

Dining with a Cursed Bloodline: The Hermit and Amazon Provisions

written by Andrea Lambert | January 28, 2018



My car breaks down. I don't get it fixed. I stop driving. My world becomes my House of the Rising Sun. I retreat inward to a private inner sanctum. As I so wanted to do for so long. It is healing.

My sleep cycles are always irregular. I only recognize it as Non-24 when trapped inside my House of the Rising Sun for several months. Non-24 is a Sleep Disorder common among the blind. Bereft of light, the body's circadian rhythm changes. The blind often keep waking and sleeping hours longer or shorter than typical day/night diurnal patterns of non-disabled people.

Non-24 is extremely rare among sighted people. I am not blind. Yet I am totally disconnected from the normal patterns of real relationships and normal working life. My circadian rhythms lengthen as a result. I'm on SSDI for Schizoaffective Disorder, an Anxiety Disorder and PTSD. Runs in the family. As that batshit crazy tends to.

I have to keep up some semblance of normalcy. I bathe and do my witch prayers every dawn that I'm awake. It varies. I observe Day Mode and Night Mode. In clothing. When the sun is up: Day Mode is in effect. I wear normal, everyday things. Underwear. Leggings. Socks. Bra. Tank Top. Sweater. Sweater-coat.

When the sun goes down and the moon rises: I revert back to my favorite stage of Night Mode. Pajamas. Bathrobes. Lingerie. Kimonos. Thigh-high socks. Winter Nevada nights dip below freezing. I have to stay warm.

I keep long, twenty to fifty hour days. Alternating with fifteen to twenty hour sleeping periods. Constantly. No matter in what rhythm I change my clothes. I conclude that I have Non-24. I have never been formally diagnosed. Yet the writing is on the wall. I have yet another rare genetic disorder. My Bipolar cousin says she has a similar Sleep Disorder.

My bloodline is blessed and cursed. It runs back to Myles Standish. First Plymouth Governor. On my fathers side. Can we say inbreeding? Ancestry dot

com was fun. I only paid for one month. Until I traced everything back as far as I could go in the the United States. Then I cancelled my membership. A USA only membership is twenty dollars a month. The international membership is thirty-four dollars. I'm not ready for that kind of expensive commitment. I'm on a budget. Being on Disability.

On Ancestry dot com I discover enough white privilege shame to make the blood run cold. If you're white? Ever want to face how much blood you historically have on your hands? Stare it down? Try to come to terms with it? Try a jaunt through Ancestry. Chilling.

It was like lifting up a huge boulder. Seeing a million larvae, worms and creepy bugs squirming away. Skeletons in the closet. Horrifying. Yet I couldn't look away. Not for a week.

I found out a lot of things I never really wanted to know. I discovered through census records that I had one ancestor, James Hill, who owned six slaves. I learned I was a direct descendent of Myles Standish. First Plymouth Colony Governor. His Wikipedia says he brutally slaughtered an excessive number of Native Americans. So that the first American colony could be founded.

No wonder madness haunts this bloodline. For we are haunted by the souls of those we have oppressed. Peace with the past feels impossible. I feel terrible about all of it. It's the curse of blood money.

The only colonial-era ancestor I prize is Hester Friend. My tenth Great Aunt. Hester Friend was born in 1640 in Salem, Massachusetts. She never married, as was the custom of the day. To marry and remarry as spouses died off. Pump out a million babies to populate the New World. Typical colonialist bullshit. Great Aunt Hester died in 1694. At the age of 54. In Salem. As a middle-aged woman. As were usually accused of witchcraft. On the exact year of the Salem witch trials? Right place? Right time? If it looks like a duck? Quacks like a duck? Burn the witch!

I suspect Great Aunt Hester was burned at the stake in *The Burning Times*. Like Calpernia Addams in *The Addams Family*.

As mother Morticia says to Wednesday's alarmed schoolteacher, "Great Aunt Calpernia? She was burned at the stake. It was said that she danced naked in the town square and enslaved a minister. But, I've told Wednesday, college first."

Being a Salem descendent fits perfectly into my *American Horror Story* saturated life mythos. All the witches from *American Horror Story: Coven* were genetically descended from the original witches of Salem. Those who didn't perish. Instead, the crafty witches hid out. Cautiously. Fled South. To New Orleans. Where "Miss Robichaux's Academy for Exceptional Young Ladies," in *Coven* is located.

History erases women. Old official records only tell a skeleton of the story. Like the skeletons I exhume in my research. In my closet.

Could it be that I too am descended from a Salem witch? One who perished in *The Burning Times*? This delights me. Could magical powers be yet another rare genetic disorder I am both blessed and cursed by?

The young witch, Zoe Benson, says in *Coven*, "If this world isn't safe for me? Maybe I'm not safe for this world, either." Mental illness follows a similar path. Seclusion becomes my mantra.

I throw myself into witchcraft. Online-order weed. Feverishly pump out mental illness and occult YouTube videos on iMovie. Based on what I'm rapidly throwing out into the online void, I fear the men in white coats will show up at my door to drag me away to an *Asylum*. I probably watch way too much Netflix. Hollywood horror is not real.

Just in case, I research the Terms of Involuntary Commitment that would make an ambulance show up at my door. The terms are quite extreme. Being Suicidal. Homicidal. A danger to old people or children. Being gravely disabled. Or unable to care for oneself. Thus, I keep rigorous schedules. Medication. Food. Chores. Sleeping and waking according to my Non-24.

It would take substantial mental and logical gymnastics. To extrapolate from my oeuvre. Enough to be upset enough. To call in a Wellness Check. That's when the police come bang on your door to find your corpse. When your neighbors conclude that you're dead. Drastic. I always check the mail. Take out the trash. Signs of life, if you look close enough. I try to go outside in the backyard every once in a while. I'm clearly not dead yet.

A Wellness check doesn't seem likely. Certainly not from some random stranger reading or viewing something online by this crazy writer. I sincerely hope. With all my heart.

This isn't the eighteen hundreds where you could be put away for "novel reading" or "hysteria." Nor is it the nineteen sixties when being queer could land you in the bin. Thanks to Reagan's de-institutionalization. I think I can be crazy publicly online as long as my physical body is quietly inside. I so hope.

I am like a well-oiled machine of circadian dysfunctions. Haunted curses. Hollywood mythos. Blasting tweets and videos out into the void of the Internet. Screaming into the void for someone to hear. I am so alone in here.

People hear. People on Twitter begin telling me I'm famous. After spending so many years pursuing fame? Drinking the Hollywood Kool-Aid like everyone else in Los Angeles? Now, in Reno, such a fantastical idea doesn't seem real. The mental illness makes it difficult to differentiate between what is real and what is not. The question of being famous is no different. Here in my isolated little world I really have no idea at all. But people tell me so.

I withdraw inside my House of the Rising Sun. Feel that at long last I am able to live my life as I please. If? And indeed if? I'm famous? I can do as I damn well please.

But in an interior world? With no car? How to grocery shop? How to buy

essential toiletries? After all, I have to keep eating normally. Grooming. If I don't want to be deemed gravely disabled. Gotta keep the men in white coats away.

So I turn to Amazon. Amazon Prime. Did you know that in this magical modern world there is no need to set foot inside a grocery store at all? I loathe grocery shopping. Grocery stores were previously sites of anxiety attacks. I am finally liberated from driving to the grocery store! Yippee!

The cardboard boxes begin coming. Food. Provisions. Toilet paper. Toiletries. Kitty Litter. Cat food. Christmas whatnot. Whatever. I can buy it online. Have it delivered. Freedom! At long last.

My eating habits drastically change as a result. I am now unable to buy perishables unless an obliging relative drives me to the store. That doesn't happen very often. So when it does, I stock up. A wheel of butter I gradually chip away at. Bacon. Eggs. Ice cream. Especially Klondike Bars. I have a ice cream bar problem. Vanilla ice cream and Heath Bar chocolate melt in my mouth. I eat them all up very quickly when I have them. Klondike Bars are a rare treat.

After a few months, I began to rely on the same staple foods. Vacuum-sealed packets of Indian food. Tasty Bite Indian entrées like Bombay Potatoes, Pad Thai and Panang Ginger Curry.

My perennial favorite is CLIF BUILDER'S Chocolate Peanut Butter Protein Bars. Grazing, they keep me full for hours. Various types of bars become my new staple. White Chocolate Macadamia CLIF BAR energy bars. Peanut butter dark chocolate KIND Bars. LARABAR Snack Bar Variety Boxes. Delicious!

I have to get some protein. So every once in a while I order up some Chops Beef Jerky. The Four Bags Mixed Assortment Original of Red Chili Pepper, Sweet and Spicy and Teriyaki. I am starved for real beef. Those plastic packets of meat always go fast.

For supplemental protein, I eat Kirkland Hk Anderson Peanut Butter Filled Pretzels. Signature's Kirkland Fancy Mixed Nuts. I love to pour out a white china bowl of these finger foods and nibble.

I need vegetables. Fresh vegetables aren't an option. I become hooked on Seaweed Love All Natural Roasted Seaweed Variety Packs, Original and Olive Oil. The wafer thin green crisps melt in my mouth. I rip open packet after packet. Photosynthesize.

My Non-24 circadian rhythm runs on coffee. Folgers Classic Roast Ground Coffee. Medium Roast. I eschew my previous Los Angeles whole bean, fresh ground Starbucks in this *Brave New World*. I drink so much cold, black coffee. It's cheaper to buy it in bulk.

I can't afford to worry or care about the "healthiness," of my lifestyle. It is what it is. Survival Mode. I'm just doing what I have to do in the moment to survive. Besides, for someone as chronically ill as I am? With so many rare genetic disorders? A "healthy," "normal," life was never possible. Some

dreams are best left abandoned. I give up all hope of this thing people call a "real life," a long time ago.

I become a nocturnal hermit. Maybe I'm famous? As long as the cardboard boxes of Amazon provisions keep coming, it doesn't matter to me. I just want to hide out in Rapunzel's tall tower. Never let down my shoulder length moon-colored hair for any man. Raise a huge bramble hedge about my property like Sleeping Beauty. Never awake from my sleep to any man's kiss. Sleeping Beauty is a romanticized story of nonconsensual sexual violation, anyway.

I am at peace. Dreaming Internet dreams of creativity.

Dining with a Cursed Bloodline is a series of autobiographical personal essays investigating sumptuous food, the goings on of a tight-knit Reno family, and queer disabled survival during the Trumpocalypse. A widowed witch with Schizoaffective Disorder, anxiety and PTSD explores her world through food, from Cherry Clafouti's from her backyard tree to traditional Italian Christmas cookies. Appearing the last Monday of every month.