

**Release that Witch...
and Wizard?!**

Disclaimer: All characters here are at least 18. Hogwarts starts later, so by the time Harry arrives, he's 19. Cheng Yen (陈嫣) was in her mid-20s before waking up in the 21-year-old body of Garcia Wimbledon. Witches gain their first awakening upon adulthood, at 18 years of age.

Story Starts

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**Prologue Chapter 0 -
Awakening in Border Town
as the Fourth Princess**

Cheng Yen felt as if someone was calling her.

"Your Highness, wake up..."

She turned her head away, but the sound only grew louder. Then came the tug of fingers at her sleeve.

"Your Highness, my Royal Princess!"

Cheng Yen's eyes snapped open. Nothing around her resembled the cramped office she had known—the hum of the air-conditioning unit gone, the glowing screen gone, the desk stacked with blueprints gone, and so too the walls plastered with post-its. Instead, she found herself in a strange place: rows of squat brick houses, a round public square thronged with people, and at its centre, a tall wooden gallows in the shape of a doorframe.

She sat on a raised platform overlooking the square. The chair beneath her was no soft swivel seat, but hard iron. To either side sat people watching her closely. A few young women—dressed like medieval ladies from a film set—were giggling amongst themselves.

'Where on Earth is this? Wasn't I just working through blueprints?' Cheng Yen's mind felt numb, dulled by relentless overtime that had pushed her past her limits. She could remember only the flutter of her faltering heartbeat, the desperate wish to rest her head on the desk for just a moment...

"Your Highness, please announce your verdict soon."

The speaker was the one who had been tugging at her sleeve: an older man in a white robe, perhaps in his fifties or sixties. At first glance, he resembled the sort of grey-bearded sage or wizard she had seen in those western films.

'Am I dreaming?' She licked her dry lips. *'Verdict—what verdict?'*

The answer revealed itself when she followed the crowd's gaze. The people were glaring at the gallows, fists raised, voices hoarse from shouting, hurling angry vitriol and stones.

Cheng Yen's sharp new vision caught every detail. Where once she needed glasses—a consequence of hours on end looking at a screen with minimal lighting—now she saw clearly across fifty metres.

Two wooden pillars rose about four metres from a raised base, a crossbeam lashed with rust-stained rings between them. Through these, twin hemp ropes dangled—each loop cinched tight around a waiting neck.

The prisoners stood hooded, wrists lashed behind them, their bodies covered in nothing but torn, filthy rags.

Slender and frail, the one on the left looked as though the wind itself might break her. Her torn rags exposed brittle ankles and the faint curve of her chest, marking her as female. Though shivering in the bitter wind, she strained to stand tall.

The right-hand prisoner loomed a shoulder taller than the girl, his frame all length and sharp lines. Though his skin was pale, he carried himself with a quiet, wiry strength.

'Exactly what crime did they commit to deserve death before so many jeering voices?' The thought barely formed before memories crashed over her with the answer.

She was a witch—and he, an unprecedented warlock.

Her new memories told her that witches were women who yielded to the Devil's temptation and turned into incarnations of impurity. But the warlock appeared in none of them—she knew of him only through Barov, the Assistant Minister of Finance assigned to aid her.

"Your Highness?" Her Tolkien-esque aide, Barov, urged softly.

Ignoring him, she leaned forward, her chin resting on her fingers, her legs crossed, her elbow braced on her thigh—pretending to think.

The truth settled heavily: she was no longer Cheng Yen, weary draftswoman and fledgling engineer. She was Garcia Wimbledon, Fourth Princess of the Kingdom of Graycastle, lady of the bleak place called Border Town.

She leaned back, fixing Barov with a steady look. He insisted it had been the townsfolk who seized the witch, then, with the help of a noble, used her to bait the warlock, binding him with a God's Stone.

A lord or bishop usually sanctioned such matters—yet here, in Border Town, the final word belonged to her.

The memories or knowledge she had gained from taking over this body didn't really feel learned but rather lived, embedded as though from years of experience. It unsettled her. A dream could never be this detailed.

'So... am I dreaming? Or have I travelled back in time—into the body of Princess Garcia?'

From a weary engineer to a royal princess.

Border Town was barren and bleak, and nowhere in her school history lessons—middle or high—had she seen mention of a "Kingdom of Graycastle."

'Is this some twisted isekai, instead? If so, where's my cheat skill? Where's my overpowered knowledge perk?'

"...!"

A sudden pop, a flash of light across her vision. She bit back a grin—now wasn't the time.

She had to end this travesty. For centuries, people had heaped their fears onto witches—but to watch them die as sport? That was something Cheng Yen could not stomach.

She seized the written order from Barov's hands, tossed it aside, and stretched languidly.

"I'm tired. The judgement shall be postponed to another day. Court is dismissed."

It wasn't recklessness—it was theatre. The princess she had replaced had been capricious, unrestrained, contemptible, and even promiscuous. Garcia Wimbledon wore the role well.

Not that she could rise before the nobles and cry *'release that witch... and wizard!'*—or rather, warlock.

The nobles around her scarcely reacted, though one armoured knight leapt to his feet.

"Your Highness, this is no jest! Witches must be executed at once—or others will try to free them, especially with the appearance of the first warlock in history! If the Church learns of this—"

Carter Lannis, her Chief Knight—broad-shouldered, striking, though marred by that unfortunate chin beard. She almost licked her lips at the sight.

Her frown deepened, voice laced with mockery. "Afraid, are you? A man with arms thicker than most men's torsos, cowering at the thought of a witch storming our prison? We already succeeded in capturing the warlock. Would it not be better to catch a few more?"

Her Chief Knight fell silent. Cheng Yen gestured, summoned her guards, rose and swept from the platform. The nobles bent low in respect—yet their eyes glittered with contempt and lust she could not miss.

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Back at the keep—the castle of Border Town—she ordered her guards to bar the anxious Barov from entry.

Finally, alone, she let her heartbeat settle as she stared at what hovered before her. Ever since she'd thought of cheat skills and overpowered perks, this thing had floated into existence.

Her gaze flicked to her attendant and guards, still present. Rising, she strolled to the bookshelf, fingers skimming along the spines before tugging one free at random.

'Hmm... now am I able to move this?' The screen shifted to the left at once. A grin spread across her face as she opened the book—

"Your Highness." A soft voice cut through her thoughts. Garcia looked up; the guards had withdrawn to their post outside. To her left stood Tyre.

Her attendant sank to her knees, tugging her blouse loose, soft curves spilling free. A sweet smile touched her lips.

"Would you have me see to your usual needs?"

Tyre—Garcia's appointed personal attendant—had entered her service after Wimbledon III discovered his daughter's promiscuity. The scandal had come when Garcia fell pregnant by a male whore—renowned for his magic hands or

magic tongue, depending on who you asked—whom she frequented with Yorica, her old friend from King's City.

Cheng Yen, too, wasn't opposed to relationships with either sex.

Her looks had always drawn notice, near enough to the Chinese ideal, yet her last romance had ended in high school. University offered no respite—men dominated her chosen field, and the steady press of their attention only soured her further.

When she began working, the endless tasks consumed her days, leaving nothing but sleep between shifts. At least the discreet toy she kept at home granted her some measure of relief.

Still, though her body tingled in anticipation and her attendant's look was tempting, she forced it down. There were more important matters at hand.

Typical of the old Garcia, Cheng Yen—no, *Garcia*—reached out, squeezed her attendant's generous chest, and said lightly, "Not now. I'll call for you later."

'Perhaps I'll allow myself a little indulgence... later.'

Her attendant smoothed her clothes, bowed with grace, and withdrew.

Alone again, she let the book fall forgotten to the side. Earlier, it had been a prop, so her guards would not think her mad for staring at empty air. Now, at last, she could study the screen in earnest.

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Leaning back, she concluded her exploration of the screen. Disappointment tugged at her—so much for cheat skills. All she got was this hovering panel, not the flashy powers she'd seen in web novels and manhua.

While interesting, it offered only three things. The first was the locked gacha mechanic, which gave no context. The second was the missions, the foremost reading 'Develop Border Town and become King,' with three choices listed beneath.

Last of all was access to Wikipedia itself and its references. To Cheng Yen, this was the closest thing she could get to a 'cheat skill'—knowledge would help her with developing Border Town and maybe even rising to the throne.

Even here, exiled to this poor corner of the kingdom, she remembered her father's decree. Wimbledon III had proclaimed, "The heirship of this kingdom shall not be based on age, but instead, the capability to govern."

Meritocracy and gender equality might have sounded progressive and even futuristic, but in practice, they fell far short of being fair. Each sibling had been set to a different territory, none of them even close to equal in resources or value. Hers, by far, was the worst.

She asked herself how the test would be assessed—by people, by power, by coin? Her father had offered no measure, only the command to compete. And in such contests, if driven to desperation, assassinations might even be among the options.

Cheng Yen sighed. This was obviously a barbaric age—the reckless killing of witches told her that much. Yet even if she failed to win the heirship, she would remain a blood princess of Graycastle, Lady of a realm for life.

She suppressed her tangled thoughts and walked to the mirror in her study. The woman gazing back had dark grey hair, the royal family's mark—each sibling bearing a different shade. Her waves tumbled to her hips, framing a pale, heart-shaped face marked by aristocratic poise. Her eyes were striking: calm, commanding, a piercing blue that caught light like polished ice, both alluring and dangerous.

Her body was a shock. Where Cheng Yen had been slim, praised by her peers for her neatness, Garcia was bold and curvaceous. Breasts strained against silk, hips flared, legs long and smooth. Cheng Yen grinned despite herself.

'So this is what it feels like to have... curves,' she thought.

"Forget it," she told herself through her reflection, thoughts of how she had ended up in this body still circling. Death by exhaustion wasn't a pleasant thing to dwell on.

'No matter what, I've been given an extra life—I can't complain too much.' She drew a breath. The most crucial mission now was to play her role as the Fourth Princess and keep the secret. Otherwise, they might believe the Devil had possessed the real princess, and she'd be burnt at the stake—or rather, hanged.

"So, most importantly—live well," she whispered to the mirror. "From now on, I am Garcia."

As the declaration left her lips, her gaze settled on the three choices beneath the mission to develop Border Town and become King:

Execute the witch and wizard.

'So here it calls the warlock a wizard... curious.'

Release the witch and wizard.

And lastly—

Recruit the witch and wizard.

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END

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