

Vigil -- Maegan Clearwood (she/her/hers), April 30, 2020

This quarantine, I became a witch. Which isn't to say that there's any particular way to become a witch, any secret formula or magic spell that instills in you the sudden desire to wear a pointy hat. I became a witch out of pure necessity. Witchcraft, after all, in whatever form it takes (and there are so, so many) is all about manifestation. It sees potentiality and names it so that it becomes something that can be embodied in flesh and blood and bone.

This quarantine, I built an altar where I kneel daily, filling my nostrils with sweet incense and my eyes with soft candlelight and my fingertips with quiet electricity. I made space for myself to be still as the world outside crackles with fear of the unknown. I pull cards for some inkling of clarity. I try to pay attention to the moon, to remember that there's something so much bigger than me outside my subbasement window. I built an altar out of necessity -- for understanding and meaning-making and questions.

This quarantine, I perform witchcraft for an audience of one. Two, if you count my cat. Three, if you count my partner and his regular requests for tarot readings. Five, if you count my burgeoning coven of spellbound friends. Twelve, if you count the theatre witches I sought guidance from via Zoom. But mostly it is an audience of one. Witchcraft is teaching me that theatre has the capacity to be impossibly small. It can be delicate and slow, tender and soft. It can be as ephemeral as an incantation whispered under one's breath or as languorous as a candle melting its long life away.

Imagine all the theatre witches in self-isolation this very moment, weaving worlds out of thin air and repeating spells composed by other witches long gone. Some perform over cauldrons, some over Zoom, some over freshly baked yeast-less bread. The magic of theatre is sometimes hard to see, but it is there, and we are holding vigil, cupping our hands over the flame as it threatens to go out.

This quarantine, witches are everywhere.

After quarantine, theatre will need witchcraft more than ever. The Tower is the most destructive tarot card, and theatre is sitting in it: lightning has struck and we are witnessing an entire world crumble. It is tempting to leap from the Tower's windows and abandon the carnage for a structure that promises to withstand such storms. What's hard to remember about The Tower, however, is that it is never reduced entirely to rubble. A foundation always remains – perhaps not visibly, but certainly beneath the ground, with stone and metal and memories holding form amidst the detritus. As

theatre witches, we must excavate until we find our foundation, then make manifest something even wholer than before.

After quarantine, we will be Fools and Magicians and High Priestesses and Queens. We will be witches, because theatre needs our blessings. We will be called to find magic in the unexpected – in design renderings and ticket stubs and forgotten lines. It will be so frighteningly easy to lose that magic as soon as the world begins rotating normally again. But it always present, always waiting for us to heed its call.

After quarantine, will must keep holding vigil. We must continue building our altars and thanking our ancestors. We must remember how fragile our little world is and keep the candle burning. For many months (years?) will pull The Tower and the 10 of Swords and the Five of Cups. We will hurt and grieve and throw things at the wall. But we must keep weaving spells. We must keep manifesting the impossible.

After quarantine, we are all called to be witches.