

Great Journey Backwards - Into The Shadow Embraces of Devil's Sabbath

An excerpt from Dragon's Blood #3: Dark Witchcraft



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"To me then Lucifer, Satan! Whoever you may be, the demon that the faith of my fathers opposed to God and the Church - This is the credo of the witch."

"Make a hole in the ground and stab thine victim over it. Eat its flesh and drink its blood. After that prostrate downwards, placing thine arms crossed, head to north, and in such a configuration dwell till the dawn, for Thine Lord walks in the Dark and horrific is to behold Him." - such descriptions as this one, quoted from *The Red Book of Appin*, are found in many other texts of the European tradition of witchcraft. It is enough to mention such names as Gilles de Rais or Madame de Montespan, to realize how vivid and passionate picture was formed in the minds of European societies when it comes to describe a pact with the dark forces. In literature, tales and legends people entered a covenant with the Devil in order to achieve power, wealth, or fulfill other desires. Whether we believe these tales or not, we cannot deny that in the modern discourse only the bright side of the European witchcraft is presented - the cult of the Mother Earth and her powers of fertility. What happened to all these famous accounts of naked women dancing around a fire, reciting Christian prayers backwards, or sacrificing infants to the Devil? Is this all a mere fiction, invented by the Catholic Church as a propaganda used to fight the pagan cults? Did witches never meet at orgiastic Sabbats to call the name of the Devil and ask Him to fulfill their most hidden desires?

The word "Devil" derives from the Greek "Diabolos," which originally denoted a slanderer, the one who questions the order established by God. The roots of the word "demon" again may be traced to ancient Greece. "Daimon" or "Daemon" was a spirit, an entity existing between the worlds of humans and gods. But to the Greeks and the Romans, demons were not necessarily evil - they were related to destiny, the divine power, and even the higher wisdom. Even Socrates claimed that he was in contact with his Daimonion which warned him against mistakes, but never forced to anything. Probably this was due to the tradition to perceive these entities as an inner voice, a genius, an advisor of man. Moreover, Socrates ascribed to his Daimonion divinatory powers, far greater than all contemporary techniques of divination. Later on, the Greeks themselves divided these demons into two distinct categories: Eudaemons (watching over mortals to help keep them out of trouble, similar to the Hebrew guardian angels), and Kakodaemons which brought misfortune and misery. Nowadays, we can enumerate many more interpretations of these spirits. Some occultists consider them as objective beings and associate them with evil actions, or initiators which challenge humans and guide us on the initiatory path of spiritual progress. There are also occultists, like the famous magician Aleister Crowley, who claimed that demons were merely parts of human consciousness which assumed a particular form in the span of time. In the Left Hand Path currents also another approach is employed: an entity called the Daemon is regarded as analogical to the Holy Guardian Angel - the higher Self which guides the magician on the spiritual path.

Let us now proceed to the description of the Sabbat and its nature. Most often the celebrations occurred in desolate places, in the wilderness, or on the peaks of mountains (such as the famous Brocken). The ceremonies were performed on days of special significance - connected with the

seasons or the Moon phases. They began at midnight and lasted until the dawn. They involved wild singing, sexual orgies, and intoxication with alcohol or hallucinogenic herbs. The surroundings in which the Sabbat occurred: the river, the Moon, the lake, or the late night hour – all this emphasized the natural and feminine (meaning: dark, negative principle) nature of the Sabbat. At the centre, in the circle of stones, near the ritual fire, stood the dark Master of the Sabbat – the demonic creature who presided over the whole ceremony, and who aroused the excitement and bestial lust in the participants of the ceremony.

Another place, often associated with the Sabbat, were the crossroads – the metaphoric meeting place of the spiritual and human realms. This also suggests the dual nature of the sabbatic practices – performed in the mundane world of humans / the conscious plane, and in the astral sphere of demons / the unconscious or dream level. In modern times, we often interpret rituals this way. In the initial phase of the celebration, a witch or a group of witches began the ritual in the mundane world – with ecstatic dancing they entered a trance, or with the use of the famous witches' ointment (containing natural hallucinogens), applied on sensitive parts of the body, they achieved the state of gnosis. A similar function was ascribed to orgiastic sexual techniques or alcoholic intoxication. After the desired state of consciousness was achieved, the Sabbat was conveyed to the astral sphere – there occurred communion with demons, spirits, succubi and incubi. While the modern "light traditions" of witchcraft, such as Wicca, emphasize mostly these aspects of the Sabbat that are connected with the cult of natural sexuality and fertility, adepts of dark paths go much further. The Sabbat is not merely a method of attuning oneself to the eternal cycle of the seasons. When we direct the powerful energy of sexuality, we may achieve much more. The celebration of the Sabbat is fertile indeed – it is the powerful tool through which the magician is able to manifest one's Will and make desires come true. The goals, methods, and their results are represented by the three archetypal figures of the Sabbatic Devils.

The first "Devil" that we are going to discuss is Cain, a figure rarely mentioned in texts about the Sabbatic Witchcraft. But it is him who, according to the apocrypha, initiated wild and blasphemous orgies at the feet of a mountain located near the Garden of Eden, from which the first humans were exiled. His partner in these practices was reputedly demonic Lilith, the one who endowed mankind with the ability to obtain pleasures from carnal ecstasy, and also his numerous offspring, together with the fallen angels. There are many interpretation of the biblical story of Cain, but he seems to be a very complex and controversial figure, anyway. Even his birth is hidden behind the veil of obscurity. It is generally claimed that he is the son of Adam and Eve, and the brother to Abel. This is, however, uncertain from a particular point of view. There are theories that Cain was conceived in a union of Eve and Samael / the Serpent. And thus, Cain might be considered the fruit, offered by the Serpent to the first woman according to the book of Genesis – the gift being the sexual act, which is the central point of each Sabbatic ritual. In another story, Eve was reputedly possessed at this moment by Lilith, and so the true parents of Cain are the infernal rulers, and not the first human couple.

We can also find many stories and tales which prove the dark nature of Cain and his devilish origin. He was said to practice cannibalism and drink the blood of his brother – hence his connection with vampirism, which also emphasized his sexual relationship with Lilith, his mother. And she is the symbol of the dark side of female sexuality and the blood magic. Moreover, the theme of the life-fluid is intertwined into the whole life of this first human being who entered the antinomian path of spiritual rebellion. The turning point in his life is the murder of Abel, his brother, which again might be interpreted in many different ways. First of all, it is a metaphor of a rebellion against God and his unjust (in Cain's opinion) judgment. In the source literature we might find fragments which explain this event as a symbolic removal of a weaker side of consciousness, and with this act Cain consciously stepped beyond the path predestined by God for humans. One is certain – since that time humanity has divided into the descendants of Cain (the son of the Serpent), and the descendants of Adam (the son of God). Here we have the motif of blood again – in the veins of the so-called Cainites flows the blood of those who walk the path against the natural order. This is, of course, symbolic and denotes people who dare to question the surrounding reality and decide to step outside the human structures – to create their own way to divinity. This is the antinomian path of the Sabbat.

This is also what Cain himself done. According to the Bible, it was him and his sons that became the creators of all civilization on the earth. As they were denied the entrance to Eden, they decided to create their own "paradise" with their work and crafts. There they could freely shape the reality and replace God. Cain, who shapes his own fate, is therefore a symbol of the way to one's own divinity and all creation separated from God. And thus he is the initiator of all systems of spiritual progress related to the Left Hand Path: the creative rebellion, independence, and striving to become a creator of one's own fate. The concept of the city in this context appears as a symbol of self-isolated consciousness – one of the goals of the dark path. The first human tenements are also a metaphor of the way against nature – separation from the natural order, which is synonymous with antinomianism. This should not be, however, interpreted as an opposition against nature itself, or as considering the beauty of nature as a contradiction of the spiritual path. Through the way towards divinity, we learn how to feel and experience the surrounding world and ourselves as we really are – free from any imposed points of view. With time, we begin to understand the true dynamic nature of the world and thus we are able to shape it according to our Will.

For the murder of his brother, God gave Cain a mark and punished him for eternal exile and damnation. This mark is usually considered to be a horn growing from Cain's forehead, a reflection of his dark nature. According to other theories, this mark was formed when Cain was hit by a jewel which fell from the crown of falling Lucifer. Both of these theories seem to be related. The horns, a common emblem of the Sabbat, represent force, life, and leadership. Their spiral shape reflects the dynamic principle of transcendence. They are the true crown of a Ruler – a man who has power over himself and the surrounding reality, the figure equal to God. Lucifer is the one who opens the third eye of an adept and crowns us with a diamond – illumination and divinity. The mark of Cain is the opposite to what God gave to his followers. To bear this mark is to rebel against God and his laws – to reject the so-called "path of the righteous," falsely claimed to be the only true spiritual path. Adepts of the path of Cain are those who use their force, responsibility and Will-power to decide about their own salvation and fulfillment of the dream of humanity: unconstrained freedom.

Also the Sabbat itself, when deprived of its superficial elements, reveals its antinomian nature. When we take a closer look at its principles, it becomes clear that it is built not on infernal but rather reversed foundations. The place of the Sabbat itself implies its esoteric character. It occurs in a dark place, surrounded by the dynamic and chaotic elements of nature – in the heart of primordial wilderness – opposed to the illusory harmony in the world of man. The Moon is also connected with the night and darkness, and contrasted with our "normal" reality which is ruled by the Sun. But the relations to antinomianism are even more revealed when we discuss the Sabbat performed on the astral level, in the sphere separated from the world of creation, where the laws are completely different than the mundane regulations. The astral world is the realm of demons and vampires. The word "laws" seems inadequate when we consider the unconstrained freedom, characteristic of this sphere – both in the physical, moral and psychological sense. Here, the imagination rules over the reality. It is in a way represented by the figure of the Master of the Sabbat. In fact, he is an antithesis of any sovereignty. A horned devil evokes associations of destruction, not of creation, characteristic for any ruler in the mundane sense of this word. He is not a majestic and beautiful figure, but rather terrifying and disgusting. He evokes fear, not love. He is not created in an image of God or man, but an animal – the Beast. And this is what his nature is like – savage, primordial, bestial.

A similar antinomian nature is found in most archetypal symbols connected with the Sabbat. They are usually directed towards liberation of a huge energetic potential contained within human unconsciousness and sexuality. Hence the complete moral freedom, orgiastic sex, pederasty, sodomy, or zoophilia. The breaking of all social and personal constraints releases a huge amount of sexual energy which can be directed towards the destruction of old barriers and manifestation of one's Will. It is the same with recitation of the Lord's Prayer backwards – breaking all cultural taboos gives us access to a huge energetic potential. The famous Osculum Infame, the kissing of the Devil's back, is also a particular affirmation of this path – the reversal of human laws and turning to the dark, the hidden, and the desired. A similar function has the practice of shape-shifting during the Sabbat – transformation into beasts of the night. In this way the magician identifies with the dark and hidden instincts, and releases energy contained within the atavistic regions of the psyche. While transforming

into an animal form, we establish contact with the dark element which destroys obstacles on our path of spiritual progress. These are usually creatures connected with blood, as e.g. a bat or a wolf. This should be interpreted in a symbolic way. It is similar with the reputed sacrifices of infants which occur at Sabbats – this motif represents a sacrifice of material life for the sake of spiritual development. In this sense it is also a sacrifice of oneself for oneself. Astral vampiric forms enable an absorption of this life blood and allow for an ability to reproduce oneself eternally from one's own resources. This sacrifice might be also interpreted in sexual context, as it is suggested by Crowley. In this sense a sacrifice of a child becomes a forbidden exploration of one's sexuality for magical purposes. It is nothing else than the sacrifice of male semen.

And this is the hidden meaning of the symbolic reversal, depth instead of height, left unconscious side instead of right and conscious, the world of sleeping instead of waking, the triumph of imagination and subjectivity over the objective and reputedly "real," the female and the lunar instead of the male and the solar.

Another face of the demonic Master of the Sabbat is Mephistopheles. His legend spread around Europe as a universal tale of a pact with the forces of darkness in order to gain wealth, power, and above all – knowledge. In this legend he is usually connected with Faust, the scholar who did not hesitate to summon the dark forces, so as to explore the secrets of his own existence and the whole universe. He rejected all the sciences that he had studied before, and turned to magic and the irrational, because he understood that only there could he find the initiation into the mysteries of the world. Man as a microcosm is a faithful reflection of the universe, the macrocosm. Exploration of the world is therefore also a journey into one's inner self, to the sphere which lies beyond the border of common perception.

In this sense the role of Mephistopheles is identical as the confrontation with one's own Shadow, the hidden depths of our psyche – which is also emphasized by one of the forms of the Devil: the Black Dragon, a reflection of this dark element. To achieve divinity, man must become whole and accept all lessons that are taught by this dark principle. This may occur on many levels – physical, moral, and in other domains connected with the depths of the unconscious. An interesting analysis is found in Jung's writings about the archetypes. Even though the left hand path is often viewed as merely source of evil and destruction, in fact it is the other way round. The world and the man, in order to develop and remain balanced, has to explore both light and darkness, because in ourselves, as well as in nature, day cannot exist without night. Darkness contains change and dynamics. It is the element of negation which enables transformation of old forms and creation of something new. It is the source of infinite energy, the potential of which lies in the primordial chaos. And to gain this enormous power, the magicians point their attention at this direction.

The nature of darkness also contains striving towards the inside, the unknown and the hidden. In a symbolic way, this reflects the very nature of the pact, which represents the conscious confrontation with the inner darkness, and bringing the unconscious impulses into the light of consciousness. Mephistopheles is the guide in this great initiatory test – he challenges us to confront our true nature with its both sides: bright and dark. The unconscious side is revealed in a very subjective and individual way – this can mean a confrontation with one's fears, forbidden desires and fantasies, acceptance of what is regarded as low and bestial, contrasting the personal nature with expectations of the surrounding community. Through this process, called in psychology "individuation," we can get a deep insight into our hidden nature. This does not denote immorality, but rather amorality: breaking out of structures imposed by society, and gazing outside the limitations – far to the brink of madness which enables us to explore the irrational.

The last of the discussed lords of the Sabbat is Samael. He is perhaps one of the most archetypal masks of the master of darkness in our culture, and he seems to be an embodiment of ultimate evil and darkness – i.e. Satan. But what is the ultimate darkness if not the universal complement of absolute light? That is why the nature of Samael is ambivalent and he becomes a projection of all that is desired by man. His other names are: Pan, Baphomet, or the Sabbatic Goat. All these figures are universal as they unite in themselves the symbolism of contradictory elements. These are the two genders, which

reflect the harmony between the masculine and the feminine principles; the hooves represent the connection with the Underworld, and the horns reach the heavens and the transcendental world. The radiating brilliance of the infernal fire is united with the absolute and impenetrable darkness. The alluring beauty and the disgusting ugliness. This is the dynamic force underlying the construction of the universe.

Mankind has always dreamt of the power over oneself and the surrounding world. But the closer they were to the canons of their perfection, the greater was the dissonance with what they had to reject, sacrifice, or deny, in order to fulfill this dream. This way Satan was born – he became the embodiment of all that was evil and rejected, and yet somehow desired. This story has its origin in the biblical tale of leaving the Garden of Eden. Human lust for progress, eternal development, appeared too strong. This took the form of the serpent who separated mankind from God and made people aware of their potential. The consequence, however, was damnation as punishment for independence and the necessity to weave one's own destiny. Behind each choice lurks responsibility, and to achieve the final goal, one has to pay the highest price. In order to gain the divine insight into the nature of things, one has to sacrifice everything, together with one's own life. For to achieve power and wisdom, one has to do the same, and this creates fear of responsibility.

The figure and the symbolism of the Devil in the Dark Tradition of the Sabbat, represents eternal transformation which occurs in human soul. At the beginning it seems to be repulsive and terrifying, but in consequence it leads to the highest light of wisdom and power that is within man's reach. This great gift is the ability to know oneself and one's Will – the possibility of becoming something more. The Devil who represents the dark side of human nature, reveals to us knowledge of our infinite potential. However, only few have the strength to accept the Serpent's gift, because the highest challenge for each human being is the ability to see the true image of oneself – and sometimes something more – the Beast that lies dormant in the soul of every man.



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