

## Witch 2

### Chapter 2 The Witch Named Anna (Part I)

For a period of time Roland locked himself in his room as he carefully reviewed the memories of this new world, such that dinner had to be sent directly to him by his servants.

Roland suppressed his fear of the unfamiliar environment he found himself in under his strong will to live. He was very clear that if he wanted to blend in and avoid being suspected by the people around him he needed to get more information as soon as possible.

Roland had to say that the fourth prince had, apart from fooling around with some other sons of the nobility, no additional things in his brain. Over and over again, Roland was unable to remember any valuable information such as knowledge of the aristocracy, the political situation in his own country, or the diplomatic situation with his neighbors. As for basic common sense, such as city names, or the years of significant events, they were completely different than the history of Europe he knew.

It seemed that based on his memories, the old Roland had had absolutely no chance of obtaining the throne. Perhaps the King of Graycastle was aware of this, and because of that, the prince had been thrown into this hellish place, even if he made a mess of things in this border town, it wouldn't result in much damage to the kingdom.

The next memories Roland looked at were of his brothers and sisters, and what he found left him unsure whether he should laugh or cry.

Roland's eldest brother, the First Prince, had an above average military power, his second brother was scheming and horribly treacherous, his third sister was afraid of death, and his younger sister was brilliant. This was the entirety of the former fourth prince's impressions of his siblings. Roland felt a little awkward, after more than a decade of living with them the old Roland's knowledge had been summed up in a few words. What forces they'd developed, who their competent subordinates were, what they were experts at, what their plans were and so on...he knew nothing at all.

It was only three months ago that the fourth prince had come to this frontier town, but the nobility had already stopped hiding their contempt for him. It was obvious that the fourth prince wasn't cut out to be a leader. Fortunately, when the King had left Roland this territory, he had sent along two of his more capable subordinates to provide assistance so the townspeople wouldn't suffer under the old Roland's inept rule.

After Roland woke up the next morning one of his maids, Tyre, repeatedly mentioned that the Assistant Minister wanted to see him. When it seemed that he could put it off no longer Roland acted according to his past memories and reached out to cup the maid's ass before sending her to fetch Barov, who had been waiting in the drawing room.

Seeing the flushing Tyre exit the room, Roland suddenly realized that, since he had reincarnated, shouldn't he have a system or something like that? At least in many tales that was the standard formula, but the arrival of a system never happened.

Sure enough, what Roland had read in those novels was all fiction.

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In the drawing room, Barov was already restless from waiting. The moment Roland appeared he asked, "Your Highness, why didn't you order the execution yesterday?"

"One day earlier, one day later, what's the difference?" Roland said as he clapped his hands, letting the attendants know to bring his breakfast in, "Sit down, Barov."

The impressions he had from the old Roland's memories, and also based on his own opinion, was that the Knight Commander liked to confront problems with the fourth prince directly face to face, even in the presence of others, while the Assistant Minister was more circumspect and liked to discuss issues in private. In any case, the loyalty of the two was likely to be to the King.

"A day later may lead to other witches appearing, my royal prince! This isn't the same as before with your previous escapades, not during this time of chaos!" Barov cautioned.

"How can you even say that?" Roland asked while frowning, "I thought you were capable of distinguishing the differences between superstition and fact."

Barov looked bewildered, "What superstitions?"

"That a witch is evil and the devil's messenger," Roland seemed to not mind as he patiently answered the question. "Isn't that what the church teaches us? They won't intervene here, I think it's actually the opposite. Their propaganda states that witches are evil, and while we've chosen not to actively aid their witch hunt, all the people in this territory believe in these shameless superstitions spread by the Church."

Barov was shocked, "Could...could a witch really be..."

"Indeed evil?" Roland asked, "Like what?"

The Assistant Minister was silent for a moment, trying to decide if the prince was deliberately making fun of him, "Your Highness, this problem can be discussed later. I know you don't like the church, but this pursuit of conflict is counterproductive."

Roland curled his lips. It seemed that reversing this superstition about witches wasn't something that he could do overnight, but for now he decided to put it out of his mind..

When Roland's breakfast of toast, fried eggs and a carafe of milk arrived he made up two plates, one of which he served to the assistant minister.

"You haven't eaten until now, right?" asked Roland before he started eating. The maid had told him that Barov had arrived outside his chambers at dawn, and had directly requested to see him, so he shouldn't have had time to eat. While he'd decided to imitate the former prince's way of life, he'd also decided to begin to change the way people perceived him a bit at a time.

The Assistant Minister was a good first target for his plan. Roland thought to himself, If you can make your men feel valued, then they'll be more motivated to work for you.

Taking the initiative had always been the most efficient way to win, hadn't it?

Barov took the cup of milk Roland handed him but didn't drink as he anxiously said, "Your Highness, we still have a problem. The guards reported that three days ago a suspected witch camp was found in the

western forest. Because they left in a hurry and didn't clean up all of their traces, a guard found this in the camp."

He took out a coin from his pocket and put it in front of Roland. This wasn't the common currency of the kingdom, at least according to the memories of the old Roland, he hadn't seen such a coin. It wasn't even like theirs, it wasn't even made of metal.

Feeling it in his his hands, he was surprised to find that the coin was warm, and the assistant minister definitely wasn't the source of this sweltering heat of at least forty degrees celsius, which reminded him of the moment when one took a bath.

"What is this?" Roland asked.

"I thought it was just some foul trinket that a witch made, but it's actually more serious than that." Barov had to pause to wipe his forehead, "the printed pattern is known as the Devil's Eye of the Sacred Mountain, which is the emblem of the Witch Cooperation Association."

Roland rubbed the coin's uneven surface, he guessed that it was probably fired ceramic. Indeed, he saw that the center of the coin depicted a "mountain" shaped pattern of three triangles juxtaposed with one eye in the centre triangle. The pattern's contour lines were very rough, he judged that it should've been polished by hand.

Roland recalled the two terms "Devil's Eye of the Sacred Mountain" and the "Witch Cooperation Association", but wasn't able to discover any details. It seemed that the fourth prince had had no interest in occultism.

Roland didn't expect that Barov knew more, but he continued, "Your Highness, you haven't seen real witches before, so it's understandable if you think their abilities are exaggerated. Indeed, they can be injured, they'll even bleed and aren't any harder to kill than the rest of us, but that's only for a witch who can't resist. When they receive the devil's power it can shorten the lifespan of a witch, but it can also give them terrible power. Ordinary people just can't match them. Once a witch grows to adulthood, even an army will have to pay a high price to kill her. Their desires are almost impossible to suppress, ultimately causing them to degenerate into the devil's minions." "The Church therefore declared a Holy Inquisition, If a woman is found to have even a chance to be a witch they're to be immediately seized and executed. The King has also approved of this decree and in fact, these measures have been highly effective and the incidents where witches have wreaked havoc have already greatly declined in comparison to a hundred years ago. The Sacred Mountain, or to say the doorway to hell, is only a rumor illustrated in an ancient book from that era."

Roland, while gnawing on his bread, sneered again and again as he heard this. Although the histories of this world and the world he knew were very different, their historical trajectories were surprisingly similar. No matter if it was the church in this world or the church he knew from his, he thought that religion itself was the devil's minion, the real source of evil. You don't think sentencing someone to death only because they are different isn't evil? Using God's name to kill someone was all kinds of wrong. Unaware of Roland's thoughts, Barov continued with his speech, "Recorded in ancient books is that witches can only find real peace at the Sacred Mountain. They wouldn't have to suffer uncontrollable desires because their magic would have no side effects. There's no doubt that the so-

called Sacred Mountain was certainly the birthplace of evil, an entrance to hell on earth. I think that only hell won't punish those who've fallen for the devil's temptations."

"The "League of Allied Witches," who are they? What's their relationship with the Sacred Mountain?" Roland asked.

Barov explained with a sour face, "In the past, everything was good because the witches would run away before the Inquisition arrived and were living in seclusion. But in recent years, the League of Allied Witches appeared and made a difference. They want to gather all of the witches and find the Sacred Mountain. For this purpose, the Witch Cooperation Association will even take the initiative of luring others into becoming a witch. In the last year, many babies disappeared in the Port of Clearwater, and the rumor was that it was their doing."