

Witch 10

Chapter 10 The Stonemason

This week, the weather wasn't good, the sky was always gray, Karl van Bate's mood was like the weather, gloomy to the extreme.

Walking on the wet stone street, from time to time there were people greeting him. In in this town, Karl run a school. At Graycastle those noble children with the talent to go to school, attended a different kind of college, here he was also teaching for the children of ordinary people. Therefore, in this border town, he had a very high reputation.

"Hey, Mr. van Bate, good morning."

"Sir, is my son doing all right?"

"When are you free, Karl, let's go fishing together."

At ordinary times Karl would always smile and would respond to them, but today he just nodded, never saying a word.

Since he witnessed the hanging of Anna, in his eyes the world appeared to be flawed – or to say since his departing from Graycastle a crack seems to be rising into existence, but he deliberately turned a blind eye. He used his busy work to numb himself, and to a certain extent, he even used the innocent smile of the students, to cover this crack.

Until Anna died, he thought, that the world had not changed. But after the hanging, the crack not only did not disappear, but it expanded.

Regarding Anna, he recalled the memories of the previous half a year. Within the more than thirty children in her class she stood not out, with a normal appearance, she was never a person of many words, but there was something that let Karl felt a little impressed.

That was her passion for knowledge. No matter what they would teach, characters or history, she could always remember it on her first try. Even if it was the boring history and evolution of the religion, she was always seen holding a book. He had seen the young lady help to take care of her neighbor's sheep, sitting down in the sun, Anna would carefully brush the sheep's hair, gently, like someone would do it with a baby. The picture he could still remember very clearly was the sweet smile of a happy girl, no matter what or how he could not think of her as a sinister and evil person.

Later there was a fire at her place, and Anna's mother unfortunately passed away, afterwards Anna never came back to college. He never saw her again, until a week ago, when she was proved to be a witch and hanged in the town square.

Be tempted by the devil? An unclean person? Evil? All fart! In his heart, he had for the first time doubts about the Holy Church, for the first time he doubted the knowledge they imparted.

Whether or not Anna was a witch, he didn't know, but she would never turn evil! If a yet to mature girl, a girl ignorant of the world and full of curiosity could be called evil, then the administrative officials of Graycastle were from hell and possessed by the devil too! In order to save several hundreds of gold

royals, they deliberately stole stone material in exchange, leading to the collapse of the half-finished theater building; more than thirty masons of their guild had died.

But were they hanged? Not even one! The judge finally ruled that the leader of the stonemasons was unsuitable for his job, he was punished into exile, the stonemasons were forced to disband.

And Carl, who knew the insight story, fled out of the limelight and left Graycastle, he followed the road into the west, eventually ending in the border town.

He managed to establish a college, with a lot of students, he already got to know the new neighbors, he found new friends, but the crime from the officers of Graycastle was always engraved in his mind. Now, once again he felt the world was mocking him- what was evil, the gods of heaven could they really see it clearly?

The last overwhelming straw for Karl was Nana.

Nana and Anna were nothing alike; one could even say they were the complete opposite. She was a very lively girl, quite well known in the college. Only seldom attending class, and when she was there, she could never pay attention, only lying in the grass. If you asked what she did, she would giggle for a while, and then she would answer that she was looking at a fight between a grasshopper and ants.

Nana's face was always full of laughter; it seemed to be her nature. The evil world had nothing to do with her, at least in the college, she could always be happy and was able to laugh. Karl was even a little curious – if she had ever cried since she was born.

Until two days ago, when suddenly, with a long face, Nana came to find him, “teacher, will I be hanged too, like Anna?”

This let him knew, his student, Nana had become a witch.

“Ah, isn't that Teacher? Come over here and help us to look at what it says.”

Karl felt as if someone had pulled his sleeve. He looked up and found that he had arrived at the town square. Many people stood around the board and shouted, that someone should let them know what the announcement said, hearing van Bate's name, everyone consciously get out of his way.

“Teacher, you coincidentally came, help us to look at it.”

“You are right, originally it was Meg who would read this to us, but the end result was, that before he could tell it to us, he got stomachache and had to go to the toilet, until now he did not come back.”

Like always, he nodded with a smile, then he explained in detail the content of the bulletin board to everybody who listened. But at the present Karl discovered it was impossible — the smiles and enthusiasm of these people was not fake, but for him it was, but seeing this, it became more and more intolerable to wear the fake mask himself.

The post of the hanging of Anna was placed above the notice, everyone was cheerily discussing about it. In a sense, you were her murderer; he could say it only in his own heart, your ignorance and fear had killed her.

Karl had to swallow down his emotion, took a deep breath and walked to the front of the announcement list.

“The prince called for hands to help with the construction of new buildings for the border town, a variety of different kinds of jobs is available,” he said.

But I am also one of her killers, and what qualifications do I have to blame them? The one who told them that witches were evil, was it not me? Karl had a bitter taste in his mouth, look, everything they knew I have taught them, word by word the Holy Church doctrine, I always thought I taught well, to hell with it!

“Stone grinder, they have to be male, from 20 years to 40 years old and healthy. Payment, 25 bronze royals per day.”

Mud craftsmen, not limited to gender, over 18 years old, they should have experience in masonry, the daily payment would be 45 bronze royals.”

“Handyman, requiring to be men, 18 years of age or older, 12 bronze royals per day.”

“.....”

No, he had to do something, if Anna’s death has been irreparable, then at least he couldn’t let Nana die. Karl heard his inner voice shouting, “the Mason guild collapsed when you did not stand up, Anna was hanged when he did not stand up, do you like what happened when you staid silence, helplessly looking at these lovely child, when she would be sent to the gallows?”

But what could he do? Could he flee with Nana out of Border Town? He had his own family, a family who traveled with him from Graycastle, just when there live got better would they need to leave again? Even Nana herself, who was born into a rich family, would she leave her fixed place of life?

Stonemason, not limited to gender, age is not limited, preferred are people who participated in building for the municipal administration, like the stronghold, or other fortifications, the city hall recruit for long term , with monthly remuneration of 1 gold royal.”

“Additional Term: People with rich experience and excellent performance, could get granted an official position.”

After reading the notice, the people become even more noisy, “paid monthly 1 gold royal, this is even better than the payment for the stronghold cavalry!”

“Will you go? Can you build a fortress?”

“You, just don’t only stare at this, go get a job, every day you would get payed for the work, count together you would not get much less than with hunting.”

“Indeed, when going to hunt it is possible to lose one’s own life and when you have to dodge it is also possible to get lost.”

Karl van Bate did not pay attention to this; he concentrated on the seal and signature on the final notice. It was the autograph from Roland Wimbledon, the fourth prince.

Did the prince not know, that the Month of the Demons was already coming? Whatever he wants to build, at the moment it's not a good time to start. It seems his Highness knew nothing about constructions, provided that oneself could become the stonemasons, would he then brought to his attention Karl had suddenly an idea, perhaps through this recruitment, he could see the prince himself, the highest ruling in Border town.

This thought let Karl swallow a mouth of saliva, could he convince the prince that the witches were not evil? There were rumors of his Royal Highness unique ideas, he should have a character different from ordinary people, but also that he hated the church very much. Maybe he could do it! He thought, although in the end the hanging of Anna was ordered by Prince Roland, but everyone could see he was not willing to do it.

The prince himself was still in his early twenties, this should make it easier to understand, those girls were still in the marriageable age, how will they suddenly become evil and do unforgivable acts?

Of course, there was a possibility that Karl would end as a Witch Helper, he would have to go to the gallows, together with the witch. The Church's law stipulates that anyone who shield a witch or who would plea for leniency, should be regarded as someone who abandoned himself and become a demon disciple.

Only the prince, the prince who hated the church, could be his last hope, since only he could declare the church's law as a waste of paper.

Karl prayed in his heart.

Even though he did not know to which God he should pray, he closed his eyes and prayed for a blessing.

In memorial of the dead Anna, for the sake of Nana who was still alive, and for himself, so that his own heart crack would no longer expand.

He decided to take the risk.