



A Burning Insight for Halloween

October 3, 2008

Dear Friends,

October has arrived, and along with it, a myriad of magic including Jack-o-Lanterns, Ghouls, Ghosties and Witches. In many cultures, this is the time to celebrate death and honor the ancestors.

When I consider my own ancestry, which is largely European, I am reminded of the "Burning Times" - a period of roughly 400 years in which people accused of practicing certain arts were named "witches" and burned alive. Many were healers, midwives, herbalist and practitioners of earth-based folk traditions.

Some were women who owned property of value. Others were individuals whose spirituality was not aligned with those in power. How did these "witches" become the hook-nosed Halloween hag we see today?

Perhaps the following, written by a 16 year old girl, will give some insight:

The Halloween Witch

Each year they parade her about ... the traditional Halloween Witch. Misshapen green face, stringy scraps of hair, and a toothless mouth beneath her disfigured nose. Gnarled, knobby fingers twisted into a claw, protracting from a bent and twisted torso that lurches about on wobbly legs.

Most think this abject image to be the creation of a prejudiced mind, or merely a Halloween caricature. I disagree. I believe this to be how witches were really seen.

Consider that most witches: were women, were abducted in the night, and smuggled into dungeons or prisons under the secrecy of darkness, to be presented by the light of day as a confessed witch.

Few, if any, saw a frightened, normal looking woman being dragged into a secret room filled with instruments of torture. To be questioned until she confessed to anything that was suggested to her, and to give names or whatever would stop the questions.

Crowds saw the aberration denounced to the world as a self-proclaimed witch. As the witch was paraded through the town, en route to be burned, hanged, drowned, stoned, or disposed of in various other "forms of love," all created to free and save her soul from her depraved body. The jeering crowds viewed the results of hours of torture.

Ahriana's Musings

The face, bruised and broken by countless blows, bore a hue of sickly green. The once warm and loving smile gone -replaced by a grimace of broken teeth and torn gums that leers beneath a battered, disfigured nose. The disheveled hair conceals bleeding gaps of torn scalp from whence cruel hands had torn away the lovely tresses. Broken, twisted hands clutched the wagon for support. Fractured fingers locked like groping claws to steady her broken body. All semblance of humanity gone. This was truly a demon, a bride of Satan, a witch.

I revere this Halloween crone and hold her sacred above all. I honor her courage and listen to her warnings of the dark side of humanity. Each year I shed tears of respect and remember her involuntary sacrifice in the name of religion.

Written by Angel, 6/99

- Do you pray for the healing of others?
- Do you have family or spiritual traditions you value and practice?
- Do you use herbal healing remedies or "mom's secret cure for a cold?"
- Do you own property someone else might wish was theirs?
- Have you ever coached a birthing mother or been present to comfort the dying?
- Have you ever had a difference of opinion with a neighbor, a friend or a spouse?

If so, by the standards of our ancestors, you might be a Witch.

Something to think about -hmmm?

"Never again the Burning Times!"

Blessed be,

Ahriana Platten