

THE WITCH OF PUNGO  
(a sequence excerpt)

Written by

J Darin Wales

Based on Events from the Life of Grace Sherwood,  
The only Woman in the History of Virginia to be  
Convicted of Being a Witch

EXT. LYNNHAVEN WATER - MOMENTS LATER

A circus atmosphere greets Grace's cart.

Tall pine and cypress trees, limbs loaded with onlookers, oversee the cove as hundreds line the banks.

A wagon filled with the Justices and a second with the Jury of Women flow into the grassy area as the masses arrive.

Two twenty-foot skiffs moor at the waters edge.

Hauled from the cart, Deputies march Grace near the skiffs.

WATERS EDGE

The Seven Justices and Jury of Women surround Grace as the Crowd rubbernecks to see and hear.

Elizabeth Hill peers over the crowd.

COL. MOSELEY

Jury, examine the defendant for any instruments of escape.

The six women close in around Grace as the Seven Justices, Col. Moseley, and several deputies make their way to the skiffs.

MARAH

Strip her!

Grace stiffens.

Bertha Thomas and Sarah Norris tug on Grace's outer garments as Grace crosses her arms and grabs her clothing.

BERTHA

They're coming off one way or the other. Relent of your pride!

Grace's temperature rises. She drops her arms and fixes her eyes upon Marah Barnes and her smirk.

The Crowd stares in silence.

Bertha and Sarah waste no time and pull off Grace's skirt, shoes, and outer blouse, and leave only her long white shift.

MARAH

Again, everything!

ANN BRIDGES

Marah-

MARAH

All of it. Now!

Ann Bridges and Joan Cotle wait on either side of Grace and grasp her shift at the waist.

ANN BRIDGES

Grace,...

Ann Bridges and Joan Cotle pull Grace's shift over her head to the Crowd's gasps.

Elizabeth Hill is taken aback.

Ann moves square in front of Grace to block the Crowd's view of her naked body.

MARAH

Stand away, Ann Bridges!

Ann and Grace lock eyes.

GRACE

Thank you. But they see what they want to see.

Ann shrinks back from Grace.

MARAH

Sisters, look for any amulets or sharp instruments with which to cut or cast spells. Outside and in!

Bertha Thomas and Sarah Norris step in with Marah Barnes and scrutinize and touch everywhere below the neck.

Ann Bridges and Joan Cotle comfort/caress Grace's head and hair more than "search."

GRACE

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...

Grace flinches at a penetrating intrusion below. Her blood boils.

Elizabeth Hill looks away. Her lies and naiveté in this unjust proceeding have come home to roost.

GRACE (CONT'D)

For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Marah Barnes leans in close.

MARAH  
 (whispers)  
 May Hell welcome you with open  
 arms.

Grace maintains her stare at Marah Barnes as she and the five women step back.

MARAH (CONT'D)  
 Your Honor, it is the finding of  
 this Jury of Women that the  
 defendant secures nothing.

COL. MOSELEY  
 Bring Mistress Sherwood to the  
 boats to be bound.

Ann Bridges and Joan Cotle swallow Grace with her shift as the four deputies hustle Grace to the boats.

INT. SKIFF #1 - MOMENTS LATER

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Deputies cross-bind Grace's thumbs and opposite big toes

-- A canvas sack pulls over and down Grace's torso

-- Crowd members scream insults

-- Grace's head pops through the open-ended sack and drawstrings pull tight around her neck

-- Paul and Grace's boys watch in silence from the bank

-- With Grace's bound hands and feet tucked inside the canvas sack bottom, the bottom drawstrings pull tight

-- A length of rope secures Grace's waist

LYNNHAVEN WATER

The two skiffs push away from the shore as the Crowd screams.

Grace rides in Skiff #1 with Col. Moseley, the Sheriff, Rev. Saunders, and two Deputies.

Skiff #2 contains the Seven Justices and one Deputy.

EXT. SKIFF #1

Two Deputies bind the skiffs forty yards into the water.

Col. Moseley raises his arms to quiet the mob.

COL. MOSELEY

For the charge of practicing  
witchcraft, Mistress Grace Sherwood  
has been crossbound and will be  
cast into water above a man's  
depth.

The Crowd celebrates.

COL. MOSELEY (CONT'D)

Should the accused float, she will  
be deemed a witch!

The Crowd roars and boos.

COL. MOSELEY (CONT'D)

Should Mistress Sherwood sink and  
not surface of her own accord, she  
shall be deemed innocent!

The Crowd falls silent.

COL. MOSELEY (CONT'D)

Mistress Sherwood, do you have  
anything you would like to say?

From her hunched position, Grace nods.

The Sheriff motions for the two deputies to lift Grace.

Grace views the Crowd and feels a shift in the wind. She  
studies the tree line behind the Crowd.

Dark clouds approach.

GRACE

You all be comin' here to see me  
ducked! But I tell you this:  
Before this day be through you will  
all get a worse duckin' than I!

The Crowd erupts and Col. Moseley nods to the deputies.

Deputies launch Grace into the Lynnhaven with a PLOP and she  
vanishes below the surface.

The Crowd screams with excitement.

Bubbles surface for a few seconds and cease.

Boat occupants peer over the edges.

A hush falls on the Crowd as Rev. Saunders signs the cross.

COL. MOSELEY  
Ready on the rope—

SPLISH! The white canvas pops upon the surface.

Grace's wet-hair-covered face sticks up, gasps for breath.

Col. Moseley sighs and barks his orders as the Crowd screams for fire.

COL. MOSELEY (CONT'D)  
Pull her in, quickly!

Deputies drag Grace in. Bound, she coughs and chokes.

Rev. Saunders stands at the bow with his ceremonial Bible.

COL. MOSELEY (CONT'D)  
Your bible, Reverend. How much does it weigh?

REV. SAUNDERS  
About a stone.

COL. MOSELEY  
Give it to me.

REV. SAUNDERS  
I'm sorry?

COL. MOSELEY  
Give me the bible.

REV. SAUNDERS  
But—

The Sheriff yanks the Bible from the pastor.

COL. MOSELEY  
Around her neck. Now!

The deputies tie the parchment anchor as the chants grow.

DEPUTY #1  
Secured.

COL. MOSELEY  
Pick her up once again!

The deputies raise the dripping Grace for Col. Moseley to address. Grace seethes at the procession.

GRACE

What malfeasance this be, you bastards!

COL. MOSELEY

Mistress Sherwood—

GRACE

One ducking be not enough?

Col. Moseley waves his hand and Grace hits the water and vanishes.

Col. Moseley nods to the deputies.

The deputies nod in response as the rope sinks.

MURKY UNDERWATER DARKNESS

The glow of canvas sinks downward led by the Word of God and trailed by flowing auburn hair. Muffled Crowd-chants fade.

SKIFF #2

The boat riders lean further over the edge and search.

MURKY UNDERWATER DARKNESS

The glowing blob hits the sea grass and stirs the sediment.

Watery voices from nowhere come and go.

Grace's face strains, her eyes widen.

Internal GRUNTS, GROANS, and SCREAMS echo in the water.

The canvas fabric writhes with intense motion.

Grace's face reddens and vanishes in the muck water.

SHORELINE

The Crowd grows silent.

Dark storm clouds rush in above the Lynnhaven.

SKIFF #2

Several Justices rise and peer into the water as a gust of wind hits the Crowd and jostles the skiffs.

SKIFF #1

Beads of sweat appear on Col. Moseley's brow. Small growing waves lap against the boats.

COL. MOSELEY  
Damn it! Pull her up! Now. Now!

The deputies pull the rope, but it will not move. They put their weight into it. Stuck!

The Justices all stand. Justice #1 jumps to Skiff #1 to help, along with the Sheriff.

COL. MOSELEY (CONT'D)  
Oh my Lord.

Col. Moseley moves over to lend a hand and all pull.

TWAP! The rope releases from the depths. The deputies reel in the length with all haste.

The white canvas materializes and flutters like a ghost as it nears the surface.

Col. Moseley grabs the canvas bulk and pulls it up and over. He staggers back in anticipation of more weight.

The deputies and Col. Moseley shake the open canvas as the water-drenched bible tumbles out.

Col. Moseley throws the canvas aside, leans over the edge and searches the water's dark depths.

COL. MOSELEY (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Jesus.

A couple of feet from the surface, Col. Moseley stares into the water. Rev. Saunders again signs the cross.

SPLOOSH! GASP! Grace's face and torso burst the water's surface mere inches from Col. Moseley's face.

Col. Moseley staggers and falls backward into the boat

The Crowd gasps.

Elizabeth Hill lets a out a puzzled sigh of relief.

SHORELINE

CROWD MEMBER #3  
She's alive!



CROWD MEMBER #1  
She is a witch!

## LYNNHAVEN WATER

Grace gathers her breath, swims on her back away from the skiffs. She stares at Col. Moseley, indignant.

Grace turns toward the horde on shore and points skyward.

## SHORELINE

The Crowd scans the foreboding clouds.

Single raindrops ripple the water's surface.

Lightning flashes and BOOMS as the Crowd scurries for cover under trees and wagons; others dash down the muddying road.

A torrential rain unleashes its load upon the affair.

A lightning bolt strikes the nearby woods. People scatter, panic.

## SKIFFS

The deputies untie the two skiffs as the furious Col. Moseley picks himself off the skiff floor.

COL. MOSELEY  
Mistress Sherwood! In the boat!

Col. Moseley, instantly soaked, drips over the debacle.