* **Each year they parade her about ... the traditional Halloween witch. Misshapen green face, stringy scraps of hair and a toothless mouth beneath her disfigured nose. Gnarled, knobby fingers twisted into a claw, protracting from a bent and twisted torso that lurches about on wobbly legs.

Most think this abject image to be the creation of a prejudiced mind or merely a Halloween caricature. I disagree. I believe this to be how witches were really seen.

Consider that most witches: were women, were abducted in the night and smuggled into dungeons or prisons under the secrecy of darkness, to be presented by the light of day as a confessed witch.

Few, if any, saw a frightened, normal looking woman being dragged into a secret room filled with instruments of torture. To be questioned until she confessed to anything that was suggested to her and to give names or whatever would stop the questions. Crowds saw the aberration denounced to the world as a self-proclaimed witch.

As the witch was paraded through the town, en route to be burned, hanged, drowned, stoned, or disposed of in various other forms of Christian love ... all created to free and save her soul from her depraved body. The jeering crowds viewed the results of hours of torture. The face, bruised and broken by countless blows, bore a hue of sickly green. The once warm and loving smile gone. Replaced by a grimace of broken teeth and torn gums that leers beneath a battered, disfigured nose. The disheveled hair conceals bleeding gaps of torn scalp from whence cruel hands had torn away the lovely tresses. Broken, twisted hands clutched the wagon for support. Fractured fingers locked like groping claws to steady her broken body. All semblance of humanity gone. This was truly a demon, a bride of Satan, a witch.

I revere this Halloween crone and hold her sacred above all. I honor her courage and listen to her warnings of the dark side of humanity. Each year I shed tears of respect and remember her involuntary sacrifice in the name of religion.**

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