

The Spirit Repository



*A Coventina Circle
Paranormal Romantic Suspense*

Devon Ellington

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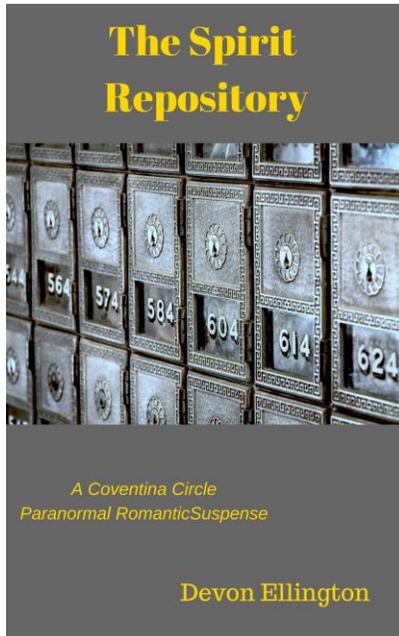
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About the Book



Bonnie Chencko knows books change lives. But she never expected her life to change because she happened to duck into a small bookshop in Greenwich Village on a rainy late November night. She's attracted to Rufus Van Dijk, the mysterious man who owns the bookshop in his ancestors' building. A building filled with family ghosts, who are mysteriously disappearing. It's up to Bonnie and her burgeoning Craft powers to rescue the spirits before their souls are lost forever.

Book 2 of the Coventina Circle Romantic Suspense Series.

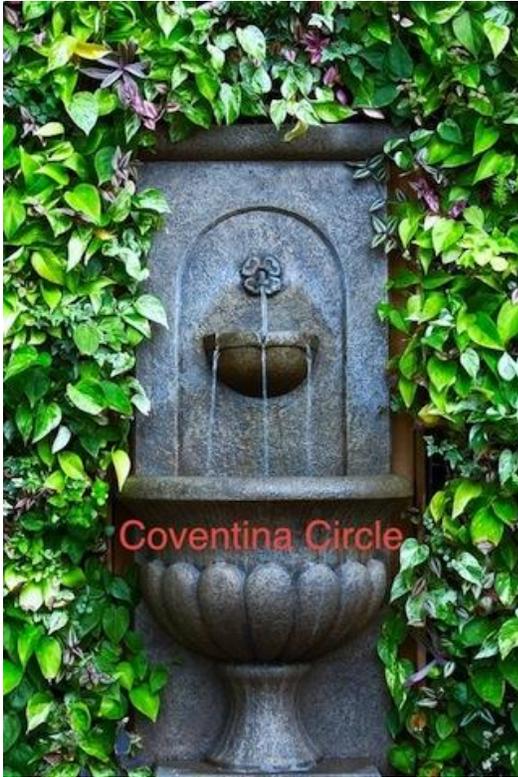
Digital Release: May 2018 from Bluestockings and Gentlemen Press

Print Release: TBA

Universal Buy Link:

<https://www.books2read.com/u/bpp09l>

About the Series



"Make the world a better place by living your path" is the Coventina Circle's motto. Reality often interferes.

The Coventina Circle is a (fictional) urban coven based in New York City, dedicated to making the lives of its members and the world they live in a better place. Led by high priestess Diana, members Morag, Amanda, Lesley, Sylvie, and their extended circle including Bonnie Chencko and Hartley Crain walk their talk. Unfortunately, life, the mundane world, and, far too often, the paranormal world, interfere. They have to rely on their own growing talents and on each other to survive.

The circle is named in honor of the Celtic well goddess Coventina, known for her healing powers. There are several wells attributed to her, the most well-known near Carrawburgh's Fort on Hadrian's Wall.

The Coventina Circle books are paranormal romantic suspense. Each book follows a different member of the Coventina Circle or someone connected

to them, as they determine to solve a paranormal danger and find love along the way. Each book has a different pair of central protagonists, although coven members weave in and out of all the books. There are a total of seven books planned for the series.

The first book in the Coventina Circle Series is *Playing the Angles*. Witchcraft, politics, and theatre collide as Morag D'Anneville and Secret Service agent Simon Keane fight to protect the Vice President of the United States -- or is it Morag who needs Simon's protection more than the VP?

Universal Digital Buy Link:

<https://books2read.com/u/49PqIJ>

The Spirit Repository is the second book in the series.

The third book in the series is *Relics and Requiem*, scheduled for release in October 2018.

Amanda Breck's complicated life gets more convoluted when she finds the body of Lila Conchez in Central Park, identical to Amanda's dream.

Detective Phineas Regan is one case away from retirement; the last thing he needs is a murder case tinged by the occult. The seeds of their attraction were planted months ago, when Phineas investigated an attack on Amanda's friend Morag. Now, fate is determined to draw them close. But can they work together to stop a wily, vicious killer, or will the murderer destroy them both?

Visit the Coventina Circle Website:

<https://coventinacircle.devonellingtonwork.com>

Visit the Coventina Circle Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/CoventinaCircleRomanticSuspense/>

Excerpt 1:

Before Rufus could question or she could elaborate, the front door opened and banged shut. A gangly young man with short-cropped black hair entered, carrying a large take-out bag. Delicious smells of meat, chicken, onion, melted cheese, and peppers wafted from it. Minerva growled, and the other two cats glared at him. "Hey, the line at the taco place took for damn ever, but at least I got some beers to go along with the food," he said. He noticed Bonnie. "Oh, hello. I'm sorry, I didn't know we had company. I'm sure we can make the food stretch."

"Because you probably don't need to eat six tacos," Rufus smiled and shook his head. "Bonnie Chencko, this is Adam Grenowski. Adam, this is Bonnie. She ducked in here to get out of the rain. Adam works with me."

"Hidden away from the real world and daylight like a vampire," he agreed cheerfully. "Good thing I'm nocturnal." He sneezed. "Damn, guess the allergy drugs wore off. Gotta take some more." He placed the greasy bag on the table and took off his outerwear.

"Adam's allergic to cats."

"And dogs and ferrets and all the rest of the critters New Yorkers tend to hoard to keep loneliness at bay," Adam retorted. "Give me a nice goldfish any day." He opened a drawer behind the counter, pulled out a packet of pills, and swallowed two without water.

"You work here anyway?" Bonnie asked.

"Hey, a little sneezing never killed anyone."

"Now, that's not entirely true," said Rufus. "Back in --"

"I don't wanna know, Mr. Ripley's Believe It Or Not Encyclopedia."

"I better go." Bonnie placed her cup and saucer on the table.

"You're welcome to stay," said Rufus.

"Yeah, sure," said Adam. "Rufus is right. I really *don't* need to eat six tacos. That's why I ordered two extra enchiladas."

"No, I need to get home to my dogs," said Bonnie. She looked at Adam sideways through her lashes. "Hoarded to ward off loneliness."

"Hey, if there's a way I can put my foot in my mouth, I will," said Adam. "Part of my charm."

Rufus snorted and nearly choked. Adam whacked him between the shoulder blades.

"It was nice to meet both of you, and thank you, Rufus, for the tea." Bonnie stood up and put on her coat, hat, and gloves.

"You'll come back, won't you?" Rufus asked.

Bonnie picked up her messenger bag and her purse. Was she imagining it, or did she detect a note of worry in Rufus's tone? "I'd love to come back. I want to browse through the books, and I'm sure it'll take more than one trip."

"Soon, I hope." Rufus smiled at her, a hint of a flush creeping into his cheeks.

"Soon," Bonnie promised. She walked to the door and tried to open it, but it wouldn't give way.

"Oh, hey, hang on a sec, I'll be right there," said Adam. "Sometimes the door sticks."

"Yeah, when you slam it shut like that," Rufus countered.

Bonnie gave it another good jiggle, hearing Adam's footsteps behind her. A moment later, she screamed as a knife sailed through the air and pinned part of her sleeve to the door.

Excerpt 2:

"I can't help you if you don't talk to me," Amanda reminded her.

"Jake said something happened at the bookstore."

"Rufus's? What was Jake doing there?"

Bonnie looked at her. "I know. That's what I want to find out."

"Call the--" Amanda started.

"--bookstore," they finished together. Bonnie nodded. "I am."

She dialed the number. It rang twice before Adam picked up.

"Mathias Hendrik Books, good afternoon."

"Adam? It's Bonnie."

"Oh. Hi." Adam didn't sound happy to hear from her.

"Can I speak to Rufus?"

"He's not here."

"Can you tell me where he is? I got a weird message." Bonnie decided not to tell Adam that it was from Jake, not Rufus.

Adam sighed, so deep and heavy it shook down the transmission.

"Rufus is at the police station. They found the body of his ex-girlfriend in a dumpster around the corner."

Excerpt 3:

Everyone's faces turned toward Dylan Austell, wearing expressions of expectations and rapture, and the music hadn't even begun. At one table, near the stage, three women sat together, staring up at him. One of them, a redhead, with streaks of curly golden blonde hair pulled back and braided with roses, stared up at him with an almost religious fervor that made Bonnie uncomfortable. The three women clasped hands across the table.

Are they trying to put a spell on him? Bonnie wondered.

She glanced over at Kayla and Lerrien, who stood together, leaning against the wall. Kayla stared at that table, too, a slight frown on her face. Lerrien had one hand on her shoulder, and leaned in close to whisper something in her ear.

"Is everything okay?" Rufus leaned in.

"I'm wondering if they're trying to cast a spell." Bonnie kept her voice low, but hoped Rufus could hear it over the applause. She jerked her head toward the three women at the table.

"What if they are?" Rufus looked puzzled.

"It's breaking the rule of not trying to manipulate someone else's free will."

"Are you sure he's not doing the manipulating?" Rufus asked.

"He's aware he has a strong effect on people, and he's playing with it, but he's not trying to manipulate our free will."

Rufus snorted. "All performance does, to a point."

Bonnie flushed. "Not in the way I mean. Not only is it wrong to try to manipulate the way I think those three women are, there's so much energy in this room, if something goes wonky, it could have serious consequences."

"Is there something you need to do about it?"

Q&A With Devon Ellington

Question: Following the evolution of this book through your blog, *Ink in My Coffee*, and on social media, it seems this was more of a struggle than *Playing the Angles*.

Devon Ellington: The books offered different challenges. When I originally wrote *Playing the Angles*, it was going to be a stand-alone. I had no intention of creating a series. Bonnie wandered in to sublet from Morag near the end of *PTA*, and started telling me her story. Around the same time, I was reading Washington Irving's diaries and books about the history of New York when it was New Amsterdam. That all came together for *The Spirit Repository* – the idea that Rufus was comfortable living with the ghosts of his ancestors, but that someone was trying to destroy those ghosts.

The original publisher of *Playing the Angles*, back when it had another title, had first-look on my next book in that world or in a different one; while that book was in production, I went under contract for a different series with a different publisher. *Repository* kept going on the back burner while I fulfilled signed contracts. When the publisher of *PTA* and I parted ways, I put the book aside.

When I sat down with my advisors and we did the career re-evaluation in 2017 and discussed new directions, I re-read *PTA* and really liked it; and I had more ideas for *Repository*. I'd written about a third of the manuscript before putting it aside. I started thinking about the stories of the other members of Coventina Circle, and came up with a series proposal. When Bluestockings and Gentlemen Press were interested in the series and willing to commit to the series, not just a book once it was finished, I went back to *Repository*. I had to get back into Bonnie and Rufus's rhythms. Rufus, in particular, has a particular formal cadence, while Bonnie is more effervescent. Very different than the dynamic between Morag and Simon.

I hadn't outlined the book, so it was harder to get back into it, find its rhythm, keep writing, and then figure out where I wanted it to go. At the same time, I was juggling the release of *Savasana at Sea* and the re-release of *Tracking Medusa*. So it was a lot.

Q: You have some interesting side stories in the book: New York's history as New Amsterdam, the Battle of Fort Washington in the American Revolution, the popularity of spiritualism and mediumship in Victorian New York.

DE: Because Rufus lives with so many decades of ghosts, there are different time periods that wound into the story. New York still had plenty of Dutch influences; if you look around the city, they are still strong. I didn't know much about the Battle of Fort Washington before it came up. Once I started reading about the way the American prisoners were stashed on ships in Brooklyn, starved, and the dead bodies thrown over the side, well, it was awful. I knew I had to put it in. The tie-in to the Percy family of Northumberland – had to go in. Anyone who knows me knows how obsessed I've been with Shakespeare's Hotspur and his real-life descendants. I've always been interested in how mediums and spiritualism became popular, especially in New York. It gained momentum after the Civil War, when people were so desperate to connect with their lost loved ones and grew from there. *Other Powers* by Barbara Goldsmith has inspired several of my characters.

Q: I felt like I could read an entire book about any of those side stories.

DE: It was difficult to keep them as anecdotes and discoveries, and not go too deeply into any of the tangents.

Q: Will we see more?

DE: Once the main thread of the Coventina Circle series is complete, I might go back and write some of these stories as straight-up historical fiction rather than paranormal romantic suspense. I still want to do that with some of the backstage stories in *PTA*, the stories behind the ghosts. Time and interest is going to dictate part of that. When I can schedule the writing, and if people want the stories.

Q: Stylistically, this book is different than much of the rest of your work.

DE: Yes, and that's always scary, isn't it? There's more narrative than I usually use. I dramatized some of the narrative, and it created too much of

a tangent; I needed the information (although I cut it way back), so it made the most sense to have Bonnie and Rufus make the discoveries and then share them. Both of them are introverts. There's more self-reflection and internal monologue here than in most of my other work. I had to be true to their characters, not worry about my ego and holding on to "the way I usually do things." That way lies madness and bad writing.

Rufus and Bonnie question themselves, they have trouble trusting their hearts. I also use exclamation points more often. Because they don't trust their instincts during the course of the books, they also tended to ask questions instead of make statements. My editor and I had to change some of that because of what happens in the third book *Relics and Requiem*. One of the characters in that is Australian, with the upward inflections at the end of many of his sentences. It's a different rhythm than the self-doubt in this book, but we had to look at the use punctuation to communicate the cadences properly, and how the cadences would play against each other, book-to-book. So we changed some of the questions in this book to declaratives. We had more discussions about comma placement and how to set interior quotes in spoken dialogue than usual, because we had to make it read clearly. Digitally, some of the correct copy editing style didn't work, so we had to amend it and work with the publisher to make sure it was okay. It was difficult to let go of some of the style guide protocols that are second nature. Grow and evolve, right? I am so grateful to both my editor and my copy editor for their willingness to hash out punctuation beat-to-beat when necessary.

Q: Jake is a very strong character. How did he come about?

DE: He walked into the book and made himself at home! I cut him out of a few drafts, and he kept coming back. So I let him do his thing. One of the themes in this book, which I will build on in future books, is how interconnected this particular community is. Even if they don't always get along, they'll help each other. Bonnie and Jake have a strong connection that makes Rufus uncomfortable. Going further than that gives too much away too soon!

Q: There's a lot of Celtic/Irish connection in this book, too.

DE: Yes. New York has pockets of different communities. They mesh, but they also keep a strong sense of identity. It's one of the great things about

living in New York, and one of the things I miss about it. There's still a very strong Irish community. Lots of students, lots of young men and women who come over and work for a few months for their gap year and whatever. When I lived in Hell's Kitchen, the community was changing. But it was still very strong down in the Village.

Q. Are there really hidden gardens in New York?

DE: Oh, yeah. Plenty of friends and colleagues created sanctuaries, sometimes just putting a blanket or table and chairs on the asphalt roof, or "Tar Beach" as we used to call it. More people than you'd think create rooftop gardens, and rooftop farming is getting more popular. Also, many of the buildings have tiny, narrow enclosures, back to back, bricked-in or fenced in, where they can have a bit of outdoor space. There aren't a lot of alleys in New York – the gardens tend to back up against each other. But those delightful sanctuaries exist. It's amazing what people can do with the space.

Q: I have to ask about The Dragon's Lair.

DE: That is my fantasy of a perfect pagan club in NYC. As far as I know, it doesn't exist. It would make sense to put it on the Bowery, as it re-gentrifies, although I've jiggled the geography a bit to make it fit.

Q: Will we have stories set there?

DE: It features in *Relics and Requiem* at the very least. I'm pretty sure I will set some short pieces in and around the club. Kayla and Lerrien are pretty interesting, and having that setting allows for all kinds of stories to flow through.

Q: What about the esoteric library on Orchard Street?

DE: Again, fictional. I love the NY Tenement Museum, and I could imagine the library being a couple of buildings down from it. There are a few private libraries. The New York Theosophical Society is on E. 53rd St. I thought I remembered it being down by Grammercy Park, but maybe I mis-remembered or maybe it moved. Their library is open to the public. There's also the New York Society Library on E. 79th St. and the General Society's Library on W. 44th St. I was a member of the latter for several years, before

I moved away. I loved working in there. I thought it would be fun to have an esoteric library where Bonnie and Rufus could make discoveries, and it took on its own life.

Q. I'd like to see stories set there, too.

DE: When I can carve out the time, and if the stories pull enough, it'll happen.

Q: You also have two in-jokes. One referencing a character from another series; one a nod to the next book in this series.

DE: You can blame Jenn McKinlay for those! She has similar cross references in her series. But it makes sense – two of my series are in contemporary Manhattan. Although the characters inhabit different circles (no pun intended), it makes sense that they would both use the Société Sortileger. And the other reference came about by accident, and we decided to leave it in.

Q: What can you tell us about the next Coventina Circle novel?

DE: *Relics and Requiem* is scheduled to release in October. That's Amanda's story, and her complicated life gets even more so when she helps out an acquaintance at a small museum and winds up involved in a murder. The detective who catches the case is Phineas Regan, who we met in *Playing the Angles*. They are the primary protagonists. Amanda's got a lot of sharp edges. She's very forceful and dynamic, very different from Bonnie. I'm having a lot of fun with Amanda and Phineas.

About the Author



Devon Ellington publishes under half a dozen names in fiction and non-fiction. She worked on Broadway for many years, and is an internationally-published playwright, radio, and screenwriter.

She's published hundreds of articles, dozens of short stories, and has an active freelance writing business. Her work, both fiction and non-fiction, is in a variety of anthologies.

She writes the Coventina Circle paranormal romantic suspense novels, the Gwen Finnegan paranormal archaeological mysteries, the Nautical Namaste Mysteries (as Ava Dunne), and the Jain Lazarus urban fantasy adventures.

Her main blog on the writing life is Ink in My Coffee:

<https://devonellington.wordpress.com>

Her main website is:

<http://www.devonellingtonwork.com>

The Coventina Circle website is:

<https://coventinacircle.devonellingtonwork.com>