

The Dark Horse Book of Witchcraft

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For centuries, scary tales of powerful women imbued with supernatural abilities have been told to children and adults alike. In this book, the editor draws together several old and new tales of witches—not the sweet and funny witches of television shows like *Bewitched* or *Charmed*, but frightening stories, starting with the scene of the three witches from Shakespeare's *MacBeth*.

Allie has written more than a dozen graphic novels, including the *Devil's Footprints* series and adaptations of *Star Wars* movies. This gathering of witch tales follows an earlier collection, *The Dark Horse Book of Hauntings*, which Allie also edited. Both graphic collections contain several old tales, done in art, or, in the case of the classic *Mother of Toads* by Clark Ashton Smith, in short-story format with some fine illustrations by Gary Gianni. Additionally, there are new stories, such as *Tale of a Troll Witch* by Mike Mignola, starring the graphic novel anti-hero "Hellboy," and a tale of the Salem witches with an ironic twist at the end, *Salem and Mary Sibley* by Scott Morse.

In most of the stories, witches are portrayed in a negative light. They crush men, make young women see demons all the time, or lay curses that blight an entire family unto countless generations after the initial spell is cast. However, these are also cautionary tales: the young woman chooses her fate rather than cause harm to her younger sister, and the family that is cursed deserves to be cursed.

The editor includes an interview with a real witch, Wiccan High Priestess Phyllis Curott, titled "The Truth About Witchcraft." Curott, author of the best-selling *Book of Shadows*, is an attorney who began her legal career fighting organized crime in the Teamsters; she is also a maker of independent feature films. In the interview, she describes her experience of witchcraft in a very rational, yet poetic fashion. Curott discusses the negative views people hold of witches and says she sometimes uses the term "Wiccan" rather than "Witch," because "Every time you say 'Witchcraft,' the person listening is seeing and hearing through the filter of this toxic stereotype."

Indeed, although many of the tales in this graphic novel awaken the primal fear of the supernatural crone—the witch who is often pictured as evil—the editor dedicates the book "In Memory of those women and men hanged, crushed, and left to die in prison, in the summer and fall of 1692, in Salem, Massachusetts, then the most advanced port city in the New World." Allie lists the names of those victims of the Salem witch hunts, which took place in a town near where

he grew up, an event that captured his imagination in his youth, and led to this collection of tales.

CAROL LYNN STEWART (September / October 2004)

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