

AT THE TIP OF THE CASTLE TOWER

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What you see – exists.

What exists – you recognize.

What you recognize – you name.

*What has a name – had been seen
by the first-one – who ever was.*

That one being in all eternity – Svetovid!

Sve-to-vid /All-this (world/space)-seer/

*Supreme god Svetovid dreamed in the eternity. When he opened his eyes
the stars flew out and with them everything that exists, the whole Uni-
verse, too.*

He reached out his hand and grabbed a wooden pillar. All the construction below him was dangerously shaking in the rhythm of his climbing. He has climbed the trees many times. But this was different, more unpleasant and unnatural.

“Do not look down! Absolutely do not look down!” he said to himself. He climbed almost with his eyes closed and held his chin up in hope that his curiosity would not beat him and he would look down. With bare feet he clung on to the thin beams, which were built for support. Finally, he stepped on a narrow board, on the last one, which was on top of the scaffolding. Sitting on it he could reach the sphere at the tip of the castle tower.

From the bottom of his heart he hated the master, who had sent him up here. His stomach was growling and his fear of falling fogged his mind.

“You will eat when you come down! In that way you are less heavy and you will climb to the top faster,” had said the master mockingly when he had complained about his hunger. Then, suddenly, the master had hit the back of his neck with a flat hand and his eyes had blurred for a moment.

“Come on! Let's go!” the master had commanded sharply. There had been no other choice, but to obey. At first it was hard, and then it was easier. He just wasn't allowed to look down into the depth. So now he was on the top.

He sat on a narrow board. A brush with metal bristles was dangling on a leash attached to his belt. He jammed an old tanned deer skin instead of a cloth into his pants. He grabbed the brush and began to scrub the rust and bird droppings from the metal ball.

The spire, onto which the ball was attached, was constantly slightly swinging under its movement. While he was rubbing he was thinking about the ball, about himself and about the wizards' tower, about the cursed and damned tower.

So it was rumored! This further increased his fear.

“Do not look down,” he said to himself and soon the words were echoing in his head and in the rhythm of his hands. He forgot that he was hanging over the castle rooftops, and that he would surely burst into thousands pieces if he fell on a paved stone pathway, far away ... there somewhere ... on the bottom. He almost fainted due to his hunger. Therefore he stopped for a while, put down the brush and tied himself with the rope, which dangled from the middle of the central pillar.

He encouraged himself and looked down. People were like ants and trees were like shrubs. He thought how funny it is that everything becomes so small. That put him in a good mood and he suppressed the growling in his stomach.

He began rubbing the sphere with even bigger force. He was rubbing the sphere almost angrily and in his mind he denied that there would be anything magical in it or on the tip or on the wizards' tower. Wizard or not, to him this was not important. At the end he was rubbing the sphere mechanically. He was angered by the rivets, since the iron wire brush was sticking to their edges. They were necessary because they were holding together the curved panels from which the ball was made. From below the tower the sphere seemed smooth. But from up close it looked like a ridiculous pile with rusty edges and with countless rivets. After some rubbing, the ball's panels started gleaming like a brass and the sphere suddenly moved. He stopped and leaned forward to better see what was happening.

“Look, look, Jacky! The sphere can be opened! ... What is in it?” he muttered in his chin. One panel was lying on the second panel below and the edge looked like a small rail. He tried to put a finger into the opening so he could push the plates apart. It was not possible because of the rust in a little channel.

He grabbed the brush. He rubbed frantically, trying to free the panel from the rust. Finally he scrubbed all of the remaining rust and the panel slid to the side by itself. The sphere was hollow. However, he couldn't see the interior well, as he sat sideways to the opening. He put his hand into the darkness with caution and fear. He trembled and worried that something might grab his forefinger. He was on the wizards' tower and who knows what could be hidden in this ... hollow sphere. Maybe ... something vicious.

He couldn't imagine what it could be. But that "nothingness" was scary. His hand was trembling, but nevertheless he pushed it deeper and deeper into the dark interior. He felt a shelf on which a kind of square object had been laid. It seemed that it was wrapped in a rough cloth. He tried to find the edges and corners of the object with his fingers. He tried to lift it, but it was pretty difficult. With an outstretched hand he didn't have enough strength to pick it up.

Maybe it was ... a box or ... a book. Huh, he didn't know much about books. He saw them before, but he has never read them, since he couldn't read.

Who would teach a serfs' son how to read? Even the young mister in the castle did not know how to read. How would than he reach that knowledge? Those black ants on the pages of the book incited his interest, but who could teach him anything about reading. Plowing and sowing, yes, maybe. Or chopping the trees, digging ditches along the road and alike. But reading ... hey?!

Now he was old and big enough to climb the wizards' castle tower and scrap the rust and bird droppings with the brush. Since he was slim and handy, he was useful for such life-threatening task.

Carefully he looked down if anyone was watching. But people below didn't care what he was doing up here. If he only rubbed the metal ball well and gave it a shiny gloss they would be satisfied. He thought about pulling the object from the inside of the sphere. But

he changed his mind. This must be done in the evening, when the night falls, so no one will see.

He sighted. It became clear to him that he will be hungry and rubbing this ball until evening. He must finish the work; otherwise someone else will climb up here and discover that sphere is hollow. Book or whatever it is in the box must be something special. Otherwise, no one would hide it so high in the hollow sphere at the tip of the castle tower. Wizards' tower, hey!

"If this isn't ... a magic book, my name is not Jacky!" he thought. It gave him the creeps to consider that idea.

After that he was rubbing the ball and the spire with a tremendous zeal until the evening.

Upon finishing, the ball was spotlessly clean. He pulled the old reindeer leather cloth from behind his belt and he polished the sphere to a high-gloss, so it shined like gold. His mouth was dry, but some saliva was still there, so he could occasionally spit on the metal and continue rubbing the surface with even more vigor. When the sun went down, the ball caught its last rays and dispersed them over the castle courtyard.

People down there, those funny and tiny ants, stopped in the middle of their work and with loud approval admired the shiny sphere. Jacky laughed to himself with satisfaction. Then he suddenly realized he is very, very hungry. But he waited until the sun disappeared behind the distant hills and light on a ball went out.

He stretched and with a great difficulty pulled the object out of its hideout. He closed the panel. He untied the rope, which was protecting him from falling. The book, now he was almost certain that the object really was a book, was wrapped in a protecting rough canvas. He fastened everything to his body and pulled his torn shirt over it. Through the canvas he felt some unknown feeling, as thousands tiny needles would penetrate his body. Then some strange

heat spread over his body and it was a nice sensation, since the dusky air became colder.

Like a squirrel he slipped down the scaffold and reached the ground. When he touched the courtyard's floor the dense dusk already lied between the castle walls. He looked up and the last ray of sunlight bounced off the sphere and onto the ground in front of his feet. The small round sunny spot shivered on the pavement, slowly slid to the castle wall and then disappeared in a crack between the stones. The crack was just big enough for his finding and he slid the book into it. He didn't think he just does.

He ran into the kitchen, where workers were already feasting on a dinner. Master waved at him and sat at the table next to him.

"You did well, Jacky. Very well. Lords are satisfied!" said the master and shoved a little bowl with cold broth in front of Jacky and another one with half gnawed bones. Jacky looked at the master sadly. He laughed and pulled a tiny copper coin out of his pocket.

"Eat! You're must be starving! And see, I'll give you this one too, if you scrub the spheres on the other three castle towers."

* * * * *

Water under Silentwood was gurgling and thrumming a little all the time. Water snake-ons and dragon-lins were constantly shooting back and forth just below the water surface. There was always enough food under the human dwellings. They were prepared to do anything for food; they even allowed humans to tame them. They were not too happy when the first people settled here in Shallowater. Those impatient ones also occasionally ate some reckless human. Although, apparently people are not too tasty. But eventually they found a way to coexist with the newcomers.

“Ey, if they only knew,” thought wizard Zeomay. He chuckled. *“A little magic and there is peace in the house!”*

He stepped on a terrace, formed from the lower seed-head of the big-swamp-pumpkin. The whole growth-building was swinging like a big pendulum in the afternoon breeze and was slightly whimpering. On his back the wizard was carrying a black bag, which appeared to be alive. From time to time something moved inside of it.

Above the terrace a wooden stem of a great puddle-bushel was climbing. Its open white blossoms smelled sweet and intoxicating. Hundreds of tiny dust-feeders were flying around the blossoms and it seemed like the whole puddle-bushel hummed in a rhythm, which lulled the senses. It was rocking in the wind and its fat flakes were sticking to each other. When they were released a clapping sound was heard.

Zeomay leaned over the fence and sent a mind-slip into the waters.

“Bluish, my dragon-lin, come here!” wizard said-in-mind. He waited a moment or two and then he sensed the animal long before he actually saw it with his eyes. Bluish returned the thinking-pattern:

“I am coming! Do you have anything tasty for me? I'm so hungry!”

“A whole bag of see-ones is waiting for you!”

“Hey, those are my favorite. I like you Zeomay!”

The wizard nodded with a smile on his face. He knew it was really true.

Water looked like it was boiling and it seemed like many blue snake-shaped bodies would intertwine with each other. It resembled a pile of cooked spaghetti, thick as a human body. Bluish was dragon-lin in his middle lifespan. Well shaped and longer than one hundred human heights. Its light blue scaly skin glittered in the evening sun. Out of this blue pile a long spaghetti-like neck which was thin-

ning towards the head was raising. Its mane consisted of upright semi-translucent scales. A small head had terrible mouth, full of sharp teeth. He was so big that in comparison the human head looked like an apple and it really wasn't difficult to imagine how the first magicians in Shallowater lost their lives.

Bluish allowed Zeomay to smack him twice between his eyes. Then he gently put his snout on the magician's shoulder.

"Where are those see-ones? Are they in that bag on your shoulder?" said-in-mind Bluish.

"You want one?" thought the magician.

"Not only one! A hundred! You do not know how good they are!"

"Alright! Open your mouth!"

Bluish opened his mouth wide and Zeomay, resigned in his faith, ignored the toxic stench coming from the dragon-lin's throat. He placed the bag on the ground and took out the first see-one. Fish-lin was still resisting weakly, but since it had been outside of water for a long time, it could no longer breathe with full gills. It ended in the dragon-lin's snout. The dragon-lin sank his teeth into the see-one and with short head gusts he moved the fish-lin closer to the throat.

"Oh, how good it is!" Bluish said-in-mind, when he pushed the see-one down the throat. The lower part of his body was moving around in circles and the necks scales were shaking.

"Do you have more?"

"Certainly! Here's next!"

Bluish trembled with pleasure and eagerly swallowed the see-ones.

"Now, there are no more!" said-in-mind Zeomay at the end and opened the bag wide. Bluish pushed his snout in it and sniffed the interior.

"Uh, yeah, yeah. It is true. But ... I could eat more of them, but it must be enough for today. I cannot stop eating them. You do not know

how good they are!" thought the dragon-lin very fast. So fast, that Zeomay barely followed. He still had that smile on his face which formed hundreds of wrinkles around the eyes.

Zeomay smacked the animal twice between his eyes again. Dragon-lin sank his head in the shallow water and slid between the roots of the big-swamp-pumpkin. His swimming looked like a satisfaction dance, he was sliding left and right between the roots, which were supporting the growth-building - the dwelling of Zeomay.

"Do not forget to bring me a new bag full of see-ones tomorrow," Bluish said-in-thought.

"Maybe I won't bring the see-ones. Perhaps I will catch another fish-lin."

"Well, yes! It does not matter. But among the fish-lins the see-ones are the best. For me they are always the best."

"I know! I know!" answered Zeomay in his mind.

He turned and wanted to enter the growth-building of the big-swamp-pumpkin when it suddenly hit him. He collapsed to the ground. It seemed as if he would be punched in the face by some giant hand. He shook his head to clear his mind. Slowly the world around him calmed down.

"The Book! Someone had found the Book, the unique one!" he felt rather than thought about it. He opened his long-seeing-eye and now he could see the wizards' tower, the scaffolding around it and a tinny thrall boy who pressed the Book to his body and hid it in his torn shirt. That dirty shirt veiled his long-seeing-look.

He tried to establish a connection with the Book. But an old flax canvas, from which the boy's shirt was made, obscured his look. This alone was odd! The Book was also wrapped in some layers of rude linen, which was enchanted with a tremendous power. The third obstacle was a lock. He couldn't unclench it, despite his effort.

He felt the boy's body heat and that he was carrying the magic Book somewhere ... in depths ... or where? For a moment he saw a paved castle yard and then everything sank into the cold darkness. There was no more human contact with the Book.

"Thrall boy?" he thought when his long-seeing-eye closed. *"Old Whitebeardy was the owner of this Book ... a long time ago! ... Interesting! ... He never told where the Book was ... He rather allowed it to be taken away by White-all-seeing-woman to a swamp and to Van, to the Other side of Eternity ... Ordinary boy? From village? How?"*

He was upset by the thought that the Book has certainly been seen by all who have ever been ordained in the garden of Supreme Accordance, whether they were white seer-mags or black-scholars. He himself was a very proficient seer-mag, maybe the best in Silentwood or even in the whole world. But ... surely someone else had seen that. But who?

Slowly he picked himself up from the ground. He murmured in his beard:

"The Books hasn't been seen for at least a hundred years. It's always the same! One hundred years is a period, when every magic is revealed, any sorcery is broken."

With sliding steps he came to the fence and gazed into Shallowater. He musingly looked at a garlic-tree forest in the distance. He pulled a necklace out of his shirt and weighed an amulet hanging on it. He opened a lid of the amulet and looked at a fine red beryl crystal, which blinked at him slightly. It was his connection with the Book, the one and only. However, there were others who were also connected to the Book. They were wearing the same necklace as he did. He needed to call them to the meeting now.

His inner peace was destroyed. He pushed himself away from the fence and hastily walked through the terraces door.

* * * * *

Jacky looked back once again if anyone was following him. Houses in the village were quiet and calm. White-wing owl hooting in the forest, which just increased his anxiety. A small hut where old Morningman the Eremite lived was dark and silent.

Jacky fixed the bag on his shoulder and stepped to the door. He wanted to knock on the door but they gaped and swung on one hinge. They were tied with a rope, which prevented them from falling to the floor.

“Good evening, dear mister Morningman” Jacky politely greeted when he stepped into the hut. But he was interrupted by a coughing giggle coming from the old man in the corner.

“Dear ... hee-hee-hee ... what krgkr ...,” the crooked figure began saying, but was than chocked by a long, weak cough. When it ceased, the old man said while clearing his throat:

“Yeah, yeah! So it is with me. White-all-seeing-woman is already flirting with me. A little more and I will die. Finally.”

“I would ...”

“My boy, what brings you here?” Jacky failed to reply, because the old man continued:

“Are you not Jacky, the first son of the deceased Sysibin? Who was a smart carpenter? Surely, you must be, because you look like him.”

Jacky was amazed how the old man could see in that darkness. Especially because it was evening and the only light was coming through the door and therefore Jacky was nothing but a shadow in the doorway. The villagers also claimed that the eremite is semi-blind and stupid on top of it. But there were others who swore that he can read and write, in fact, he was once able to do both.

“I want to know something... about the wizard called White-beardy ...” said Jack carefully.

“OUT! Get out, you troublemaker!” old man howled in the next

moment and got up half way. His voice sliced through the air. To Jacky it felt like a real stick would hit him over the shoulder. The old man raised his hand and menaced him.

“I also brought something to eat!” said Jacky shyly and started retreating with his back turned towards the exit. When he reached the door, he turned around and left. The old man called out after him:

“What do you say? To ... eat ... Wait, wait, come back!”

Jacky once again stood in the doorway. The old man lowered his voice:

“Well, well! Sometimes I hear something wrongly ...” Wizard eagerly watched the boy’s bag and quietly asked:

“What have you brought? Something good?”

Jack opened the bag and placed a piece of bread, smoked meat, a piece of cheese and a small flask of red wine on the old, worm-eaten table. He took all of that in secret from the castle kitchen yesterday afternoon, when he finished polishing all the balls on the towers. Before he came here, he ate some too. He still had a wonderful taste of cheese in his mouth. He also made a small sip of wine. Wine was really great. He reached into his trouser pocket to see if the copper coin was still there. Master kept his word this time despite of his proverbial avarice.

The old man slowly glided to the table, sat down and began to eat greedily. However, he still chewed every mouthful well. He opened the flask and sniffed.

“Oh, ho, ho!” he said and immediately took a sip.

“Yeah, yeah! This really invigorates a man!” Then he ate some more and stared at Jacky. He stopped chewing and muttered with a full mouth:

“I think you said something about Whitebeardy? Sit down, my son, until I finish my meal! No one brought me such delights for a

long time.”

Jacky carefully sat on a bench on the other side of the table. He was amazed that this rickety thing didn't collapse under his weight.

“Yesterday I was on the top of the wizards' tower. I had to clean the ball,” said Jack. He became silent because he remembered that he cannot tell the old man about the magic book. Now he became worried that someone might find it in the crack in the wall. Therefore he became restless and move over on the bench which creaked.

“On the tower you have been?” the old man nodded. His thin long hair fell over his forehead and he pushed it away while he was eating. Jacky thought it was strange he still had hair at all.

Jacky didn't know how to proceed. So they sat in silence, the only audible sound was the eremite's smacking and satisfied crunching. Then also the swallowing when the old man leaned the flask filled with wine. It was obvious that he didn't eat so well for a long time.

When he finished, he wiped his mouth with his sleeve and said:
“What did you say you were doing on the tower?”

“I had to clean the ball and the tower tip. It was so rusty, but now it shines. It is made of gold ... “

“It is not the gold,” said the old man and waved with his hand. “It is brass. If I remembered correctly what my father had told me, it was the grandfather of the deceased Russomay - the last castle's blacksmith, who had hammered it. That was when the castle was built. That'll be more than ...” He pondered for a while and counted how many years had passed. When he calculated, he nodded and said:

“Yes, yes, it was about a hundred and fifty years ago. I think!”

Jacky said:

“Right! The castle was now bought by knight Vlaj, the noble

Rosevalley. His highness intends to rebuild it because it is supposedly the most beautiful castle far and wide.” The old man nodded:

“Well, if gentlemen said so, it must be true!”

Jacky grinned and said:

“His highness builds it for his lady, too. She’s is so beautiful!”

“Oh, yeah? Then there’ll be trouble ... Yes, yes,” nodded Morningman and knocked three times with his right hand’s knuckle on the table.

“It’s true! Is it not, my Lesh?” he said. The old man was looking for confirmation from the tree spirit, Lesh, which lives in the table. Worm-eaten tables’ boards were a bit tight for the spirit and it didn’t answer, it just creaked a little. But Morningman understood that nonetheless.

“So you therefore had to climb on the wizards’ tower, right?” said the old man quietly. Jacky nodded.

“There’s talk about ... Whitebeardy, they say that he ...,” began Jacky quietly with fear, because he was afraid that the old man will roar at him again.

“There are a lot of gossips. Mostly nonsenses,” said the old man and waved his hand. “But some rumors are true.”

“Yes, that’s what interests me. Truth!” said Jacky lively and leaned towards the old man. Morningman first look at the flask, but then decided to drink the rest later. He nodded and began to tell:

“In the ancient days, behind nine rivers and nine mountains, beyond the great forest of Darkwood a boy was born, a thrall baby. At that time no one suspected that he will become the largest among the largest which have been ordained in the Garden of Supreme Accordance, out there on the beautiful plains of Heavenly Peace. He was a good, skilful boy, and he wanted to know everything. He learned easily and with his knowledge he quickly defeated all of his friends in any game. It happened that one day Archimay,

the head seer-mag of white magic wizards came to their village. He saw the boy and took him with him to teach him about magic and wizards' science and skills. And it was not long when the pupil surpassed his teacher. However, he didn't stop there. When he acquired all the white magic skills, he went across the plains of Heavenly Peace up to the castle Stonemoss, where dark magic was performed by black-scholars. He was a student of Vala the Dark, the darkest of them all. In the end he learnt everything about magic. He was the first wizard who was seer-mag and black-scholar in one person. He took a trip around the world. They say that there is no place on the world where he wouldn't be. When he returned, he decided to put all the acquired knowledge in The Book, the one and only. "

Morningman paused and stared at Jacky. He sat nervously, but he didn't say anything. To him the conversation went the very uncomfortable way. He swallowed and said:

"Morningman, tell me what happened then," he hoped that his voice didn't tremble too much.

"Well, then ..." said the old man. "Then he came here to the castle Tophill. In that time the castle lord was baron Henry, the noble Downhilly, who offered him shelter and food. Henry built the wizards' tower and Whitebeardy was able to look for the Philosopher stone. Here he supposedly wrote The Book."

"The wizards' tower was built later than the castle, then?"

"Certainly, my Jacky!"

"What happened then?" asked Jacky again.

"Then, then! You ask one and the same," growled the old man. But since Jacky didn't answer he continued:

"Well, then ... Later some greedy wizards arrived. The white and the dark ones believed that Whitebeardy had ... by the way, at that time he already had a long white beard, after which he was ap-

pointed and recognized. So ... he had already written the Book of All Knowledge. Greedy fools wanted to have it at any price. So much flattery, fraud and disputes brought bad luck over the castle. One day plague came, a terrible disease, and drove many souls into the Van, to the Other side of Eternity. Good and evil, but also the innocent ones. Later the plague also struck the village and after that the whole country. Wizard's friend, a lord and a baron called Henry, cursed him in his sorrow and misery. That broke Whitebeardy's heart and he decided to hide the nearly finished Book from the world. Maybe he destroyed it, maybe didn't. That would probably be difficult, since it contains a lot of magic, which is not always easy to break. What do I know? Anything is possible! Otherwise ... those are just rumors, whispers ..."

The old man shut up, thinking and nodding to himself, staring at the wormy table. Jacky didn't dare to say anything more. He was afraid that his quivering voice would betray him. He was frightened of the eremite because he was neither half-blind, hunchbacked or stupid. The more he thought about him the more he believed that Morningman was also a wizard. Maybe even a black-scholar and, like most villagers, he was also afraid of them, since parents used the stories about them to scare the little children. They've told him, he would be eaten by them if he wasn't good. At that moment it seemed to him that he is not good and if Morningman really is a black-scholar he will certainly eat him.

"I ...," he blurted out painfully. "I should ... I've been here for too long. My uncle certainly misses me ... I've been away from home for a long time." The eremite didn't listen to him. He continued with the story, more for his own sake than for Jacky's:

"The Book supposedly exists. But it is also possible that it vanished a long time ago. Whitebeardy was the largest among the largest, a white-seer and a black-scholar at same time. He was a cun-

ning man, also clever, very clever! But ... Jacky, why are you suddenly interested in Whitebeardy?"

"I am not interested ...," said Jacky in confusion and started looking for a way to get out of the rickety hut.

"I am interested in ants," he said then with relief. Morningman looked at him with lack of understanding on his face:

"What ants?"

"Those black things on a parchment. Such as in the books!"

"Do you mean letters?"

"Yes, yes, letters. I would like to know what's in the books. What they say!" Now Jacky got excited and began gesticulating wildly.

"There on the wizards' tower I had time to think. I heard about the mighty wizard who knew everything about everything and wrote a book. I thought to myself how nice it would be if I learned the letters and would be able to read ... that Book." He bit his lip, because he almost said that he had found it.

Eremité was observing him and he opened and closed his gap-toothed mouth. He raised his hand and pointed towards Jacky:

"You want to learn how to read and write? Oh my, why did you, three hundred green gross bears, then come to me?"

Jacky was embarrassed and said carefully:

"Many people in the village think about you as ..." Eremité interrupted him:

"Let them think what they want. I do not care!"

"Yes, exactly!" confirmed Jacky and continued:

"But others say you know how to read and write. So I thought to come here and ..." Now he did not dare to continue.

"And ..." Morningman raised his eyebrows. He noticed that some of his hair strands fell over his face and he smoothed them back with an accustomed hand.

“Mister Morningman, would you teach me ...” Jacky asked carefully.

“Yes?”

“E, hm! ... How to read and write?” he finally blurted out.

Silence appeared, only the rickety hut whimpered slightly when the wind hurled into it. They heard the flies flying over the food remnants on the worm-eaten table. In particular they were attracted to a drop of wine, which slipped from the flask and fell on the table.

Then Morningman sighed deeply and Jacky said:

“If I get a piece of cheese, some bread and meat tomorrow... Would it be possible, then? Can we agree?”

Morningman sighed again and looked at flask greedily. With the swing of arm he had drove the fly away, grabbed the flask and drank the sweet wine to the bottom. When he finished he placed it on a table and said:

“Well ... This might really be possible. When you come here, bring me something to eat.”

“I will, master,” said Jacky cheerfully.

“When you come back again, do not call me master. Call me a teacher! Ok?”

“I will mast ... ehm, teacher!”

* * * * *

Morningman was sitting in his old hut since Jacky left and persistently stared at the worm-eaten table. There were still some crumbs on it. He spit on his finger, picked them up and put them in his mouth. He wiped the slithery finger in his trousers. Then he realized that it was already dark. He reached behind his shirt and pulled out a wonderfully crafted medallion, which hung on a long golden chain. The subject was contrary to everything else in the old hut. He opened the cover and looked at the flashing red beryl crystal. It

seemed to him that the red dot was increasingly growing until it filled his vision.

Now the day, everyone was waiting for, finally arrived. White-beardy's mirda (=wizards soul) returned after hundred years. Morningman was satisfied about his accurate prediction where it will appear again. He claimed that it will appear at the same place where it vanished into Van. Again and again he was surprised who the mirda-carrier in the next life was. This time it was Jacky, the son of the late carpenter Sysibin. If only he could discuss this with White-all-seeing-woman ... But she was relentless. She knew when the lives of humans and wizards and many other species will end, but she was always silent, never said anything.

The only thing needed now was to wait for the Brotherhood of the Red Beryl to gather. He hoped that all are in good shape and on This-side-of-the-world after more than a hundred years. He also hoped that all are still on the side of white magic. Passion, love, faithlessness, lies and truth - you cannot conjure that up, enchant or change with potions. Looking into the humans' soul is easy, into the wizards' mirda almost impossible. Breaking it is possible, but then the wizard loses his mind and all the knowledge he had.

Once The Book doomed the land. Is it really worth everything they did on its behalf? He hoped that it would be different this time. If they properly addressed the matters.

"Maybe I can steal it by means of trickery from Jacky," he thought for a moment. Through the conversation with him he realized that in front of him sat an innocent and ignorant wizard with mirda and not a child with a human soul. He only needed the knowledge and wisdom, which they must give to him. First, the knowledge of reading and writing. Then he must go to the garden of the Supreme Accordance to learn the magic skills.

The evening slowly changed into the night. Morningman was

still sitting, constantly thinking and staring at the flashing beryl crystal. At midnight the wizards' fraternity began to gather. Zeomay arrived first. He appeared in the middle of the old hut.

First, a hissing ball appeared and a figure stepped out of it. But because he was excited he calculated the coordinates wrongly and he burned a part of the worm-eaten table and the bench next to it. The table still stood on its three legs, but the rest of the bench rumbled to the floor. This noise woke Morningman from his trance. He closed the medallion's cover and said calmly:

"You ruined my bench and my table!"

Zeomay was still a little dazed by the trans-location. Therefore he didn't answer immediately. In fact, the voice traveled to his consciousness for a few long moments. Morningman used this to his advantage and said:

"Hello, friend. It's been a long time. I think almost one hundred years have passed."

Those words caught up with the past ones and made a cacophony in Zeomay's head.

"One by one, please!" mind-slipped Zeomay. And immediately after that:

"Oh, I'm sorry. It was unintentional! ... Hello, really! ... You're right, long time ... But not yet hundred years, two or three years are still missing!"

Morningman sent his thoughts back:

"You owe me a table, a worm-eaten one, and a bench!"

"Will I conjure them or will you do it yourself?"

"It was not made by magic! This was a real one, a real table. And the bench, too. You do not know how proud I was of them. They were made by Sysibin, Jacky's deceased father ..."

"Oh, I'm sorry again. It really was not on purpose!"

"I don't know ..." said Morningman out loud.

"I'm sorry, again, really! Now I can't fix it. I have no knowledge and no experience to repair your real table and bench. I am not a carpenter, you know! I can use magic to repair the table, it will look whole. But bench ..." hurried Zeomay, also with voice.

"Oh, leave it. I'll find a way to repair it, somehow," said the eremite. "Where are the others?"

"They will come!" replied Zeomay.

"So ... I will prepare everything," said Morningman and snapped his fingers.

In the next moment the interior of the rickety hut turned into a huge conference hall. In the middle a massive round table stood and twelve comfortable chairs were placed around it. The seats and the back of the chairs were abundantly cushioned. Crystal glasses stood on the table in front of each chair. Behind the glasses some jars full of fragrant, sweet wine were waiting for the guests. A glittering chandelier with hundred candles was hanging from the ceiling.

"Hm, all of it might be too kitschy," said the eremite.

"No, not really!" Zeomay shook his head.

"Well, I leave it then!"

"Yes, leave it!" agreed the guest. Morningman stepped into the corner, where the worm-eaten table stood. When he leaned on it, it creaked.

"Good idea that I had supported the table with some persistence magic. Otherwise the poor thing on three legs would fall apart!" thought Morningman happily.

"I hope that is comfortable enough for you, my Lesh?" The old man knocked on the table three times and in return he received a squeak and a few bored sighs.

"Perfect!" he thought happily.

In the mean time Zeomay sat behind the round table. Morning-

man joined him. When they started talking about the old times the first trans-location shiny balls hissed in the hall. Nine figures disengaged from them and appeared on the chairs, three of them were women. Zeomay nodded with satisfaction, but then his look stopped at an empty seat.

“What’s with Argolan? Anybody knows?” he asked eagerly. No one answered him.

“Hm, hm!” he shook his head and sent a mind-slip:

“Really, no one knows where Argolan is?”

“They said that ...” a mind-slip came from a female figure on the left of Zeomay.

“What did they say, my dear Leonora,” asked Zeomay loudly. “Say it out loud, so everyone can hear!”

“I have heard that he transgressed to the black-scholars’ side. I think that was more than fifty years ago. At that time he dwelled in a cave under Crystal mountain. Then he suddenly vanished. As far I know his cave is buried under the stones. I tried everything do reach him ...” she said while she was brushing her hair with her hand.

“Anyhow, even if he is a black-scholar now ... he is still a member of Brotherhood of the Red Beryl,” said Morningman. Leonora shook her head:

“But he is also a traitor. If he would be here he would reveal everything we’re saying and all our plans to those ... blacks!” she said and pointed somewhere outside the meeting hall.

“Certainly,” growled Zeomay. “We have to settle this somehow. But he is still the owner of the red beryl and therefore we can’t do anything. Unless someone volunteers and go to find him? And then demands the medallion back - the easy way or the hard way! Anyone?”

Silence set in and all the wizards and seers started gazing at the table. They pretended all this did not concern them. Argolan had a

reputation of being a strong opponent.

"Fear is a beautiful thing!" thought Morningman.

"In fact I need two volunteers," Zeomay raised the bit. Morningman nodded:

"I will go! Alone! But I can't go now. A student is waiting for me!"

"It's true! A student really is waiting for him. With the Book! That is more important!" Zeomay agreed strongly.

Now the wizard Yatagan, who sat opposite of Zeomay, stood up.

"If there is another volunteer, I will go! Two of us can take Argolan, if necessary." They all looked to him. Coldane also stood up. She barely spoke and a wart on her nose was shaking wildly.

"If Yatagan is going, I will go too!"

"Oh, well, this is settled, than!" said Zeomay. "Any objections?"

He looked at all of them. They sat quietly as a mouse and it seemed as though they would like to crawl under the table. Zeomay smiled.

"If and when you need help, call me! Argolan is a mighty opponent and we must go against him together. For now it will be enough if you two establish what happened to him and where he is. The rest will be resolved when time comes."

Zeomay's flat hand hit the table and he continued:

"Now, about why we are gathered here."

The gathered around tables nodded and murmured. Here and there, someone dropped the call:

"That's right!"

"You have been called!" said Zeomay when they became silent. "The Book had called you all! After one hundred years, when almost every spell fades away and even the strongest chant wanes off, it is

also the time for reincarnation of Whitebeardy's mirda. It was embodied in a young tinny boy from this village and it waits for us to awaken it. To open the gates of knowledge and wizardry."

Leonora thought his speech was too enraptured and she started making funny faces. Her little black haired neighbor Brandoline couldn't remain serious and she started to giggle. That interrupted Zeomay who looked at her with surprise. She was a little bit sorry about that so she quickly added:

"You said it perfectly! But I think that you also weren't able to peek in the Book. None among us could do that! Isn't it true? Everyone has seen the shirt and it was enchanted. Did you ask yourself where this thrall boy even got such a shirt? Then, that rough canvas in which the Book is wrapped. There is also a magic lock and the covers are probably also enchanted. He was carrying the Book somewhere downwards. Where? In a well? In a cellar under the castle?"

Morningman interrupted her words:

"I have spoken with Jacky!"

"With whom?" asked Brandoline.

"With Jacky! That's the boy's name," said the eremite. "He came to me. Alone. He asked about Whitebeardy. He wants to learn how to read. I wonder why a simple thrall boy without a father would have such an idea. When we talked I realized that mirda from the biggest of us has been embodied in him."

When Zeomay wanted to continue, Morningman interrupted him with a hand motion.

"Oh, one more thing. He didn't take the Book into the castle's basement or into the well. He brought it from wizards' tower of the castle Tophill. The Book was in the sphere at the tip of the tower. Whitebeardy hide it from us there! Up there in the clouds, so that's the reason why we weren't able to find it, we were all looking at the ground!"

Sighs of surprise were heard in the hall.

“How do you know that this is the truth?” asked Yatagan and leaned over the table to hear well.

“Because ... the castle was bought by the new lord and the knight Vlaj, the noble Rosevalley. He also renovated the wizards’ tower. They had sent Jacky up there to rub the spheres and clean the tips. He found the Book in a hollow sphere. When he hid the Book under his shirt and touched it with body you all saw it. Now I am very, very worried who else noticed that!”

“I was thrown on the floor,” said Zeomay. Two or three of them also said the same. Zeomay raised his hand and the gathered became silent.

“Now you know why we are all here. I summoned you in a great hurry to Morningman’s hut.” He turned to the eremite. “Morningam, you’ve met him first. He trusts you! So, you will realize his wish. Teach him how to read. Whitebeardy’s mirda and also all the magical charms, which shield the Book, won’t allow us to read it. We are the greatest white wizards, without a doubt. But also the others, may be the white seers or the black-scholars, will not be able to break the spells. Whitebeardy took great pains so the Book can only be opened by the one who is trustworthy. Maybe that person is Jacky. We still do not know! But only when he will know how to manage the powers and the knowledge ... than maybe he will be able to ...!

“True,” they all nodded and agreed. Zeomay continued:

“Our every spell leaves a trail in the Garden of Supreme Accordance. Since it was so urgent, you all made the immediate translocation and left a lot of trails there. When we trans-locate back we will leave new ones. If we want to stay hidden from our opponents we must use our wizardry very moderately. The next meeting will be here after six full moons, but you must come by foot. As travelers,

beggars, comedians or whatever you will come up with. Just no magic!”

Leonora said wistfully:

“Oh! I haven’t walked for several years. It will be very tough for me.”

“You do not have to walk. Be a lady and drive here with a cart or with a carriage,” Brandoline said to her.

“Oh, yeah! That is a very good idea,” Leonora was delighted. She turned to Zeomay:

“Have we finished the meeting?”

“Not yet!” said Zeomay. He turned to Morningman again:

“Teach him how to write and read. After six moons we will examine what he knows and is able to do. Then, if everything is right, we will take him to the plains of Heavenly Peace in the Garden of Supreme Accordance. There he will learn everything about wizardry, magic and spells, everything that we know. Right?”

“Right, right!” said Morningman. “But I have no idea how to teach him about reading and writing. I have never taught that to anyone.”

“There’s a first for everything,” said Yatagan.

“So we’re done!” said Zeomay and waved his hand. “Let the magic serve you well and you serve it obligingly,” said at the end as a farewell. Above the table a hissing ball appeared and his figure twisted into it. The ball collapsed. One by one they bade farewell and disappeared into their own balls. The last one was Bradoline’s. She sent a loving look to Morningman before she vanished.

When she was gone Morningman snapped his fingers and the shinny meeting hall changed into the dark eremite rackets hut again. He stared thoughtfully into the worm-eaten table, which had three legs now, and the crooked bench in the corner.

“It is good that Jacky has an uncle, who is also a carpenter as was

his father. *I will ask him to repair it,*” he thought absent-mindedly. He sighed.

“Maybe it would be better to search for Argolan with Yatagan.” For him this was far easier than teaching Jacky how to read and write.

“How can I do that, three hundred green gross bears?”

He opened his long-seeing-eye and tried to find the boy. But he only saw a foggy figure without details.

“The Whitebeardys’ mirda is already anchored inside of him!” he figured out. He was worried. They must hurry and introduce him to the white seer-mag as soon as possible.

“If such a gentle bud comes into the hands of the black scholars ...” He couldn’t finish that scary thought. It was too horrifying. Sweat drops appeared on his forehead when the next thought arose. *“The Book will then pass over to the dark side and evil, terrible, unimaginable horror will cover the world.”*

Next thought lifted him up. *“If we teach him how to read and write we can avoid all of that.”*

He realized that a lot of things depend on him alone. He is, as a matter of fact, the key person, a wizard who can change the flow of history.

Suddenly he felt strong and determined. He jumped up and walked out of the creaking hut. He wanted to find a goose and pull out a few of its feathers for a quill pen. He also needed a parchment and an ink and some book for exercise. Well, this he can conjure up. He said loudly:

“Jacky, just wait! I will teach you how to read and write so well ... You will see!”

* * * * *

This is how the young sorcerer's apprentice Jacky, the son of the castle serf, began his life path.

