



Fairytale of the Lost Town

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Mythology

How sunny and beautiful was the late autumn's day, when a young prince, who went by name Elmar, walked out of his large castle. He mounted his horse early in the morning. He was quiet but resolved. He heard not the words of others, who, trying to bring water to his ardent heart would yell: „Don't go!“, „Sit down“, „Sleep on it“. He heard them not and their words had no effect on him. He did not understand their words either. His horse was as beautiful and as handsome as him. The horse's hair was dark and braided. It casted a shadow over the lightness of the coat. He resembled his owner, who carried the same ratio in the paleness of his skin and darkness that hid inside his locks. He mounted the graceful animal. His blue coat was dropping down elegantly and beautifully. From a modest distance, he waved at his mother and father. Worried looks did not leave his parents' faces. In vain were their complaints and so were their comments. They knew that their son would do anything he was set off to do. Wearing a confident smile on his face, he gave them the final wave.

The leaves had become golden, red and yellow. The sun kissed them tenderly and they all reflected its shine. With sun following behind him, he carried on. The light that came from the sun, bathed all of him and his faithful horse in a golden hue. So magical it looked, that some of the courtiers, watching his shape become smaller in the horizon, were sure that their Prince had become a mystical, celestial being. The sunlight followed him as he rode and very soon he was but a tiny spot in the distance for the courtiers who came to bid farewell. Nothing could the prince hear but his own horse and his soft and confident steps. Excited and enthusiastic only like the youth chasing the dream could be, he stood upright and proud, riding forward. Long time has it been since the idea in his mind was born. He was young when he first heard the tale of a city magnificent but hidden, felt but not seen. Since he was a child, he heard stories about a place, a city, so

beautiful and lovely that every time he heard of it, the image that sprung in his mind grew brighter and stronger. City of Zlateni, so it was called among the people, although, the real name, nobody knew. The old stories told, that, Zlateni was hidden, either under a lake or a sea or a river, or under roots of a large, deep tree. Nobody knew when and how it disappeared. Some claimed that it was because of the potent storm, that once, long time ago, hit the surface. Others said that it happened after a large, enormous enemy army struck it. So many versions of the story were there and everyone clung to their truth. Some people, also spoke of horrors that happened, others of vast beauty, another group spoke of pleasures enjoyed there and another spoke of it as the world of God's grace – the one everyone would feel once they bid farewell to the life as they know it. Many a times, the stories were told to the Prince, just as many times was he told that, it was only a story – fanciful and unreal. And yet, none of it had power enough to silence a prophetic-like voice in his heart, mind and soul. Not once it was that he had dreamed, seen and imagined the place he was told of. He often saw himself walking between its intricate and mighty architecture, and the vast springs, rivers and waters that were in it. He saw the lush greenery of its gardens and he was sure that he had walked around them. „How beautiful, how beautiful they were.“ – he thought. The images and dreams haunted him, and so, the Prince Elmar became consumed with the desire to discover the truth and mystery of it. He spent many days in the library, studying the works of famed and unfamed scholars. He found nothing that would quench the thirst and desire in him. Very few books covered the story, those who did give it pages of their books, did not believe in it, saying that it was a merely metaphoric story of old, those who did, could speak little and recommended not to seek to know that which is better left unknown. Elmar had no fear of unknown and in his soul, he was more certain of the town's existence than he was in his own life. Long he planned his adventure, those around him called him a madman, but he had little care for their scornful words and planned his journey devotedly. „It will be mine“ – he thought, recalling everything that led his journey. The joy of the new beginning, the endless possibility took over his heart as he rode towards his first destination. He has planned where his search will be. He folded a paper in his leather purse. The paper had a list written on it. The list carried names of the places he would visit. Prepared and determined, he was certain of his success.

First on his list was a river that passed by the town. He planned to go to the spot where it was deepest and purest. Once he was there, he had to utter the words, that, according to the book he read, would summon the city to the surface. The day was getting warmer and the warmth of low sun reached his cheeks, eyes and hair. It was an early evening when he came before the river. Sunlight was still touching the place with its last

remaining rays. He was suddenly, too tired and scared to begin what he wished to begin for a time so long. He sat down under a tree, his horse was tied to it. From his purse, he pulled out a piece of bread and meats he had preferred. He thought it sensible to eat before the day became darker and before he sets off on his path. „Who knows when I will have another chance, if the town happens to be under the river.“ – he thought.

He was still sitting there as the evening got darker and the gleam of young moonlight could be seen in the reflection of the river. How beautiful was the bank and the scent aromatic and tense scent of the grass in the early autumn. He breathed in the air deeply and strongly, he closed his eyes, forgetting himself and submitting his senses and soul to the sensual nature around him. The moonlight shone brighter with every moment gone. Its magic and gleam was caught between the overgrown grass, among the trees and among the closed bluebells and harebells. He woke up his horse and came before the river. Coming closer to it, he took a breath from the deepest spot of his lungs and said the words that he remembered and knew so well. It was on his lips for a countless number of times while he was preparing for his journey. He said the words, his eyes were still closed. He was looking for a sign with his ears and nose. An instant passed and nothing came, another instant, then more than an instant, but nothing came. How confused was he! He knew not what he felt in that moment. Was he disappointed, relieved, disheartened or perhaps it was everything. He opened his eyes, looked at his horse, then looked at the moon's reflection in the river. He looked up, demanding answers, but answers did not come. He was disheartened by the failure and a pinch of doubt formed in his heart. He was at the same time, relieved because in the moment he said the words, he caught himself, with some voice distant and quiet praying for failure. He found in that moment, that he was unready for what he came for.

„There is nothing“ – he said with a defeated voice. „There is nothing“ – he said again. He sat down on the grass. His face was between his palms, his lively hair fell around his forehead, touching the corners of his fingers. He took out the list from his pocket. He saw all the names, all the places he was to visit and as he did, the doubt in his heart grew bigger and stronger. „What if all of my journey will be but a rediscovery of feelings I have just had? What if the last to come will give nothing but an intensified blow and force me to return with head bowed and pride destroyed? Mockery and joke for everyone, a material for future myths and tales of a Prince with a fanciful dream? Prince deceived by his own desire and passion?“ He looked back at the river, questioning everything he so dearly kept to his heart. Then another thought came to him. The thought of reputation lost, name lost suddenly seemed not so big of a tragedy. Would he gamble it all? Oh he would! What was his honor, his name, his memory in face of a dream materialized? Under the sound of an autumn's night,

under the smell of fire and hay burnt, he fell asleep, covering his body with a velvet blanket, and his dark thoughts with seductiveness of a dream.

He woke up early the next day. The sun was bright and low, so potent that the spring's sun seemed little and weak. In the morning bliss, the Prince looked at the river. Its shining glitter was on the surface. Everywhere he looked were particles and sparks of enchanting light. On the other side, he saw trees, already orange and yellow and among them, the beautiful red berries, inviting and crushing the branches of the mother tree with its weight. He wanted to cross the river and pluck them. There were no berries on his side and the forest was not as thick as it was closer to the villages and towns. The other side was connected only with a tiny passage and was a modest distance away. He mounted his horse and rode to the other side. He forgot for a moment about his quest and collected a full basket with all sorts of berries. He returned quickly to his initial plan and rode to the next spot he was to search in. He was to go to the sunflower fields, a couple of hours of ride away. He has read, in accounts, that underneath them, there was a passage, a portal, to the lost, secret town. He gave a handful of berries to his companion, mounted him again and rode towards the fields. On his way, he saw villages still asleep, and in some, their larks were already up, walking around and preparing for the day to come. The fog was still heavy on the soil, cobweb already found its place between the leaves of the grass. The birds were already out, greeting the day with their cheerful song. It seemed like a prayer to the Prince. „They are singing Psalms of gratitude, Hymns to beauty, Odes to life. At the same time, in their chirps, there was a drop of melancholy, as if they knew, that those were among the last songs they'll sing here, before some frost and cold forces them to go away. He saw squirrels climbing up the trees, frogs jumping from place to place, dragonflies flying. „Could this legendary city be any prettier and magical than the world he lived in? What if they have similar stories of this world? What if in their stories, there were no birds and glistening rivers?“ – many thoughts were on his mind while he was riding, solitary, far from interruption of other human voices and demands.

He was riding down a hill. Earth seemed boundless to him, and then in the valley between the hills, as if hugged, was a field of sunflowers. Proud and tall, slightly dried up from the sun, but still moving in the direction of their lover and idol that breathes life and death into them.

He stopped for a moment. In front of his eyes spread the golden flowers, above them, the sky was blue and orange. Villages, rivers, forests and his home were behind him. He rose his glance higher – and then he saw the hills covering, touching each other from the distance. Fog and smoke were coming out of the fields.

Squeezing his eyes, in reaction to the Sun's touch, he remembered the last night; the feeling of hope before it and the all-consuming feeling of despair and failure after it. This time, his hopes were smaller and he expected so little. He thought even if once again he faced nothing but the voice inside of him, telling him that it was all in vain. „The blow won't be as strong as the first one.“ – he thought. Lightly and gently, with a slight insecurity, he moved the reins, his legs, his feet and gave the animal a sign. They moved slowly and graciously, downhill to the yellow field, between the slopes under the hills. There was no sound but the sound of his breath and horse. He stopped before the proud and tall flowers and then he walked in. He felt the touches of their leaves and branches on his skin. They caught his hair, a few times he was forced to stop and detangle it. He closed his eyes, said the words and waited. Opening his eyes, he hoped that he was in a new place, but he was not. Once again, the taste of dream betrayed consumed him. And it hurt less but there was less of faith too. He looked around anxiously, for any sign of change. But the sign did not come. He walked out of the fields and sat down. „It was not here“ – came to his mind. He thought of the list of places he was to visit again. Is he going to go through the same feeling over and over again? How could he be the same person at the end of the path that would be nothing but rediscovery of the empty feeling that consumed his soul in that very moment? He did not know. Was he going to become a victim of his own dream, own greed and vanity? Looking at the large, yellow heads of the flowers, he remembered a speech of a priest back in his town. Devoted and dedicated to heavens as the priest was, he told him that big faith leads to one's failure, just like human of no faith is bound to live a limited existence, so is the human of dreams and ambitions bound to see that he had become a slave and that he abandoned everything to serve the dream, only to be betrayed by it. „That is faith without wisdom“ – those words echoed in his mind as if he heard them there, as if flowers were telling him, mocking him and his childish naivety. He looked at the animal by his side. „You are laughing at me as well, don't you? I will not be mad. Laugh! Maybe I should laugh too.“ His hair was restless. „I will not go the town“ – he said to the horse. The animal moved its ears and made a sound. „I will see all the places“ – he took out the wrinkled piece of paper from his pocket. „If I shall be destroyed by a dream, I might as well dream it fully. Until its very end. Then wake up a madman! I perhaps will be so wretched that by then, it won't even matter to me!“ He heard birds in the distance, the sun was mighty and he took out his little knife, decorated with motives of dragons and flying creatures.

The next day he woke up with a chilly feeling in his bones. The blue of the dawn spread accross the fields. The yellow flowers took on a cooler shade. The moon was still up in the skies. Its power was not as mighty as it was

in the night but it still stole his glance. He for a moment, thought, that he uttered a prayer that he was not in control of, yet he knew it was a kind of a prayer. It was not told by his mouth, for his mouth was shut, neither it was told by his thoughts, for his mind was empty, it was said by something else, inside him, uttered by his most intimate and hidden being. Inside of him was a childlike awe and he felt strangely free. He pulled a paper out of his pocket again, and saw a list of locations that he was to go to. Fifteen of them. He realized, looking at its length, that he could not afford to waste time and as soon as his body was fed, he got on his horse and saddled off. He went around the flowers, gazing upon their round heads as the sun reappeared in the East. He rode through fields, gold and brown. They were either harvested or ready for harvest. How little did he know of the world that he was a part of, of people whose patron he was. The dawn was leaving its blue, ascending towards brightness.

By the evening he had reached a lake. The lake was so large that eye could not meet the end of it. It shone orange and red in the Michaelams' sunset. Hills rose, seemingly strangely, in the middle of the plain. The wildflowers were partly dry, partly still in their blossom. He, that time, did not think of the past attempts, the fears and anxieties were none. He gazed upon the lake's surface once again. He saw his own reflection in it. His face looked tired and exhausted. Under his eyes, were leftover of worry and exhaust. He took the water between his palms and washed his weary face. His dry skin soaked in the water quickly. As he moved the water up his arms and elbows he felt the waves in water increase. „What a pleasant breeze“ – he thought. But it grew stronger and he thought it not possible to have them that strong and potent in this calm and steady lake. He moved away from the water instinctively, the animal near him started to move. He looked at the surface of the water and saw how the water started to move. It moved in directions and waves that were not natural. He was so immersed in watching the movement that he had not seen, in its first moments, the space formed, a space leading into depths. He looked at his horse, asking it for clarification or an explanation. „Is this it?“ – came to his mind. But he said no words that he was supposed to say. How? And from where did this appear? He took his friend by the reins. „We shall go“, he said. Animal hesitated and moved, but in the end, resolved to follow the lead. He walked down a stair-like structure, astonished that around him there was no water or moist. The stairs seemed to be neverending. After a long way, they departed on what seemed like a road. The stairs that were behind them disappeared and they were all alone in the depths of the lake. He stopped for a moment. He still hasn't reasoned how and what occurred. He was in the city he looked for, that was clear to him, but how was it that it just came and appeared before him. And how was it that it was real, alive, existing? All his

sorrows, all his disappointments until now suddenly seemed justified, understandable and even enjoyable and pleasurable. Oh indeed, his happiness now would be far less if he did not know that previous feeling to compare it with.

He did not know if he had been lost or whether that was the town he dreamed of, or whether he was lost, trapped or perhaps fallen asleep. He closed his eyes, stopped and moved on. The deeper he went in, the more the place took form. A line of cottages appeared, he could see a few curious faces behind the curtains, looking at him curiously. He made no gesture to them, but some of them saw that he had seen them. He did not know where he was to go. He continued walking on the path. With each step, the town turned prettier. There were vast gardens in the city and beautiful balconies hanging off the buildings. There was a harmonious scent of life spreading all over the city. He was suddenly stopped by what to him looked like an officer. He had a round face and light brown hair. He looked at him carrying mild, serious and yet, affable expression. „I am the officer of this place. You are advised to come with me.“ He was in doubt for a moment, but looking at the young man's clothes and posture, he concluded that he was probably telling the truth.

Without much resistance, he shook his head and walked behind the tall, straight stature that was in front of him. He looked around and saw delightful young hills, charming houses, fenced gardens and people in them. They reached a more inhabited area with buildings, tiny shops and narrow streets. The people recognizing the officer, greeted him. The Prince was relieved upon seeing it. They came before what seemed like the main square. The young man in front of him was often looking behind, making sure that he was followed. Finally, they had reached the main palace and on officer's request, the gate opened. The garden before the palace was wide and spacious, with flowers and plants that he had never seen before. Their colors were so peculiar that he could not find a proper adjective to describe them. Yellow and orange, purple and blue and yet neither of those. The palace was rising above the garden. Its gentle, tulip shaped roofs rose high. The white, golden and beige colors gave the castle a look of paradisiac beauty. „How magnificent“ – thought the Prince, not taking his eyes off the vast beauty that surrounded him. Suddenly, he recalled the memory of how his journey began, of failure and faith lost, and now he was more awake than he could have ever been and he saw before his eyes his own dream and it looked more beautiful, more potent than the one in his head. His horse was still with him, he was still alive and he has found it. When they reached the palace's door, the gate opened, his horse was taken to the stalls and the officer led him in. No word was said between the two of them and for a moment, he would forget that he was being walked to what was the center of the town. He was calm and at peace, confident that he was

not in danger. The palace was beautiful on the inside like it was on the outside. The tall walls were decorated by the golden embroidery. All over it were embroidered roses and on some, he could see verses and poems written. A large chandelier lit up the place. The officer, with a simple hand gesture, gave him a sign to stop. He was now in a tall room, with an ottoman, table and wall of books in it. The highness of it was balanced by the pale row of curtains.

When the door opened, from behind them came a woman, young and of medium high and with a thick hair of dark brown braid. She wore a simple green dress that hung on her shoulders, baring them white and round, and as she came in the middle of the room she gave him a strong glance. „Welcome“ – she said with a light smile on her face. He kneeled lightly, assuming that was appropriate among the nobles here as well and when he put his legs back to a straight position and he looked back at the woman in front of him.

„Thank you for your welcome.“ – he said. „You may sit down“ – she told him calmly. A maid brought in drinks and food. „I am Duchess Evanthia of these realms. You are the Prince of Zlateni, are you not?“

He looked at her visibly aghast. She smiled teasingly as she noticed, proud of her own dominance in the room.

„Yes, I am the Prince of Zlateni.“ – he responded.

„Allow me to ask... How did you know?“

„I have my ways.“ – she said bringing a porcelain cup closer to her lips. She smiled after she put it back on the table and then in an instant her face became serious again. „I have ears and eyes up above. They told me of a young Prince desperately seeking this place and that in his quest he was very persistent. That he believed in it to be his fate. Is it true? Do you believe in fate?“ – she asked.

„I do not know. But I knew I had to find this place.“ – he said placing his lean, long leg on top of the other leg's thigh.

„And when you failed, a few times, did you still believe in this place, despite having more evidence not to?“ – the smile on her face returned.

„Something in me did believe, otherwise I would not have made the next step.“ – he responded.

„And why did you believe?“ – asked the Duchess.

„I do not know.“ – he said unbothered for not knowing the roots of his faith.

She stood up and walked to the bookshelf. There were hundreds of books placed. Touching them lightly with her fingertips, she started speaking.

„My city, this city, stood hidden for many years. It was in place of the lake long before your ancestors made the

town..." – she stopped, took a breath and continued – „We were alone and had no powerful allies. When a large army of looters and thieves was attacking our town, it came under this lake. Hidden.“ – She turned towards him. „We were protected, our survival was ensured but we remained trapped and bound within this space.“ – Now she looked at him directly, he was listening attentively, holding a finger on his cheekbone. „That enemy no longer exists, but we still only live here, with no others knowing us.“ – she stopped again. „We are said... it was said“ – she came a little closer, „that our town can return on the surface only with the help of someone from up there. But for those outside were were but a myth so not one of them came to us. I believed... not believed. I knew, that one day, one of you would come.“ – she sat down. „Will you help us?“ – she asked.

„Help with what?“ – he asked in order to hear it once again.

„Help us come back ... to life, among other humans. It is lonely and ugly here. And you have come.“ – she looked at him. „I am ready to make my town part of your Kingdom. I will be but a vassal if you shall be good to my people... I ask of you, help us“ – her queenly pride was diminishing in her plead and she spoke with a voice of someone was at their execution point and has one last wish to make.

„Am I allowed to take time to think about it?“ – he asked. She was quiet for a short instant.

„Yes, yes, rest. My courtiers shall take you to your room if that is what you wish.“

„Yes, please. I would like to.“ – he said

She called the guards and let them follow him to his room.

The Dutchess retreated into her room. Sitting on her bed, loosening her hair, she turned towards her court lady who was a fidgety and witty young woman. „Have I done the right thing, Ayla?“ – she asked with a worried tremble in her voice. Her handmaiden sat down by her side.

„What else was there to do? The life here... where we are the only people and yet to know that there is an entire world above us. Colorful and lovely. Full of life and opportunity and chance to expand, spread.... You have done right. Life here seems to be perishing, it is only a matter of time before decay and death are its relations.“ – she said combing her mistresses' tresses. She smiled lightheartedly and added: „If it all comes to be good, you will be remembered as no other ruler was. Even if you fail, all will remember your attempt, your faith and your sacrifice for your people.“ – she moved to see her Lady's face.

„Perhaps you are right. Thank you.“ – the Duchess gave her a kiss on her forehead and cheek and the handmaiden went out.

The next day, the Duchess invited everyone, including the young Prince to the breakfast. The chatter was light

and soft, but the Duchess kept looking at the novice at the table. She tried to read off his face a sign of thought or a decision. He was calm and pensive. She heard inside herself a voice that whispered something but she could not clearly translate its whisper into a language. When the morning tea was taken away from the table, the Duchess asked for everyone else but the Prince to leave. She wore her hair down, it reached all the way to her hips and before she even uttered a word, she got up, holding her hands together and playing nervously with her fingers.

„Prince...“ – she began.

„I have made my decision“ – he interrupted her, „I shall help your people“ – he said confidently.

Her face froze for a moment. It was easier than what she thought it would be. She walked around the room for a few moments. Then she turned towards him.

„And what do you want in return?“ – she asked.

„I shall not make your Kingdom a subordinate to mine“ – he stopped, „but I shall not allow a double Crown either.“ Assuming where it would lead, she looked at him with a penetrating gaze.

„I propose our Kingdoms unite.“ – he said crossing his legs and looking at her with a pride on his face.

„And how shall they unite?“ – she asked.

„Through matrimony. United under the Holy Laws.“ – a light smile appeared on his face.

„Are you asking me to marry you?“

„I am offering you the best option for you and your people. And for me and my people. And yes, I am asking you to marry me.“ She looked away and then sat down.

„Are you even fond of me or is it just the politics?“ – she asked.

„The time was little to know if I were fond of you. But there is a beginning of fondness if I must say. It is not political, it is altruistic.“ – he said confidently.

„I will have to think about it. If you do not mind.“ – she said and gave him a sign to leave.

In the evening the same day, the Duchess was once again with her Handmaiden. She told her what the Prince suggested.

„It does not sound so bad, your Grace. He could have been ugly and old.“ – she giggled.

„Oh, Ayla. I am not in mood for jokes.“ – her voice sounded tired.

„Pardon me... But do you like him even a little? And even if you don't, weren't you the one who said she would put herself on fire for her people? This is easier than burning.“ – Ayla had a rarely serious expression on her

face.

„But what if I burn on the inside, forever?“ – she said.

„And wouldn't you burn on the inside forever if you didn't do it? What could you do here? Marry some of the nobles and your children, grandchildren... your people, staying here“ Ayla stopped but quickly continued. „You can read people and you were never wrong about courtiers. What does your heart tell you about the Prince?“ – Ayla looked at her worried eyes. The Duchess looked down, then up.

„He is virtuous and kind.“ – she said.

Ayla caressed the Duchess's cheek. „You see... Is he so bad that you could never love him? As a friend at least? Remember that perhaps he shares your plight. Maybe his people will oppose, maybe his parents wanted him to marry someone else. He also gave your people freedom.“ – Ayla said.

„But he is doing it for his dream, not for my people.“ – the Duchess said.

„You were ready to serve as a vassal to his Kingdom. If he wanted, he would have done it. And he could say the same for you... that you opened the path to here just so he can get your people on the surface and that you can become the ruler they will sing of in the poems.“ – Ayla took the Queen's hand and looked at her.

„You share the dream... And perhaps he understood, that one of you can't have it without the help of the other. All of your people are looking at you, don't let them down.“ Ayla left the room and Duchess looked at the magnificent painting that faced her.

„Indeed“ – she thought, „I cannot get my people out of here without him... And without a proof of my city's existence, he can't go back without being seen as a lunatic.“

Yet despite being so close to doing what many of her ancestors dreamed but never done, she suddenly felt fear. It was fear of the life unknown, nostalgia for when her and her people were the only people in the world and lords of their universe. Resolved to do what had to be done, she went to the bed and fell in a deep, powerful sleep.

The morning came for her, faster than she hoped it would. Ayla and handmaidens came in, they were noticeably tense but they were silent and tried to be jolly. They brought her oils for her face and dresses and brushes for her hair. They looked at her with a compassionate expression, united in their anguish, fear and hope.

She invited him in the very room where she saw the Prince for the first time. Both of them, knew what was to be told, and both of them knew not who was to break the silence. The Duchess made a few steps around the room. „I have decided“ – she said as she stopped moving. „I accept your offer. Today, you shall go, bring your

people, chains, horses and pull us out“ – she spoke quickly.

„Pull you out? Entire city?“ – he looked confused.

„The old books and people say that is the only way. You with your strength from above, us with our chants from below.“

„And how do I know you will not leave me? Let me be embarrassed?“ – he came closer to her.

„You know my ambitions and wishes.“ – she told him, „Perhaps you fear trusting me, but that’s the risk you have to take.“ – she spoke confidently.

„I shall do it, then.“ – he said asking for a retreat and spoke to nobody after.

In the evening, the Duchess’ guard entered his chambers.

„If you are ready, we are“ – they said.

With a move of his head, he gave an answer of approval and they led him out. The Duchess was in the hell, looking at him as he was leaving her place. His horse waited for him in the garden and he rode behind the guards. Once again, he looked at the mighty walls, beautiful gardens and curious faces that looked at them. Arriving at the spot where he first was, the guards, inside themselves, spoke words and the passage opened. The world he knew and lived in whole his life, suddenly shone differently. Everything was just as he left it, yet, at the same time, he felt he saw it with eyes so different that it was not exactly the same. It was sunny and bright. He turned around to look at the lake; it was calm, untelling, not a single sign of the world under it.

„Was it a hallucination?“ – he thought. „Was his mind playing with him? No, no, he knew what he had seen and he knew what he was to do. He galloped through the woods and villages, the warm autumn sun was shining over him. He was to do it, in spite of everyone and everything. When he arrived at his castle, the guards, stablemen looked at him thought that it was a phantom that flew past them. He paid little notice to their glances and mounted off the horse and entered the castle. His parents, King and Queen, stood in shock.

„You are alive.“ – the Queen said. His father smiled happily.

Prince with a gleam in his eyes looked at them. „Alive, and with news.“ – he paused

„What news, son?“ – the King stepped forward.

„The city, the hidden city. I have found it.“ – he said, „And I need people... to pull it out. If you will allow me.“

His parents looked at him suspiciously, then they looked at each other. Without word said to each other, the King spoke: „Are you sure of it?“

„I am. Let me take people and I will prove it. To all of you“ – the confidence and clarity of his voice suggested no

doubt. Knowing that Prince's will, once set, was unchangeable, Queen and King gave each other another look and in a single voice, gave their approval and support.

Prince invited everyone to the main hall – farmers, maidens, soldiers, horsemen.

„My dear courtiers, today, like never before I need your support. Only with your help, I can make our people's long told fairy tale become clarity and reality. I have found the lost city. If you are loyal to me, as you have been to this place since no historian remembers, you will accompany me on this day.“ – The Prince looked more youthful, and at the same time, he was wiser than ever before. He knew that a change inside of him happened. His courtiers looked at him. They were confused, but his fire and ardor, passed on them, and with a hope, wish and will unseen, they agreed to take part in the dream. They ran to storages, picked ropes and chairs, some of them ran to their villages and brought their followers, and all of them, together, armed with the strength of their desires and bodies, rode towards the lake. Golden afternoon gilded their bodies and tolls. They sang songs of past and future and few of them wondered what madness took them.

Under the lake, everything was ready. The Duchess gathered the entire city on its main square. Little sound was heard. Nothing could be heard but the whispering of the prayers and silent chants of the hymns. Fearful of hopes shattered, they did not want to rejoice and hope. Nobody dared to look at anyone else's eyes. Everyone became for himself and refused anyone else in the privacy of their fears. Then, a young woman from the crowd, unable to keep silent, spoke: „Did Prince leave us?“ – everyone looked at her. The isolation that was, suddenly was not. They shared the same fear. Their Duchess said standing before them: „He made a promise. He will not leave us alone.“

„Do not fear. Gods are not so cruel to play with us like this.“ – a male voice from the crowd shouted. The atmosphere improved and soon chatter returned.

„Quiet!“ – the Duchess said. „I hear something.“ – they all went silent. The Duchess recognized the voice and words. „He has come.“ – she said smiling to her people. They all together said the spell to open the portals. Above the lake, the sun was setting and aromatic evening brought calmness. Prince said the spell and in that moment, once again, doubted what he had seen. „What if I will be a fool, in front of everyone?“ Hundreds of people looked at the lake, then at their Prince and enthusiasm left them and their minds were filled with questions and hearts with uncertainty. For a moment, nothing happened, then, he saw, tiny waves appear, this time, many at once. People's faces were filled with amazement. They looked at each other, seeking confirmation that it was not just them who saw it. He was not told much but he knew that he had to give them

ropes and chains, perhaps they would do the rest alone.

„People, pull your tools through the whirlpools and hold onto them tightly. Under the lake they saw countless,, thick ropes, chains with hooks come down. The joy covered their faces and they forgot what they were to do. The Duchess then spoke: „Tie and hook, tie and hook.“ The guards and soldiers placed the large, chained hooks all around the city's foundation, the ropes were tightened around walls and them.

On the surface, they felt the movement from the areas below. Someone said. „There is people there, there is people there.“

„Of course they are!“ – someone shouted back. The side that heard it laughed amid the heavy work. The first drops of sweat appeared, the first torn skin on the palms, blisters and blood. Prince saw it, and fearful of his people losing faith and strength, looked at the group next to him. He gave them a sign to proceed.

A few men went and soon returned with horses. New chains were thrown down and horses pulled them.

Evening soon became darker and full moon shone bright on the lake. The Prince joined the others. In the city, it looked like the effort was fruitless, but hundreds of people, combined started pulling the rope up, hoping that their attempts will help those above. They did not think about whether they had right to hope. Then the first crash was heard, then the second, the walls that held the city, the foundation that held it, were lifted.

„Pull“ – were the screams.

„Pull!“ – said another.

Another group was standing on the side, chanting hymns as if in delirium, not allowing the sound of the cracks to disturb them.

The Duchess looked around and seeing the unshattered faith and strength of her folk, left the surroundings for a short comfort of her mind, then returned.

„It is moving.“ – someone spoke on the surface. „It is moving“ – the same voice shouted again. Then the whole crowd, shouted: „We are moving it. Pull!“

Down in the lake, and old woman spoke.

„Sing the hymns, say or chants and prayers.“ – and she started singing a new hymn, others following her.

„The meadows of our ancestors we shall see,

The world we know, but believes in us not, we shall see,

Home we will return,

At home once again, we shall be.“

They paid no attention to anything else, their bodies were one, the rhythmic movement brought down the differences, names and ages. They forgot they were anything else but the movement and the song. And then, awakened from the dream, they felt a wave of water over them and saw the people on the shore surrounding them. They lifted their heads up and saw the sky and moon as clear as ever. They were still chanting when the other group noticed them. With a relief in their bodies, they freed their painful hands and looked at the small, old looking walled city and its singing people. The Prince looked at it, still finding it hard to believe, remembering the anguish he went through to feel the joy of this moment. The citizens were silent, then their Duchess said. „We are out. We made it.“ They repeated and soon it was impossible to tell whether they were laughing or crying out of joy.

„Let's go, let's go“ – Duchess said and they moved forward. They were touching soil and surface for the first time since their ancestors were hidden. The other group came towards them, still only partly aware of what happened, but very soon, the feeling of common accomplishment filled their hearts and they met, spoke, both having questions for the other.

The Prince approached the Duchess. She was sitting by the shore, looking at her town, on the other side of it. She got up when Prince came. The moon shone bright above her town.

„You did not betray us. Thank you.“ – she said, looking at his bloody hands and sweaty, peasant's clothes.

„And neither did you.“ – he smiled. „Your town looks beautiful on a place it once was. You will be remembered in the books of your people.“ – he said to her looking at the proud town.

„And yours will remember you.“ – she added.

„I do not know what came to be, but I knew your town was not a legend.“ – he said not moving his glance from it.

„And now it will be a living legend.“ – she joined him in looking at the town.

„I know you are tired.“ He stopped, „but tomorrow you and anyone of your courtiers visit me... to speak of our agreement. We shall prepare feasts and music for our brave and strong people after they had rested.“ – he said.

„So it shall be.“ – she responded and after he had seen she did not wish to speak more, he left.

Soon, just like they promised, Duchess and Prince married, their realms were united and their people, remembering their efforts and bloody palms, grew fond of each other. Their children and grandchildren spoke stories, the memory deepened their fraternity and young Prince and Duchess, later, King and Queen, craved in the stones and paintings. Stories of them were so many, some so unbelievable, that centuries after, it was

wondered whether they were real or whether they were but stories of old legends and fairytales.

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