

S l a v a S a r a z h i n



Fairytales for adults in the fourth dimension

A collection of motivational
short stories

Slava Sarazhin

**Fairytales for adults in
the fourth dimension**

«Написано пером»

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It is happening, and your heart is beating inside of your mother's womb. At the same time the inexorable countdown to your end has already begun. Everybody has their own lifespan. Some timepieces are covered with magnificent ornaments of gold, silver and precious stones, and some are simple and unpretentious, but they all bring you closer to your death. The hidden mechanisms of self-destruction tick away inexorably. Every precious drop of your life drips away into the ocean of time. Every drop represents a moment of your life; every drop represents the amount of time you have left, like a poison.

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Slava Sarazhin

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Introduction

To the reader

It is happening, and your heart is beating inside of your mother's womb. At the same time the inexorable countdown to your end has already begun. Everybody has their own lifespan.

Some timepieces are covered with magnificent ornaments of gold, silver and precious stones, and some are simple and unpretentious, but they all bring you closer to your death.

The hidden mechanisms of self-destruction tick away inexorably. Every precious drop of your life drips away into the ocean of time. Every drop represents a moment of your life; every drop represents the amount of time you have left, like a poison.

So, from being a nice cute child, you grow up to become an independent human being. In the beginning, you find everything exciting, but with each passing drop of your precious time you become an adult. This disease relentlessly undermines you. At first, it shows no signs, but then you notice the first wrinkle. The symptoms are relentless. This disease is called old age. This is the only illness that depends on your lifespan in hours, minutes and seconds, and it batters away at you day and night. Every birthday and anniversary brings you closer to the inevitable.

But you feel full of energy, powerful and in control, because in the end you are a human being, and you are responsible for everything around you, and you create it only for yourself.

Listen to your body clock. This is not the sound of your heartbeat. It's a different sound. It's the sound of your personal time bomb. Feel the movement of the cogs and springs, as this perfect mechanism is inside of you, and it defines who you are.

Take some time, and slow down the pace of the rat race. You do not need to be afraid of time. You do not depend on the movement of the cogs and springs, you do not depend on the program of self-destruction. You are your own god, and you can pause the heartbeat of this mechanism inside your body itself. Firstly, slow down the pace of your life, enjoy the miraculous changes in your body, and then throw the broken mechanism away, because you think that you are immortal. You have no control over the metered steps leading you into oblivion. You have no control over when you look in the mirror and no longer recognize the unfamiliar person on the other side.

Try to remember that you are not free from restrictions, especially restrictions on the time that you have left. The date of your death has already been set, you've done it yourself and you move towards it deliberately with a smile on your face, trying not to think about the great void that lies beyond. A natural fear, a fear of death, lives within you. A program created by your ancestors, who died according to plan, makes you follow after them, feeling like you are just like everybody else.

Get out of that mindset! Get out of this system of belief and look back on those who remain in the system. Look them in the eye. They still have that fear that you have stepped over, after throwing away the broken mechanism designed for just one life. The system consisting of the cogs and springs of society which has forged the stereotypes.

Enough. Listen to me, enough is enough. Enough of self deception. You are not a self-destructing time bomb. You are free. Just remember that, and when you do remember, listen... What do you hear? This is the state of total freedom and silence in the void. A feeling that God exists inside of you and for you, out of time and space.

The Atlas holding up the sky...

Spring is a great time! All of nature wakes up, and even the sparrows chirp in different voice. The first grasses, bravely rise up out from the black soil, saturated by the melting snow. I am standing in the midst of all this beauty, deeply breathing in the air. People pass me by, looking at me puzzled after seeing my happy wide smile, happy and a little bewildered by the splendor that I see all around me. They immediately avert their eyes and walk on faster, only because I am standing in the middle of the sidewalk, stopped by a sudden sense of life going on around me.

Suddenly, I pay attention to a man standing there, just like me, with a sheepish smile on his face, taking in the world around us. Our eyes met and we understood each other without saying a word. We smiled at each other.

He was a man of strong physique, you could even say huge. His powerful shoulders were almost bursting through the seams of his lightweight jacket, showing off every movement of his muscles. The man drew a space around him with a sweeping gesture of his hand, as if to ask my confirmation that the long-awaited spring had arrived. I nodded to him in agreement and a smile lit up his dazzling strong face. He came over to me and offered to shake my hand.

"Atlas," he said in a deep bass voice.

Automatically I shook his hand and as soon as I did so I made a hissing noise like a punctured tire. The man's hand felt like it was made from railway tracks.

"Sorry I didn't get that," I said, through the hissing sound, shaking my hand around.

"That's my name," repeated the man, anxiously watching my hand flicking around in front of his nose.

"My apologies!" He said. "I always forget that my grip is overpowering! My name is Atlas."

"My name is Slava," I said, holding out my hand to this athlete, but thinking of the consequences, I immediately withdrew it.

The man laughed, and for a moment it seemed to me that his laughter, resembled something similar to the sound of falling rocks and a summer thunder storm, reflected against the blue spring sky as it echoed over us, covering us with a wave of pure energy.

"You would not happen to have a cigarette?" Asked Atlas, closely watching carefully every person in the river of people flowing past us on both sides.

"Sorry... I don't smoke," I said, and I wanted to add: "And I advise you not to either," but looking at his powerful figure, I remained cowardly silent.

Atlas smiled knowingly and said: "It all depends on how you feel about it! If you inhale the pure mountain air and can still be sure that it is dangerous for your health, believe me, you will not last long."

Atlas laughed thunderously again, and once again I caught the strange effect. His laughter surrounded me, sparkling with bright lightning and melting into space.

"Instead, I'm enjoying every day," continued Atlas. "It has already been several thousand years. Every day is different to the one before. Every day offers hundreds of different opportunities, and I try to take every one of them!"

Noting the change in the expression on my face, Atlas smiled understandingly, and clapped me on the shoulder in a friendly way that left my head buzzing. After that he turned round one hundred and eighty degrees, and confidently strode off down the road.

I couldn't allow myself to miss out on the chance to talk with the real Atlas, because these days I didn't believe in accidental encounters. Having caught up with Atlas, I adjusted to his rapid confident stride, especially as he was heading in the same direction as I was.

"So you are Atlas?" I asked, getting used to the pace of his walk.

"Yes! I am Atlas," he replied nonchalantly. "Like the Atlas of legend, walking the streets every day, enjoying life."

"So, who is holding up the sky?" I asked, straining to remember the image of a huge man holding up the starry sky.

"My brother is doing that job at the moment," said Atlas.

I walked a little behind him, and looked at his un-doubtfully powerful body, but it still didn't look enough for such a massive mission (supporting the vault of heaven with all the satellites, aircraft, space debris, and the clouds).

As if sensing what I thinking Atlas stopped abruptly and turned to me. I nearly bumped into him with my nose.

"Listen, Slava," he said, looking me straight in the eye. "Surely you're thinking that no amount of muscle could hold up the sky? There is not a man on earth strong enough to hold such a weight. Why do you think I told you about the power of persuasion? Atlas holds the vault of heaven on his shoulders because of the power of his belief that he is able to so. And these," he shrugged his huge shoulders, "are an extra help."

He raised his index finger in admonishment, smiled, turned and went on his way.

Taken aback by his ability to read minds, I caught up with Atlas and asked him:

"So you mean to say that even I could do it?"

"Of course," said Atlas. "Do you want to give it a try?" He asked, turning his head and looking at me appreciatively from head to toe.

"No, thank you. I was just asking more out of curiosity. I do not like monotonous work," I said hurriedly.

"I'm the same," said Atlas.

"Once my brother and I were stood under the weight of the heavens, dreaming that the day would come when we would be released from this terrible burden. The time would come when it would be possible to straighten our weary shoulders, take a deep breath, and enjoy eternal life, without cursing it. But my brother and I are different! I told him: "we must not only dream – we must take action!" If the sky was somehow held up before we became involved, then it will stay put without the help of a pair of sweaty men. My brother did not want to listen and he didn't follow his dreams, but I understood. Everything we think, everything we know, what we believe, is not so important. The important thing is what we do."

"When I realized this, I dropped the sky from my shoulders, wiped the salty sweat from my forehead and, for the first time in my life, I smiled. Since then, the smile has never left my face, and I'm happy every day."

"What about your brother? In my opinion, it was not fair to leave him this burden."

"He is OK! Someday he will understand the truth and will throw the heavenly dome from his shoulders."

"And then the end of the world will come," I said confidently.

Atlas stopped abruptly, but I was still moving and needed to quickly take a couple of steps back. He looked thoughtfully at the drifting clouds in the blue sky.

"While you are here, people... mankind, the sky will never fall! Because, even if the clever Atlas supports the sky with the strength of his faith doesn't believe he can get something better from life, then what about you humans! Every time you feel the pressure of life, lack of success and other misfortunes, this is if as nothing compared to the weight of the sky. There have always been people like that! But there are others like me... and you," a second later, Atlas looked me in the eyes and said:

"Enjoy every moment of life and leave the weight of the skies to those who already hold it with pleasure."

Atlas turned and strode off. I didn't go after him, because I understood what he was saying. Each of us – Atlas, and everyone has a choice – to support the sky or live a full life. I straightened my shoulders, and smiling at everyone that I passed by, I strode confidently into the spring.

Endless Prairie

The endless prairie was like an old woman's dream. The sun-scorched grass rustled in the sunlight, and only a lonely tree raised its twisted branches skywards in a futile plea for rain. An old Indian from the Dakota tribe rocked backwards and forwards on the back of a spotted mustang.

The mustang slowly moved its legs, occasionally pulling a clump of dry grass from the baked earth. The hunt had been unsuccessful, and the wounded bison turned out to be tricky, just like the shaman from Dakota's tribe, and perhaps it really was him. It was not without reason that hunting alone was taboo.

But the Dakota knew no fear. His old wigwam was full of holes and the winds blew straight through it, and his son, his father's pride and joy, was growing so fast... He needed a lot of meat and fat. Strapped to his belt, decorated with beads and bouncing against the mustang's sides, were a couple of prairie dogs that he had caught. Not a rich catch for a three-day hunt. The old Indian's body was as sticky as the sultry air. The bison had got away, and he and his old mustang were exhausted.

Then he heard dogs barking ahead of him, and in the flickering hot air, he recognized the outlines of his tribe's pointed wigwams. The mustang pulled back his ears, snorted, shook his mane to fend off the pesky horseflies, and trotted on quickly, expecting a welcome break. The bitter smell of wood smoke, and the leaping barking dogs became mixed with other sounds, creating a unique noise which was pleasing to the ear.

There was the sound of a young child, the neighing of a foal, and the sound of pots hanging over the fire. A woman screamed at an insolent dog that had dragged off a marrow bone. The Dakota shrugged his shoulders. He didn't want anybody to see how depressed he was by his failure. A shaman emerged from his wigwam and stared at the old Indian with his eagle eyes. An easy grin distorted his deeply wrinkled face.

But all the heavy thoughts vanished like dust, as if washed away by the rain on the pelts of a wigwam when the boy ran to greet the Dakota. His braided hair bounced against his shoulders, like the prairie dogs his father had brought back from his hunting trip. Running to the mustang, the boy deftly grasped the outstretched hand and was pulled up onto the horse's back. The old Indian hugged his son tightly, and the mustang carried them to the family wigwam, where a woman was waiting for them. The boy dropped to the ground, took the catch that his father offered and handed it to the woman without saying a word. She disappeared into the dark wigwam, also without saying a word.

"When can I go hunting with you?" Asked the boy, helping his father to remove the threadbare blanket from the mustang.

"You still have a lot to learn, boy," replied the Indian wearily. "The bison have become cautious and cunning as a fox, and there are fewer and fewer of them. Only a skilled hunter can hunt enough meat to survive, and also you need a lot of patience to catch a mustang suitable for hunting for yourself."

"I'm ready," said the boy. "I'll be a good hunter. No, I'll be the best hunter in the prairies. No bison will be able to hide from my spear."

"To become the best hunter in the prairie, you need to know a lot. It is not enough just to be brave and strong. You'll need the wisdom of the ancestors, the magic of the shaman, and the eyes of an eagle. You will need the lightning swiftness of the rattlesnake and the cunning of the coyote. You have to learn a lot of things, my boy."

"What do I need to do for this?" Asked the boy excitedly, crumpling the edge of his jacket.

"We'll go down the path of learning and will take small steps. We will go as slowly as an experienced pathfinder, who studies the tangled trail. Also..." The old Indian's eyes settled on a piece of wool which was being rolled along by the wild wind.

"Also," he repeated confidently, "every time you take a step, every time that you learn something new, every time you achieve something, no matter how small, promise me that you will add to the length of rope that you will begin to weave from this piece of wool!"

He gave his son the piece of wool and the boy stared back at him with a puzzled expression.

"But... but why would I need to do that?" The boy asked with surprise.

"You have to count each victory, each new piece of knowledge, each new piece of wisdom gained. The length of the rope will indicate how successful you are. As the lasso gets longer, your knowledge and experience will continue to grow, and when you weave a new piece into the rope, think about what the new piece of knowledge that you have found means, what you have achieved, and how much wiser you have become. Do not let fear stop you."

"I will do as you have instructed me," the boy said, and turned and went to the women to get his first lesson. To learn how to make a strong rope from a simple ball of wool.

P.S. As time passed, the boy became a young man. He caught his mustang with a strong lasso, made by his own hands, using the wisdom and knowledge he had learned in life. Believe me, the Dakota tribe would never starve, and the women would no longer look longingly at the worn hides of their wigwams while his mustang's hooves shook the dusty soil on the endless prairie. The white feathers of the noble eagle flying over his head were witness to his prowess.

Wrongfully Accused!

"Yet again that filthy bird landed right on my hat, and now I can't see a thing."

"Go away, you worthless thing. How am I supposed to know what to say to a bird?"

"They don't pay any attention to me. Why do these stupid people think that crows are scared of me?"

"They are not only not afraid of me, but they use my head as an airfield!" "Go away, I tell you!"

"How dare those stupid people treat me this way? They stuffed me with straw, dressed me in rags, and even made my eyes from different buttons! How am I supposed to look at the world through different sized buttons? If this crow doesn't get off my hat I still won't be able to see anything! It's still squawking..."

"If that was not enough of an insult, these people planted me on a pole, and guess what? It goes right through my ass! What a life!"

A huge flock of crows, black as pitch, was flying above the corn field. The hoarse croaking of the crows carried far over the green expanse.

The scarecrow stood in the field, impaled on a pole, in a battered old jacket. Eyes made of buttons of different sizes and colors were sewn onto the kindly round face, and an old straw hat sat on its head. Right on the edge of its hat sat a huge old crow cleaning its feathers.

"How dare they do this to me: day and night in any weather I hang in this field, suffering from pouring rain and grueling heat? If there was just some reason behind it, but there isn't!"

"Surely they could find newer clothes for me, and a more comfortable pole!"

"How dare these impudent crows sit down on my head? I am here to scare them away! How dare they peck away at the corn on the cob right in front of me?"

"Just shut up... I am sick of listening to you." The scarecrow heard next to his ear. "Who's there?" The scarecrow screamed in fright.

"Well, you really are a nasty piece of work. I have spent the last half an hour sitting on your head and listening to your accusing monologue!" "Wow! A talking crow!" Whispered the amazed and surprised scarecrow.

"You really are a nasty piece of work," said the crow with a sigh.

"So, are you are saying that it's alright to have a talking scarecrow – this is normal, but instead the most intelligent of birds is supposed to be incapable of speech? Is that what you are saying? Also, please identify what gender you are. I may be a speaking crow, but I'm already tired of referring to you as «it». It's quite annoying!"

"Those disgusting, bad people have stuck me in this field to scare away mutant crows!" The scarecrow yelled in a scared voice.

"Shut up!" There was a deafening croak just above his ear.

"I am a man," he responded, immediately frightened.

"What? Who? Is there a man here?" The crow looked around pretending to be frightened.

"Well, you asked how to address me... So, I'm a man!"

"So from now on I'm supposed to refer to you as "Sir"?" The crow fell into raucous laughter.

"So, why all these sarcastic taunts? Judging by the way you speak, you're an intelligent bird," the scarecrow replied politely. "You can call me the Scarecrow."

"Very nice to meet you. My name is Crow," replied the Crow, flattered.

"So," the crow continued, "instead of blaming everything and everybody, tear yourself off that pole and do something with your life! Stop blaming others – don't waste your time!"

"Easy for you to say. I... I can't even move my fingers, and I have a pole stuck in the... well, you know where!" Said the Scarecrow indignantly.

"Well, if a miracle could happen and your tongue can move around inside your straw head, then you'll be able to lift a finger, and do even more," said the crow, and she took off powerfully from the Scarecrow's straw hat, and soared into the blue sky.

"Well, well!" Muttered the Scarecrow to himself, thoughtfully adjusting the straw hat on his head. "Well, well," he said a moment later in astonishment, as he realized what he had just done.

You all know how the tale continues...

A girl called Dorothy and her dog Toto passed by, on their way to the Emerald City. One day in the future, as we all know, the Scarecrow would become the wise ruler of the Emerald City. That's just how it happened!

A rose fell on Azor's paw

In one most ordinary garden, two roses were growing next to each other on the most ordinary pink rose bush. Just like in a fairy tale, they were most unusual roses. When they were still buds, they wondered about the meaning of life and their own purpose, in honor of which they were preparing to bloom in this world. However... only one of them was thinking about its purpose and the second one was simply prepared to come into the world. So, when the tender buds appeared on the rose bush, the rose bud that was seeking its destiny, asked the second bud:

"Why are we born? What is the sense in all of this? What is our purpose? What am I to do for this world?"

The second bud answered:

"What purpose? What are you talking about? You're just a flower! Relax, drink from the nourishing juices of the soil, open up your petals to the sun, and don't think about anything else! Look around... Look how many buds there are around here and none of them ask themselves such silly questions."

(I have to explain that these unique pink buds, communicated through extrasensory perception, or telepathy, if you wish, as a rose, of course, has no way of speaking, not even in a fairy tale).

However, the first rose bud didn't want to drop the subject. It was searching for its destiny. The idea to simply be born, and then for the rose petals to dry up and fall to the ground, filled it with despair.

The second bud just shook its head in disbelief:

"Don't fill your head with such matters. Accept life for what it is! You have no purpose! What purpose can a flower have?" The second bud laughed telepathically.

But the first bud would not let go. It was looking for an answer. It asked anything that flew by: birds, insects, and even wasted its time on a frivolous conversation with the wind.

Then one day, a butterfly sat down to rest on its unopened bud. Its colorful wings reflected bright colors in the sunlight. "Butterfly, what were you created for?" The bud asked, not expecting an answer.

"For beauty of course, simply for beauty," the butterfly suddenly replied then it fluttered away from the bud.

"For beauty? Of course, I'm here for my beauty!" The bud sighed with relief.

Realizing its destiny, the bud directed all of its efforts to become not only the most beautiful flower on the bush, but in the whole garden.

On a clear summer morning, when the first rays of the sun gently touched the ground, our bud turned into a flower! It was a magnificent flower, with petals of burning scarlet flame above an emerald green cup.

Drops of dew sparkled like diamonds in the velvety petals. Even an old well traveled beetle could not resist but sit down for a moment on a nearby flower (it was our second bud), and brushed away a tear from its eyes with one of its front paws, making sure beforehand that no one saw it.

A couple was strolling in the garden early on one particular morning. The young man, struck by the perfect beauty of the flower, carefully tore it off and gave it to his lover.

The second bud laughed maliciously as the girl fastened the magnificent flower in her hair.

Together, they were even more beautiful. The bright flower shining like fire against the girl's hair, which was as black as a crow's wing! "I have fulfilled my purpose," whispered the flower.

"You have wasted your life," said the second bud.

"What do you think?"

RS. On that day, the young man proposed to his sweetheart, offering her his hand and his heart.

Infinite perfection

At the riverside, an old monk sat and slowly carved a statue of the Buddha. Wooden curls littered the grass beside him. In the branches of the tree under which he sat, taking refuge from the heat, the birds were singing, enjoying the warmth of a summer day. Nearby a small boy, a novice from the monastery, gathered edible herbs and roots. Work progressed slowly, but the bright face of the Buddha was already recognizable in the warm piece of wood, which the old monk held in his rough hands. He sang something to himself, humming softly, so that only the spirits of the river could hear the song that flowed from his mouth.

The grass rustled, and the novice approached the old monk. In his wicker basket he had a poor crop, just enough to cook a lean soup, which should be ready before noon. The boy stared attentively at the steadily moving hands of the old monk. He watched on with a smile on his face, watching the work of a skilled carver, and he could already make out the contours of the future statue. "Your carving knife behaves like it has a life of its own, teacher," he said, watching as the wood shavings fell gently to rest on the grass.

"How skillful your actions are – they are perfect. Your hands do not experience fatigue and your eye does not miss a single crease in our spiritual mentor's robes. Someday I will reach the highest level of skill, and my art will be the equal of yours."

The Monk sighed, stopped working and looked at the bright glare on the surface of the river running by. Here and there large fish burst through the silvery surface, hunting for unwary insects. The Monk held out the almost finished carving and shook his head.

"We will never reach perfection! We are committed to try to achieve it and take the steps needed, but they are endless. Look at the flowers and herbs that you have gathered. They are almost perfect, nothing more, but the nature of things is such that no matter how much we try to improve, there is always room for improvement."

"In our inherent desire to learn and develop, we always want to become something bigger and better. If we yield to this tendency to self-improvement, our life becomes a chain of incessant achievements and satisfaction. The path to perfection is endless. Just like this river."

"But it falls into the great sea," the boy replied, carefully looking at the shiny surface of the river.

"You're right, my boy," said the Monk, patting the boy on the cheek. "Just as my mind and soul and experience will soon join the ocean. Then your time will come, and it will be your turn to enjoy all this priceless knowledge."

He rose with difficulty, and the ghostly spirits of the water in the bay disappeared into the rushes. He went to the riverbank, observing the colored stones rounded by the river with a satisfaction, in a way that only a river could, imbuing them with pattern and meaning. Carefully, he lowered the statue of the Buddha into the water. He gently pushed it away, and the river's current picked up the priceless gift, and carried it away to the vast expanses, toward infinite perfection.

A fly in the ointment... or is it the other way round!

Look around: a gentle breeze makes fabulous fairytale like flowers sway, a gurgling brook fills the air with a crystal clear sound, and the air is full of the scent of honey and meadow grasses. Let's go over to one of the flowers and look inside one of its buds. Who do you see in there?

A fat man with drooping cheeks. His fat little body is colorfully and tightly dressed. His rounded legs are dressed in stockings and soft shoes with curled toes and bells on the ends. A pointed cap sits on his head, and his yellow wings are folded behind him. He lies in the center of the bud with a long straw pushed deep into the heart of the flower, and he is drinking nectar.

Without looking up from his work, he squints at us with narrow eyes, his pointed ears twitching irritably. He waves us away nervously, clearly demanding that we leave immediately and don't interfere with him, which we were happy to do – it was a disgusting spectacle!

Yes, you guessed it: we are in elf country, and this one was not the most pleasant example. If you look closely, you will see men in bright colorful costumes scurrying around in the air like bees, and the ringing of the bells on their shoes was making all the noise, not the murmur of the brook.

In the country of the elves, as in our own world, there is a class system. Some work hard, sweating to collect nectar and fresh dew. They exchange it with the bees in return for honey. Some elves work on strategic plans for the cultivation of new meadows of honey flowers. There are elves that work specifically in trade on a special exchange.

Of course, there are the elite – the most intelligent elves with the brightest minds, who ensure safe conditions for supplies of nectar and honey, which is quite capable of undermining the economy of some foreign elven powers.

So, our story is about them. No, not that fat man, we have just seen in the bud of a beautiful flower. He is nothing to do with the elite; he's just an ignorant lazy man. I'll tell you the story of two of the richest elves in this fabulous fairytale country.

They were masters of their craft, and thousands of ordinary elves worked for them. As I already said, their reserves of nectar and honey exceeded all their possible needs. Every morning these Elves powdered their wings with gold dust, thus indicating that they belonged to the elite. When they fly (of course, they could fly, and if you imagine that they were like balls of fat, you would be mistaken. A daily game of squash kept their magical bodies in good shape, and their wings were bright and strong), and so when they flew, sunbeams shimmered around their wings.

Every economy is vulnerable to ups and downs, and elven country is no exception. There was a terrible drought in this fairytale country, and as the whole economy was dependent on nectar producing flowering plants, the elven country began to experience a brutal economic crisis. Stocks of nectar and honey melted away before their eyes, and in the end our fabulously rich elves were ruined.

For the first time they had no control over their situation, and didn't have a single gram of honey or nectar left, and the workers were scattered in all directions. The bailiff had seized their homes and the nasty man even brushed off the remains of gold powder from their wings to cover their debts. What a horrible situation!

One of the former wealthy elves fell into a terrible depression, and shed his tears day and night, remembering his untold riches. He pitied himself and cursed fate, the drought, and all the other elves into the bargain. He even cut the ringing bells from his shoes so that the cheerful ringing of the bells wouldn't distract him from his dark thoughts. But what did the second character in this fairytale do?

Assessing the situation and looking around, he smiled, happy and relieved. With a groan, he stretched out his small wings and buzzed them, which had become a lot lighter without the gold powder on them, and finally laughed heartily in happiness! The bailiff, who at this very moment

was carrying away the last bag of precious seeds from our character's house, looked at him curiously and asked: "What are you so happy about? I am taking away the last wealth you have left and you have just become a pauper!"

Our fairytale elf replied: "I finally got rid of the last restraints that kept me from chasing my dreams! All my life I wanted to grow sweet grapes and make the best wine in all of fairyland, but my financial commitments to the affairs of the empire did not allow me to quit. So, I am grateful for these events!" Again he laughed merrily, and ringing his bells, he rushed up into the air.

The bailiff followed him with his slanting eyes, and used his magical sight to determine the direction of his flight – just in case. Then following his habit of work, he shrugged his shoulders in disbelief and hobbled of f back to his office, dragging along a bag of precious seeds.

A wise old caterpillar, similar to the one in the fairy tale "Alice in Wonderland" (and maybe even the same one), gurgled muddy water in a hookah, and firing a puff of smoke from its mouth, it uttered: "How you perceive the current situation, how you react to it, then that is what affects the result! Some become happy, and some unhappy in the same situation."

The caterpillar laughed raucously and breathing in another breath of smoke, he went into a coughing fit, spat out some bitter saliva, and accidentally got it on the dirty jacket of the first elf, who was trudging past, shedding bitter tears.

"Yes, random mishaps do not happen by accident," said the wise caterpillar and thoughtfully tucked the mouthpiece of the hookah into its green mouth.

East is east...

Oh, the East! Turkish delight, belly dancing, the heat, melons, Sultans, viziers, beautiful women, and fairy tales like "A Thousand and One Nights"... By the way; today I have another fairy tale ripe for the telling. Perhaps not exactly like those of "A Thousand and One Nights," but very close.

Some time ago, in one the furthest Eastern states, when people travelled through the air using environmentally friendly flying carpets, there lived a beautiful princess. Of course, she wore traditional style trousers, small flat shoes bent upwards at the toes, embroidered with emeralds and cotton made from silver and gold, and whatever else an Oriental princess should have.

Also, she thought very highly of herself. As it says in the fairytale: "Mirror, mirror on the wall, tell me who is the fairest of them all" was nothing compared to her self-esteem.

Her beauty was heralded on the eastern markets, and people prostrated themselves in front of her and groaned, pretending that her beauty had blinded their unworthy eyes. I must tell you that they all performed this quickly and correctly, because the princess was always escorted by her faithful executioner, who carried a huge sword. So everyone agreed with the beauty of the princess unconditionally. Of course, she was bored, because there were no computers, social networking had not yet been invented, and a camel is not a Bentley.

One day, she was walking through the bazaar and observing the citizens with their brightly colored bottoms raised towards the scorching sun. Their faces were buried in the dust, blinded by her beauty, and slightly scared by the executioner's sharp and shiny sword. The Princess stopped in surprise, and the executioner smiled a happy and wide smile.

In the midst of the bottoms, sticking up like watermelons in the fields, a man was standing. The Princess opened her mouth in amazement, and held out her hand to restrain the excited executioner.

The man was a water carrier, and large copper pots were hanging from the short yoke over his mighty shoulders. The water-carrier was handsome, and that was the main reason that convinced the princess to stop the executioner. But what he was doing also interested the princess! He was looking at the sun through smoked glass. The Princess had a similar piece herself from the last eclipse.

She quietly crept up to the water-carrier and asked him: "Hasn't it blinded you?"

""No," the water-carrier replied in a deep rich voice, and it sank deeply into the Princess' heart."

"It's very beautiful!" The man continued, not looking up from what he was doing. "It burns like a torch in the hand of the night watchman on the main wall. Who lit it? What is the meaning of this phenomenon?"

The young man thoughtfully lowered the hand holding the glass and turned to the Princess. His eyes were still teary from looking at the sun, so he didn't recognize her at first, but when the visual signal reached his inquisitive mind, the piece of glass fell from his hand. The pots of water crashed onto the dusty ground, spilling the precious water, and he fell on his knees. However, if you think he was scared of the big fellow with the sword towering behind the princess, then you would be deeply mistaken. The young man was bold, and the princess was really beautiful.

"Give me some water," was all the water-carrier could manage to squeeze out, his eyes fixed on the beautiful face of the princess.

"Oh, I forgot", he came to his senses and eagerly drank from one of his own pots of water. "Oh, beautiful princess," began the water-carrier. "How can I make amends to you?" At the same time the executioner who was stood behind the Princess, drew his hand across his throat in answer to the question.

The Princess was completely confused.

First of all, she wanted to throw herself on to the water-carrier's chest and feel the beat of his brave heart.

Secondly, she realized that by the movement of the bottoms raised up to the skies that no longer resembled watermelons, that the entire square was listening carefully to their conversation.

Thirdly, discipline is discipline, and if she didn't cut the water-carrier's head off then her reputation would be ruined.

Fourthly, in the end, she was a princess and he was only a water-carrier, but his pitch black curly hair shone in the sun.

Since the Princess was a politically trained lady, she was well versed in palace intrigue, and the master classes by the court vizier had done their job. She hid the strange feeling that had arisen somewhere in her heart, to the very tip of her folded shoe, and said: "Because you broke the law, and looked directly at me, you will be killed."

"Oh, yeah..." Screamed the court executioner happily, as it had been a long time since he had any work to do.

"However!"

"Yeah, yeah," a puzzled sound broke from the executioner's lips, which made the raised bottoms in the square change their positions to hear better.

"However," repeated the Princess. "In exchange for your courage, I'll give you a chance." The executioner's mournful howl echoed over the silent square.

"Yes, a chance," the Princess repeated, accustomed to her emotionally disturbed executioner (at the end of the day it was quite stressful work for a man).

"I want a gift," The eyes of the Princess looked around trying to find a solution. "I want," the rays of the sun made her squint, and then she came to her decision. "I want the moon!"

"The moon?" The water-bearer repeated in amazement.

"The moon?" The whole square repeated as one.

"That's it," repeated the Princess. "I want the moon to hang in my bedroom instead of a lamp... Delivery time for the gift is unlimited, but if you do not bring it to me, you can say goodbye to your head."

Baby tears of frustration ran down the executioner's rough face. He was the executioner, but not a fool, and had a degree in medicine and phrenology. Or do you really think that the Princess would keep an idiot in her service just because he had a sharp sword on his shoulder?

He knew how clever the Princess had been to arrive at her decision.

The goal had been set, the term was not restricted, but the punishment prescribed had been put off for an indefinite period.

The Sultan, recently poisoned by her personally, rubbed his hands in excitement, which were sticky with Turkish delight in the groves of paradise, and he was surrounded by houris (heavenly virgins). He had taught her everything she knew; she was one smart girl...

"Oh, and one more thing," added the Princess about to leave. "If you bring me the moon, I will make you my husband." Everyone in the square sighed as one, and the water-carrier fell into a swoon.

"Bitch," The dead Sultan began to laugh, shaking paradise, and frightening the timid houris.

From that day on, the young man's life changed completely. Though he was a water carrier, his mind worked perfectly well. He began looking for a way to give the Princess the moon, and as he concentrated on this task, more and more ideas rushed into his head.

The best of these ideas was to become a student of the court astrologer. After all, who was better acquainted with the stars and the moon that he coveted?

The wise Astrologer, dressed in an embroidered brocade robe, closed his bloodshot eyes. He was accustomed to following the birth of universes which decided the fate of the world, and he listened to the young man's story.

For some time he sat motionless, and the guy was thinking that he had fallen asleep, but finally he said: "You are a happy man. You have a goal, and this is a great purpose in life! Some people can live their entire lives without having a purpose, so they are like a boat without oars or sails in a vast stormy ocean. How will fate deal with it? Whether the boat will sink or make it to the beach, no one can tell!"

"If you want to be happy, set a goal that will be most important to you, which will release your full potential and awaken your intentions."

The astrologer smiled, opened his eyes, looked at the young man and, of course, took him on as a student. These days, very few had sought to become sorcerers, because their heads could leave their shoulders quite quickly, if their predictions from the stars did not please their rulers.

Many years passed by, and the young man matured. The teachings of the old astrologer opened his eyes to the laws of the universe. He learned about the structure of the stars and the connection to the human soul. The poetry of the ancient sages awakened his heart, and he began to look at the world in a different way. He became famous, and he was asked for advice. Women would bring their babies to him for his blessing, and the young would come for a wise word. They were seekers of their destiny.

Now the time had come when he was ready to fulfill the desire of the Princess.

A terrible commotion arose in the eastern states, as everyone knew about our character's great knowledge. Everyone prepared for that magnificent silver moon, the patron of lovers, blessed wanderer in the night sky, to leave the vault of heaven forever, and shine only for the Princess, who by this time had become sole ruler.

At full moon, when the moon shone on a round velvet sky embroidered with myriads of stars, our character came from the tower. No one slept; it seemed as if all the people of the earth came out of their houses to see how the moon would be removed from the firmament. The Princess was also there, surrounded by a large retinue, and her executioner who had now grown old. The Sultan, watched on with interest from heaven, surrounded by his houris, waiting for a miracle. Even the ancient genies, invisible to the ordinary eye, sat on the tops of the minarets to watch the interesting event.

Our character left the astrologer's tower wearing an ordinary old robe. Hanging from a short yoke, and swaying to the beat of his steps, were two copper pots. He slowly walked to the Princess. His eyes, filled with wisdom and knowledge, shone like the stars, whose secrets he had learned.

Approaching her, he said: "I'll fulfill your wish. I will give you the moon." A deep silence flowed across the earth. It seemed that even the breeze ceased to move, hiding itself, waited for what would happen next. The whole world came to a standstill!

Without taking his eyes off the Princess, the sage took a simple copper bucket, and took a copper ladle from his belt. He filled it from one of the pots of water, and began pouring the fresh water into the bucket.

He handed the bucket to the Princess: "I give you the moon...", said the wise man quietly.

The Princess took the bucket with both hands and saw that on the transparent surface of the purest water from the icy mountain peaks, the moon shone in all its splendor. The bucket slightly trembled in the hands of the Princess, and the heavenly body showed up dimpled, like light clouds in the summer moonlight.

Nobody heard the laughing and leaping of the evil genies on the tops of the minarets, who were clutching at their ghostly stomachs, watching our sage, who under the creaking sound of the yoke on his shoulders, melted into the night.

In the Eastern markets there is still a legend of a wise water-carrier, who, along with life giving water, brought wisdom, giving him true immortality.

Release the fly...

A big black fly struggled on the window, trying in vain to overcome its invisible barrier and, in spite of everything, with a persistence worthy of respect; it battered its head against the glass.

"Yes, a concussion is guaranteed," the man wearing the tight but expensive suit thought to himself, but without much interest.

Two things occupied his mind:

Firstly, to help finish the fly's suffering, and send it off to another world.

Secondly, to complete the strategic planning for the next six months for the company.

Both the first and the second options were boring and uninteresting, but the thought of the fly was more fun.

He stared blankly at the computer monitor, which was showing line after line of boring figures. In his brain, which was accustomed to providing blinding strategies, correct and sharp as the stab from a sword, three active thoughts were spinning around:

Firstly, what to use to kill the fly?

Secondly, he needed to go to the restroom.

Thirdly, a cup of coffee would be nice.

His wandering gaze stopped on a glass snow globe, which was stood on his large desk, indicating his rank in the company. You know what we are talking about: it's a ball of glass, and inside there is a wooden house and a tree covered in snow. If you shake the globe, it will begin to snow again (wouldn't it be interesting to know what sort of liquid was inside it?).

The man in the expensive but tight fitting suit slightly loosened the knot of his tie and reached for the ball.

"I should have thrown this out a long time ago," he thought to himself. "Colleagues at business meetings used to look at it with curiosity, probably whispering behind my back. Each to their own."

The man shook the globe, turned it over, and a blizzard of fake snowflakes whirled around the tiny house with its miniature windows, through which the man dreamed that he could see some movement. He brought the globe up to his eyes, and through the window frame he could clearly make out someone's silhouette. "What the...?"

The buzz coming from the fly became more annoying. It literally filled all the space around, and then suddenly everything became blurred somehow, like an unsuccessful snapshot taken while still moving...

"Are you completely out of your mind? Can you hear me? I am asking you, what are you doing?"

A freckled faced boy with red-hair appeared before the man's eyes. He shook his shoulders. The man himself felt like he was sitting on a hard wooden floor. It was bitterly cold, and puffs of cold vapor escaped from the boy's mouth.

Making sure that the man could see him, the boy repeated: "You should have warned me beforehand if you had the itch to shake this thing! I smacked my head, and the room was left freezing cold!"

"Who are you?" Was all the man managed to squeeze out, pulling up the collar on his expensive suit.

"What do you mean who am I? I'm your inner child, that's who!" The redheaded boy replied, hugging himself, as he stuck his red hands under his armpits.

"Who are you?" Asked the man again.

"Your inner child! You created me yourself so don't give me any crap. The idea has been growing in your head for years!"

"Am I dreaming?" The man asked, pinching himself painfully on the thigh.

"Well, of course you are. How else do you think your fat body managed to squeeze inside this tiny house?"

The boy laughed loudly, his mouth was wide open and he clutched at his stomach.

The man looked around the walls of the wooden cabin. Everywhere, literally everywhere, paintings were hung on the walls. He had already seen them somewhere before, and he tried to remember where...

Ah, yes, they were his paintings, the ones he drew as a child! Here was one of his favorite dog chasing a brightly colored ball. "That's my mother with a bouquet of roses, presented to her on Mother's Day..."

"So these are all my paintings," said the man quietly, standing up and looking at the walls. "Here is one of the whole family, with the sun high above us, and we were all smiles. What wonderful pictures." The man people remembered an old professor who had taught him to paint as a little boy.

"Your son has a natural talent," the professor told his parents on numerous occasions. "He will become a great man and bring a lot of joy to many people."

"This won't make him any money," they answered. "What kind of work is that? An artist! That's just ridiculous!"

So the boy was no longer allowed to go to the old professor, who believed in his dream.

But the boy had a big, beaming, watercolor dream. He wanted to be an artist! Not just a painter, but the best of the best, so that his paintings would live a life of their own, so that the people who saw them could understand how an artist feels when he creates a masterpiece.

"You had a dream!" Murmured the boy, standing behind the man.

"But the money..."

"You must still have a dream!" Said the boy. "Otherwise I would have died in your heart, and yet I live! This is your life," said the boy pointing at a series of pictures.

The man came closer to the wall and he could see his life in the form of a slideshow. He finished school with honors. He entered university to study economics. He achieved great success, and Internships in the UK. He achieved his first position of great responsibility, and after that he climbed the career ladder. On another picture, a simple pencil drawing, he saw himself sat in a puffy chair, with nothing showing in his eyes, holding a glass snow globe. There was a black spot on the window pane behind him... It was the fly.

"Do not let anyone discourage you from your dreams!" Whispered the boy. "I'm still alive, but my strength is running out!"

"You will be discouraged. They will tell you that you're crazy and it's impossible. There will be those who will laugh at you, trying to make you change your mind! They will try to make you just like everyone else! Don't you dare listen to them! Your dream – this is your real life!"

The man covered his face with his hands... and was awakened by the noise of the glass snow globe falling to the floor.

Baffled, he looked around. His cozy office, the summer heat, his over tight neck tie... All he could feel was the cold in his heart. The cold from the abandoned wooden lodge and the cold from his unfulfilled dreams.

The man looked at the broken snow globe at his feet. A viscous puddle shining with fake snow pooled around his expensive shoes.

The man stood up, slowly loosened his tie and walked to the door, then paused for a moment. He came back in, went over to the window and opened it wide, letting out artificially conditioned air, and the fly into the bargain. Then he walked confidently out of the office.

"I'm not acquainted with that person. Who is he? Maybe it's you or me, or someone else? Did the man become an artist – I don't know. I know one thing for certain, there are fresh flowers all year round on the lonely grave of an old professor who believed in his dream."

Above yourself

A sharp jolt and the well trained body flew up in the air. Elastic muscles contracting, releasing all the power that they were capable of. A jump executed with perfect technique, as a result of hard and persistent training.

The pole moves in slow motion, the athlete's back curves into an arc and floats over the bar. The pole falls slowly to one side. There is a pressure in the air.

Adrenaline is buzzing in the blood. Only one thought – just to win. To win is to survive. Overhead, there is a bird high up in the sky. Every beat of each wing is visible.

The athlete's body clears the bar, remembering the force of gravity, he begins to fall slowly down to the soft mat. There it is! A new World record!

When this thought flashed into the athlete's mind, everything began to move faster. He landed, immediately springing to his feet, he raised his arms above his head in a gesture of victory, clenching his fists in the air.

Thousands of enthusiastic screams exploded from the stands. Tears rolled down the athlete's face. They were tears of joy, tears of victory and the realization of a dream.

Next came the bright glare of cameras flashing. His ecstatic face, wet with tears, was on the front page of all the sports publications. Sensational! A World record! The new height had seemed previously unattainable to human beings, but he had managed to make it happen.

Since childhood, he had prepared himself to break the record. He had trained morning and evening. Endless kilometers of road trips with the team to all corners of the globe. How many years? He had done the impossible. Only the birds flew higher than him. Congratulations, interviews, his hand tired from signing autographs.

Finally, he was back home. Autumn forest, golden leaves, grass turning yellow... no sounds around. Only the sound of the wind between the trunks of the sleepy birch trees. The athlete looked at the gloomy autumn sky. A lonely bird left behind by its flock was flying south to warmer climes.

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