

## LEXIPHAGIA

a story about witches

by Dreyer

*Along with the traditional texts of the Faith, the people of Karr are also taught stories from a newer manuscript called The Journal of G., a travelogue written by the famed witch hunter of the Old King. Witch Hunter G. was a witness to Aranathea's testimony before the King, and it is said that when the proof of the good and proper treatment of witches was set before him, he suffered a deep crisis of conscience. Saved from the depths of despair by Aranathea herself, the witch hunter sought to redeem himself in the eyes of God by serving as the Good Witch's bodyguard, traveling the King's lands by her side as she spread the word of salvation to witch and wight alike.*

*While most of the stories within the Journal concern the capture and punishment of various witches across the country, they are held to contain good moral lessons for those without magic as well, and so are often read by preachers for their sermons.*

*The following is an excerpt from the Journal of G., regarding an encounter at what is now known as the Elvale Archives, a Watchtower site located near the northern border of Karr.*

### REGARDING THE TAMING OF THE WITCH OF PAPER, WHO LIVED IN THE LIBRARY OUTSIDE WALLSBOROUGH WITHIN THE ELVALE

<sup>1</sup>It was high noon when our party arrived at the town of Wallsborough, which sits at the bottom of the Elvale, well north of the Capital. <sup>2</sup>The townsfolk treated us coldly and with suspicion, for we had a Witch among us. <sup>3</sup>But we took ourselves to the square, and there we gave our demonstration. Aranathea made her flames until she could not compose herself, and then she was treated with public spanking and scolding, and made to shame herself in front of all the town, and thus the people saw that Witches can be tamed.

<sup>4</sup>We were summoned then by the Mayor of Wallsborough, who asked if a Witch in their midst might be tamed the same way. <sup>5</sup>Long ago this Witch had put herself up in the Duke's archive, and chased out everyone with her Magick. <sup>6</sup>The Witch would not leave the Archive to visit wickedness upon the people, but none could enter lest the Witch attack him, and the scholars could read their own writings no more.

<sup>7</sup>We went then to the Archive without delay, and the Good Witch and I entered the building by ourselves. <sup>8</sup>The inside was dark, and there lay about many piles of books, and upon these books sat swarms of white moths, eating the pages.

<sup>9</sup>The largest of the piles moved, and out from under it came a girl of Aranathea's age, pale and gaunt, her clothes in tatters. <sup>10</sup>"Begone!" she shouted at us. "Whoever you are, you are not welcome here!"

<sup>11</sup>Said Aranathea to the girl, "We will be gone when you have answered: What has happened to all the books of this library? Where have all of these moths come from?"

<sup>12</sup>The girl, the Witch, smiled, as she spoke with much arrogance. "The books are all mine, and the moths are all mine. <sup>13</sup>The moths eat the books, and they keep their knowledge within their bellies,

and they feed the knowledge to me, and it is so that I have become a woman of great learning. <sup>14</sup>Ask me whatever you dare, for now there is nothing in the world that I do not know."

<sup>15</sup>"What does the outside of this building look like?" asked Aranathea, for that would surely have been written in no book inside the building itself, and she was certain that in her sequestering the Witch would have long forgotten.

<sup>16</sup>Verily the Witch could not answer, and so she howled like a beast, and she set her moths upon us with fury. <sup>17</sup>Aranathea made her flames, and the light from the fire confounded the moths in their flight, while my blades cut them apart one after another. <sup>18</sup>Soon Aranathea was upon her, and in a flame's flicker she had her over knee, and she treated the Witch with spanking until she cried like a child.

<sup>19</sup>The Paper Witch looked upon Aranathea with light in her eyes, and she looked about the Library, and she wept. <sup>20</sup>"What have I done! What have I done! All of these books, all this knowledge, it will die with me, and it will never be known to anyone again!"

<sup>21</sup>Aranathea embraced her, and stroking her like a mother comforting her crying child, she said, <sup>22</sup>"There is no reason for despair. You will not die, for the time of killing witches is at its end. <sup>23</sup>Your Magick has made this problem, and your Magick will yet mend it. In your arrogance, you tore this Library down, but in your humility, you will raise it back up again."

<sup>24</sup>Said the Paper Witch, "But if I use Magick to build the Library back up, will I not simply tear it down again in my Wickedness?"

<sup>25</sup>Said Aranathea, "Do not worry, for I have used Magick as well, and when our work is done I will be by your side, and we will see together how we can be made good again."

<sup>26</sup>Together the three of us set about fixing the Library: the Paper Witch took each book and filled it up with pages, and filled these pages with the words she had stolen, and Aranathea and I would put the book back in its place according to her directions. <sup>27</sup>Then when she became tired, Aranathea took her and bent her over a rail, then bent over beside her with her robes up and her breeches down, and I spanked their bottoms red with my razor strop until both were crying like babies. <sup>28</sup>For a day we worked like this, until our attendants delivered word to town, and the next morning several strong Wights came to assist us. <sup>29</sup>Aranathea taught them the proper way of looking after the Witch, and we left her and the Library in their care while we headed for our next destination.

<sup>30</sup>Oh Lord our God, who art in Heaven! Pray watch and keep the Witch of Elvale! <sup>31</sup>Let her harm no one, and let no one harm her, and grant her the sense to make right of her own wrongs, <sup>32</sup>and let her remember that there is so much more to know of Your creation than is written in the pages of books. <sup>33</sup>Let the light remain in her eyes, and with them let her see the truth of creation as You have wrought it, amen.

*It is the prevailing opinion of modern Magissiology that the Paper Witch in the story above is the current living Matron of the Elvale Archives, home to more than a dozen witches of the northern regions. However, this has not been confirmed, as this witch is famously reclusive, showing herself to few outside her coven; even within Elvale few wights know her face. One who can secure an interview with this Librarian, and commit her testimony to ink, will have made a great contribution to our field of study.*