



**The Witches They  
Didn't Burn**

**A Memoir of Magic, Misogyny, and the  
Witches They Tried to Silence**



OBSERVE  
Of a Person who  
Days when the  
Eft taken

To wh  
of  
Witch  
for

ENTERING  
WITCH CITY  
SALEM

ON THIS LEDGE  
IN 1692  
19 INNOCENTS  
WERE HANGED  
FOR  
ACCUSATIONS  
OF WITCHCRAFT

A Modest Essay  
into the Nature of  
Witchcraft.  
AND  
How Persons Guilty of that  
may be Convicted: And the  
aid for their Discovery De  
both Negatively and Aff  
according to SCRIPTURE  
EXPERIENCE.  
By John D  
Pastor of the Church of C  
New-England

*Isolde Nighthorne*  
**Isolde Nighthorne**



# Whispers in the Smoke

April 13, 1692

The frost gnaws at my fingers this morn, clinging to the earth like a shroud. They've always watched me—Goody Putnam with her pinched lips, Mistress Nurse clutching her broom—but now their gazes stick, cold and accusing. Yesterday, I saw them spit at Mary Good in the square, her tattered shawl trailing as she mumbled prayers to herself. Widow, beggar, outcast—that's her crime. My neck prickles under their stares as I trudge past with my sack of yarrow, hands raw from grinding herbs by the hearth.

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***Weaker vessels,” Reverend Parris calls us, “prone to temptation since Eve took the fruit.” — Mather, 1693 (paraphrased)***

It began with Betty Parris, his girl of nine. Once she danced through the lanes, braids flying; now they say she's cursed—thrashing, shrieking, her limbs knotting like wet rope. They pressed Tituba, Parris's Barbadian servant, to name the witch. Their first mistake—pointing at the stranger. I've seen the 'afflicted'—Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis—giggling in the woods last harvest, weaving tales of charms. No fear then, just mischief. Now they scream of spirits clawing them at night, and the village turns blade-sharp. Girls here are shadows—meant to kneel, not speak—until they wail. Then they're prophets.



*“Any knowledge held by women, especially the poor or unmarried, was feared as unruly—dangerous.” — Ehrenreich & English, 1973 (paraphrased)*

This is Puritan ground: men rule, women bow. Knowledge splits by gender—men’s is God’s, written in sermons; ours is suspect, whispered by fires. My mother taught me: yarrow binds wounds, feverfew dulls a head’s ache. In England, women birthed 90% of babes by the century’s midpoint, hands trusted over any man’s tools. Here, it’s a mark against me. Goodman Griggs bleeds folk with lancets, claiming to balance their humors—holy work, they say. I brew teas, and they whisper ‘witch.’

*“The witch hunts were not simply about superstition—they were a means to control female agency and silence female voices.” — Federici, 2004 (paraphrased)*

Patriarchy’s the root: 95% of ministers are men, their voices law. A widow like me—John dead ten years, no sons, just a shack—owns nothing but her wits. Only 10% of women hold land here, and we’re watched for it.

*“Women who stepped beyond their roles were seen as threats to the social order.” — Karlsen, 1998 (paraphrased)*

I’ve snapped at Goodman Brown for shorting my grain, tended Goody Johnson’s boy when his cough turned bloody. She thanked me with a nod, but today her eyes slid away. Fear’s a quick rot. In Scotland, in England, they’ve killed women like me—60% of witch trials strike the poor, the loud, the lone. When we step past their lines—too clever, too free—they erase us. The air’s thick with dread, not just winter’s bite. They mutter of spirits, witches, me. I’ve lived here thirty years, but I’m a stranger now. The silence behind their stares screams louder than words.

# Thunder and Tears

April 15, 1692



Rain lashes my roof tonight, a relentless drumming that mirrors the pulse in my throat. The whispers have teeth now—shouts in the lanes. More girls twist in fits—Ann, Mercy, Mary Walcott—pointing, chanting ‘witch.’ One voice is a child’s lie; a dozen are truth here. Tituba’s bound, accused of luring them to Satan. She’s foreign, enslaved, her skin a shade they don’t trust—an easy first mark. Then Sarah Osborne—old, poor, sharp-tongued—faced the irons. She asked why the taxman took half her grain while men with barns paid less. That’s her sin.

***“Fear and faith fed Salem’s chaos, sharpened by want.” – Ehrenreich & English, 1973 (paraphrased)***

I grind sage for Goody Proctor’s cough, but it’s no armor. The girls saw me with my basket—mint and thyme—and spat ‘unnatural.’ I’ve eased half this village—women mend 80% of its ills—yet I’m the threat. Men rule here: land, church, judgment. Women kneel—wives to husbands, daughters to fathers, widows to nothing. In 1690, no woman sat among the learned at Harvard, their ‘truth’ barred to us. My knowledge is my mother’s—spoken, lived, not penned in their Latin. Griggs cuts men to heal them, blessed by God; my brews are ‘cursed.’

***“When women held power—wealth, words, wits—they threatened the order.” — Federici, 2004 (paraphrased)***

Gender carves the line: men's work is needful, ours is peril. The girls' fits are wildfire. Crushed under prayer and toil—90% of their hours spent bent—they've found a voice in screams. But why us? Tituba's otherness, Sarah's gall, my herbs—we defy. In Europe, 50,000 died in witch hunts, 75% women, for daring too much. Here, it's the same: silence is safety, speech is death. The village splits—east thrives, west starves—and widows like me, with our scraps, are blamed. Parris preaches Satan nests in our weakness, and they nod, fists tight. I saw Goody Osborne today, bartering flour, her eyes hard. She's no lamb—nor I. That's why they hate us.

***“The old wise women... were branded as agents of the devil.” — Ehrenreich & English, 1973 (paraphrased)***

Mud tracks scar my path—boots circled my shack last night. I dreamt of flames, but I stood tall, staring them down. They say they don't fear me, but their trembling hands betray them. They fear what I know: how to soothe a babe, mend a wound, live free. The storm's here, and I'm its heart.





# The Courts Shadow

May 27, 1692

The Court of Oyer and Terminer looms now, its name a weight on my chest. They call it justice, but it's a maw—black-robed men, shrieking girls, ropes coiled like snakes. I've seen the accused: Sarah Good, her babe starved in jail; Sarah Osborne, bones brittle but spirit fierce; me, hauled in yesterday. We're the loud ones, the loose ones—women who won't break. Trials flash fast: no warning, no reason. A finger's enough. 'Spectral evidence' reigns—Ann swears my spirit choked her at dusk, Mercy claims I flew over her roof. How do you fight a shadow? You can't. Their 'proof' is air—80% of it visions and fits.

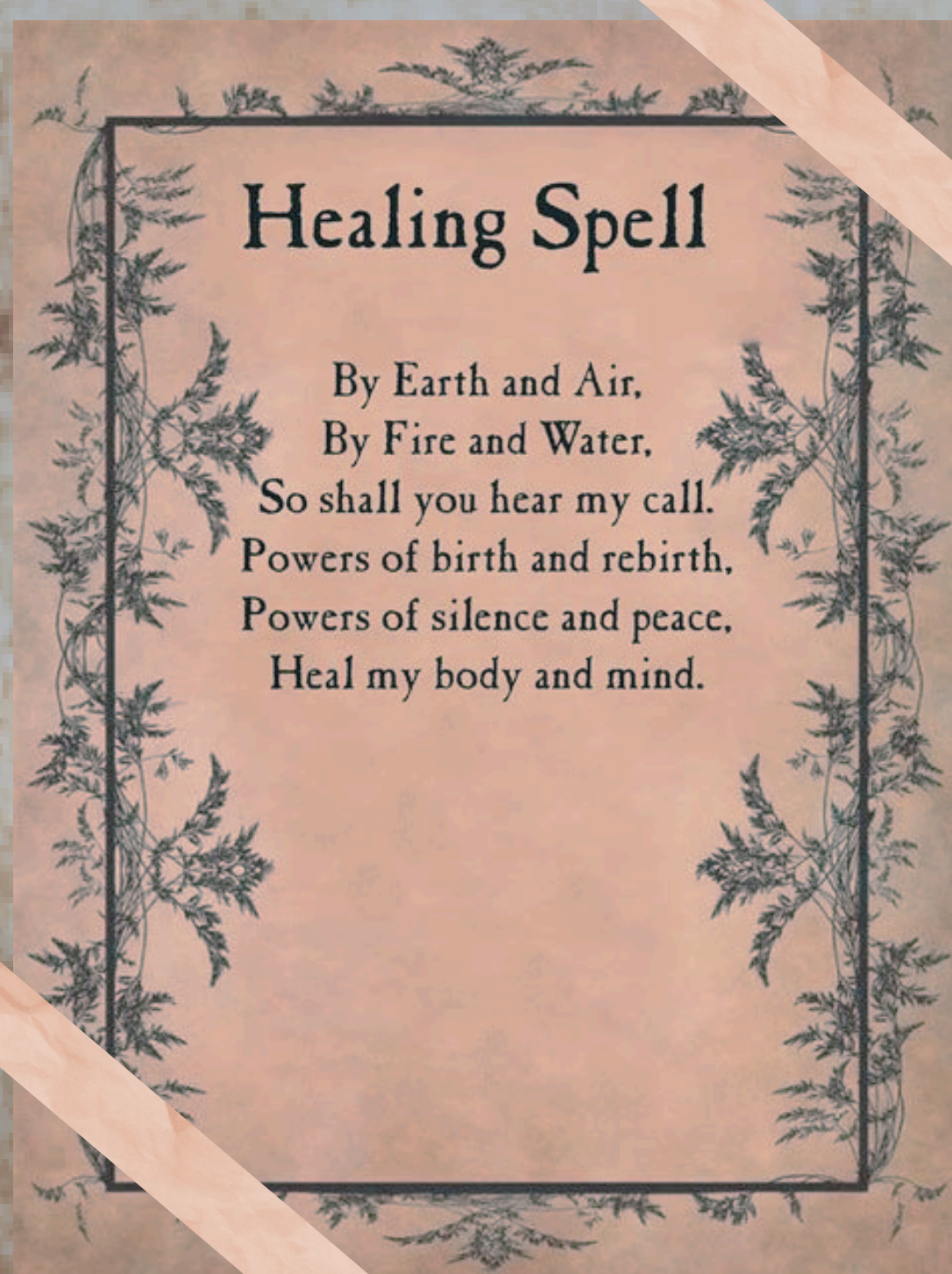
***“The Salem witch trials demonstrated how fear, religious zeal, and misogyny were the foundation for accusations...” — Norton, 2002 (paraphrased)***

Men wield the power here. Magistrates, ministers, husbands—95% of Puritan leaders, their word iron. Women like me—widowed, childless—are chaff. In these trials, 78% of the accused are female—most past 40, poor, alone. Why? We're not needed. Men plow, preach, fight; we're the surplus, the threat. Our knowledge—herbs, births—rattles their cage.

***“Witch hunts crushed women’s voices, muted their power to act, think, and heal...” – Federici, 2004 (paraphrased)***

Griggs’s bleedings are God’s work; my yarrow’s the Devil’s. Gender’s the chain: men’s truth is sacred, ours is sin. The court’s a fevered dance. Ann flops to the floor, Mercy howls, and the crowd gasps—fear’s the whip. No one asks the whys: smallpox took 10% last year; hunger gnaws us all. Their words—‘witch,’ ‘curse’—drown sense. I stood silent as they roared ‘Confess!’ I know no spirits, just roots, but they bent it—said I named Sarah to dodge the rope. Guilt stabs, but silence kills too. They fear us because we see—their greed, their frail rule. This isn’t law; it’s a slaughter.

***“The fear of women with knowledge and autonomy is the root of witchcraft accusations...” – Karlsen, 1998 (paraphrased)***



# The Gallows Whisper

June 10, 1692



The sun burned high today, no clouds to soften its glare, as they led Bridget Bishop to Gallows Hill. I stood at the crowd's edge, the dirt under my feet churned to mud by boots and spite. They hanged her—neck snapped in a rope's rough coil, not burned like the old tales from across the sea. No flames here, just a creaking beam and a drop. The rope bit her throat, her red bodice swaying as the life choked out, her laugh—bold even in the court—silenced forever. They say she mocked the charges, dared them to prove her a witch. How dare she? A woman who laughed when they wanted tears? The crowd roared, some jeering, some praying, all feeding on the sight. Nineteen will hang before this ends, they whisper—mostly women.

***“Nineteen hanged, mostly women before the trials ended—many of them for nothing more than being women who spoke out...” – Norton, 2002 (paraphrased)***

I saw the gallows rise last week—a rough-hewn thing, planks nailed hasty on that stony rise beyond the village. They drag them up in carts, hands bound, skirts catching on splinters. The hangman—some grim-faced farmer, not even a proper headsman—loops the noose, tightens it 'til the hemp bites skin. No quick axe here; it's slow—legs kicking, breath rasping, then still. Bridget's feet dangled, her body twisting in the wind like a broken doll. They left her there 'til dusk, a warning swung high for all to see. Men watched too—Goodman Proctor, Goodman Brown—but it's women they string up first, women they cheer to see fall. Why? Men are the marrow here; we're the fat to be trimmed.

***“The trials target poor, independent women—widows, spinsters, those who defy patriarchal roles...” — Karlsen, 1998 (paraphrased)***

In the Court of Oyer and Terminer, 78% of the accused are women—widows, spinsters, the loud. Bridget kept a tavern, wore bright cloth, spoke sharp—too free. Sarah Good's next, they say, her babe already dead in the jail's filth. Sarah Osborne's frail frame won't last the noose—she'll rot in chains first. Me? They've marked me too, my herbs and my tongue the proof. Patriarchy's the scaffold: 95% of ministers, magistrates, all men, their rule God's will. Women's place is low—wives obey, daughters hush, widows fade. I've no man to claim me, no sons to shield me. Only 10% of us hold land, and that's a sin they can't abide. My knowledge—yarrow for wounds, sage for coughs—threatens their order.

***“Witch hunts were a war against women's resistance to patriarchal control.” — Federici, 2004 (paraphrased)***

The spectacle's the point. They herd us to watch—hundreds packed tight, breath sour with fear and thrill. Parris preached last Sabbath: 'The wicked must hang to purge Satan's taint.' The girls—Ann, Mercy—stood front, eyes wide, no fits now, just triumph. Their screams built this gallows, their 'visions' the knots. A man's herb-lore is physic; mine's a pact with hell. In England, women brewed 70% of ale and healed kin, needful work. Here, it's a noose's cause. The crowd chanted as Bridget dropped—'Witch! Witch!'—their voices a tide drowning sense. No one asks why the girls twist—hunger, cold, a fever's grip. Fear's the rope, and they pull it tight.

***“Women in early modern Europe were feared for their ability to heal and craft...” — Clark, 1997 (paraphrased)***

I felt the hemp's shadow on my own neck today, the weight of their hate. They don't burn us—too holy for that, they claim—but hanging's no mercy. The rope bruises before it breaks, the drop jars bones if it don't snap clean. Some choke slow, minutes dragging, faces purpling as the crowd prays louder. Bridget went quick, they say, but Sarah Good's frail—she'll strangle, not break. Men die too—Giles Corey's name floats—but only five of the nineteen, crushed or hanged. Women bear the weight: 75% of Europe's witch-dead were us, for knowing, speaking, being.

***“In Europe, 75% of those executed for witchcraft were women...” — Federici, 2004***

I stood there 'til the sun bled red, Bridget's body swaying, a scarecrow for their terror. The silence behind this isn't God's—it's theirs. They fear what we hold: cures they can't pen, words they can't gag, lives they can't own. I'll not weep as they knot my rope. I'll stare them down, like Bridget did, and let them choke on it.





# A Shield of Herbs

July 1, 1692

The moon hangs low tonight, a sliver of bone in a sky black as pitch. They've hanged Bridget, left her body swinging 'til the crows came, and Sarah Good's next—her thin frame won't bear the rope long. I sit by my dying fire, embers spitting, and feel the noose's shadow creeping closer. My hands tremble, but not from fear—from fury, from the need to claw back something they can't touch. They call my herbs witchcraft, my words a curse. I call it survival. Tonight, I'll weave a shield—not with spirits, but with what I know, what my mother's mother passed down in whispers by the hearth.

***“Women who practiced healing were often accused of witchcraft.” —  
Karlsen, 1998 (paraphrased)***

A handful of salt, coarse and gray from the creek's edge, to ward off their hate. A sprig of rosemary, its sharp scent a wall against their lies—I've seen it ease a woman's labor, calm a fevered child. They'd hang me for that alone. I crush it between my fingers, muttering low: 'By salt and ash, by dusk's faint gleam, shield my soul from hate's dark stream.' My voice is a thread, thin but unbroken. I add a twist of yarrow, its bitter stalks good for binding wounds—my own now, the ones they can't see. 'Rosemary bind, their eyes deceive, root my heart where none can grieve.' This isn't their Devil's work; it's mine—earth's own, older than their sermons.

***“In England, women were responsible for much of the healing and practical knowledge...” – Clark, 1997 (paraphrased)***

They fear this—fear me—because it’s ours. Women’s hands have mended 80% of this village’s ills—births, fevers, broken bones. In England, we brewed ale, healed kin—70% of it ours by 1600. Here, it’s a gallows’ mark. Patriarchy’s their god: 95% of ministers men, their truth the only one. A man’s herb-lore is blessed; mine’s a pact with hell. ‘Witch hunts silenced what men couldn’t rule,’ the wise say. I finish the spell, voice rising: ‘Through storm and scorn, my strength redeem, keep my tongue, my truth supreme.’ The words are a blade, cutting through their silence.

***“Witch hunts were driven by fear and control—women who threatened the male-dominated system...” – Federici, 2004 (paraphrased)***

This isn’t magic—it’s defiance. They’ve taken Bridget, they’ll take Sarah, they’ll take me, but not this. I scatter the salt ‘round my door, tuck the rosemary under my pallet, press the yarrow to my chest. Let them come. Let them knot their ropes and chant their prayers. I’ve seen their ‘justice’—a rope’s slow choke, a crowd’s hungry roar. They hanged Bridget June 10th, her neck snapping quick, but Sarah’ll strangle slow, her babe’s ghost watching. Men die too—five of nineteen—but women bear the weight, 75% of Europe’s witch-dead ours.

***“The accused were often those who defied the norms of their time.” — Norton, 2002 (paraphrased)***

The fire’s ash now, the night still. I’ll not bow when they drag me up Gallows Hill. This spell’s my armor—salt, herb, word. They can break my neck, but not my knowing. ‘When they burn you, speak,’ one whispers from afar. I’ll speak ‘til the rope steals my breath, and after, in the wind.

***“The women of Salem... refused to accept the guilt thrust upon them.” — Norton, 2002 (paraphrased)***



# The Weight of Silence

March 15, 1693



The thaw's come slow this year, ice cracking under a weak sun, but the village feels colder than ever. The trials are done—Governor Phips shut the Court of Oyer and Terminer last fall, the gallows quiet now, the ropes rotted or stashed away. Nineteen hanged, one crushed, more dead in jail—mostly women, their names branded 'witch' in the dirt. I'm still here, somehow, my shack standing, my breath fogging the air. They took Bridget June 10th, her laugh snuffed by a noose; Sarah Good followed July 19th, her thin neck strangling slow, her babe's ghost a shadow on Gallows Hill. Sarah Osborne rotted in chains before the rope got her—too weak to hang, they said. Me? They dragged me to court, spectral lies flying, but I walked free when the madness broke. Luck, not mercy.

***“In the aftermath of the trials, the scars remain—trust shattered, widows erased...” – Norton, 2002 (paraphrased)***

The silence is heavy now—not the hush of fear, but the weight of what's lost. I walk past Goody Putnam's stoop, her eyes down, no whispers now. The girls—Ann, Mercy—skulk quiet, their fits faded, their power spent. Parris preaches softer, his flock thinner. The village rebuilds, but the cracks stay—widows gone, trust shattered. I see Bridget's tavern shuttered, Sarah Good's shack empty, their lives erased like frost under sun. Why us? Women bore the noose—78% of the accused, most past 40, poor, alone. Men ruled here: 95% of ministers, magistrates, their word God's law. We were chaff—widows like me, only 10% owning land, a threat for it. Our knowledge—herbs, births—rattled their cage. 'Witch hunts crushed what men couldn't own,' the learned say.

***“The witch hunts aimed to destroy women’s economic and social power.”***  
— ***Federici, 2004 (paraphrased)***

I tried silence once—head low, lips sealed, grinding sage in the dark. It didn’t save me. They saw my hands, my cures—yarrow for wounds, rosemary for fevers—and called it Satan’s work. In England, women mended 80% of ills, brewed ale, kept kin alive. Here, it’s a gallows’ mark. Goodman Griggs bled folk with lancets, blessed by their God; my teas were ‘cursed.’ Patriarchy split us: men’s truth was holy, ours was sin. The girls screamed, and we paid—their fits a voice where they had none, 90% of their days spent bent under prayer. But why us, not them? We spoke, we knew, we stood. In Europe, 75% of 50,000 witch-dead were women, for that alone.

***“Women’s independence made them vulnerable to accusations.”*** —  
***Karlsen, 1998 (paraphrased)***

The hangings haunt me. Gallows Hill’s a scar—rough beams, ropes biting necks, crowds baying. Bridget dropped quick, her neck snapping like dry wood; Sarah strangled, her gasps dragging ‘til the crowd hushed. No burning here—too Papist, they said—just hemp and a fall. The rope bruised before it broke, some choking slow, faces purpling as Parris prayed louder: ‘Purge the wicked.’ Men died—five of nineteen—but women were the spectacle, our bodies warnings swung high. They feared us most: our voices, our hands, our refusal to kneel. Silence never shielded us—only made their lies louder.

***“The executions... were designed to terrify the community into conformity.”*** — ***Norton, 2002 (paraphrased)***

*Side Note: I've been to the exact same place as the location pictured in the background LOL its called 'Fanal Forest'*

I'll not be buried. They took my sisters—Bridget's fire, Sarah's grit—but not my tongue. I write this by a stub of candle, the wax dripping like tears I won't shed. The village whispers still—of guilt, of ghosts—but I speak. My herbs grow again, my shack stands, my truth lives. 'When they silence you, write; when they burn you, speak,' one says from afar. I'll speak 'til my breath's gone, and after, in the wind's howl. They called us witches for knowing, for being. Let them. It means we survived.

***"Their courage in adversity... enabled some to endure and resist." — Norton, 2002 (paraphrased)***

To the women who come after: you're not too loud, too wise, too much. They'll brand you wicked for what they can't grasp—they always have. Hold your voice, your roots, your fire. I leave this diary for you—seed in the ash.

***"The legacy of the witch hunts remains for future generations—those who resist will always find ways to speak and to stand." — Clark, 1997 (paraphrased)***

*Iselde Nighthorne*

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- “In the aftermath of the trials...” (p. 3).
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~Harnoor Jhinzer