

The Forgotten Witch

Generations ago, these lands were ruled by witches. Thirteen monsters, whispered to have been humans who took demons into their hearts and reshaped their own souls, and who ravaged the continent for a century before they were finally brought to justice.

Nations have risen and fallen since then. The Templar Order that defeated the witches gave rise to the Inquisitorium, which in turn grew into the Order of the Sacred Martyrs. They rule much of Rabshekah with an velvet fist, influencing the laws and morals of local kingdoms and punishing heretics who stray too far from the Martyrs' light. But the legacies of the witches endure in the shadows, with mercenaries, scholars, and adventurers seeking out the last hidden treasures and libraries of the witches, hoping to find something that will give them a life of luxury or power.

Which brings us to you.

You are Zhel, the Witch of Enmesharra. You were cast down into darkness, the whispers of your loyal followers echoing in your ears as the Templars put them to the sword and the torch. You have been forgotten by this world, and you have nearly forgotten yourself. But all of that is about to change.

You wake slowly, feeling air breath across your skin for the first time in centuries. You don't know exactly how long you have slept, tormented by nightmares. In your dreams, you felt the deaths of your people, over and over. Your handmaidens, buried alive. Your ministers, burned at the stake. Soldiers cut down whether they fought or fled. Every follower killed, and every death a chain to hold you.

But now the chains are broken. You have risen from your coffin, a ritual shattering the wards holding you down. In the darkness of the room, you are still disoriented, ten thousand deaths screaming in your ears.

"I summon you, host of Enmesharra. I offer you gold and blood. Smite my enemies and serve my will. I bind you under seven stars, in the darkness of the moon."

Your eyesight gradually focuses on the woman kneeling in front of you, within a seven-pointed pattern drawn in salt and framed in red candles. She is in her mid-twenties, with red hair that cascades down her back, her breasts bound in a leather corset and her body wrapped in a worn, thin silk shawl. Her green eyes stare up at you, burning with intensity, and as she draws a silver knife and pricks her finger, dripping three drops on the ground in front of her, you realize with growing confusion that she is in the midst of a spirit-binding ritual that was old even in your time.

Targeting you.

It's not working. Enmesharra is still bound deep within you, entwined with your own soul so thoroughly that you can't separate their desires from your own. The warding circle around you is well-constructed, and if you were a ghost or a lesser demon you would be trapped, helpless until you agreed to serve her. But you are neither, and it might as well be a child's drawing for all the good it will do her.

This woman thinks to make you her slave? How far has your memory fallen, that she thinks a few springs of rowan and a salt circle would protect her from you? What has happened to this land?

Torn between two thoughts, one takes hold. How dare this woman think to control you?

As the woman looks up at you, you raise one hand, and clench it into a fist. Her expression turns quizzical, and then her eyes widen in shock as the candles around her flare and melt, mingling with the salt and forming into four long strands. You strike before she can recover, two chains of melted wax and salt wrapping around her wrists and pulling them down to her sides, while the others form cuffs that stretch over her ankles. The bindings on her wrists pull backwards, and she rocks back on her heels with a whimper of fear, unable to scramble back due to the wax encasing her feet. It is hot, and you can see her skin redden slightly around the wrists, but she is not burned.

Not yet.

You step out of the coffin, looming over the woman. She gathers a fragment of defiance. "What is this? I summoned you!"

A thin smile spreads across your face. You feel your skin stretch; you are gaunt from your long imprisonment. “You released me,” you correct her. “And I should thank you. But then you sought to bind me again. I don’t think you’re one of my loyal followers, are you?”

She shudders, eyes going wide as you lean down over her. “W-wait. Please.”

“Oh, now she pleads?” You reach down with one long nail, touching her corset. For a long moment the woman’s wards resist your sway, but as you apply more force the leather shifts and flows, the leather unspooling and reforming into a harness that pulls on her arms, tying them to her sides at the elbows. She lets out another squeak of fear. “Who are you?”

“M-my name is Branwen. Please, stop. I just... I need your power. Please, great spirit, have mercy!” Her eyes well with tears. “If my... if my pride offended you, I will serve you. I will do anything!” She pulls at her bonds. “Save my people!”

You raise an eyebrow. This woman has talent. Her wards resisted you, if only for a moment. And it is an unusual request, given the danger she is in.

You reach down, cupping Branwen’s chin in your bony fingers. “You’re a quick learner. That is an important trait in a witch’s apprentice.”

You thought her skin was as pale as it could be, but it goes paler at your words. “You’re... a witch?” she asks in hushed tones.

They forgot so quickly. “I am Zhel, the Witch of Enmesharra. I once ruled these lands, and I am inclined to do so again.” The words come from a faraway place, but they feel right. “But I am a magnanimous ruler. Swear to serve me with all your heart, and I will swear to do all in my power to keep you and your people safe and hearty. Do you agree?”

She stares up at you, sweat beading on her brow. “Y...yes. Yes, master. I will serve you however you see fit.”

“I accept your fealty, and your worship. You are mine, for now and forever.” You let your hand drift down her chest, fingers running over the strands of leather barely holding in her breasts, and then down to her stomach. Her breath catches as the tendrils of magic trailing from your fingertips run over her skin, leaving a warm tingling sensation behind them that brings a flush to her cheeks. You stop at

her bare stomach, just above the shawl bound around her waist. “I grant you permission to genuflect.”

Power surges through you, and Branwen lets out a moan as you bind her into your service. She arches her back, ankles pinned as she falls forwards at your feet with a scream of pleasure, body trembling from the energies pouring through her. As she shudders, your glyph forms below her stomach, to punish her if she betrays you and reward her for passing your tests. You breathe in her pleasure, feeling it tingle the back of your throat. One follower, a trickle of power. A start.

When she is done, you gesture lightly, and the wax pours off of her ankles and wrists, releasing her. You sit beside her, and your hand strokes her hair. “Welcome to my service, Branwen,” you say. “I have my first command for you.”

“What is it, Master?” she asks dreamily, still in a daze.

You pull on the trickle of magic that Branwen is providing you, raising a bench from the stone floor beneath you both so that Branwen can lie against you and you can stretch your legs. It seems that centuries bound in one position has left you a bit stiff. “Tell me of your enemies,” you whisper into her ear, one finger stroking down the length of her bare back. “Your first lesson as my apprentice will be how to treat a witch’s enemies.”

Branwen shivers, body still limp from your attentions. “They call themselves the Harmonious Ones,” she murmurs. “An offshoot of the Church. They came to our town years ago, arrested our militia, and claimed a tithe of our crops, in exchange for their ‘protection’.”

A common refrain. You nod, letting her continue.

“The Harmonious Ones control the whole valley now,” Branwen says. “If they find you to be less than moral according to their code, they press you into slavery, so that your master can ‘train the devils out of you’. Every year, they demand more, and every year more people are taken. We’re on the verge of starvation, but they just raised the tithe again.” She shakes her head. “We won’t last much longer.”

“What magic do they wield?”

“They have inquisitors, who can smell magic and pull it apart. Aside from that, nothing. They believe that magic is an expression of Sin, humanity trying to claim the Divine.”

“And they came to my tomb,” you muse. A coincidence, or were they looking for you? “How did you find me?”

“This is the Unspeakable Pit. There have been legends for generations. Anyone who comes here is devoured. I thought... I hoped that my spells would protect me.” Branwen looks up at you, mouth curling into a self-conscious smile. “Foolish.”

“Desperate,” you correct her. “Desperate people make desperate decisions. Which is why we will make these Harmonious Ones desperate instead.”

Her eyes glitter with pleasure at the idea, but you can see she doubts. “How?”

You stroke Branwen’s hair. “It will be a simple matter to seize one of their soldiers, learn their organization, and teach you the first spells that you will use on my behalf. From there, we will marshal your townsfolk and begin the task of dismantling these ‘Harmonious Ones’.”

You reach down, tilting Branwen’s chin up to stare into her eyes. She shivers, but you can feel her oath pulsing between you, holding her in place. “And the first soldier will be your slave,” you whisper. “Who has harmed you, Branwen? Who has disgraced you? What would-be oppressor do you want to see crawling at your feet, begging to serve you?”

Branwen’s eyes close at the thought, and a flush crosses her face. “I...”

“Don’t tell me,” you tease, hands running over her, feeling her chest rise and fall as she imagines the scene. “Show me. Take me to the Harmonious Ones, and consider your vengeance.”

You leave the cave with Branwen at your side, clad in dark cloaks formed from the dust. The fort is strangely close; it takes only an hour to reach an outcropping looking down on it, a walled complex with a few dozen inhabitants.

You weave a shroud of invisibility as Branwen studies the soldiers. “Her,” she finally whispers, The soldier she points to is tall and fit, with dark skin and short

hair whose bangs almost cover her eyes, wearing a sort of segmented plate armor that is unfamiliar to you. “She beat my father when he would not yield.”

“Good,” you say. “We will follow her, and take her when she is alone.”

Branwen gives you an adoring smile. Then she sees something, and her breath catches in her throat. “Wait.” She looks past the guard, pointing to someone else. This woman is taller, with dark green hair cascading down her back and sun-kissed skin, wearing shimmering golden robes. “That’s Magistrate Hanya. She is the leader of this outpost. I didn’t think she would be here. If we take her, we’ll have everything! Could we, master?”

You give Branwen a stern look. “Impatience unmakes even the greatest witch,” you say. “A soldier will be searched for. A magistrate will lead the Harmonious Ones to call for backup, flooding this land with enemies. We will take the soldier.”

For a moment, Branwen looks like she wants to protest, but the glint in your eye convinces her that you are not to be swayed. She nods quickly, bowing her head. “Yes, Master,” she murmurs.

“One day,” you promise her, “Magistrate Hanya will beg at your feet. But for now, watch. And learn.”

You lead her to the edge of the camp, where the dark-skinned soldier is polishing her sword. It is the work of a moment to extend your veil over her. She doesn’t notice you at first, but as she catches you out of the corner of her vision, her eyes widen and she opens her mouth to yell out a warning.

You whisper a command to her armor. It is perfect for this. Each segment of the metal stretches and twists, bonds unravelling and twisting into long wires. The fabric underneath explodes upwards, wrapping around the soldier’s mouth and muffling her as her shout turns into a scream. She stands, trying to raise her sword, but with a second gesture the metal twists and extends, the hilt twisting upwards and wrapping around the base of her breasts as the blade unspools like thread towards you.

Within moments, it is done. The soldier whimpers, struggling against her newfound restraints. Under her armor she is lithe and muscled, covered in small battle-scars. Metal wraps around her naked flesh, pinning her arms to her sides and creating a collar that forces her to raise her head. A black bag covers her head,

depriving her of light and sound and leaving her terrified protests barely audible, and a long leash leads from her quivering breasts into your apprentice's hand.

And all while her fellow soldiers continue their work mere feet away from her, unaware of their companion's fate.