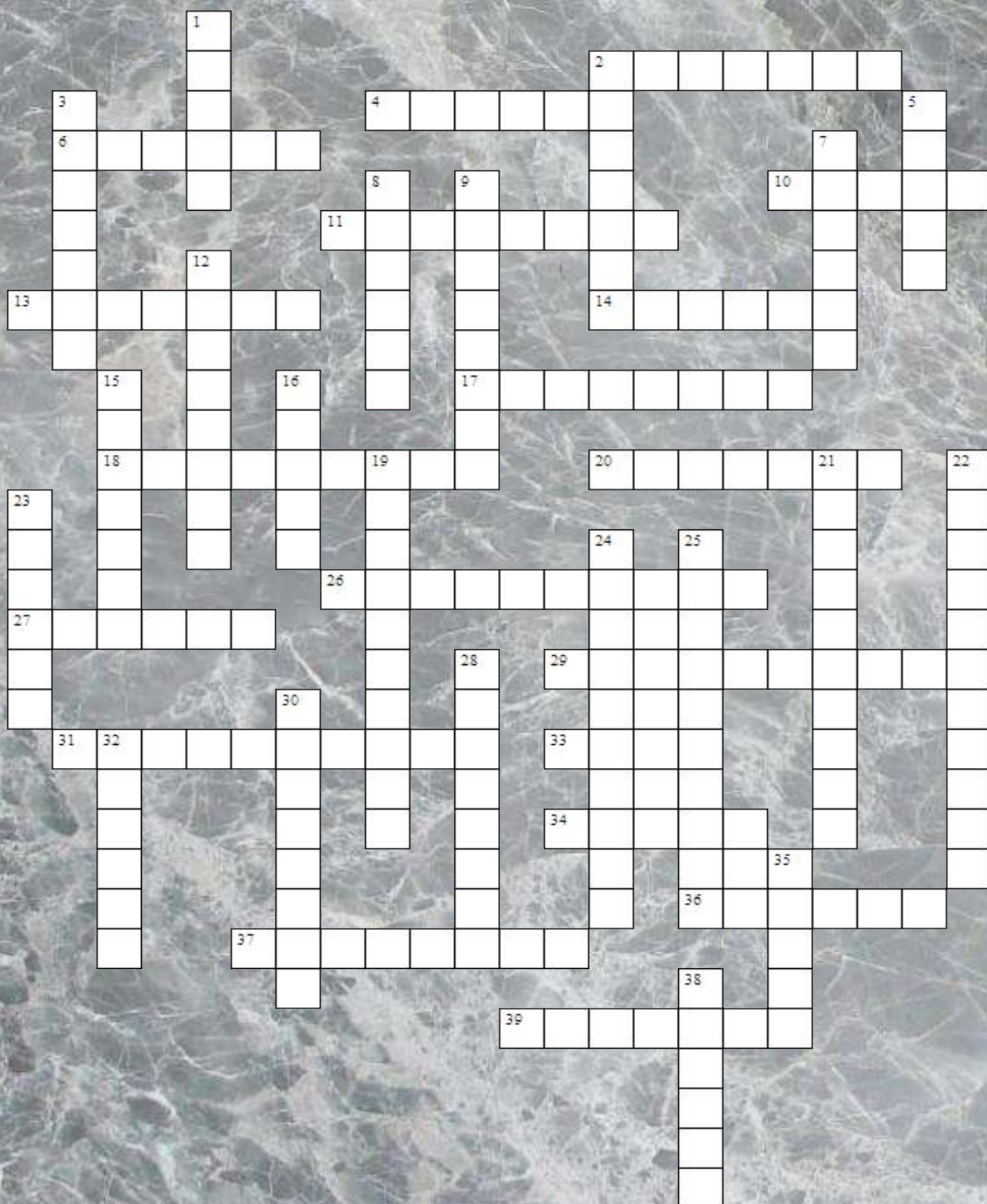
THE REAL KITTEN PULSE – HOW MANY CALORIES DOES AN IDIOT HAVE?

By MISS NEL



A PAGAN CROSSWORD

FROM SANGRAAL



CROSSWORD HINTS

ACROSS

- 2 – Fierce Kemetic Goddess
- 4 – Sumerian Fertility and love-sex Goddess
- 6 – Ritual blade used to direct power
- 10 – A god of the “Wild Hunt”
- 11 – Eliphas Levi’s “God” of Unifying Opposites
- 13 – Aleister Crowley’s revealed philosophical tradition
- 14 – To know, to dare, to will, to be _
- 17 – Meaning “choosey”, a mixed praxis
- 18 – The “Phantom Queen” of Irish Mythology
- 20 – An “oath-breaker”
- 26 – The belief of many, individual gods
- 27 – Birthplace of Wicca, the New _ Coven
- 29 – What witches do
- 31 – Tarot cards are a form of this
- 33 – Consider to be Gardner’s initiator
- 34 – Afro-Haitian religion servicing the Lwa
- 36 – The ‘Mutable’ astrological sign of water
- 37 – The gods of a religion
- 39 – An herb associated with inducing dreams

DOWN

- 1 – The Goal of Ceremonial Magic – The _ Work
- 2 – Last name of the Alexandrian founder
- 3 – Hindu deva who removes obstacles
- 5 – The Elder Futhark are a type of these
- 7 – Greek Witchcraft Goddess
- 8 – The solar holidays
- 9 – Number of moons in the year
- 12 – six-pointed Star of Above and Below
- 15 – Greek Goddess of the grain
- 16 – The ‘Cardinal’ astrological sign of fire
- 19 – The belief that all deities emanate from a “Source”
- 21 – Two intersecting lines form this magical place
- 22 – British _ Wicca
- 23 – Adjective for “love and light” pagans
- 24 – DRW: _ Religious Witchcraft
- 25 – A spirit or deity that guides the dead
- 28 – Five pointed Star within a circle
- 30 – Jewish mystical system
- 32 – A mid-winter Sabbat
- 35 – The lunar holidays
- 38 – Ritual blade used to harvest plants

Happy Valentine's Day!



FROM ALL THE STAFF AT REALPAGAN.NET, I
WISH YOU A VERY LOVELY DAY WITH YOUR
VALENTINE.

WHETHER YOU CELEBRATE THE SECULAR
HALLMARK HOLIDAY, OR THE FEAST OF THE
MARTYRS, ENJOY YOUR FESTIVITIES.

