

**Sabira Stahlberg**

# **The key in the book**



*Lecti* book studio

**A mysterious key is found in a book.  
When Bert steals it,  
he does not know  
that Elsa is following him.  
Together they find a dangerous  
secret,  
which has been hidden  
for hundreds of years.  
Magic and death are waiting for  
them.  
And a forgotten treasure...  
A historical mystery with real  
background.**



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# Anna

‘At that time it was not called witchcraft, but sorcery,’ Elsa tells.

‘Have you heard of Anna at the Cape cottage? Your forefather Sture accused her of casting a spell on Duke John and his wife Maria.’

‘A spell? Do you mean she wanted to kill them?’ Bert stops the car and turns to face Elsa.

‘Yes, to conjure means to kill,’ Elsa says.

‘Sture said that Anna cast a spell so they fell ill. Duke John and his wife Maria both died young. They never had any children together.’

‘What do you mean?’ Bert demands to know.

‘In the verdict of the court it says that Anna was friendly with the Devil,’ Elsa says. She made animals sick and secretly milked the cows of other people. The crops failed in Duke John’s fields... But I believe it was just another bad year.’

‘I cannot believe that Sture talked about the Devil,’ Bert says.

‘He was a good Christian who believed in God.’ ‘Many Christians believed also in the Devil,’ Elsa points out. ‘Sture tried to cure Anna from sorcery using water from a christening ceremony. But it did not help.’

‘I still can’t believe Sture would do that.’  
Bert is stubborn. ‘I have read his letters.  
He was a clever and learned man.’  
‘In a letter from another priest it is written  
that Sture had conflicts with Anna,’ Elsa says.  
‘They had different opinions.  
That letter you have not seen yet.  
I found it among a lot of other papers.’

‘Was Anna burnt at the stake?’ Bert asks.  
‘Her brother tried to gather ten gentlemen,  
who could swear that she was innocent,’  
Elsa explains. ‘But he did not succeed.  
Women at that time were considered to be  
not of age. They had to get the support of men.’  
‘That is nonsense,’ Bert says.  
‘Women did not need to take  
the husband’s family name when they married.’

‘It does not mean they were free.  
Anna was a common woman with  
some knowledge of herbs.  
She came from a small farm in the country  
and she could not read or write,’ Elsa tells.  
‘What did she have to do with the Duke  
and his wife?’ Bert wonders.

‘The Duke’s wife Maria asked her to come,’  
Elsa explains. ‘Maria tried to get pregnant,  
but did not succeed.’  
‘Maria was a good Lutheran Christian,’ Bert says.  
‘Why would she call for a witch?’

‘People believed in all sorts of things,’  
Elsa says. ‘Anna tried to help Maria  
with her herbs, but still there was no child.’  
‘So Maria spoke to her priest about it,  
and he accused Anna,’ Bert murmurs.  
‘Sture the priest had his own interests in mind,’  
Elsa says. ‘He was jealous of Anna.  
Maria preferred to listen to Anna  
and no longer cared for him.’

‘Anna was surely tortured,’ Bert says.  
‘That is what they did back then.’  
‘They tried to drown her, but she floated,’  
Elsa replies. ‘Perhaps she could swim.  
But that gave enough evidence for the court  
to decide that she was a witch.  
Sture wanted her to be burnt at the stake.’  
‘Did they behead her first?’ Bert asks.  
‘No,’ says Elsa. ‘That is why she almost  
managed to take revenge on Sture.’

Bert jumps.  
‘What do you mean?’ he demands.  
‘At the stake Anna took hold of Sture’s coat.  
She pulled him into the fire,’ Elsa explains.  
‘He was badly burnt and bed-ridden for weeks.  
Anna claimed it was not she, but Sture,  
who tried to murder Duke John.’