



Hadewijch in the Castle: Cannabis Healing Story

We believe that we have plugged into a sacred, healing energy stream that is flowing thickly around the planet. Like reaching up and pulling on a cord of a moving train or tram, we reached up and connected to a higher calling, a pulse of holistic healing, a pulse of returning to ancient ways, that is a comforting drum-beat, growing bigger and louder and more significant to our lives with every passing day.

What we are doing with our new age order of Sisters is not something we created. It is something we plugged into. Everything about us is cultural appropriation. We appropriate everything good that our ancestral mothers learned and practiced.



We believe in the family values of the stoner culture. Stoners have had to hang together and protect their own culture for

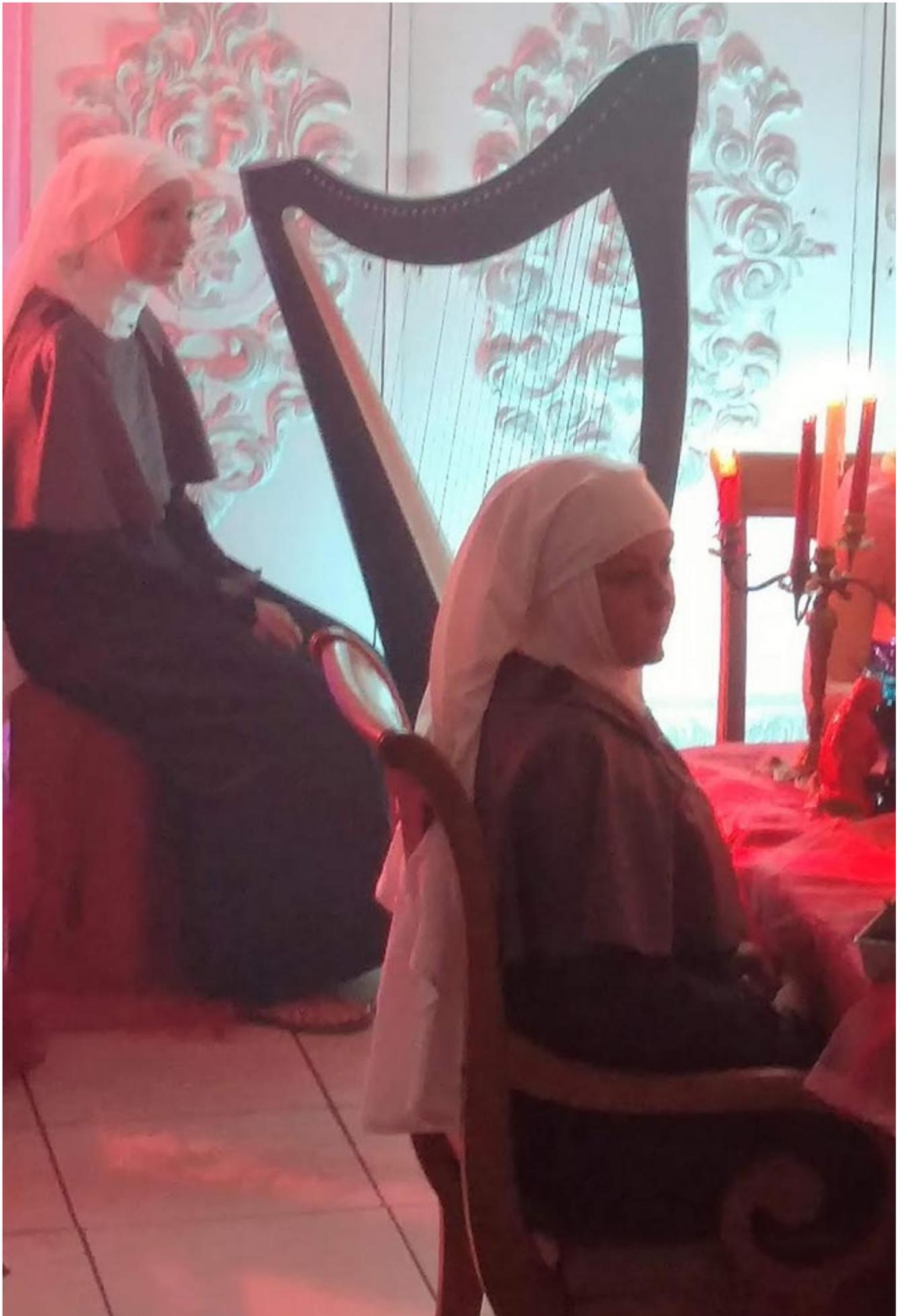
one hundred years of persecution. Stoners have had to make sacrifices to get along with people and society, a society where conventional wisdom says that cannabis is bad and cannabis smokers are bad.

Stoners have always tolerated this baloney, because they look kindly and patiently upon the ignorant and think, 'yes, it was once conventional wisdom that the earth is flat. It was once conventional wisdom that women have smaller brains than men. It was once conventional wisdom that if you masturbated you would go blind. But we live in an age of science and your old-paradigm views are adorable in a naïve, throw-back kind of way, but untrue none-the-less.'

Stoner values respect and revere the ability to protect boundaries and familial privacy. Stoner values hold transparency in high regard and secrecy in suspicion. Stoners respect knowledge and science. Stoners are generally compassionate, to people and to the planet.

We also hold fast to the belief that those who attempt to grow weed and attempt commerce in the cannabis space will be foiled if they go against compassionate principles applied to people and the planet. Those who are ok with fracking, will not be rewarded by their efforts with the plant. Those who are ok with caging children, those who protect and defend Trump and others of his ilk in other countries (Doug Ford, Therese May), those people can't grow cannabis and be successful in the healing space. Those who want to be billionaires just because they want to brag and be like Trump, you will fail. The plant will not serve you, I promise. She will choose who she serves and who she doesn't, and you will fail if you try to cultivate her with false or shallow intentions.

Those who judge others without trying to understand them, they will not be rewarded by this industry. And those who are mean to women, they will – especially – be locked out of reaping any rewards on the backs of the magnificent female cannabis plant.



It was springtime in the castle and those whose lives centered around the Beguine sisters, those who farmed, made plant medicine, those who worked day in and day out to alleviate suffering among the town-folk, farm-folk, land-owners and serfs – were busy putting away their tools and chores. It was hours before their normal quitting time, but it was a special feast-day.

It was the feast of young Beguine sister and her man, in their mid-twenties, and expecting twin babies. It is the custom of the Beguines to prepare the first-time parents with gifts and supplies from the tribe. Dignitaries had gathered. Some of the Sisters were nervous. It was an ominous sign that the feast was to be of mixed people. It wasn't normal. It wasn't custom. Yet, the abbess had her head turned by the tax collector who wanted to be part of the celebrations and especially, wanted to bring the business of the feast to his relative. The tax collector had insisted on helping arrange the feast, inside the castle, at the Bear and Steer, a local tavern and eatery owned by his brother-in-law.

"It is not customary for us to have a public celebration in the castle. It is custom to have them privately, on the farm," explained the Abbess that day in the foyer of the house on the farm – that day the tax collector had unexpectedly stopped in.

"You know, it hasn't escaped my attention," said the tax collector to Sister Hadewijch, "That the castle governors don't know you are growing cannabis to put in your potions. If they knew, they would put a special tax on you or, even, they could shut you down." He threatened. Sister Hadewijch sighed and agreed to have the baby shower in the castle, in a public place, in a place where 'others' might be. "And I'm going to invited everyone from my office" said the tax collector on his

way out the door.

Hadewijch sighed. Somehow, she knew there would be trouble. She didn't know what form, she just knew there would be.



It turned out to be the fact that the very-pregnant mother smoked cannabis at the baby shower that brought the town to buzzing. It brought out all the righteous indignation of those who know so little. The Sisters and Brothers weren't back on the farm a fortnight before word came that the town was buzzing about the cannabis consumption that happened inside castle walls (gasp!) and by the mother with the babies in her belly, no less! Right in the alley behind the Bear and Steer, right before Goddess Mother and the world! Double gasp!!

The Beguine elders who paid for the celebration, the elders who agreed to make this celebration open to non-tribal members, hadn't considered the mother-to-be's eating disorder. They hadn't considered that the town-folk had no reason to know that the young mother requires a small amount of THC before each meal to stimulate her appetite.

"Do you think our taxes will be raised because of this?" asked Sister Sierra.

"Do you think those wankers are going to get vengeful?" asked Sister Alice.

"Nonsense," said Hadewijch to the gathered Sisters and Brothers. "Do not fear these people and do not hold these people in contempt for their ignorance but look kindly on them as if they are mis-informed children. You don't get angry at a child for not understanding algebra, do you? We are a complicated order. We are not simple, as many would like us to be. We are like a beautiful onion with many layers to be peeled off. We are foremost, compassionate healers. We were gathered to celebrate more than the coming of the twin babies. We were gathered also to celebrate the healing of the mother-

to-be and the father-to-be under our own tender care, using our own natural ways. These townsfolk don't know that the father, four years ago, admitted himself to a recovery clinic nearly dead from overdosing meth? Or that his meth habit was actually a step better than his addiction to cutting himself? These town-folk don't know that the mother-to-be is severely anorexic due to family trauma and malnutrition experienced as a young child... nor that cannabis allowed her to keep eating what she must through-out her pregnancy to nourish those children and bear them to birth successfully. The town-folk don't know any of these important facts."

"Will you tell them, Sister?" asked a young postulant.

"No, I will not." Hadewijch answered quickly. "They must learn these things on their own."

The Elder Beguine paused and took a sip of water from a pewter mug. Setting the mug down, she continued, "They will not know our personal stories. They will have to find their own way to the truth. The town-folk will never know that those babies were scheduled to be aborted. That the mother believed she would die in child-birth, something an old, white-man castle-doctor told her years earlier. She believed her anorexia would overtake both of them, that she would be unable to eat, and that she and they would die (at best) or they would be born deformed (at worst) and that only the herb calmed those fears and gave her the certainty and strength she needed to go forward with the pregnancy. Only the Sisters' assurances that we would not judge her or fault her for continuing to use cannabis as her medicine through-out the pregnancy convinced her not to abort the babies she was sure would come deformed. The Sisters all know first-hand how she relies on the THC to stimulate her appetite before each meal. She smokes so that

she can eat like normal folks do.” Hadewijch stood up from her place at the table.

“What about the tax collector?” asked an Elder Sister.

“The tax collector has put us in jeopardy,” Sister Hadewijch said plainly. “I will have a word with him, at some point. If there are no further questions, I have much work to do and one of you should be checking up on our soon-to-be-mom. It’s nearly 4:20 and we want her to eat a full dinner.”



When our young Sister arrived at the hospital eighteen days before the due date of the twins in her belly, she admitted naively and calmly to the check-in nurse that she had smoked a joint the day before. I wasn't with her. I would have warned her that this is Merced. This is a place that once, not long ago, a mother having weed in her system was reason for the health insurance to be cancelled and for Child Protective

Services to be called in. My millennial Sister knows the law and knows her rights as a medical patient. She told the truth. Her truth caused the hospital staff treat us all like trash until the babies' toxicology report came back and showed there was no THC in their systems. The mother smoked a high-THC joint the day before, but no THC was registered in the babies immediately after birth. That fact made curiosity over-ride hostility with the medical staff in obstetrics.

"Hadewijch, why are they being so mean?" asked the young man earnestly. "Why do the castle-keepers not allow me to be with my wife, now, while they are poking and prodding at her? Why can't I be there to hold her hand when they give her the epidural?"

The old woman's sympathy showed all over her face. "I am so sorry, son," she said. "But we are but humble farmers and we do not have the sophisticated, fancy equipment these folks have." Hadewijch spoke with her hands, gesturing all the equipment surrounding them where they stood. "Having twins is not something that should be done at home, with a mid-wife. Those babies have taken all of the calcium, magnesium and iron out of her system. She has preeclampsia, high blood pressure, and is at high risk of dying. The babies are perfectly healthy, and all this we wouldn't know if we didn't have access to their hospital, their technology and their technicians. You cannot expect people who are of science, who are of technology, who let those things define them completely, you cannot expect them to have compassion. They are not un-compassionate, they just have strange, un-compassionate ways. I see it like you do! I see it, but I don't care, and you mustn't care either because #1, these are not our people and #2 right now, our people, our Sister, your wife, needs the tools and knowledge they have to spare her life and the lives of those twin babies in her belly. We are

using them, don't forget, my son. We are using them. We do not have to like them or accept them, we must just use them."



Hadewijch had noticed every slight. When a nurse asked 'where's the papa' and Hadewijch answered, 'her husband is out making a phone call', the other nurse corrected her, saying "they aren't married, they just live together". As if she was on auto-pilot and couldn't ever miss a chance of putting her two-Christian-cents out into the universe. The only weddings that mattered were the ones of their culture. She wished her young Sister had been more careful in answering.

Hadewijch noted how they refused to let anyone be with the young, frightened mother, only twenty-four years of age and fearful of dying. Afraid of giving birth to monsters because she dabbed THC concentrates during the first three months of her pregnancy, not knowing she was pregnant. Her eating disorder made her cycle irregular and she was accustomed to not having her period more than having it. She didn't learn of

her pregnancy until she was half-way through and it was too late, then, to do anything about the concentrates she consumed months prior.

Now she lay frightened and scared and they make her more so by subjecting her to an interview by nazi nurses who don't give a flip about making her more uncomfortable, by daughters-of-science who won't allow her to have her loved ones by her side.

Hadewijch saw it. She saw their bully tactics, which seemed brutal to all of them, to her, to Father/Brother Dwight, to the expecting young parents, in stark contrast to the gentle and respectful healing they practice in their tribe. But she didn't judge them for it. She prayed for their enlightenment. She thanked them for what they did know. How to run a blood pressure machine. How to check the urine for danger signs. How to measure the baby's heartbeats. They have tools. And they know things that will help our Sister through this, she reminded herself and the nervous father-to-be. We are in their land, seeking their help. We must respect their ways. It is our way, she reminded them both.



After the healthy babies were born, doctors and nurses came by to chat more respectfully. Someone finally asked the new mama why she had smoked cannabis and finally, my lovely young Sister/Daughter was allowed to explain about her eating disorder. Those who were once hostile suddenly became compassionate. I told my young Sister that perhaps, going forward, she should lead with that information.

It was two weeks ago today that the babies were born and in two days, it will be two weeks since they left the hospital to live in a cocoon of love, tended by their parents, their Oma and Opa, their Tante and Ohm. Kept secluded in a little apartment, far from noise and hustle. They gain weight and color and their mother gains her health back. And we are back, all of us, to working and mingling with people who respect cannabis as a medicine – one people, one tribe.

