

Malevolent Maine

Episode 36: The Ritual of Water

Malevolent Maine is a horror podcast, and may contain material not suitable for all audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

INTRO:

MEGAN: A mill that seems to be manufacturing something only at night. An artifact said to open doorways through hell itself. An indepth look at the increase in witchcraft in Maine and a review of all we know so far. We'll be bringing you these stories in the coming weeks.

Hey everyone, it's Producer Megan. Our show has grown so much this season - you've doubled our fanbase. We want to thank everyone for listening and scaring their friends with this show. We see you on social media, and we appreciate all the support. Don't forget to join the Malevolent Mob at patreon. All six episodes of The Black Tarot are posted, plus we're hard at work on our next side story. Go to patreon.com/malevolentmaine. Thanks again and enjoy!

The grass crunches softly under your feet. Above, the moon shines coldly down on you. The cemetery is still and quiet, and you can't help but look over your shoulder, sure something is there waiting for you in the dark. You see the faint flickering of a flame off in the distance beyond a large grave stone, and you know you're close. It's a secret midnight meeting and you've been invited.

This is Malevolent Maine.

Guys, what was that?

I saw it with my own eyes

No, seriously, what was that?

It's just not scientifically possible.

I can't explain it.

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

This stuff is wild, man. It's real wild.
But... what was that?

Water, water, everywhere, MMers, and not a drop to drink. We were going to bring you the story of the Wendell Aldrich and the Schooner Seance - we had it all ready to go, but just days before release, we got word of a story we just had to bring you. We'll save the mysterious death of Aldrich and his two wives at a later date. For now this story seems more pressing.

Two days ago we received a call at the Malevolent Maine offices. It was late at night, after we had left for the day. We're going to play that call for you now. We don't think it needs any more introduction:

SABRINA [nervous]: Um...hello. This is Samantha Greer. Um, I think we just performed the Ritual of Water.

This young woman, whose name we aren't using out of request from her family, left a number where we could reach her and hung up.

As you can imagine, we dropped everything to investigate this. If you've been listening to our show this season, you know that we've encountered various covens of witches who have enacted various charging or tempering rituals across the state. Machias, Andover, and Fort Kent have seen the Rituals of Fire, Air, and Earth performed there. We had long suspected the Ritual of Water, but had no way of knowing when and where in the state it

would occur. The call from the girl we're going to call Sabrina, for reasons that will become apparent soon, was the key we needed to solve this puzzle.

All of the previous rituals have occurred during one of the witches' sabbats or holy days. If what our caller was telling us was true, then this most recent one had taken place about ten days before the Sabbat of Mabon [**may-bin**]. Right around September 11th - the obvious American history aside, this didn't seem to be a date that coincided with anything powerful in the world of witchcraft.

Still, we'd been tracking this loose alliance of witches all year and if, for the first time, we actually had someone who had performed the ritual who was willing to speak with us, we needed to pursue this.

Sabrina, again not her real name, lives in the town of Kennebunk in York County. Located at the southern end of the state Kennebunk is one of the oldest settlements in Maine, founded sometime around the early 1620s, though it wasn't until two hundred years later that Kennebunk split off from nearby Wells to become its own incorporated township.

Kennebunk was once home to a robust shipbuilding history as well as the Kesslen Shoe Mill. It was the site of the famous Lafayette Elm, which was named after General Lafayette when he visited Kennebunk in 1825. The tree grew to a massive 120 foot spread, and over 17 feet around its trunk before succumbing to Dutch Elm disease in 1969. It is home to a strong tourist industry, with places like Mother's Beach, the Wedding Cake House, and the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge bringing in thousands of people to the town each year.

We spoke initially with Sabrina, and learned that she is sixteen years old and part of what she claims is a real witches' coven. We soon spoke with the girl's mother and with her support, arranged a sit down interview with Sabrina and her friend and fellow witch, who we'll call Willow.

Because the subjects were underage, both Sabrina and Willow's mothers accompanied the girls, and Mark arranged to meet them at the Kennebunk Free Library. Lucas had previously visited this library back in Episode 13: The Lost Lady of the Plains, and had kept in contact with one of the librarians there, Aspen. Aspen was able to set Mark up with a small conference room to use for his interview with the teenage witches.

We'll play parts of the interview for you in a moment, but before we jump into it, we want to summarize some salient points. Sabrina and Willow are high school students and have been friends since they met in sixth grade. They both like fantasy novels and role playing games, and sometime around fourteen, they say they discovered real witchcraft. They are practicing Wiccans, something both mothers were quick to point out is just a phase and not something they allow the practice of in their homes. Mark reports both girls rolled their eyes at this, when they were sure their mothers couldn't see them.

About a year ago, just after Christmas, they were contacted by a woman online who heard they were into witchcraft and suggested they all form a coven together.

MARK: Can you tell me more about this witch that contacted you?

SABRINA: She seemed really cool. She sent us Snapchat messages. She had like half black and half white hair, like right down the middle.

WILLOW: She said she was twenty. She was a singer in a band, 'The Intended.'

MARK: Did she ever tell you her name?

SABRINA: She said we should call her Betrothed.

Betrothed, for our new listeners, is a title we've heard in the previous three covens. These people, all women, refer to

themselves as the Betrothed, as in promised to Satan. It appears to be a high-ranking position in this widespread confederation of witches we've uncovered. In all of our research, all of our communication with our connections, we've only ever been able to discover three, now four Betrothed.

Sabrina and Willow's Betrothed told the girls that she was hosting a gathering, and forming a coven. They were going to meet on New Year's Eve at the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, off York Street, at midnight. She told the girls she hoped they could sneak out and join them.

When the girls arrived they met the Betrothed deep in the cemetery, huddled around a small fire she had built. There were nine or ten other teenagers, most of them girls. They recognized one boy from their school but didn't know his name.

WILLOW: We did an opening ritual, and Betrothed passed around a flask she said would, like attune us to the great powers. I think it was wine.

SABRINA: She said she wanted to bring us together. To make a great change in the universe. She talked a lot about how messed up the world was. You know, like pollution and war and global warming. She said we could change that. But only if we all worked together.

In the end, the Betrothed asked each member if they would swear their allegiance to the coven and to each other. Each member had to prick their finger with a silver knife, and then let a bead of blood fall into a small bottle, which the Betrothed took and wore around her neck on a chain.

The girls said there were two members of the group who didn't want to join, and they were allowed to leave with the Betrothed's blessing. She planted a kiss on each of their foreheads and told them to make greatness in the world before sending them away.

The Betrothed then gave everyone in the group a new name. Sabrina became Morrigan, while Willow was named Ceridwen [keh-ruh-dwin].

These are, of course, names of Celtic goddesses. Morrigan is an Irish war witch, the so-called Phantom Queen, often seen washing the bloody clothes of those she has inspired to die while doing brave deeds. Ceridwen is a Welsh enchantress, often associated with rebirth, transformation, and inspiration. The others in the group were also given names from Celtic mythology.

The girls admitted to Mark that they were intrigued by these new names, and spent hours learning everything they could about them, both in their classical mythological form, and in more modern witchcraft usage. They searched for connections between these new names and their own personalities, often astonished at how accurate they were. They took this for a sign that the Betrothed was really magical and had their best interests at heart.

The girls say that they met regularly, at least once a month, sometimes more. On each of the Witches' Sabbats, the Betrothed would bring a bottle of wine and marijuana to share with the new coven. She would often give them certain tasks to perform before their next meeting.

Once they were supposed to etch the symbol of mischief somewhere on the property of a person or business they believed was putting harm into the world. Another time, they were tasked with stealing an expensive piece of jewelry from their parents. At that coven meeting the Betrothed passed around the pieces so that each member had touched all of them, then she wore all of them for the remainder of the meeting before returning them to the coven members.

SABRINA: She was cool. She knew things. Like how the world really works. Sometimes she'd bring her guitar and play some of her songs for us. She was smart and pretty and we all just, I don't know, believed in what she was saying.

Slowly the girls became seduced by the Betrothed, and she ramped up her demands. The girls admitted to stealing mail from several prominent citizens in the area on a certain day. Another time, they spray painted a mystical symbol on each truck of a certain construction company in town. Others were tasked with leaving dead fish on the doorsteps of certain businesses.

WILLOW: I don't know if we ever really understood *why* we were doing these things. But Betrothed told us it was all part of the plan so we went along with it.

As the directives became more and more aggressive, both girls admitted that they began to question the direction of the coven, if only in their own minds. On the surface they still followed the Betrothed's requests, still met once a month, and still performed the rituals.

Sabrina said that in June, just before school got out for the year, the Betrothed had everyone meet on June 3, the night of the full moon at their usual place at Mount Pleasant cemetery. They performed an opening ritual and passed around a bottle of wine and a joint the Betrothed had brought. Then, she told them that tonight they had a very special task.

That night, the Betrothed led them through the woods behind the cemetery to a side road where she had parked a large, white van. She instructed the coven to climb inside, but told Sabrina she could sit up front with her.

As they drove, The Betrothed passed around more wine and more weed and made the coven listen to her music.

SABRINA: She told us we had been chosen to perform a very special ritual. The Master had told her what to do, and that we would be doing a very great service.

MARK: Did she tell you who this Master was?

SABRINA: No. But we all knew.

MARK: Who was it?

SABRINA: The Devil

The Betrothed drove for half an hour, while her young coven fell more and more under the influence of the chemicals she had supplied for them. Sabrina says she tried to pay attention to where they were going, but soon she was lost.

They eventually found themselves in the town of York, some thirty miles south of Kennebunk. The Betrothed took them down another side road, then killed the engine.

WILLOW: She told us to get out and to take the tools from the back. There were shovels and like picks or whatever they're called, for digging in the ground.

The Betrothed led them through the woods again, into another old cemetery and to a specific grave.

SABRINA: I remember the grave said Mary Nasson [**nass-on, not nay-sin**] and had a picture of a woman on it. It was really old.

The Betrothed ordered her coven to dig up the grave. At first, the girls say they all balked at the idea, but the Betrothed told them this was part of the great ritual, one that would summon the energy to change the world. This was a great honor and one that would make them very important in the world that would come after. Reluctantly, the coven agreed and began digging up the remains of Mary Nasson.

We've talked quite a bit about Maine's history of witches and witchcraft. We introduced Mooretown, Maine's oldest witch settlement, in episode 1 of this season. Last season we talked about the Witch of Woodland Valley, and of course, all of the various covens we've covered so far. One name we haven't talked much about is Mary Nasson.

Mary was a well respected white witch from the town of York. She was born in 1745 and became quite famous for not only her herbal healings, but also exorcisms she performed on haunted or demon-infested homes. She died at age twenty-nine and was buried in the Old Parish Cemetery.

But that wasn't the end of Mary's story. No. They said she loved her six children so much that she would often rise up out of her grave to play with them, and many have reported seeing her spirit in the graveyard itself, and also the nearby playground.

Mary's grave is perhaps the only one in the entire state with a massive stone slab between the headstone and the footstone. This was placed there, stories say, to keep her in her grave. Though if it ever actually worked, is unclear.

The Betrothed directed her coven to move the stone slab. When some in the group said it was too heavy, the Betrothed rolled her eyes and performed a quick ritual over the group. She told them it was to strengthen their muscles. They got back to work, their heads swimming under the influence of the spell and the wine she had provided.

When the slab had been moved away, the Betrothed directed them to begin digging up the grave. When they reached the rotting wooden coffin, the Betrothed ordered it broken and told her coven to remove the skull of Mary Nasson. The girls say the group grumbled about it, but in the end, one of the teenage boys in the group, going by the name Cernunnos [**sir-nuh-nowss**] jumped down and retrieved the skull. The Betrothed cradled the skull close to her chest, then instructed the coven to fill in the hole and replace the heavy stone slab. When the work was done, they went back through the woods to the van, and drove back to Kennebunk.

It hasn't escaped our notice that skulls or skeletons seem to be a common thread in these rituals. The Ritual of Air ended with a human skull suspended from a wooden totem on top of a mountain.

The Ritual of Earth involved digging up the remains of another witch, Grammy Grimes, though her skull was left intact. The Ritual of Fire involved burning some sort of living offering. We'd bet money that something was done with the skull. And now, Mary Nasson's skull.

In witchcraft, bones, especially skulls are believed to house incredible power. Bones are a connection back to the spiritual archetype they belong to. A snake skull for instance, harkens back to snake energy and maybe a powerful enhancement in a venomous potion or hex. A fox skull connects back to slyness.

So what might a witch's skull call back to? Might these skulls, used in conjunction with the charging rituals, be calling back to the primordial, archetypal energy of witchcraft itself? We're starting to wonder if the skull used in the Ritual of Air, the one Skye said she saw glow with malicious energy, might have belonged to a witch. And is it possible the Coven of Fire sacrificed one of their own for their Ritual? Could all of these witch skulls be used to help focus and refine the already potent magic the covens are attempting?

MARK: What happened next?

SABRINA: We didn't see Betrothed for like three months.

MARK: What do you mean?

SABRINA: We didn't have any more meetings. She would send us messages and stuff, but we didn't meet up until like, the start of September.

The girls claim that the Betrothed made a plan for them to meet in their usual place in the cemetery on the first of September. When the group had gathered, Sabrina noted that a few of the members weren't present. She thinks that maybe after what they did at Mary Nasson's grave, coupled with the relative inactivity of the summer, caused a few of their coven to re-evaluate their commitment.

After the opening ritual, the Betrothed removed Mary Nasson's skull from a black silk bag she carried with her. The skull had been cleaned and an upside down triangle had been carved into its skull and stained a deep blue.

To anyone who has been following these rituals, this symbol should be recognizable. All of the rituals we have encountered have used a common visual dictionary to express the element they are connected to. An upside down triangle, that is one, one with the point facing downward, is the sign for water.

Sabrina and Willow both said the skull was covered in other, smaller carvings. They identified some symbols of glyphs for power, focus, and energy, among many others they did not. They said these carvings, which covered most of the skull, were not painted or stained like the water symbol, but it was impossible not to notice them.

The Betrothed passed around the skull, making sure every member of the coven touched it. Then when she took it back she told them that it was now time to complete the ritual they had started when they had retrieved the White Witch's remains.

WILLOW: She chose us.

The girls explained that the Betrothed chose the two of them to take Mary Nasson's skull. On the night of September 11, 2023, they were to take the skull to the top of the water tower across town and recite the words of the ritual.

The girls were hesitant, but the Betrothed kept up the pressure, reminding them that this was all for the great change that they would help usher in. The Master and the Mother demanded it, and they would be greatly rewarded for bringing their dreams to reality.

MARK: She said that? The Mother demanded it?

SABRINA: Y-yes.

The girls say they kept the skull hidden for ten days before climbing the water tower late on the night of September 11th. They placed the skull at its top, and they recited the words the Betrothed had given them.

MARK: Do you remember the words of the ritual?

WILLOW [reluctantly]: Yeah.

BOTH GIRLS: Mother. Mother of Water. Mother of all. We evoke you. With the Libation of Water, with our promise to you, we seek your guidance. Dark Father who watches from the towers in the East, we ask that you come into your loyal Betrothed and grant her your power.

It's the same incantation Grace Vickery heard during the Ritual of Fire. It's the same one Skye heard during the Ritual of Air.

Mark asked the girls if they saw anything, if anything happened when they completed the ritual. Both said they did not, but they also admitted they were thoroughly freaked out by this point. The climb up the water tower had been long, and the sheer height did nothing to assuage their fears. With the ritual complete, both girls hastily descended the tower and ran home.

It was on their way back that they decided they were through with the Betrothed. It had been building for some time, but they finally came to the conclusion that the Betrothed did not have their best interest at heart. The constant references to Satan, the escalating acts of vandalism, the desecration of Nasson's grave - all of it weighed heavily on their minds. There, on the dark, lonely walk back, both girls decided they needed to leave the coven, to tell someone what they had done.

So when they got back home, Sabrina called our office and revealed what she had done.

SABRINA: It just... it just doesn't feel right. What we did, you know? Like, it was fun and cool, and then all of a sudden it wasn't anymore. And... and I... I keep thinking we did something bad.

This was just a day ago, and after the interview Mark went to investigate the locations. First the Mount Pleasant Cemetery, where the girls said the coven met.

MARK [in studio]: I walked around a lot, looking around where Sabrina and Willow said they regularly met, towards the back of the place. There wasn't much to indicate they had been there. There was some litter and some footprints, but nothing definitive.

His next destination was the water tower to see if Mary Nasson's skull was actually up there.

Before that, though, we want to stress that this investigation is still ongoing. It usually takes weeks or months to fully investigate a case. We tend to do a lot of research, both on the internet and in our ever growing collection of old books and histories. With this case, we've had twenty-four hours. The team is scrambling, but it's all hands on deck to see what we could find.

A moment ago, Tom came into the studio with some new information related to the timing of this fourth ritual and perhaps why it didn't take place on a Sabbat like the previous ones.

It turns out that September 11, while being Patriot's Day and a day of remembrance for the attacks on New York and Washington, also *does* have some significance in the world of witchcraft, and it dates all the way back to 1626.

Joan Wright is believed to be the first person accused of witchcraft in the British North American colonies. She was a midwife and a self-proclaimed "cunning woman," a term used to describe a woman proficient in folk or low level magic. As a

folk witch, Joan Wright focused on healing and simple, everyday charms.

When a family refused her midwifing services because she was left-handed - a sure sign that she was untrustworthy and suspicious - the new mother soon developed an infection and the infant died a few days later. The family, the Allingtons, promptly accused Wright of witchcraft. Her trial was September 11th, and she was soon found guilty, and executed.

While not one of the major holidays in witchcraft, it may be a special day in conjunction with Mary Nasson, the so-called White Witch of York. Both women were folk witches, both practiced healing, and would most likely be considered "white" or good witches by today's modern classifications.

It's important to note that the covens we've been investigating, our Elemental Covens, for lack of a better term, seem to be Satanic in nature. There have been numerous references to Satan and the Devil, and not in the abstract way that modern members of the Church of Satan make use of the term. These groups seem to worship the literal Devil, as well as a being they call the Mother.

We talked about the Mother Witch in Episode 21, when we discussed Mooretown, the long lost witch town of Maine. Mother Witch is an all powerful being, one that certain sects of witches hold in the highest regard. She is said to be an ancient, powerful being, above even Satan, who she has taken as a consort. The stories say she sleeps, trapped or transformed into a tree to preserve her lifeforce until she has consumed enough blood to reawaken and lay waste to the world.

If this teenage coven, the Coven of Water, took the skull of Mary Nasson, a white witch, combined with the ritual performed on the anniversary of Joan Wright, another white witch's death, might signal that these rituals are drawing from all spectrums of witchcraft.

Looking back, the Coven of Fire appeared to be a traditional ceremonial witchcraft coven. The costumes and masks, the fire rituals, all of it seems to indicate a group that is highly focused on the ceremonial aspect of magic. The Coven of Air, the women who hiked the mountain and crafted their insect charms appear to be hedge witches, focused on nature and the natural world. The Coven of Earth, so focused on Grammy Grimes, a solitary witch, appeared tied in with crystal magic, using stones and the power of the earth. This new group, the Coven of Water are gray witches, blending curses and hexes with more healing and beneficial spells. They also seem to have a bit of the cosmic side - aligning with specific lunar events. Add in the white, folk witches that were used as part of the offering, and these groups have tapped into a wide variety of beliefs and powers.

Could these rituals be building to something involving the Mother Witch? While often a figure called upon in rituals, these seem more targeted than simple evocation. All of these rituals are empowering charms, meant to invigorate an area or person with immense power in order to complete a larger, more complex magical working. What could these covens be building towards? And will we discover their purpose only when it's too late?

Mark made the decision to investigate Kennebunk for signs that the teenage coven had been active in the area. He went to the places the girls said they had drawn charms or sigils, looking for evidence they had actually been there and done these things. He also made the long climb up the water tower to see if he could recover the skull of Mary Nasson.

MARK [climbing the tower]: So some of the places - businesses and homes where the girls said either they or their coven placed charms, did have some magical symbols drawn in various places. Now, this doesn't indicate much more than that the girls did draw these symbols. But, they did admit to being interested in witchcraft before they ever met this so-called Betrothed. While it isn't exactly proof these teens were corrupted by the

Betrothed, it is indication that they at least believed they were performing some sort of witchcraft.

I also spoke with several locals who claimed to have been woken up in the middle of the night by a thunderstorm moving through the area. They said this happened after midnight, which *could* coincide with when the girls performed their ritual. Then again, it could just be a typical Maine thunderstorm, something we experienced all summer.

Now, I had to wait for night to climb the tower. I couldn't quite get permission to climb it, so... uh... I sorta snuck in. If anyone from the Kennebunk Waterworks is listening, I'm sorry. So...okay, I'm at the top now.

I'm looking around but...but I don't see a skull anywhere. Hold on... what's this? It looks like a pile of brown mush. Almost like a paste or... or kinda like drying mud or plaster. And is that... there appears to be some traces of blue in there too. Maybe paint. It's -

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN: What are you doing here? You don't belong here.

MARK [startled and drops phone]: Ahhhh!

Mark says he encountered a woman on the top of the water tower. He said her look and appearance matched the description the girls gave him of their Betrothed.

MARK [in studio]: I don't know where she came from. I mean, she had to have been behind me, climbing, but I never saw her, never heard anything until... I admit, I was a little freaked out. She was intense. There was... a... an aura about her. Like a power. She...I don't know. I think I mumbled sorry and ran down the tower as fast as I could.

Did Mark encounter the Coven of Water's Betrothed atop the water tower? It certainly seems so. But what was she doing up there?

Was she watching to see if someone would interfere with the ritual site and followed him up? Did she know he was coming? Or was she there for something else?

And what about that plastery substance Mark saw? He was attempting to take a picture when the woman startled him, but it appeared to be in the exact place where the girls left Mary Nasson's skull. Could the sudden rainstorm of the previous night have disintegrated the skull? Not likely, according to our sources, at least not all at once during a single event. A more likely explanation, at least in our realm of expertise, is that the ritual performed there, whatever spell or power it enacted, drained the skull of its hereditary power, reducing it to a mushy bone meal.

MARK [in studio] : The skull the girls took up there might not have been the actual skull they dug up. It could have been a plaster or paper mache copy that *would* have disintegrated in heavy rain.

Four Elements. Four Covens. Four Rituals. With all four complete, is it time for whatever this has all been building towards? Will these four, unconnected covens come together? And why can't we find any trace of these people? Not with any of our contacts, nor anywhere else?

Mark's encounter with the Coven of Water's Betrothed is our first face to face encounter with one of these powerful witches, but we're no closer to discovering their true purpose or identity.

If you have any information, or you hear anything regarding these covens, please reach out to us. We have the feeling that nothing good is going to come of all this, but we're still in the dark about what it actually is. Any help or information you can give is greatly appreciated.

In the meantime...

Stay safe out there, Maine.

Malevolent Maine is Lucas Knight, Tom Wilson, and myself, Chris Estes.

If you'd like to read more about our investigations check out our website at malevolentmaine.blogspot.com/

While there, don't forget to check our merch store. And, if you're so inclined, support us on Patreon at patreon.com/malevolentmaine

Thank you for listening to Malevolent Maine.

And as always, stay safe out there, Maine.