



**A Witch Shall be Born**

*Robert E. Howard (1906 - 1936)*

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Read by:	Phil Chenevert	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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Written in a few days in the spring of 1934 and published by *Weird Tales* that same year, *A Witch Shall Be Born* by Robert E. Howard tells the story of a witch, Salome, who replaces her twin sister, Queen Taramis of the city-state Khauran, as queen and her resulting conflict with Conan, the captain of the deposed queen’s guard. Themes of paranoia, the good and evil reflected in the duality of the sisters, and the conflict of civilization and barbarism are prominent. There is a strong undertone of Christianity as well. A prophecy by Salome makes clear she is an early incarnation of the Salome of the New Testament. The second chapter, “The Tree of Death”, is noted for the scene of Conan’s crucifixion, a variation of which was included in the 1982 film *Conan the Barbarian* featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan.

**Robert Ervin Howard** (January 22, 1906 – June 11, 1936) was an American pulp fiction author best known for his character Conan the Barbarian and considered the father of the “sword and sorcery” fantasy fiction subgenre. Born and raised in Texas, his father was a country doctor who had a penchant for get-rich-quick schemes. The resulting financial problems led to marital difficulties and frequent moves. His mother, who suffered from tuberculosis his entire life, felt she had married beneath her station. As a child Howard dreamed of becoming an author of adventure fiction and achieved his first success at age 23. His writings were published in a wide selection of magazines, journals, and newspapers in several genres. The main outlet for his stories was the Depression-era pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, which featured Conan the Barbarian, a character whose cultural impact has been compared to that of such icons as Batman, Count Dracula, James Bond, Sherlock Holmes, and Tarzan. Howard remains a popular author, with his best works still continuously in print. His suicide at the age of 30 led to speculation about his mental health: when he learned that his mother had entered a permanent coma, he walked out to his car and shot himself in the head.