

# WITCH

*Stories for Those Who Are*



## Introduction

**W**ITCHCRAFT CAN BE PRESUMED TO BE as old as humanity. In the caves of Lascaux, France, are the paintings of the hunt. On the tundra of Siberia, the shaman summons a soul back into the ill person and they do not die. The Northern Paiute introduced the Ghost Dance to reunite the living with the dead to achieve the numbers necessary to defeat the invaders. In Australia an Illapurinja, a woman kurdaitcha, will point the bone, bringing about a death to avenge a wrong.

In Initiation, a Memoir –

*Witch people, like magicians and sorcerers, conjurers, druids and hoodoo hexers, like cunning women and cunning men, kurdaitcha, shaman, manitou, angakok, curandera, bruxa, enchanter and shapechanger are needed in this world. We are the stories not bound by dogma or displayed as relics in a museum. We cause disquiet. We summon questions but it's not our way to give answers. They take us to the wild and the frightening places. The cave*

*entrance under the ice at the base of that crevasse. Blue handprints on the rock face imprinted with an ochre of confusion. By people we cannot name and from a time we cannot confirm. Once Upon a Time people. People of the reindeer. Volcano people.*

Witchcraft could be said to be a generic word. I'll agree to that. Some of you may not. Much hype has gone into proving the validity of tradition or the rightness of its religiosity. I want none of this anymore. It is unnecessary. All the so-called sources can be proven wrong. Invented to seek validation. You are reading this you were likely attracted by the title or have been given the book by someone who knows you to be witch.

I don't box myself as *a* witch. Not now. Not at this end of this life because *a* and *the* objectify what is a doing and being self, not a title. I'm a little like some thoroughbred horse demanded by my owners to become a trotter but that is brumby at heart. A wild, high country herd creature.

Many years ago, when I was still practicing becoming witch, I worked ritual and initiated others. I called the practice *witchcraft* even then, and even titled one of my books *Witchcraft Theory and Practice*, but it was, after all, a practice. Not a becoming. That took letting go of all that externalization and androcentrism. It took communication with grandmother mountain, uncles and aunts who are pelicans, crows and pigeons. Mother sea and grandfather winter and all the other cousins of fur and fin, feather, fern, thunder and harsh summer nights. It took growing up. Responsibility for being witch.

Do we need another 101? To add to the plethora of variations of the same? No.

WITCH consists of thoughts from a grimoire, anarchism, stories from today, Celtic stories, for I am an indigenous Celt and have no right to misappropriate the stories of others. But... the old stories, so often suggested we learn, by authorities or academics, scholars of myth and legend, were written up by monks, therefore how much credence should we allow.

The first essay, *The Lost Language of Story*, might be the most difficult so you can leave it till last if you choose. It should make more sense then and begin, for us, a revolution of non-clichéd witch stories. Your own. Your lover. Your children. The people you truly learned from.

This book suggests we lose the pointy hat problem, the broomstick, the long black velvet cloak (unless it's your daily apparel), the trapping that seek to trap any one of us into not being and doing, but into needing an identity. We should be demanding authenticity from each other. From those who claim authority. Sure, we all wear our colors. Of course. But it's also necessary, at some stage, to admit

that the pentagram is the path of the planet named *Venus*, as observed from Earth. Venus orbits the sun approximately thirteen times, for every eight orbits of us, and the tips of the five loops at the center of this magnificent geometric figure have the same relationship to one another as the five points of a pentagram. The design is beautiful for that reason, not, as some say, as the symbol of a witch. It has been claimed. I have no conundrum with that but knowing its mystery is to not be thought loopy. I am so tired of that. Many people, also witch, are tired of this old story.

Witch is animist. Witch is also heretical in the etymological meaning of the word which is the right to choose. Anarchist, not in the common, modern ideologies of misrule, rioting and carnage but in the etymological sense of having no leadership. Witch moves like the wind in the treetops or the waves on the shore. We can change our minds, deepen and be owned by no rules. We will never be mainstream. All that consumption. All that carelessness. There is a Maori term *marama piko*. Blindfold. But it's in the brain. Some synapses that don't register the pain of our other species living in feed lots, or sow stalls, or penned in vivisection laboratories or hunted for trophy or for selfies.

So many of you have written to me, had cups of tea with me in Sydney or Galway, over lunch at the head of the Mississippi in Minnesota, on skype conversations from Canada, across vast oceans and sky, here in Melbourne. More will happen tomorrow when Dante comes, this coming January (2018) in New Zealand with the wild and feral Hamilton mob are met, or maybe Arizona, with Nila and her family, maybe over lunch on the Isle of Stenness, north of Scotland, with Virginia and Leslie.

You've said *Where do we go now, what do we do now*, and many of you have fallen victim of cult-like money-grabbing coven groups who can teach you very little.

There are artistic and theatrical organizations popping up around the earth gathering crowds for huge midwinter celebrations, to feast Samhain and Beltane, to meet others and to finally feel we have come somewhere as a rewilded people who know the religions are false.

These stories and wanderings are collected and collated for you.

Humble thanks to those who have inspired me along this bramble-laden, rambling, ill-used reindeer track – Bernard Casimir, Nila Chandra, Chris Morgan, Melaine Knight, Linda Brinkman, Korinna Leach, Audrey Lowden, Kallan Kennedy, Astara Lak'esh, Eldritch Forest, Natalie Harter. The work of Marin Shaw, Lynne Kelly, Robert McFarlane, Wendell Berry and Nan Shepherd.

In honor of Lorraine Mafi-Williams (8 August 1940 – 23 January 2001). Remembered.