

Introduction

As I have said elsewhere *Witch World* never was intended to be more than a one-volume book, a fragment of which had been originally jotted down for a historical novel that never came into being. However there seems to be that about *Witch World* itself that continues to draw both the writer and readers—the latter, judging by letters received, eager to know more and more.

First there was the eastern continent comprising *Estcarp*, and the traditional enemies *Karsten* and *Alizon*. Then, out of nowhere, there arrived the first adventure in *High Hallack* to the west: *Year of the Unicorn*. This was also the first to have a female protagonist, and though it was not warmly welcomed by male readers, women greeted it with enthusiasm.

However, more and more letters brought questions as well as suggestions for new adventures of favorite characters. The first sharing and building of such a tale was with *Ann Crispin* whose collaboration in *Gryphon's Eyrie* was, to my mind, a widening and enriching experience. Nor were either of us satisfied to allow our characters to remain mute at the end of that adventure. The idea of *Songsmith*, carrying on into a second generation, developed before the last word of the first was set on paper.

Unfortunately, other commitments faced both of us and we did not get much further than an introduction and a somewhat vague outline of the following events. Though we hope to have the book finished soon.

Though *Songsmith* might be delayed, fellow wordsmiths, whose work I admired and thought sympathetic to my own ideas of fantasy, contributed short stories for what was to be four volumes of *Tales*. A meeting with Robert Bloch was responsible for the first two stories in volume one. We discussed and decided upon doing two versions of the same plot, one to be seen through the eyes of accepted "good" and the other "evil." This experiment intrigued us both.

But, with the putting together of the volume that was slated to be number three in the series, a change was suggested by the editor. The manuscripts that had been selected numbered four, all of novelette length with fine character development and excellent plotting. Because of this factor the book was lifted from the original series and was published separately as *Four From the Witch World*.

There remains this third book of shorter stories.

I was and am so enthusiastic about these new dimensions and the enlarging of *Witch World* by these other writers that a greater belief in the existence of another level world into which others also can enter becomes firm. Now I am eager to learn more and more about that which may lie within the Dales, beyond the mountains, in strange seas where even the Sulcar have not yet ventured.

Thus five of us, Pauline Griffin, Mary Schaub, Patricia Mathews, Sasha Miller, and I have recently completed another project: *The Witch World Chronicles*. These are set in Lornt, that repository of knowledge (though, alas, there must have been already too much lost through parchments crumbled into dust and books left to rot for centuries). Lornt surely holds a treasury of adventures, each more exciting than the last.

The second turning of the mountains (which brought an end to the witch rule that had strangled Estcarp into decline) by exhausting the witch power and killing many of those using it, marked the end of an era. What had happened, is happening now, that customs are broken? What of the Dark perhaps free

now to rise anew? What of menacing manifestations in the Dales and Arvon? Who will rule Karsten? What of Alizon, licking her wounds after her defeat in the Dales?

What of those Dales, exhausted of manpower, bled white by the long war? Does Alizon still threaten, and even more boldly, Estcarp? Will Karsten remain long in the chaos into which Pagan's death plunged that country?

There are separate groups such as the Falconers and the Sulcars. Their long-held sanctuaries are gone. How do they now fare?

This is a period of drastic change, of a need for new leaders to seek other goals and methods of reaching them. Witch World is no longer the same and the changes will bring pain and strife as some of these tales foretell.

But this volume is in a way introduction to the *Chronicles* in laying the groundwork for those changes. They do not cover vast areas of any nation nor numbers of people, but rather deal with the fates of small groups here and there, plucked out of their normal way of life and sent into actions they are not always prepared to accept.

So the *Tales* will become the *Chronicles* and those will lead to an ever wider knowledge of that other world and perhaps a new assessment of all.

To me is left the pleasure of knowing that my world is enriched and expanded through the efforts of others of whose embellishments I am often envious and for which I am delighted.

To those who have willingly, and with very real interest and concern, added to the portraying of characters, the expanding of maps, the advancement of new causes and ventures I am grateful. For me they have glorified a history that somewhere I am sure is real. They have truly shared.

—Andre Norton