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Initiating the Rite

Processional

Song: [*With Reverence We Come*](#) (Monica Shaner and Mike Bierschenk)

Outdwellers - Jeff

Outdwellers, you may not think we see you hiding over there,
Peeking from behind the stump, or under the bed,
But we do...

Oh Beings of mischief and trickery, we call to you!
Ambivalent ones of swamp or household, of safety or danger, of aid or ill!
You who may harm or help in your turn, you *Kikímory*, *Vílei*, and *Zméy*!
We ask you: turn away from us the side which might mean us harm.

You beings of drowning and death, you unquiet dead,
You *Drékavatsye*, *Mávky*, *Rusálky*, *Úpyory*!
We ask you: leave us in peace,

Beings of darkness without peace, of wickedness and misfortune!
You *Babái*, *Blúdovy*, *Chórtý*, and *Shishígy*, great and mighty though you are!
We ask you: leave us in peace.

All you beings who are offended by our work or who would disrupt it, we offer you this tiding:
Accept this offering and leave us
With the peace of mind that comes with knowing you are satisfied.

Purification

[In the ritual space, incense and water are circumambulated.]

As we prepare to do this work today, let us take a moment to purify ourselves and our ritual spaces. Here in this space, we pass smoke and sprinkle around us, that we be wreathed in the fire and water. Those joining us remotely, if you have a usual way of purifying, I invite you to do so now as you repeat after me:

This time is sacred to me, and I honor it. (*pause*)
This place is sacred to me, and I honor it. (*pause*)
This work is sacred to me, and I honor it. (*pause*)

May I be calm and ready to do this work. (*pause*)

So be it.

Opening Prayer

Here in this space, we are prepared to honor the Kindreds, to honor Baba Yaga, as the wheel of the year makes its turn from the warmth and brightness of summer to the dark and cold of winter.

As our ancestors have done before us, and as we pray our descendants may do in their time, so we do here and now.

The spirits of the sky are above us.
The spirits of the land are around us.
The spirits of the waters flow below us.
Surrounded by all the numinous beings of earth and sky and water,
Our hearts tied together as one,
Let us pray with a good fire.

Honoring the Earth - Shawneen

We Children of the Earth call out to Máti Zémiye, our beloved Mother, giver of all life and the source of the land's fertility. We call to you first in our rites, for you underpin our every step, our every action. For this beautiful world, and for every blessing that arises from the earth and soil, we give you praise!

Máti Zémiye, accept our offering!

Calling For Inspiration - Jess

We Children of Earth call out to the *Zóri*, goddesses of shining red-gold Dawn and of the rich-hued Sunset!

Morning Star, red-gold and shining, herald of beginnings, you open the gates of the Palace of the Sun, that he may ride in his heavenly arc and shine his light about the Earth our Mother.

Evening Splendor, draped in brocade of deepest crimson and richest midnight, you wait to receive him to your own gates, thus to safeguard his light until your sister can release him again in the cycle of time.

Zóri-zoranitsi, Ever-Watchful Guardians of Day and of Night, we humbly ask:

As you fling open the gates of dawn, so fling open the gates of our mouths, that we may speak with beauty and richness the praise of the Holy Ones.

As you safeguard the bright Sun and bring him homeward nightly, so guide and guard us that our speech be true and worthy and good.

Help us to be worthy of our work.

Zóri, accept our offering!

Purpose & Precedent - Mike B.

We gather here at this Autumn cross-quarter to honor the season, to honor the spirits, and especially to honor Baba Yaga. Many of us may have heard the name of Baba Yaga, the cunning witch of the Slavic woods, she who flies through the dark forest in a giant wooden mortar, steering with her pestle, chasing in pursuit of those who flee her. You may have heard of her house on chicken legs, which stands facing the dark forest until called by its mistress. You may have heard of the impossible tasks she sets before young maidens who arrive at her gates. You may have heard of her fence of bones and flaming skulls, from which ride out three horsemen, white, red, and black, who are Dawn, Midday and Twilight. You may have heard of her repulsive face, her bony legs, her iron teeth.

And indeed, she is all of these things, at times.

Baba Yaga is also, however, a giver of gifts, seemingly simply, yet powerful and magical. She is a transformative figure, helping those who meet her to change and grow, if sometimes begrudgingly. She is an initiator, leading those who dare through fire and darkness into their truer selves. She is a guardian of the forest, and of those who flee to its shelter seeking refuge from those who would lord over them. She is an ancient figure, old beyond telling, who has seen the arrival of humans in her forests and yet chosen to remain among them, our many-times-Great Grandmother. She is wily and cryptic and suffers no fools, but she is also a great ally, a protector, a sage. Let us prepare to meet her.

Attunement - Corbin

[extemporaneous sensory awareness attunement]

The waters support and surround us.
The land extends about us.
The sky stretches out above us.
At our center burns a living flame.

May all the Kindred bless us.
May our worship be true.
May our actions be just.
May our love be pure.

Blessings, honor, and worship to the holy ones.

(Cosmology prayer: Ceisiwr Serith)

Recreation of the Cosmos - Jan

With our minds and purposes all attuned, let us Recreate the Cosmos. In the magical plane, all points are equally center, but during the space of our rituals we proclaim our own centers and align them with the cosmos, blessing a Fire, a Well, and a Tree. Further, though we are apart we proclaim that each of our centers are aligned with each other's, one sacred and united grove.

For our remote participants, If you have a home shrine, bless the Hallows in your usual way; if you do not, then see each of these Hallows in the shrine of your heart and honor them there.

First we call to the Fire, primordial and blazing, fire of the heavens, fires beneath the earth, fires on hearths across space and time that bless the folk and welcome the ancestors and the spirits.

Sacred Fire, burn within us!

Next we call to the Well, lifegiving, filled with mystery, echo of ancient seas, basin of blessing rain, deep pool of potential and of wisdom beyond mortal knowing. **Sacred Well, flow within us!**

Finally, we call to the Tree, strong and true, restful shade in the summer, dry shelter in the winter, blessing gift of fruit and nut, great beam upholding rooves and heavens alike, many-formed but eternally present: **Sacred Tree, grow within us!**

Gatekeeper/Gates - Jan

Calling the Gatekeeper (Zheravl - zsheravle)

The Center established, let us call to a Gatekeeper who may aid us in opening these Hallows as Gates spanning all Worlds and Realms. In Three Cranes Grove, we often call upon the bird who bears our name, who is constant friend and ally. Let us go to meet him.

Close your eyes, if you are comfortable doing so, and see in your mind's eye the waters of the Well mingling with the heat of the Fire, producing a dense fog, all-colored and yet colorless. These are the mists of magic. See them as they roll in around your sacred space, obscuring the surroundings in all directions, closing us off from the mundane world, leaving nothing but our Grove.

At the edge of the mists, there is a parting. The mists roll back to reveal still waters, deep and undisturbed, stretching far into the distance, disappearing into the farthest mists.

In the shallows before you, where the land meets the waters, stands a tall, watchful crane. One foot stands upon the land, and the other is in the water. His eye is raised to the sky.

This is Garanus Crane. He has dominion over the three realms: he walks upon the land, feeds in the waters, and flies through the sky. He guides us among the worlds and realms, that we may visit them in safety, secure beneath his sheltering wing.

Garanus Crane, we give you praise, as is good and fitting. Come join us at our fire, far-reaching one; **Garanus Crane, accept our offering!**

Opening the Gates

And now, Garanus, we ask you this further boon. We pray you, join your magic with ours, that we may open these Hallows as Gates. (And let all of us, no matter where we are, open our own Gates, be they on a shrine or within our hearts.)

May these Wells be not simple vessels on our altars, but deepen as shafts plunging to the Underworld, bringing our prayers and offerings to all below. **Garanus Crane, open the Gate!**

May these Fires be not simple flame lit by human hands, but brighten as a pillar of fire stretching to the heavens, bringing our prayers and offerings to all above. **Garanus Crane, open the Gate!**

And may these Trees be not merely wood and stone, but the great and mighty World Tree, rooted deep, crowned high, spanning all the worlds and realms, bringing our prayers and offerings to all the spirits, no matter where they be. **Garanus Crane, open the Gate!**

We stand here, connected at the Sacred Center to worlds Above and Below, to all the realms of Land, Sea, and Sky. **Let the Gates be Open!**

Children of Earth, the Gates lie open before the Holy Ones. Let only truth be spoken here, as we turn our attention to the Three Kindreds.

Inviting the Kindreds

Ancestors - Ann E.

We Children of Earth call out to the *Pérdcheh*, those who have gone before us, our Ancestors.
You whose breads we bake, you whose songs we sing, we call to you!
Ancestors of our bodies, whose lives engendered our own;
Ancestors of our faith, whose practices we take up and pass on;
Ancestors of our culture, whose grace we emulate and whose downfalls we learn from;
Ancestors of our hearts, whose death cannot part you from our love.

Pérdcheh, Ancestors, be with us now and join us at our fire.
Aid us and guide us as we walk these elder ways.

Ancestors, accept our offering!

Nature Spirits - Jeff

We Children of Earth call out to the beings of nature and of wild spaces.
To the *Léshy*, the *Boróvi*, the *Gayévi*, guardians of the forest and grove;
To the *Vódnitsi*, rulers of lake and pond and deep spring;
To the *Dzédki* and *Karzéuki* in the mines and tunnels;
To the *Zhar-ptítsi*, beautiful and dangerous firebirds;
To all the old trees and rocks and creatures, our allies and friends,
You who crawl, creep, fly and swim, come all you wild unfettered spirits to our fire!

Spirits of Nature, accept our offering!

Shining Ones - Katie

We Children of Earth call out to the *Bódzi*, the Shining Ones, divine beings!
You who make our lives and minds more than a twilight fog;
Who cast your light and shadow into our world;
Who teach us and guide us to greater works and deeds;
Bódzi, Shining Ones, we invite you to join us in our work today,
To work through us and with us.

Shining Ones, Accept our offering!

Three Kindreds Praise Offerings

Song: [*Kindreds, Three, We Honor You*](#)

Baba Yaga, the Being of the Occasion - Traci

We Children of Earth call out to Baba Yaga, wise woodland witch!
Grandmother of all forest creatures,
Wily setter of tasks, scourge of the powerful,
Cunning dealer of good and of ill,
You who are quick to cut,
Yet quick also to protect, we call to you!
Hear our cry, and heed us.

Baba Yaga, accept our offering!

Praise Offerings for Baba Yaga

Song: [*Skull and Fire*](#) (Mike Bierschenk)

Prayer of Sacrifice -

Having given offerings to the Ancestors, to the Spirits of Nature, to the Shining Ones, and especially to Baba Yaga, we now pour out one final offering to carry our prayers to the holy ones.

May our prayers descend in the Well to all who dwell below.

May our prayers arise on the Fire to all who dwell above.

May our prayers flow out along root and branch of the Tree, reaching all the worlds and realms.

Kindreds All, accept our sacrifice!

[This final offering should remove all remaining offerings, *and* boiling water should be poured into the teapot as a key offering.]

The Waters of Life - Mike B.

And now, having given, it is right that we may receive. Often, in our rites, we call out to the Holy Ones and exhort them to “give us the Waters!” This ritual, however, is dedicated to Baba Yaga. And Baba Yaga is an old one, a crafty one, and not one who looks well upon those who would place demands on her.

Ritually speaking, we have asked Garanus to bring us to the edge of the firelight that surrounds the chicken-legged hut, but we stand outside the gate. As we told you in the pre-ritual briefing, our intent is to journey within, to ask Baba Yaga if she will share a mug of tea and tell us her wisdom.

Children of Earth, is it your will that we should ask the Baba if she will share tea with us? **It is!**
And Children of Earth, is it your will that we should ask the Baba if she will pour her wisdom into these waters, infusing them not only with herb and bloom, but with her insight? **It is!**

Then let us ask her. [Mike takes an omen to see if the Baba is willing. Assuming she is, proceed. If not, switch to a more usual Waters-taking, asking blessings from the Three Kindreds.]

Children of Earth, as I go around and pour tea, sing with us and prepare to meet with Baba Yaga. (Be careful! The tea will be very hot, so don't try to drink it right now.)

Song: [*Comfort of Home*](#) (Jan Avende)

And now, let us journey to meet the Baba. Close your eyes, if you are comfortable doing so, and feel again those energies that surround you. And from all around you, see in your vision eye the mists of magic as they arise about you, colorless and yet filled with color, obscuring your sight till

all you can see is mists, and beside you the figure of a crane. Garanus is here with you, faithful guide. He will travel with us, helping us to travel the Otherworld.

The light grows dimmer, darker, and as the mists dissipate you find yourself in a dark wood, pines and oaks mixing with beech and hornbeam, a thin crescent moon peaking through the sparse tree limbs near the horizon. Though the wood is dark, and it is eerie, it is not frightening — a comfortable crispness is in the night air, and the sounds of the last insects of the season mix with the soft hooting of owls and rustling of small creatures in the fallen leaves.

This is a place where humans have been for many centuries, but the wildness still shows through.

Gazing through the dark trunks, you see a glimmer of orange firelight. Walk toward it. There is no path, but in these old forests there is space for walking among the trunks. The firelight glows through the trees as you approach, brightening, until suddenly you pass the treeline and find yourself in a broad clearing. Before you, a fence made of thin branches and long bones, femurs and ribs, all strung together tightly with twine. At regular intervals, grinning skulls top the fenceposts, their eye sockets and open mouths burning with the fire inside, which you have followed through the woods. And beyond the fence, you see an izba, a traditional Slavic wooden cabin. It is typical of its type, simple and well-maintained, the roofline carved and painted with vines and flowers. But as you look closer you realize that it hovers slightly off the ground, supported by the massive chicken legs folded beneath it.

This is the House on Chicken Legs, the house of Baba Yaga, and she stands in its doorway, light and heat from the hearth spilling around her. Over her white blouse she wears a traditional sarafan pinafore, dark red with yellow and green accents. Her hair is mostly covered beneath a richly embroidered headscarf, gray wisps peeking out around the edges. Her face is expectant, neither welcoming nor forbidding, but simply ready to receive.

This is now your time. You may enter the gate, or not. You may approach Baba Yaga, or not. But she is ready to receive you, to share tea and ancient wisdom.

[Allow time for a brief meeting with Baba Yaga, about five minutes. Steady trance drumming throughout, then a callback.]

It is soon time to go. Now it's time to conclude your visit, to end your conversation, and especially to thank Baba Yaga for her wisdom and her hospitality.

[pause]

It is time to go. Thank Baba, if you have not yet, and walk toward the gate. Just beyond it, in the light of the skullfires, Garanus stands, patient and solid. As you exit the yard and begin walking toward the treeline, Garanus at your side, the mists begin to roll in, and as you reach the first tree trunks they rise in earnest, so that you are again wreathed in the mists of magic that you

have seen before. As you stand in the mists, they lighten, the light brightening, and then they begin to fade away.

Here, in this space, wiggle your toes, your fingers. Begin to move around, to become reacquainted with your physical body. Breathe deeply, and when you are ready, open your eyes. Look around, and see us all here, together, in this space.

You have each journeyed to the hut, and seen the space there. Many of you have sat with Baba Yaga, have heard her wisdom. That wisdom is for you personally. Some have not sat with her, have spent time in the firelight contemplating, but the blessings of Baba Yaga are for you as well. The omens of our three tea readers are for all of us here in this space: seers, what do you see? What wisdom does the Baba grant?

[Three tea readers give their responses.]

Children of Earth, do you accept this wisdom, in addition to any you personally received? **We do!**

Know, then, that these waters sit before you, infused by Baba Yaga with any wisdom she has given you personally, and with the blessings of [X], [Y], and [Z]. **Behold the Waters of Life!**

Drink then, and know that these blessings are given for your own good, and for the good of all. Na zdraví!

Working - Mike B.

Early in my relationship with her, Baba Yaga thrust a chicken thigh bone at me in a vision, and said “Get one of these! Out there! In the waking world!” without a trace of explanation. I know now that she wanted me to have a link to her, a token of her presence and her power.

These blessings that we have received, we have now drunk and taken into us. They are real and fulsome, but they are intangible. And knowing from experience how much the Baba likes a token, we now invite you to take those blessings and infuse them into a talisman.

For our remote attendees, you may or may not have a bone or other talisman with you, and you may or may not have wine or another anointing liquid available. This is absolutely fine! We encourage you to adapt what we are doing here to your needs, and to infuse the wisdom of Baba Yaga into a talisman as you see fit, even up to doing all this work mentally at the shrine of your heart.

Here in this space, we will come around with baskets of bones (both animal and clay, as you prefer), and we invite you to select one. On the tables, there are both candles and dishes of winelike liquid. The candle is there to cleanse and purify — pass the bone through the flame,

and know that its mundane nature is burned away. If in your conversation Baba Yaga advised you to be rid of something in your life, you may feel that parting in the flame.

Then, take the bone and bathe it in the dish, holding the blessings you have received in mind as you do so, knowing that as the bone is anointed those blessings flow into it, infusing it.

Logistical note: please don't burn yourself in the fire. The bones do heat quickly, and they can burn you as well. It is perfectly reasonable to pass one half through the fire, anoint it, and then to hold the now-cool anointed portion as you pass the other half through the fire.

Song: [Skull and Fire](#) (instrumental, concluding with the sung reprise)

Thanking the Kindreds

Baba Yaga - Traci

Baba Yaga, Grandmother, we are grateful for your wisdom,
For your willingness to hear us,
For allowing us to approach your hut.
May we honor the gifts you have given.

Baba Yaga, we thank you.

Shining Ones - Katie

Bódzi, Shining Ones, we are grateful for your aid,
For illuminating and shrouding us,
For teaching and guiding us this and every day,
That we work through and with you.

Shining Ones, we thank you!

Nature Spirits - Jeff

Spirits of Nature, we are grateful for your presence,
You creatures of rock and quarry,
Of fire and water,
Of forest and grove,
Of all the wild and wondrous natural spaces we inhabit.

Spirits of Nature, we thank you!

Ancestors - Ann E.

Pérdcheh, Ancestors, we are grateful for your guidance,

You of our bone and our faith and culture,
You of our hearts who are ever and always with us.
May we always hold you close, until we dwell among you.

Ancestors, we thank you!

Gatekeeper/Gates - Jan

Thanking the Gatekeeper

Garanus Crane, we are grateful for your vigilance and care.
Long-limbed and liminal,
Transporting, transgressing, transcending,
You are our constant protector.

Garanus Crane, we thank you!

Closing the Gates

And now, Garanus, we ask of you one final boon, that you join your magic with ours once more as we close these Gates. Be with each of us as we together close the Gates on our shrines and in our hearts.

May this Tree, wide-limbed and deep-rooted, draw back and become simple wood and stone.

Garanus Crane, close the Gate!

May this Fire, pillar of flame reaching the heavens, draw down and become simple flame.

Garanus Crane, close the Gate!

And may this Well, deep shaft of offering, draw up and become simple water. **Garanus Crane, close the Gate!**

May all be as it was before, save the work we have done here. **Let the Gates be closed!**

Thanking Inspiration - Jess

Zóri, you sisters of Dawn and Twilight, you have blessed us with inspiration, bright-shining as the Sun you ever guard. Through you we have spoken with beauty and with grace, and we are grateful for your gift.

***Zóri*, we thank you.**

Thanking the Earth - Shawneen

Máti Zémiye, Earth Mother, giver of life and abundance, we honor you first and last. For all your gifts and for your presence here and always, we are deeply grateful.

Máti Zémiye, we thank you!

Closing Statements & Recessional

Thank you very much for honoring Baba Yaga with us today. If you are with us here in person, then we hope you will join us for potluck, even if you weren't able to bring something to share; there is food for all! We also invite you to ask us questions about the work here, and about grove; find somebody with a nametag, and if they can't answer your question they can direct you to someone who can.

For our remote participants, we're so happy you've joined us. We'll leave the Zoom meeting open for a bit for questions and sociality, and then we'll close it out before things get too rambunctious here in the room.

And so, Children of Earth, this rite is ended. Let us walk in the light.

Song: [*Walk in the Light*](#) (Mike Bierschenk)