

## Aila's Story --

I have always known about magic. My first memory around the age of 3 was an initiation, I believe. I remember walking down the hallway to my bedroom, feeling like an angel, completely innocent, bathed in white, then, like a voice-over, I heard and felt and knew absolutely that IF I walked across the threshold of that room, I would 'forever wear the black mantle'. I knew this meant I had a choice between being one who didn't explore worlds that were uncommon, or to be one who knew; to take a path of happy ignorance, or to wear the cloak of knowledge that embraced all things, though that be more difficult. I know it sounds fantastic, but it happened, I remember it, I still feel it.

Always, I had a sixth sense – I could feel other people's feelings, literally at times, taste their emotions – like metal or blood on the sides of my tongue. It seemed that I could hear what they were thinking, or else I was very perceptive.

Oh yeah - Backstory: parents married until 18 months after I was born, Flag Day 1965. Dad was doing his residency, but my mom was done with a loveless marriage that yielded nothing other than children for her. So the family of 6 was split - my sister and 2<sup>nd</sup> eldest brother went with dad to NY, and my eldest brother and I with mom to a middle-class suburban/rural Maryland, where she found a new husband.

At age 6 I started reading, and I read a lot. When I wasn't doing that, I would help clean the house, plant and tend the gardens, or run wild in the woods just a hop over the back fence. I was brought up agnostic - my mother said my brother and I were free to decide what we believed for ourselves. Mom was into giving us culture, not toys.

At Halloween, of course I was exposed to the concept of witches via the costumes. I knew they are women who know things others don't and can make things happen by thinking about it. Folks in general were still scared of witches then, said they conjured the devil. I thought the craft was sort of a combo of Native American nature and Celtic witchcraft stuff - not inherently evil, but dangerous because one's intent made it so. The Earth worship felt right, but the Irish stuff made me shiver. And my mom's a Kelley, so... I knew from books, magic could be very dark and was not something to be played around with. And I knew I couldn't walk around proclaiming myself a witch. But it sure seemed like it from all the text I was devouring in my self-education that I fit the bill. I was scared, thrilled, unbelieving and hopeful. But I was truly afraid I was brainwashing myself into these beliefs because someone wrote a book I read and I was a loner who needed support, or as an excuse for why I hadn't more friends.

My feelings were all that sustained me. That, going to the woods, and dancing (ballet and modern dance class, but mostly alone in my room). I was shunned by my peer group, because I was different –1970's, mother divorced, no church. I was definitely different.

I would say things to myself that I wanted to happen. I would whisper to the great spirit, not calling it god, nor goddess, never calling a name, but I spoke to it, not formally casting a spell, just knowing it to be so. Maybe it was nothing more than childhood wishes; yet that was real magic for me. However, because I was afraid I would conjure bad spirits, I did not do rituals – no circles, no tools, nothing. And I felt because I wasn't doing any ritual, and that I was a farce and of course my "spells" would not happen. So I did very little, resisting, wanting to be magical, but really concerned I was a bit touched in the head, or that I was creating a persona for myself so that I felt special.

The rift between me and those same people I went to public school with for years grew. I think in was 7<sup>th</sup> grade when I actually let people believe I was a witch. I say 'let believe', because they would call me a witch, among other cruel teenage things, but I wouldn't deny it. Strange – I wasn't doing anything other than being an outcast, smarter than most, did theatre, not cheerleading.

One night, age 14 (maybe?), alone in the house while reading the "Exorcist", I lowered the book and try to let myself feel evil. I succeeded, feeling a heavy darkness surround me that made me shiver. I quickly abandoned that stance, by getting up and running away. Never tried that again.

Also at age 14, I began to smoke pot. Slowly, then gaining momentum and I gained a boyfriend at age 15. It began a journey into drugs that encompassed coke, speed, ludes, acid, mushrooms, ecstasy (only once) and lots and lots more smoking pot, to my detriment, from current opinion of my self. It really expanded my mind, but hurt my body. Still like to smoke pot, but I'm getting over it, as I'm tired of using it for a fence.

Never mind the middle class details of my life wanderings, its my magical journey I hope to share with you.

I read Carlos Castaneda at 16, but thought it too foreign in application. Later, 1992, I met Jonathon, who told me to read all of Castaneda's books. He and I started having daily vision quests – hours where we would lie together, not touching, and he would go off into the vision, describe to me what he saw, and my job was explain what it all meant. Quite a tall order, let me tell you. Most of the time I thought we were definitely both crazy, him especially, and other times I could *see* what he was seeing, to the extent that I would say "look to the left" and we could both *see* what I described. He says lately he has been reinterpreting those memories, says that right now I have to find the [Green Lady](#), but that's a long story, so...

Jump back to around 1988, I meet an older man, who, upon the last night I see him, tells me he is a witch and hands me the book "Wheels of Life" - about chakras and energy direction, Eastern thought with Hindu names. I didn't understand how that related to the Celtic witchcraft with spells and pentacles.

I joined shamanic groups – hey witchdoctors, right? – still fringe, but at least I can call myself a witch, sort of. Went to Mexico, listened to Castaneda lecture, did Tensegrity, learned more about astral projection, colors, crystals, etc.

At this time, I had a dream (as opposed to a memory). I dreamt I was in a dark place, standing at one end of a long table, around which many hooded figures sat. The leader (?) stood to my left, and handed me a shallow square bowl with black liquid, which I was to smoke through a straw. When I did, I flew across the table, end to end, while all the figures sat cackling and clapping. When I reached the other side, still facing away from the table, I looked down at my hands. They were dirty, misshapen, and gnarled with age. I looked up again and saw in front of me in a brass cauldron, a dull reflection of myself, then down again to my hands - that were now younger, still dirty, but with a washing, good as new. I felt the table of women watching. I turned a quarter turn to the right, and The Leader stood in front of me, and to the left, as I looked out of the cave we were in, out into the sunshine and green field and trees, out to where I wanted to be, but wasn't. I felt I might never get there. I awoke.

I think this dream was another initiation that happened to my dream body. But I cannot confirm this at all, just an interpretation.

I tried some groupings with others from the shamanic studies, but noone had staying power. I read more and became drawn to Wiccan ways. I set up an altar, painted a circle on the floor, and tried to get into the rituals. I've been always solitary, but I know this is because I am afraid to flex into my true power, afraid of my dark side, afraid to draw the spirit within me without having real live sisterly support right there if things get weird.

I seek a coven to work with, so that I DO the work, so that I can feel ok about knowing the divine shines through me, so I can express that tangibly to others. So I can raise power for myself and all the others who can't yet, like I haven't. So I can once again let the beauty of life flow through me without being afraid. And I begin with this.

So be it. Be it so. So mote it be.