

Sipping tea with the crone

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“Oh my,” he said, dabbing a sponge to my face and looking at my skin as if it were a national disaster. “We have *got* to find a way to get rid of those fine lines.”

My skin was changing. It was getting drier, so I needed to switch from a powder to a liquid base. I could no longer use my old, stand-by cosmetics and I was getting sick of trying to match my skin tone *after* I purchased the make-up, so I abandoned the drug store aisle and went to an actual make-up counter in a department store.

I tried to make sense of what he was saying. *Fine lines? What is he talking about?* He saw my confusion, told me to take off my glasses, and thrust a mirror into my face. It magnified the areas around my eyes about 100 times, and I saw them. Fine lines. Cosmetic code for wrinkles.

I shrugged and said, “Whatever. You’re the expert.” He handed me a bottle of foundation, then he tried to get me to buy some sort of weird green lotion, which he swore would counteract my “red blotchy skin.” But that’s where I had to draw my own line. It just made me look like Frankenstein and I’m not *that* gullible.

I left the counter with a new bottle of makeup and a budding awareness of my fine lines. I looked at my face everyday, for at least 12 seconds in my car’s vanity mirror as I put on my makeup at the stoplight, but I had never noticed them. I guess I needed an expert to point them out. But I wasn't sure what I thought about trying to get rid of them.

The thing is, I like being older. I’ve been embracing this crone in me for quite sometime and I appreciate that she’s now taking shape in my hollowing cheeks and creasing skin.

I met her when I went to my therapist with a recurring dream. I had been having a conversation with an old woman in an airport conference room. Airports were not a regular part of my life, as they are now. I was wondering what the dream was about.

Who was that old woman? What was she supposed to symbolize?

My counselor said, “She’s you. She’s your crone. Your wise woman. You’re embarking on a journey and you need to listen to her.”

I didn’t know what the journey was at the time, but now that I look back, I realize it was when I began writing. I thought being an author was something that I could never have, but then this woman would visit me in my dreams, in different forms. Some nights she was white, other nights she was black. Sometimes she was thin, other times she was ample. But she was always old, so I learned to recognize her.

One time, she gave me a green tea cup, rimmed with gold. She tossed it to me, as if it were not precious porcelain. Then she embraced me, as if I were the precious one.

The next week, I saw the teacup in a store. I’m not sure if it was the same one exactly, but it was green and rimmed with gold, and so I bought it. I began to sip tea from it, and as I did, I began to listen to her—to me—and I felt words form within me. They became sentences, paragraphs, books. Wisdom took shape inside of me.

Wisdom doesn’t necessarily come with age. I have met the sage and the fool in every generation. But the archetype holds true in my dreams, and so I love the lines. I’m not saying that I avoid all the trappings of vanity or prolonged youth. But even with my occasional stalling techniques, I like getting older. I wonder about our culture that sees something wrong with the aging process. Are we missing out on our crone? Are we trading in our wisdom for botox injections and butt lifts?

If so, I’m not sure if it’s a very good trade. I think I’d rather have my fine lines.