



FAIRY TALES

for Career Counselors

Volume

II

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

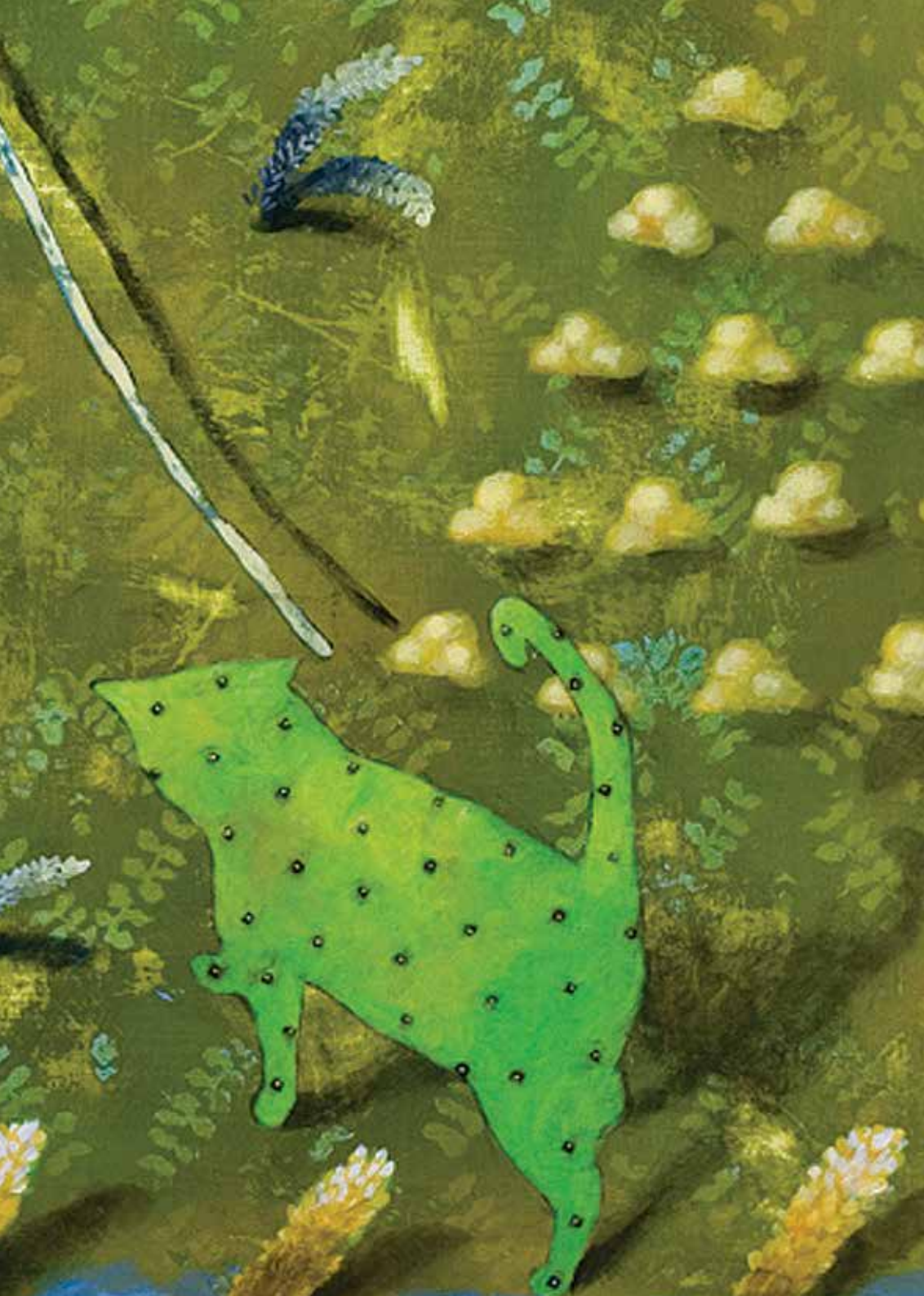
You are holding in your hands the second book of the series “Fairy tales for career counselors”. LaFri’s adventures continue in the second edition. Some of them are inspired by the winners of the National competition for good practices in the career counseling 2013, which was organized by the Human Resource Development Centre (www.hrdc.bg) together with the Business Foundation for Education (www.fbo.bg). Others emerged in the communication with interesting persons – teachers, trainers, interns, and young people whom our team met during the past year.

LaFri is joined in his journey by new travelers who have worked or are still working as part of the Euroguidance team – Bulgaria. They are telling their fairy tales on topics related to finding one’s calling and personal development.

The book is dedicated not only to specialists in career counseling, but also to anyone interested in personal and career development.

Enjoy reading!

Lachezar Afrikanov
Euroguidance – Bulgaria



DIRECTION



Writing helped LaFri rethink everything seen and learned, though it was accompanied by doubts. „All right“, LaFri was telling himself, „I have realized how important it is to know myself and my driving forces, to believe in the path I have chosen and to be open for the experiences which life offers. And now what?“

One year has passed since the great journey with the wise GeRak and NeRa in the lands of the ancient Thracian Rulers. The knowledge and the skills LaFri developed during this exciting adventure, helped him strengthen the faith in himself and rekindled the desire for new discoveries. In order to keep the inspirations from the meetings with different wise masters alive, he depicted all his experiences in a small booklet, which would help young people from his village in their quest for finding answers to the very same questions.

Writing helped LaFri revive his memories of the Flat Lands, where he found self-knowledge and realized the importance of being active in pursuing one's decisions. The images of the elves from the North Wood came to life. There, he mastered the ability to accept the different and to search for good sides in everything and everyone. The Majestic city of Varnas, the capital of the Water Kingdom, helped LaFri realize the power of the written word. The friendly fire in front of the tent, in which he had his magical dreams, did not allow him to forget the importance of teamwork. Last but not least, LaFri recalled the Academy of Sardica, where he was challenged to find his vocation.

Writing helped LaFri reflect on everything seen and learned, though it was accompanied by a doubt. “All right”, LaFri was telling himself, “I have realized how important it is to know myself and my driving forces, to believe in the path I have chosen and to be open for the experiences which life offers. And now what? I am feeling wiser, but also slightly confused. It looks as if all this knowledge, which I have received during my journey with GeRak and NeRa, could not release me from my fears and doubts, but rather put many other new questions...

It is easy to say:

- 1. Take it easy!*
- 2. Life is short!*
- 3. Have fun!*

But how? The world is so busy in its routine that people do not have the time to seek and give answers for achieving inner balance and self-fulfilling existence.

But should I? Isn't it another deception to believe, that there are 3 simple rules, which answer all the questions and help you be in harmony.



But where? If we cannot find the truth here, does it mean that it is time to go further? Take the road to distant lands in search of oneself may be the key for someone, but is it for me? Isn't that just a postponement...?"

There were days when the doubts prevailed and LaFri was not in a mood for writing. One day, a slight thought crossed his mind and he knew he had the answers. His first trip to the land of the Thracians gave him insightful answers. Maybe it was time for another great journey. In what direction? In this moment, LaFri realized that it is time to seek for knowledge from other travelers and



their experiences. He hoped those would guide him to find answers to this question. At first, he turned for help to the Elder of the village. He gave him old manuscripts with inspiring adventure stories beyond the lands of the Water Kingdom. Then, he took time to listen the exciting tales of the older villagers and this is how he came across the ancient legend of Mobiliard.





MOBILIARD'S HAT



The manuscript ended with
the words:
„Only the true seeker
shall find the directions”.

Craftsman Mobiliard was well-known for the colorful hats he created. People from all over the world visited his village to order from the various fascinating models. While waiting for their orders to be crafted, the customers shared their stories with him. Thus he was able to learn about all those wonderful things, which were happening in the world, without leaving his workshop. Gradually a desire for visiting the places he had heard of, emerged in him. But how to set off and leave the workshop and all those people who relied on his work?

One night, craftsman Mobiliard had a magical dream. In the middle of a thick and ancient forest, somewhere in the heart of the Balakan Mountain, fairies from the Order of the Rose, were celebrating the Day of the Spring Moon. The whole forest was dancing under the sound of crickets' orchestra, and the air was full of golden magical dust from the thousands of shimmering crystal wings. Suddenly, one of the fairies called craftsman Mobiliard by name and he found himself among the fairies in the forest. At first, he felt fear not to be enchanted and turned into a flower, but the fairies quickly calmed him down with the words: "Welcome good craftsman! With your talent and inspiration you make people happy, you bring beauty in their lives. Let us make you a present! Tomorrow, when you wake up, go to your workshop and make one of your famous hats. It

is important that you use red silk and instead of regular string when sewing, use rose pollen glue. This hat will be special. When you put it on, you will be able to fly to any place in the world for just a second. Thus, you can make your dream come true – you can travel, but also continue to work for people’s joy.”

The legend says that craftsman Mobiliard made a hat, which was as the one he had a dream of, and could really take him everywhere in the world. The elderly people in the village shared with LaFri that after the craftsman’s death, the hat flew away to the Balakan Mountain ancient forest and only a true traveler could find it.

LaFri assumed that his great journey in search of answers and in resolving his doubts may start with the discovery of the hat.

In the library of the Elder, LaFri found an old manuscript with a map, leading to the Balakan Mountain. From the map and the scripts to it, became clear that there was an ancient gate with three locks, blocking the way to the mountain. The keys were scattered in several directions marked as Earth, Water and Bridge. The manuscript ended with the words: “Only the true seeker shall find the directions”.



BRIDGE



For most of the people
the bridge is only a physical
connection between two shores,
but for a few,
it could turn into a magical
springboard from one state
of soul to another.



Carried away by the thoughts of Mobiliard's hat and the seemingly impossible quest to find all keys, LaFri set out on his journey. He went through the young forest above the village, then rushed down through the meadows, lit by the summer sun, crossed the tiny river, which watered the peasants' fields and with confident pace continued towards the unexplored lands beyond the horizon.

It was almost evening when our traveler reached a small stone bridge. The fatigue from the long journey quickly persuaded LaFri to sleep over, nestled under one of the columns of the bridge. For the first time in many nights LaFri was fast asleep, and in the morning he woke up refreshed under the joyful greeting of a flock of sparrows perching nearby.



In daylight the bridge looked larger and something in its overall composition and structure of the elements suggested that this was not an ordinary building. Its pillars were built from massive hand-hewn boulders. The whole design was an evidence of an exceptional talent. Contemplating on the right and symmetrical stone forms, LaFri passed this harmony to his mind and to the questions that excited him: “This bridge is amazing. It is obvious that throughout the years with patience and infinite peace, relying on their talent and on the many years of accumulated knowledge and skills, masons had put their soul into it to create this masterpiece. One is able to build such bridge only if he loves creating it, and every creation in its essence is a support and guidance for the activity that lies ahead.”

As a confirmation of LaFri's thoughts a man figure, full of dignity, appeared in the distance of the other bank of the river. He was holding a notebook and a wheel-pen in one hand and a bag full of tools in the other. LaFri greeted the stranger and expressed his joy for finally meeting someone so far away and have a talk. After explaining briefly the mission of his travel, LaFri shared he was fascinated by the bridge and the masonry technique used for its construction.

The stranger smiled and added: "It is a joy to hear that you like it, traveler. The bridge is a creation of my ancestors from the family of masons, masters of the rock. I have the honor to maintain it and I come every summer for a few days to check whether the pillars are still strong and just in case to strengthen them.

I am glad that during your trip in search of the truth, you came across this bridge. For most of the people the bridge is only a physical connection between two shores, but for a few, it could turn into a magical springboard from one state of soul to another. I hope you have felt its strength. In this very strength, you will be able to find the first key to the gate of Balakan.

Let me help you. Put your hands on this bearing stone. Try not to think of anything else, but the connection with the stone and how this stone is part of a whole. And now forget about the bridge and imagine that actually this is the bearing stone of your soul. Can you now see the other pillars that compose you? Do not answer me. Keep that feeling for yourself. And now it is time for you to continue. Look what is in your hands.”

Still captivated by the mason’s words, LaFri felt in his hand a small stone key. “But how was that even possible?” Turning for an answer to his companion, LaFri just caught sight of some silver light pollen at the place where they had met.

The first key was found and with it also – the inner confidence that happiness is possible only for people that put their soul in their work and realize their connection with the surrounding world.





EARTH



He recalled the words
of the Elder from his village
that there were moments
when one realized that
the physical appearance
was just a minor part
from our energy entity.

In the following weeks LaFri visited many picturesque villages in search of possible traces for the location of the other two keys to the heart of Bala-kan. Sometimes he felt desperate that the quest was impossible. However, gradually with every day passed he started realizing it would be better if he started enjoying the things happening along the way.

One day, LaFri stopped a few meters away from the main road to rest under an old tree in the middle of a small flat field. Pleasant coolness was seeping under the dense shadow. This revived forgotten memories of happy times. LaFri went back to his childhood, when he often used to help his grandmother in the field work. He remembered what pleasure spending countless hours in digging and planting long furrows on the family field was bringing him. The scent of fertile land of freshly cut grass and hot summer air – everything connected in an enchanting elixir made his entire soul celebrate. A desire to work on the field emerged in LaFri. Nearby, he saw a group of youngsters who was gathered in a circle. While approaching them, he noticed that in the center of the circle five teachers were explaining and demonstrating various techniques for cultivating the ground. After brief instructions, every student turned the learned into practice. What strongly impressed him

was the way all students were explaining the importance of the acquired technique to them and the way it would contribute to their personal development. In the conversations with the masters afterwards, LaFri understood they were implementing teaching methods, which involved not only mastering a craft, but also developing motivation for constant improvement.

LaFri asked their permission to join them working on the field. From the very first dig he felt strong connection to the earth. He recalled the words of the Elder from his village that there were moments when one realized the physical appearance was just a minor part of our energy entity. With every stroke of the mattock, LaFri could feel how his consciousness blends together with the rhythm of the earth and his eyes were filling with thousands pinpoints of light. As if he caught a glimpse of invisible matter from which he and everything surrounding him was woven into an unified harmony. Deep in this magical whirl, he unconsciously went through the whole field, until he reached a snow-white stone in its very end. An internal feeling urged him to look below the stone and there he saw a small brown key. Was it the second key to the gate of Balakan? Most probably, yes! At that point, LaFri felt himself even more as a part of a whole.



WATER¹



... the candidates had to face
much harder and almost
impossible challenges.
And these have tested not only
one's endurance and strength, but
also the harmony of mind and
soul.

1 The tale is inspired by the animation film "Brave"

Princess Omare² was observing the stormy sea and progressively every passed minute this view intensified her internal anxiety. After the last successfully passed exam in the Academy for career development (The Academy), she knew her father, the Ruler of the Water city Varnas, would announce the beginning of the competition, which will decide on her future husband. Omare believed that the question about her life companion was a matter of personal choice, however this was the tradition. The lessons at the Academy helped her master the skill of self-esteem and the career plan development technique. The work with the cunning teachers from the Academy helped broaden her knowledge and understanding not only for the world of labor but also for the world as a whole. She realized that happiness is in close connection with the opportunity to make free and informed choice for her personal development. The acquired knowledge was making her burden for the upcoming events even heavier. Her future was about to be decided in the competition, men who signed up for till the end of the day could take part in the event.

Far away from Omare's worries and still bearing the enchantment of connecting with the field, LaFri approached the massive walls of Varnas. The matter of the third key to the Balakan Mountain excited him not as a goal, but rather as an opportunity for more and more new experi-

² The character name is inspired by the song of Andrea Bocelli & Dulce Pontes - „O mare e tu”.

ences. LaFri decided to stay in “At the sea nymphs” inn, where he would not only rest, but have the chance to talk with the locals in search of the location of the last key. The topic of the day in the inn was the princess’s hand contest. The elderly visitors were telling stories about previous competitions and were explaining that every passing year the candidates had to face much harder and almost impossible challenges. These were not intended at testing one’s endurance and strength, but rather the harmony of mind and soul. Intrigued not so much by the prize, but by the idea that this contest represents. This was exciting opportunity on the way to self-knowledge and achievement of inner balance, LaFri decided to sign up.

Three days before full moon, as it was announced in the order of the Ruler of Varnas, all the candidates were invited in the castle to receive their first challenge. “Welcome, most decent of all! Today you are presented with the opportunity to prove yourself and thus win my only daughter’s hand – princess Omare. Our city is known for its high achievements in the realm of spiritual self-knowledge and improvement. Teacher Tsve, the creator of the diaries writing method, which helps young people from their early age to identify their strengths and weaknesses, works with us. In our Academy for career development all students have the opportunity to deepen the search of their driving forces and to develop skills in setting long-term goals for their life progress.



As those who claim my daughter's hand, you have to prove that you possess the core values, which we pass on to our young people and who are in the heart of the success of our Kingdom. You will have to go through three challenges and after each challenge, those of you, who give correct answers, will continue to the next level.

First challenge

“Let it begins. Your first quest is to interpret the following story: “Three wise men met St. Peter. He told them he would let them in Heaven if they could give the right answer to a question. “Before I ask you the question”, continued the Saint, “imagine for a moment that you are small children, who embrace the world with open eyes. Try to look with children's eyes while you seek the answer of my question. And here it is: “What is happiness?” The wise men looked at each other. But this was a question

with countless answers. Different religions around the world had diverse understanding of happiness. Different philosophical schools - different approaches to achieve happiness. Some believed that happiness was here and now, others that it is accomplished by living a life of suffering. One of the wise men ventured and formulated his response first: "Happiness is a complex setting of mind and spirit, which is a function of the personal and cultural characteristics of the individual." The second wise man developed his reply in other direction: "The idea of happiness is a trap for the people. There is no evidence of its existence". The third wise man turned to St. Peter with the words: "The question is impossible. Happiness is a space of the spirit, which every person fills with his own desires and goals for satisfactory development". The story does not say who of the wise men gave the right answer.

"Dear contestants, you have 15 minutes to consider your answers and to write them down on the parchments, which will be handed out to you by my courtiers."

LaFri was confused. He did not have enough time and the task sounded impressive. Out of the blue, LaFri thought of his experience on the field, when he went back to his childhood and was again overwhelmed by a sense

of freedom and harmony. That was it?! The answer lied in the children's eyes. The happiness in children's eyes is each and every moment because they perceive the world as it is and enjoy everything including the things which for the elders are "small" and "insignificant".

Following a brief round of consultations with his advisors, The Ruler of Varnas announced the names of the candidates who passed on to the second challenge. LaFri was among them, as well.

Second challenge

"Dear candidates, thank you for the excellent answers. Judging by them it is not possible to tell whether you are happy people or not, but it is certain that you possess the knowledge and the ways of achieving happiness. This is a very important quality Omare's future husband should possess. Now is the moment to check whether you have one more important quality... Imagine you are judges in my Kingdom and in a certain moment, I as a supreme Ruler appeal to you with the words: "Your honor, I understood today you are going to hear the case against the Master craftsman from the Chamber of Fabric Producers. I would like to draw your attention to the fact, how dishonest and deceitful this man is. In my opinion,

his sentence should be very strict. I hope you will show understanding.” The question of your second challenge is what would you do as a judge in this situation? Please provide your answer within 15 minutes.”

“Another impossible question!”, thought LaFri. The answer seemed obvious which was horrifying. As a representative of the law, the judge is supposed to be impartial and also not amenable to suggestions, even by the King. However, in the real world, is it really possible not to comply with the opinion and the recommendation made by the person with highest authority. After all, LaFri made the decision to trust his intuition and wrote down the following answer: “Your Majesty, I reckon that I do not have the right to judge and to give assessment of one’s personality. Who am I to say if someone is good, bad, hard-working, or lazy? I believe we must evaluate one’s deeds. In the specific situation as a judge I will determine whether the act of the Master craftsman is in accordance with the law. ”

After a long and lively discussion, the Ruler of Varnas announced the results: “Dear contenders, two of you have reached to the very last challenge. AnPe, the Prince of Aquarius and LaFri, the traveler from the distant land. Congratulations! Your answers reveal that you will be wise rulers.”

Third challenge

“As the tradition of Varnas dictates, the third challenge will be put by the Princess. Omare, it is your turn now.”

Princess Omare stepped forward. Her figure exuded the infinite calmness of the sea. A light sadness was shivering in the crystal eyes of this calmness. The moment when the decision of her destiny was going to be taken, was approaching. The Princess of the Kingdom, which encouraged self-awareness, personal development and free choice, did not have the right to choose in what direction to develop. What could she do? Was there any way to avoid the dictates of the tradition? In this very moment, Princess Omare realized the key to her salvation. If no one from the two contestants was able to pass the third challenge, she could remain free. But what task should she give them? Both of them proved their knowledge and skills.

“AnPe and LaFri, congratulations, your performance was excellent. In the last challenge both of you have to list the qualities that will make for a good husband of each other. The one, who lists more qualities indicated by the other candidate, will be the winner. Each of you will have 5 minutes alone to write down his suggestions and to hand them over to me.”



LaFri felt completely confused from the task given by the Princess. He had three options:

1. To list all the good qualities which AnPe possessed and to hope his suggestions would be less than those of his opponent.
2. To indicate one or two of AnPe's qualities and by doing it he would meet the requirements of the task and at the same time would have good chances of winning.
3. To write no qualities, because this way the unknown developments in the case of the other possible solutions would be prevented.

When Princes Omare announced the results, LaFri was surprised to find out that AnPe chose the very same



solution – to hand in an empty list. “Dear contenders”, judged the Princess, “Same solutions have been given by both of you, and they are strategically good. However, in the real world the best solutions are not always at the expense of others. For me, it was important to see whether you had the ability to overcome the competitive spirit of our contest and to demonstrate respect of the positive qualities of your opponent, even in the most intense moment. To what extent do you have the ability to overcome your selfishness and reach out even to your enemy? For me, you are both winners, but it is impossible to accept you as people with whom I can share my life.”

“I agree with Omare”, the Ruler of Varnas addressed to the participants. “In our Academy for career deve-

lopment we educate future generations that the personal development should not be at the expense of other team members, but to be based on mutual respect and shared learning. AnPe and LaFri congratulations for the long way you have walked. You are decent participants. You are always welcome in my home!”

LaFri felt confused. At first he took part in the competition because of the experience itself, but as the game progressed a strong competitive spirit of winning arose in him, which was now raging into disappointment. On the other hand, the Princess was right. Selfishness was able to drag one backwards. The complete person should not have enemies and he should see the positive side of everything, which happened along his way.

LaFri thanked the Ruler of Varnas for the hospitality and for the given opportunity to learn from the competition wisdom. He shared that it was time for him to continue in search of the third key to the gate of Bala-kan. The Ruler noted that the key was kept for years in his palace’s library, but one spring it disappeared without a trace. In the key box, where the key was kept, they found a note with an extract: “Water mixed with children of the earth gives life!”



BREAD



Bread is a child of water,
wheat and our love.
Bread on its own gives life...

LaFri passed through the gates of Varnas leaving the sea city behind. Indulged in the mysterious quiz of the third key to Balakan, he unnoticeably found himself next to a small cottage house. The scent of freshly baked bread was spread the air. It turned out the house was a cozy bakery, where two master bakers were creating their magic.

LaFri was hungry from the adventures in the sea city and he happily slipped through the small door of the bakery. The atmosphere inside was enchanting. The smell of the freshly baked bread, the warmth of the blazing oven, the rhythm of the whole process of sifting, rising, kneading and rolling out... And the faces of the master bakers?! What a joy streamed from them, and peace and deep dedication to each and every action.



LaFri greeted the hosts and told his story of his travels. He shared how impressed was by the bakery coziness and warmth and the feeling of some irresistible force that drew him to their craft. The masters offered him bread and cheese and asked if he wanted to try making bread. Master NaSa was eager to show him the technique of kneading and master Ev – the subtleties of kindling the oven and baking.

“Bread making is not a craft like any other”, started NaSa. “Bread is a value which unites all nations around the world. Kneading is everyone’s right, however, it is not for everyone. In order to be able to knead all the ingredients, you first have to be aware of yourself and to have reached an inner cohesion of all your driving forces. The most important rule is not to think of anything else but of here and now. Forget about your journey, forget about the keys to Balakan, forget about the thousands of questions, doubts and hesitations which overwhelm you. You are here in front of this stone table and now your hands are immersing into the fluffy flour. Feel with all your senses the scent of the flour, its whiteness and numerous small flecks. And now it is time to sift the flour. It is like rearranging your inner peace and cleaning it from the unnecessary thoughts and feelings. Usually, these are the doubts and the fear of failure. The addition of water is a milestone in the preparation

of the dough. Water helps for connecting all ingredients, building bridges among elements and adding softness. Kneading the dough has a shaping force, whose direction is to achieve holistic unity of ideas, attitudes and actions. Here and now, feel your element and your body, mind and spirit in one.”

If in the beginning of his journey someone had told LaFri that he would feel inner balance and sense of integrity at a stone table, while kneading bread, it would have sounded ridiculous... However, this was absolutely real right now. LaFri was filled with creative power and faith that he could handle everything.

Master Ev grasped that feeling of inner harmony and led the young seeker to the secrets of the next stage baking. “The most important condition in baking is to show and develop patience and calmness. Any haste could lead to a bad outcome. If you do not spend enough time on the choice of wood for fire, wet branches may fall into the fire, which would not allow good baking temperature. If you do not show patience when baking you might end up with raw or undercooked bread. While waiting for the bread, we spend the time in conversations on various topics and in sharing issues that are of interest to us. This is also part of the magic of the

bread. The creative energy of our telling passes on to the bread. Bread is a child of water, wheat and our love. Bread on its own gives life...”

“Gives life – child – water – wheat...” LaFri instinctively thought of the mysterious text to the third key to Balakan: “Water mixed with children of earth gives life! Eureka! The third key is not an actual key, but a piece of bread which will obviously help me get through the gate of Balakan.”

LaFri thanked the wise masters for the priceless advice and for the opportunity to experience the art of bread making. Holding the three keys in his hand, he headed to Balakan.





LION



„Those are the reborn souls of wise teachers, representatives of three spiritual schools Ve, Re, Al. The lions have been named after their schools – the lion Ve and the lionesses Re and Al. If you want to pass through them safely, you should tell them the secret word, which lies hidden somewhere in the history of their teachings.”

A few days later, LaFri reached his long pursued destination – the ancient gate of Balakan. All challenges during his long trip awarded him with confidence that he could handle with all difficulties and surprises.

The Guardian of the entrance to Balakan, the wise Bo, apparently sensed his determination and greeted him with the words: “Will you be able to cope with one lion and two lionesses guarding the gate to the mighty mountain from the inside?”

LaFri’s resolution vanished at once. The only thing he knew about lions was that they were the kings of all animals and people were just another prey for them. LaFri was neither carrying weapons, nor extra food to lure the mighty animals. He was traveling in search of answers, not to fight predators.

“LaFri, these are not ordinary lions”, the Guardian continued her story with calmness, “Those are the reborn souls of wise teachers, representatives of three spiritual schools Ve, Re, Al. The lions have been named after their schools – the lion Ve and the lionesses Re and Al. If you want to pass through them safely, you should tell them the secret word, which lies hidden somewhere in the history of their teaching. Listen carefully and look for the answer.”

The school Re was founded far away in the north Danish tribes. The founding fathers of the school believed

that the only true way of communication between people was to look through the other person's eyes. We tend to blame other people for our problems. Only few of us, being highly affected, are able to ask ourselves: "What do I actually know about the person with whom I am arguing? Do I know what motivates him and what concerns him here and now? Do not I just put all the blame on him, only because it is easier that way?" *How to achieve a state of empathy for the emotions of others, which will give you a complete picture of what is happening?* This is the main question for Re school followers. As you may notice the lioness Re represents in her appearance all the school principles: tolerance, sensitivity, empathy, responsiveness and, last but not least – humanity.

The school Ve is the most ancient one of all three. It was established somewhere in the heart of the German forests. It was essential for its founders to develop knowledge about life. In those ages people were mainly hunting and living as nomads. Because of the school of Ve the trade was introduced and development of the primary financial system was initiated. It was important for Ve masters to educate people in *strategic thinking, discipline concerning the organization of their lives and last but not least – justice*. When meeting the lion Ve, as you will see for yourself, this school does not tolerate any expression of uncertainty in one's own abilities, waste of mental and physical energy and unnecessary talking.

The school Al was founded in the distant exotic lands of the Hispania. People touched by the sea and the sun were excited from ancient times by questions which were in connection with the full experience of the moment. Teachers from this school professed one simple maxim: “One should be open for all opportunities, life offers!” During the ages this idea developed into a complete philosophy, which they called “*Happy coincidence*”. Al master reckoned that even without planning one’s life step by step, day by day, if we develop our faith and the feeling that every moment is priceless, destiny will send us gifts in the form of happy coincidences. This does not mean that the followers of the school are not organized people. Rather, guided by the belief that every moment is of importance, they do everything wholeheartedly and believe in the positive outcome. When you see the lioness Al, you will feel it.

Now, LaFri, after you have heard the three stories, it is your turn to try to guess the secret word in order to pass through the lions.”

“Lions, schools, reborn souls”– LaFri’s heart struck harder. He felt as if his journey had just started. “What was the secret word? Should I transact the wisdom of every school in my mind? Is the solution obvious?” While pondering on these questions, the young seeker started playing with a stick in the sand, aimlessly doodling pictures. Unintentionally, some inner feeling made him write the names of the

three schools. In his mind he started switching the places of the letters – Ve, Al, Na, Ve, Re, Re, Al, Ve. And in this moment, the word found him: “Well, yes, ReVeAl. The word is “reveal”. The three schools – each one of them carries a profound wisdom, apart from the other. I, as a traveler, learned about their teachings can pass through them, by saying out loud “reveal”, promising that *their joint truth* will become known and available to all. REVEAL!”

LaFri used the keys he found to open the door of Bala-kan. He left the piece of the handmade bread to the Guardian Bo and stepped confidently approached the lions. In this moment, he realized that he did not even ask whether “reveal” is the correct answer. He hesitated for a moment, but there was no turning back.

LaFri stood respectfully before the three majestic creatures and whispered: “ReVeAl”. The lions bowed slightly and gave him way forward soon the road lead him. Not long after, the road reached a meadow, dotted with flowers. In the centre of the meadow, LaFri noticed an old log shaped as a ship and some invisible force made him look into the heart of the log. In-between the knotted branches he saw a small package, wrapped in green silk. What a surprise, when he opened the package, a beautiful red hat with a string of pink pollen was lying inside. Finally, LaFri found the Mobiliard’s hat and the journey to distant and unknown lands could begin.



HERE AND NOW



„There are no impossible
things for
the searching soul!”

LaFri did not know how the hat worked. From the old manuscripts and people's stories he remembered that in order to activate the hat's magical power he had to put it on and say the name of the place he would like to visit. However he wondered how would he do that since he did not know where he wanted to go. The purpose of his journey was to find himself and what he wanted to develop within himself. The only deserted images that came to his mind were in connection with different states of his mind and soul. He had felt some of them during his stay at the sea city, on the field, in the bakery, with the lions. He felt, he needed to further experience and develop as permanent qualities.

While traveling LaFri often felt he was not always able to fully live and enjoy the moment. Partly he was consistently seeking for the next aim, next stage or action. He would have liked to learn from other cultures, which managed to shake off the thoughts of past and future and live in the present.

A slight hesitation, whether the hat would understand his request passed through his mind LaFri put it saying: "I would like to travel to lands, where people live *here and now!*" For a moment he felt his sight blurred in a colorful spiral and after a moment he was standing before the estuary of a majestic river. The river's beautiful yellow

color came from the yellow sand that covered the river bed. Walking along the Yellow river, he reached a small village. At the entrance he was attracted by a female statue. Dressed in orange clothes, with wooden chapel in her hands, the statue was a true masterpiece. LaFri had the feeling that any moment now she was going to greet him. It was a surprise when she actually moved and greeted him warmly. “Hello, traveler, welcome to the lands of the HereKnows. My name is AlHo and my duty is to welcome the guests of the village. What brings you here?” LaFri told her briefly of his search. While he was talking he could not stop himself from contemplating the appearance of the person he had just met. He felt that the hat had brought him to the right place. AlHo was practicing the mimes' ancient art of the mimes. She was able to stand still in a state of rest for hours. This harmony between the body and the surrounding was only possible through clearance of any kind of thoughts, feeling and worries. This sounded impossible.

“There are no impossible things for the searching soul!” – resonated AlHo. “You should try! Stand in front of me. Observe carefully and follow my instructions. First, feel the ground with your feet, but not only with heels and toes, but with the whole foot. Imagine that your feet communicate with the ground. The energy of the earth and your body make a connection. Now, when we have a

solid bond it is time to look up into our bodies. It is important to feel each and every separate element, which until this moment you have perceived as a mechanical whole. Put your shoulders at ease. Breathe. Relax your eyes. Try not to tense even a single part of your body. Gradually the breathing will slow down and will become barely audible. Here and now, there are no boundaries between you the surrounding world. You are part of the whole.”

LaFri was not able to look aside, but the people passing by stopped to enjoy the second fine statue at the entrance of their village – his...

Tired from the exercises with AlHo, LaFri decided to sleep outdoors next to a centuries-old tree, enjoying the clear sky and the full moon. The fusion with the moment was a powerful experience and he felt he needed of fresh air, and time to reflect what was happening inside him.

He has been listening the crickets' song. They were playing tirelessly their melody every single night. They were neither searching for an answer, nor this was their mission. They just knew it. It was the universal recipe to be here and now, followed by nature and all its creatures - animals, plants and trees.

“It is so clear!”, thought LaFri. “At the same time so unachievable for me. I met so many interesting people and creatures experienced so many truths and yet, I still have doubts and hesitations whether this is my way, my truth?”

LaFri decided to seek a place in the world, which would give him further confirmations regarding his life pathway. “Magical hat, please take me to a place where I will be able to feel my destiny!”

Nothing happened. LaFri repeated his request, but the hat did not move. He felt like some quiet voice whispered to him: “Stay and learn...” His eyes became heavy and he fell asleep deeply.





CLOUDY ARMS



„Peace in motion!”

As the night went on, the slight breeze descending from the mountain slope turned stronger. LaFri felt the air currents passing through his body as a flow of cool energy. He was not sure whether he was dreaming or not. However, this was not of a great importance in this compelling moment. The wind slowly carried him up to the crystal clear sky. Looked from above everything seemed miniature. LaFri felt as if with every meter up in the heights, all his questions, doubts and internal search had turned into small mots, which the wind was blowing away with ease, till his soul was filled with complete silence. LaFri tried to embrace the sky with his eyes. The stars were dancing in a blinking carnival. The moon was silently smiling at the Milky Way and a group of comets were racing in an amazing chase on the black blue horizon.

In the distance LaFri noticed a couple of white fluffy clouds, constantly shifting their shapes. At first they resembled mighty ships, then dancing dragons and now they turned into a huge silver fish. As approaching, LaFri spotted a human figure. He was master JoDe, also known as Yun Shou³. During their conversation, LaFri realized that he had mastered the art of the cloudy arms⁴.

3 Yun Shou from Chinese – cloudy hands.

4 The story about the cloudy hands is inspired by the Chinese marshal art – Taiji. The description of the techniques does not pretend to be comprehensive or in accordance with the original one and has only an artistic purpose.

“LaFri, now you will experience the cloudy arms' strength. Make yourself comfortable. It is essential to feel each and every part of your body, but without any tension. Now, focus on your hands. The the "cloudy arms' technique" consists of circular movements. It is of great importance for the eyes and the body to act in harmony with both hands. Imagine they draw and at the same time carry an invisible spinning circle. Try to caress your palm which passes before your eyes with your look. Breathe.”

At first, the exercise of master JoDe made LaFri feel weird and somehow comfortable. To be in a difficult pose without feeling any tension. To breathe. To follow the movement of his hands. Invisible circle. Circular movements. All of these instructions seemed complex and hard to be performed simultaneously. Soon, another feeling replaced the initial perplexity. By looking carefully into his palm, his conscience cleared from strained and chaotic thoughts. He started to feel heating in the area of both palms. His look calmed down. And gradually his entire being was dancing in the harmonic rhythm of spinning hands. He recalled having the same feelings during the exercises with AlHo. But here and now it was different. He successfully realized that blending with the surrounding environment was possible even in a state of movement.



LaFri told master JoDe that everything which was happening was priceless as an experience. However, all observed techniques require persistence and many efforts in order to achieve a long-lasting result. How should one practice hard when he was in a constant search and experiment with new moments?

“Yes, indeed, the best training demands a lot of practice and devotion”, replied the master. “However, not everyone is able to spend a whole life in a monastery in one of the Holly Mountains. It is vital that you do not forget the principles lying in the techniques' core. The essence of the cloudy arms, which I wish you would to take along with you in your search, is hidden in the following three words: Peace in motion!”





FALCON



“Son, you have walked a long way
but as you might feel this is just
the beginning. The knowledge of life
is like a desert. You may touch it,
you may try to hold it, but it always finds
its way to slip between your fingers,
like the sand in the desert.
What life in the desert taught us is
that we are as valuable to the earth
as are the smallest living creatures
like the ants.”

The morning dew and the first sunlight brought freshness and warmth to LaFri. From masters AlHo and JoDe he learnt one thing for sure. There are incredible places around the world and masters, who are looking for the truth that is to be discovered. Without giving it a second thought, he put on the hat of Mobiliard and whispered: "More, show me more..."

In an instance the green meadow vanished and LaFri found himself in the grasp of hot desert. He looked around, there was only sand and scorching sun. He felt the heat pushing him towards the ground and weakening his body. In this very moment an inhuman shrill, hard to distinguish noise filled the air. While trying to recognize the origin of the odd sound, LaFri noticed the figure of a rapidly approaching horseman. The rider was dressed in a white robe with a flashing yataghan on his waist. LaFri did not feel frightened. All his previous adventures had taught him that happy coincidences really mattered and every new encounter was a new piece of knowledge.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, rider! My name is LaFri. I travel the world in search of answers. I am not used to the sun in these lands. Could you please help me find a place to rest?"

“God is great because he helps in the most impossible situations”, responded the rider. “I am Halef, master of the falcons. We never turn our backs to strangers in need. Jump on the back of my horse and I will take you to my village. There, we will talk more. ”

LaFri did as his new host and in this moment a thought blazed through his mind: “Where am I? This person seems and acts as if from another planet. The way he is dressed, and the way he speaks is rather odd. What are these falcons?” While contemplating, he heard again the shrill unknown sound and here it was – a small dotted falcon flying down from the sky. With amazing grace the falcon landed on Halef’s hand and stood ready for the next task. LaFri was enchanted by this unity between man and bird.

Arriving in the village, LaFri immersed himself into the motley life of desert people. They inhabited spacious leather tents, decorated with colorful beads. There were small shelters for horses and camels in front of every tent. It was LaFri’s first time to see a camel – an incredible animal capable of surviving a few months without drinking water. And women?! For LaFri this was an inexplicable experience. All women were veiled and even their eyes were covered with transparent scarves. He wondered why do they dress this way despite the high



temperatures?! There was something different in the whole environment. At dinner in Halef's tent he noticed that there were only men present, which impressed the traveler even more. Why did the Mobiliard's hat take me here? As if I could learn anything from people dressed in robes, living in tents and spending all the time hunting in the middle of the desert?

“Welcome, LaFri!”, Halef greeted him. “Come, sit next to me. Everyone invited in my tent is a dear guest to the whole tribe. Among us are the most noble of my men. They all will be glad to hear about your adventures around the world, and also about the insights of human life you have reached!”

LaFri began his story from the very first great journey - from the lands of the ancient Thracian Rulers, to the Mobiliard's hat, the search of the keys to Balakan, the meeting with the lions, the cloudy arms, and the song of the crickets. He shared that the main question bothering him was how to maintain an inner balance, constant joy and satisfaction from life and shortly – how to achieve living with meaning.

All present thanked him and engaged into deep silence. It was LaFri's first time seeing so many people at one place sitting in silence. This was an unusual feeling. After a while the eldest of them turned to LaFri with the words: "Son, you have walked a long way but as you might feel this is just the beginning. The knowledge of life is like a desert. You may touch it, you may try to hold it, but it always finds its way to slip between your fingers. What life in the desert taught us is that we are as valuable to the earth as are the smallest living creatures like the ants. God loves all. It is our choice to follow the laws of God that help us live in harmony with the world!"

All night LaFri thought upon these words. He considered God's place in one's life for the first time. Until this moment he was fully engaged in his search for a

place in the world, for driving forces, for a choice of a calling, for the meaning of existence and it seemed he had missed the topic of faith. LaFri's family was not religious and he himself did not actively profess a certain religion. He could feel the presence of a power but whether it was called destiny, nature, luck, fairies, ancient creatures or God, it was a matter aside of his attention. Thanks to the words of the desert man, he now sensed the moment had come to seek beyond his personal boundaries and learn more about God's place in people's life and about the power of faith.

LaFri did learn something else from the desert people. When he left the tent in the morning, a flock of joyfully chirping sparrows greeted him. Their song brought the image of his home village. LaFri realized that the sparrows in the desert village sang in the same way as those in his homeland. "How blind was I?", thought the young traveler. "Actually, we, the people, share a lot in common. Desert people have their own customs, style of dressing, traditions. However, this is only on the surface. Deep in our hearts we all strive to achieve harmony with the surrounding world and have meaningful existence."

LaFri felt it was time for his next journey. He thanked Halef for his hospitality and turned to Mobiliard's hat with the words: "Please take me to the lands where I will be able to feel the power of the spirit and the faith in God."





SOUL



*LaFri was stunned
by the spirit of sharing
and brotherhood.*

LaFri found himself on a picturesque shore of a small peninsula. There was a magnificent mountain covered with thick pine forest in front of him. The freshness of the sea and the scent of spring flowers were mixing in the air. With every breath, LaFri was engulfed in the spreading harmony. A small delicate butterfly perched on his hand. In this very moment he realized that the whole landscape was studded with motley butterflies and lady-birds. The young seeker decided to take a walk along one of the paths leading to the pine mountain. Soon, he came across a group of strangers.

“Hello, travelers! Where are you heading to?” The leader of the group replied politely: “May God give you health, stranger! We are pilgrims. Our destination is one of the monasteries in this Holy land, which is also known as St. Mary’s Garden. The monastery is under the protection of one of our saints – St. George.”

LaFri once again realized that Mobiliard’s hat had taken him to the right place. So far, he wasn’t interested in the topic of religions but the stories of the pilgrims about the power of the orthodox faith fascinated him. He noticed that they were talking about religion and yet everyone put a different meaning in it. Some of the group had devoted their lives to discovering God and following God’s commandments. They wanted to visit the monastery in order to pray to the miraculous icons and establish a

deep spiritual connection with the divine being. Others were explorers of the human history. They were interested in the origin of faith as a driving force of human development and wanted to stay at the monastery in order to see its rich library, keeping ancient manuscripts of important historical events. Some from the group took the road to the monastery in search of themselves. Just as LaFri, they wanted to feel God's presence with the hope that this would help them put in order their inner world. They wished to find some simple truths on how to live joyfully and in harmony.

The group reached a small chapel by the road. There, they were fortunate to meet one of the monks from the St. George's monastery. Brother Matey was responsible for the maintenance of the monastery and, as he said, this was giving him the opportunity to communicate often with the outer material world. He proposed to show a shortcut to the monastery and while walking to tell them about the Holy land. Enchanted by his words, the travelers did not notice how the road took them to a picturesque plateau, where they stopped for a short break. The plateau was part of the mountain. However, it felt like it was a small island in the endless blue sea, which could be seen from all sides. Here as well, the butterflies and their friends the lady-birds were dancing joyfully in the air and the pine twigs filled the atmosphere with freshness and coolness.

“Friends,” said brother Matey - “let me tell you about my faith. I believe that God is our creator. In His deeds God is supported by His angels. Once, way back in time, one of His angels decided that he could take God’s place. This angel was called Denitsa. God expelled Denitsa from His kingdom and sent him to Earth together with the angels who supported him. Since then God had begun to look for substitutes for the places of the fallen angels. How do you think God recruits His army? Well, from those of us who obey the Ten Commandments and lead pious and devout life. It is difficult because Denitsa, or the Devil as it is already known, does not sleep and cannot accept the fact that he was expelled from the Kingdom of Heaven. He tries by every possible means to lead people into temptation, through fear he deflects them from the right path and they are taken prisoners of his deeds. How can we protect ourselves? By praying for God’s help and by living in good. We are all sinners – me too. However, it is important to believe that God sees our pains to cultivate our souls despite the temptations, the fear and the doubts. “

LaFri felt how all his being absorbed the monk’s words. “So simple words with so much truth in them. And such a confidence in his faith. Have faith, love and pray!” He looked at his companions. All felt his reverence for the magic of the moment.

The group reached their cherished goal at nightfall. The monastery was a massive stone complex, located at the bowels of the mountain peak, surrounded by fertile vineyards. They were welcomed at the entrance by a group of monks. “Hello, travelers! Please, join us for the evening prayer. After that we will have dinner together and will show you to your dormitories.”

LaFri was stunned by the spirit of sharing and brotherhood. Nobody was feeling worried about his valuables and all the pilgrims were walking everywhere calmly without locking doors and windows. During the dinner everyone was eating in silence. This was the first time during which LaFri was concentrated on the food in front of him and realized the power and completeness of silence.

During the evening prayer, the group did not have much time to explore the small exquisite church in the courtyard of the monastery. What made an impression to everyone was that every monk had his strict role during the liturgy and was performing it impeccably.

In the night LaFri was woken up by a cheerful bell-ring. The feeling was as if God himself woke him for prayer. LaFri put his clothes on quickly and headed towards the church together with some other pilgrims. The Moon was shedding soft light over the courtyard, the midnight

birds were warbling and the gentle breeze was gently pouring in from the sea. LaFri entered the temple with mixed feelings. On one hand, he wanted to feel the magic of all orthodox rituals. On the other hand, he felt in some way guilty, as if he was not worthy enough or prepared for the forthcoming. From the first minutes in the church he became aware of the majesty of faith and of the nonsense of his self-criticism. Inside, two monks were singing religious texts under the light of small candles. The other monks were praying – each in his own way. To LaFri's astonishment some were leaning heads back and were having a nap. How could they sleep in a church? But who says that one must not sleep in a church? Who says that we must pray in a specific way? Who says which is the right way to send our thoughts, feelings and prayers to God? As watching the night harmony in the temple, LaFri realized for him that one has the freedom to choose how to believe and no one has the right to intervene in this choice. Faith is a right to everyone but not a duty. When you look deep in yourself and express gratitude for your life and for the road you are following, you turn to God.

In the morning LaFri was filled with appreciation and inspiration. The monks were spending much of their time praying for the salvation of all the people in the world. They pray for our souls and forgiveness of our sins. This is one invisible stronghold of faith – to know that somebody

is praying for your well-being. LaFri had the opportunity to talk with the monks about God and the search of enlightenment. For them everything was coming down to humbleness. The humble person is not spiteful and lives in deep harmony with oneself. Humbleness does not mean resignation – it is much more a combination of patience, calm acceptance of all things happening in human life and active following of the Ten Commandments.

LaFri shared with the monks that during all his journeys he had unconsciously touched the meaning of faith. He told them about the kneading of bread, the field work, the cloudy hands, the still standing with AlHo, the flight of the falcon. All these were moments of complete fusion with the surrounding world, which enabled him to feel complete and joyful.

LaFri decided to stay some weeks in the monastery in order to describe his experiences. He thanked the monks for everything which they had shared as wisdom and demeanor. The monks on their side thanked him for his complete sincerity and gave him a small chest with manuscripts of people like him, travelers in search of the meaning.

One day LaFri realized that he was ready to go. He said good-bye to the monks, put Mobiliard's hat and whispered: "Home".



STORIES OF OTHER TRAVELERS



Some months after his return in the village, LaFri remembered about the chest, received from the monks in the St. George's monastery. He decided to go to his favorite place – under the shade of an old vine in the yard of his father's house, in order to have a look at the contents of the chest. Raising the mahogany lid of the chest, inlaid with small pebbles, he found a treasure of shared ideas and insights..



SONG



... more faith in your
own abilities and that you should
pay less attention to what other people
say about you.

Once upon a time, there was a small mountain village. There was born and raised Kalina. She was lively and wild like the nature around her – she loved dancing, jumping, painting, but most of all she loved singing. She was singing all day. No matter what she was doing, she was doing it singing. Kalina was singing so much that her mother often scolded her. One day the woman shouted angrily: “Kalina, please! You have given me a headache with these songs! Can’t you be quiet for just a second? You don’t sing well anyway!!!” Since then the girl fell silent – her voice was heard no more. She wasn’t daring to sing once again. Her mother’s words made her so sad that she decided to stop singing for good. She was walking from one room to another faded. At first, Kalina’s mother was happy that it was so quiet in the house, but soon she realized that she had hurt her child’s feelings. The mother was trying badly to ask Kalina to sing again but in vain.

One day, Kalina decided to have a walk up in the mountain. When she reached one lush meadow, she sat on the grass. The girl looked so sad that even the mountain got upset. The mountain wondered what sadness was hanging over this young and tender heart, what grief had come to her so early in life.

“Why are you sad, girl?” – asked the mountain.

“Leave me alone. You can’t help me!” – answered the girl.

“I can try. Tell me what have happened... at least you will feel relief.”

“From all the things in this world, I love to sing the most. But one day my mother said to me that she got tired listening to my songs and that I had no talent for singing.”

“How come? Sing me a song and I will tell you whether you can sing or not.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Come on! If you want, we can compete in singing – you will sing one couplet and after that me, too.”

“Ok.” – agreed the girl.

Kalina started singing her favorite song. After finishing the first couplet, she stopped and the mountain took up the song, just as they had agreed. Kalina stood fascinated by the beauty of the song. What a melody, what a feeling! Suddenly, she could not stand it any longer and burst into tears. The mountain was amazed and asked:

“What happened, child? Why did you become even sadder?”



“My mother has been right all the time. I cannot sing and I won’t try it anymore. I have realized this when I heard how beautifully you sang the song.”

“Oh, child, dear child – you are so wrong. Forgive me that I have misled you, but I wanted to show you the truth. During the whole singing the only voice you were hearing was your own one.”

“I don’t understand you...”

“This was the echo from your voice. You wouldn’t have believed me in any other way – if, for example, I had begun to convince you that you could actually sing very well.”

“Could it be possibly true? Have I sung this song?”

“Yes, child. I wanted to show you that you should have more faith in your own abilities and that you should pay less attention to what other people say about you.”

After this day in the mountain, Kalina began singing again.



HANDS



... take this advice from me -
they could have taken some pottery,
but nobody can take what you have here”
- and the father pointed at the
hands and the head
of the young man.

Once upon a time, in a small town, there was a craftsman. He earned an honest living for his family. When his son became seven years old, the father decided to teach him in his trade. The child was very quick learner; he worked hard and soon mastered the craftsmanship.

When Stoyan – this was the name of the son – turned 18 years, his father told him: “Stoyan, you are now old enough. Soon you will have your own family. You know that we don’t have many resources. However, we have been putting aside for a long time and managed to collect a modest sum of money, which can help you open your own workshop.”

Stoyan was very touched by his father’s action, thanked him and promised to fulfill his wishes. On the next day, the young craftsman found a suitable place for his workshop and began working. He should make enough goods to open the workshop. Stoyan spent two weeks in the shop - from early mornings to late evenings, he was working so hard. He put a lot of effort in his work and most of his goods were complete masterpieces. When he finally finished his work, he locked the shop and headed home. The only thing left was to open the workshop in the morning and to welcome the clients.

Stoyan woke early and went joyfully to the shop. When he got there, he froze. Everything was broken to pieces and there was nothing left from the goods created. The young man was devastated – so much work gone in vain!? As he was looking at the broken workshop, he couldn't help it and burst into tears.

At this very moment Stoyan's father was passing by. He stopped and asked nervously: „What have happened, my boy? Why are you crying?”

“Look, father, someone has broken my workshop in the night. Nothing is left... They have stolen my work.”

“Stoyan, take this advice from me – they could have taken some pottery, but nobody can take what you have here” – and the father pointed at the hands and the head of the young man. “And since you have knowledge, you can make even better goods.”

Stoyan understood his father's words, calmed down, wiped the tears, rolled up his sleeves and got down to work – clearing out his workshop.





LIGHT



*I wasn't able to realize
that it is better to wander
for a while but to find the way
to yourself in the end, rather than
to accept someone else's as yours.*

Naya had a great summer. Unusually for the village, it wasn't raining all the time. Watching at the last three months in the calendar, she found out smiling that there were whole three sunny days. This was a miracle, considering the fact that over the past 63 years it was raining endlessly. The people from the smallest village in the Kingdom were used to this weather. Rubber overshoes were never out of fashion and umbrellas could be seen in front of every house.

In the years prior to the rainy era, the village was a lovely and sunny place. Now, only the paintings, hanging on the walls in the house of the Viskes family, reminded of these times. There were few people in the village, remembering those days. Actually, there were only two people, who kept in mind the whole story... The first one was the honorable lord Viskes. The lord – the last one from the Viskes clan, was a proud old man, who talked passionately about change, bright future, hopes and dreams in his youth. The other was known by the name of Drago and was considered insane. Drago talked with no one, unlike Viskes – he preferred the loneliness and avoided almost everyone, who tried to approach him.

Every year, at the end of the summer, people from the village gathered on a large and lavish reception, organized by lord Viskes. Everyone was putting on his most beautiful clothes and preparing for the lively dances.

Naya was standing in front of her large miracle in her room and was trying to choose the most suitable dress for

the ball. She was nervous not only because the whole village would be there, but also because soon she would have to take important decision about her future.

The reception was the biggest event in the whole region. The best thing was when everyone gathered around lord Viskes and he was telling stories about past times. He was telling about the village when it was sunny, of the fairs, which were conducted almost every summer month, of the warmth and the sunbeams. These were all unfamiliar feelings for the eyes fixed on him. Naya, standing in front, was listening with bated breath and was dreaming of sunny days and endless green meadows. She knew what she should do.

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63 years ago the village was just a small piece of land, owned by no one. The locals were known for their infinite pride, sharp mind, perseverance and love in their hearts. They were not just smart; they were masters in creating and building. They had built the most magnificent palace in the whole Kingdom – they loved what they were doing. And they had their own little secret. Not far from the village, there was a place – a high rock, where one could hear the sea most loudly and clearly. It looked as if nobody could climb it, but the people from the village knew the way up... On the left side of the rock there was a small path, leading

towards the very peak. This wasn't an ordinary peak but a place that was giving a special feeling – feeling of freedom. Unfortunately, the people from the village had forgotten this feeling; it was buried deep in their hearts.

On the very peak, at the exact time of sunrise, while taking a deep breath the feeling of freedom was filling the soul of the one managed to climb above. The feeling shook their whole being making them forget all daily worries. In this way the best ideas for designs of various buildings, palaces, and articles were born. Soon afterwards people from the village became renowned all over the Kingdom. At first, the King distrusted the villagers and decided to test their skills – he ordered them to build a house for his youngest daughter. The king's daughter was well-known in the whole capital; she was never picking her words and was always telling what she was thinking without any considerations for others' feelings. She was hard to please. The King thought that the task was impossible. However, the villagers made a small but lovely house. King's daughter couldn't stop talking about its gorgeous ornaments, exquisite walls and beautiful decoration. And all started...

The people from the village were working hard, but the King began to want more and more and soon their love for creating became an invariable choice. They decided to resist him and stopped building and engineering. However, they were only a small group of people, at first they managed to resist but afterwards they surrendered. The King conquered the village and decided to build an Academy,

in which young people could learn craft. He knew that the people had a great passion for sun and light and called the most powerful witch in the whole Kingdom: “I want this country to see no sunlight again” – ordered the King.

And so it happened. The King was taking the best students from the Academy in the capital where the sun was caressing the earth. In this way the students were competing with the hope for a change. Of course, there were other people in the village who preferred staying. They were blacksmiths, assistants, bakers, etc.

In lord Visces’s house all guests were leaving. Naya was looking at one beautiful oil-painting and imagined what life would be in verdure, lit by sun. She felt emptiness in her heart – as if a piece of her was taken. She took a deep breath and headed home.

“That’s it – she thought – I will enroll in the Academy, I will become the best one and I will live in the capital. This is my only way to be happy and fill the empty hole in my heart.”

There was a whole year ahead before application exams. Naya was determined; she knew what she wanted and was fighting for her dream with all her strength. She had few friends that’s why she didn’t bother spending the nights in the library, learning old master books. And so the days were beginning to string one by one, the big date approaching and Naya was feeling more and more secure in her skills. Her one-year-ago dream was now looking at one hand reach. She was ready.

Naya was admitted to the Academy with highest grades. All teachers were amazed by her tenacity and confidence. Soon, the school year started.

Naya was lying in her bed; a month from the beginning of the school year had already passed. She was able to get to know all the teachers and their subjects. Since she got best marks, the teachers were willing to explain to her everything related to her education and were saying that they were sure that she would manage to go to the capital. She was nervous – she had been working hard all year for this, for her most sacred dream. However, the emptiness in her heart remained, she felt that the subjects she was learning were interesting, but it wasn't as she had imagined.

“So what? It is not interesting but it's worth it.” She closed her eyes and saw a green meadow lit by sunbeams. She smiled...

At that moment Naya felt some presence in the room. She knew that she was alone and that it was impossible someone to be around. But the presence became more tangible, it took her away from the thoughts of green meadows and suddenly, she remembered the material which she should read. She had already read all the necessary books, even a bit more; she was reading additional literature and was making researches of old buildings, methods, ways of building. She went quickly out of bed and started working. She completely



forgot about the strange presence. Three hours later she raised her eyes from the thick books – there was a tempest outside and it opened one of the windows. She closed it and decided to have a break – she wasn’t tired but she wanted to take some air. And again that feeling from the morning came in her room. This time she was scared. What could that be – what was happening with her? Naya decided just to calm down and rest for a while in order to forget all her school troubles. But she couldn’t, her mind was only in the books despite that they weren’t the most interesting material – she was even surprised by the enthusiasm she was feeling. And then she felt the presence again, but this time she was completely seized by the books and ignored it. On the next day everything repeated, Naya was puzzled even more, she couldn’t understand what was happening, but it seemed that something stronger than her was making her study harder, as if part of her and still something different from which she wasn’t able to escape.

“The Shadow”, saying this word, Naya understood what was happening. “Was it possible?” She remembered one big dusty book in the library. Since the times of the building of the Academy, there had been a strange legend: the best students, who after that were going to be the most famous creators of marvelous buildings in the kingdom, were feeling presence of a shadow till the day they graduated. Naya didn’t remember any details about the story because she thought it was quite weird and even impossible. But now every written word made sense. Naya put

quickly her clothes on and went to the library determined to find out what was going on.

She was almost running when Drago approached her (I hope you haven't forgotten Drago – our miserable character who was considered insane).

“You have felt it, right? I'm sure – Drago said – You are one of the best students, it must have found you. The shadow is the cause for this fear in your eyes.”

“Please, I don't understand you, excuse me, but I'm in a hurry. I've got urgent work to do.” – Naya answered almost breathless.

“Calm down, don't be scared of me, I know you are frightened. I felt the same once. Please, come with me, I want to tell you a story.”

Naya stopped; she had nothing to lose. Why not hearing his story?! As they were walking, Drago was telling about the old times in the village and how the King conquered their lands and smashed people's will. He continued:

“After he suppressed the will of the villagers, the King decided to build the Academy and called in the capital the most powerful witch. He told her about his misfortune and she proposed a solution to all his problems. The witch put the whole village into darkness, taking one of the favorite things from the people – the sunlight, and created strange creatures, called Shadows. The King appointed the best constructors in the Academy as teachers. Every year the teachers were choosing the best students and were trying to support them and the Shadows



encouraged them to become even better. That’s what have happened to you, right, Naya?”

Naya contemplated and suddenly, the images of the most renowned teachers came to her mind. To her astonishment, they had always been telling her something more. She remembered that weird presence of a shadow and confirmed Drago’s assumption.

“The Shadows are connecting with the students; they are trying to keep them in the already defined way – regardless of students’ wishes or dreams. The important thing is that students should be good and accepted in the Academy.”

Naya didn’t know what to tell, she didn’t understand what was happening, but it seemed that everything was coming to its place. They were walking towards the sea till they reached the rocky ground. Naya had been coming here million times when she was a small girl, but from a couple of years ago she didn’t have the time.

Drago began the last part of the village story:

“When the King found out about the unique gift of the villagers, he never thought about its origin. – Drago looked up to the rock. – “Actually, they were able to build because of one lovely feeling. Once I was student in the Academy, too. I was learning a lot. I had a Shadow as well but this wasn’t for me and I decided to relinquish. The Shadow was constantly hunting me. Day and night it was there, right beside me. I was waking up with the thought of becoming the best student in the Academy, but after that my heart was saying that I should as soon as possible give up. And the Shadow was there, I could feel its presence, its pressure on me. “

“How did you find out that you want to give up?” – asked Naya.

“What I have actually lost during the years in the Academy, was the way to myself. Somewhere there I have forgotten my dreams and have accepted the ones of the people around me. When I was young, I didn’t know my goals, I was afraid; all my peers already knew what they wanted from life. I wasn’t able to realize that it is better to wander for a while but to find the way to yourself in the end, rather than to accept someone else’s as yours. And so, during my third academic year, I decided to quit my education in order to find myself. I tried to send the Shadow away till I finally realized what I actually wanted. A feeling of freedom took hold of me and when the Shadow left me, I began singing and dancing in the middle of the square. I was so happy. Since then I have been carrying the freedom in me, but the people from the village think that I’m insane and avoid me.

And I haven't got the power to change someone else's destiny except for mine. But you, Naya, you have it, I can feel it, you believe, I have seen how you look at the paintings with the green fields in lord Viskes' house – you can change everything.”

Drago pushed aside the overgrown grass around the path and pointed forward.

“Find yourself!” – he said.

“But I can't go alone, come with me!” – replied Naya with fear.

“No, this is the path to self-learning. You should climb alone the peak to find the lost piece of you and set out for your own way. Don't be afraid, the road is never easy, but you should have faith, you are stronger than you think. Just believe!”

Naya left without turning back. As if the emptiness, which she was feeling so many years, was beginning to fill in. She felt the Shadow behind her; it whispered that she can't do it, that it was better to follow the beaten track and that this was the only way to see the green fields she longed for.

Naya shrugged off, something in her was changing, and it was stronger than the Shadow, stronger even than her own self. She looked up and saw that there was quite little distance remaining. She grabbed a tree, but she slipped, Naya was holding herself with just one hand – the pressure was too intense.

“Come on, – she said – I know I can do it, I can make it - I will find the way to myself.”

At that moment she got to her feet, made one more step and found herself at the very top. Gust of wind swirled around her and she turned to the sea. Then a wonderful feeling overwhelmed her – she felt easiness, as if she was floating above the water. This was the feeling of freedom. A bright ray of sunshine hugged her eyes and she was feeling no emptiness anymore. The girl tried to catch a sound, but couldn't hear anything. Naya tried to sense the Shadow - it was gone. She didn't know whether it would come back, but she knew that here and now she was ready to take on her way. Naya could not decide what she wanted to do, but she was ready to search, even if that would take some time.

A year later:

The small village wasn't dark anymore – greenery surrounded the lands and birds were singing every day. The King couldn't resist the strong will of the people from the village and removed the spell, on one condition...

Naya, who had been searching her way whole year, wasn't cast down. She knew she would find her vocation. And so it happened. Now, she was the most distinguished and beloved teacher in the Academy and was helping the entire village. But don't think that she was teaching science or drawing, no – she was giving a hand to everyone in finding his or her way in life. Her deal with the King was that she should motivate and send the children who had the calling for creation and building to him.

Today, anyone who wants can climb the mystic peak in search of oneself and in search of freedom.



KNOWLEDGE



After my ill success in commerce,
I realized that no matter
what I would do in this life,
I must have some knowledge
about it.

It was a warm July day, the sun was scorching over Rila forests and pastures.

Father Vatolii was standing under the monastery vine and was having a sweet talk with his disciples – recently cropped monks and lay brothers. He was answering with all possible details to their questions and they were eagerly absorbing his knowledge.

The young men were taking turns putting questions to the Rila abbot.

“Father Vatolii, tell us about your life path. How did you decide to devote your life to education and science?”

The old Rila monk was a disturbed by the question. He stared at the Rila peaks, touched his long white and answered:

“Students, it would take a lot of time to tell you my about life course because it is long and embroidered with numerous trials, hardships and successes – I have gone through fire and water... However, I will try to keep it short.”

The teacher closed his eyes and started his captivating story.

“I was born in a small pretty village at the foot of the Pirin Mountain. It was small, but very bright. A lot of merchants lived there. They travelled all over the empire and were bringing back knowledge about the world, as well as various beautiful gifts for their wives and children.

My father was a priest and a country teacher and wasn't travelling outside the village. So, my brothers, sisters and I were receiving no gifts.

That made me dream from a very early age of becoming a merchant in order to be able to travel abroad, to visit different fairs and markets, to become very rich and famous. When I was six, my father took me to his classes in order to learn how to read and write. I refused to study and do my homework, as I was constantly repeating that I would become a merchant and these things were useless to me.

When my father saw that I didn't want to study, he was very angry and sent me as an apprentice to the local shepherd. I stayed there till I was twelve, but I was constantly dreaming of becoming a distinguished merchant.

When I saved some money from my six-year apprenticeship, I decided to buy twenty bundles of cotton and go together with the other merchants from my village to the city of Bécs (Vienna). In my village, Bécs was very famous for its wealth, luxury goods and gold Thalers.

Soon afterwards, one morning the caravans set off for the distant city. I loaded the bundles of cotton and went along with them. We traveled 36 days; we passed through the lands of many peoples – Serbs, Albanians, Bosnians and Hungarians. Finally, we reached the Austrian lands.

We entered the city of Bécs at an early afternoon. I was amazed; I hadn't seen such a city so far – with enormous squares, churches, palaces and most of all vast markets. At the markets there were merchants from all over the world, they were offering thousands of various goods. I drove my three horses loaded with stock to one of the markets; took one unoccupied exhibition place, unloaded the cotton and started to look for buyers. Different people were passing along me, they were stopping, looking at the cotton, asking me questions in strange languages, but I didn't understand anything, so I just stood silent, shrugging my shoulders, and they were walking away.

So a few days passed, the merchants from my village had almost sold all their goods and they told me that they were leaving on the next morning.

I was worried, all my savings were spent for this cotton and I couldn't sell it. I did neither understand the languages of my client's language, nor did I know the price of my stock – I just knew that I should make a profit.

During my last day I was very desperate. Suddenly, a gentleman passed, he looked at the cotton, took out his purse and offered me some coins for it. I did not even think, took the coins and gave him the cotton. I was pleased with the deal and went to the traders from my home village, who were staying at one local inn.

There I bragged about my successful trade to an old friend of my father and showed him the coins. He took them, look at them for a while and then burst out laughing loudly.

“Oh, silly man, these coins are not worth even a lira!” He returned me the coins and told all the traders about my failure.

On my way back to the village everyone mocked at me and I was quite nervous about my future coming home. I should tell my father that I wasn’t much of a trader. When I went home and explained to him my commercial deeds, he smiled and said:

“Have I not told you to learn, son? Nothing happens without education – you won’t master any profession.”

After my ill success in commerce, I realized that no matter what I would do in this life, I must have some knowledge about it. At first, I signed up to my father to learn how to read and write with the younger students. After that I went to Melnik and graduated the Greek school there. I was constantly reading and improving my erudition. When I gained enough knowledge, I was nominated as head teacher in the first secular school in our homeland. Later on, I taught thousands of students in the country. I introduced new and unfamiliar sciences and became the founder of the new Bulgarian education.

I will put an end to my story here, students... And you should remember – only the one, who knows, achieves one’s goals...”



STONE



*Every obstacle, but difficulty,
is also an opportunity which
can teach us, we can benefit from
it and improve our situation!*

Many, many years ago, in the Far East, across the burning deserts of Karakum and Thar, beyond the inaccessible mountains of Kunlun, there was the mighty empire of Tsin.

This was an ancient empire, wielding vast territories, inhabited by countless population. People were living in incredible prosperity and affluence, thanks to the wise government of the imperial dynasty, which relied on the strong traditions in science and arts.

Tsin was quite different from the other empires. There wise men and educated people were highly honored. Tsin emperors believed that although very different, all people were able to achieve success, as long they were given the chance to do so – if they receive guidance to obtain self-knowledge and to put their energy into the right direction. So, everyone in the mighty empire thought that people, regardless of their origin, had equal opportunities and if they get the required knowledge or develop the necessary skill, they can achieve miracles. In many other places on earth society was strictly divided into nobles and common people and the last ones had no chance for development or rise above their current state. They were deprived of the rights and opportunities, which were given to the noblemen only by birth.

And in this empire exactly, where equal opportunities were given to everyone and knowledge and skills were most valued, lived a man called Lao Shu⁵.

Lao Shu was a wise man or at least people from the empire considered him as such. As most great sages, he knew that no matter how comprehensive his wisdom and experience were, they were only a small piece of the boundless depository of knowledge in the world. Learning from other wise men before him, he was aware that the more he learnt the more could he develop and yet there was even more left to be learnt. Therefore, Lao Shu didn't waste his time putting on airs and was trying to gain wisdom on his road to enlightenment, knowing that this was the only way to be truly useful to him and to the others.

And he really had the great opportunity to assist in the development and prosperity of the empire, since more than 20 years he had been one of the main counselors of the emperor. It was his idea various competitions between pupils to take place in elementary schools. In this way the talents of all the children could be seen and so the teachers could understand in which direction they should encourage the development of their pupils. Again, thanks to him, it was permitted for people from the lowest strata to be appointed on highest and most

⁵ From Chinese: Lao Shu – teacher

responsible offices, as long as they possessed the necessary knowledge and skills.

But as we have already said, Lao Shu was constantly seeking ways for improvement and amassing knowledge. One of his favorite methods was examining human nature. He loved communicating with random people and he was often doing it – he was asking them different questions, setting them challenging tasks in order to see their reaction, to use it for better understanding of people and, of course, to be able to help them more successfully.

One day, Lao Shu ordered a large river stone to be put in the middle of the main trade road, west from the capital. The stone was big enough to bar the way, but not that big, so it could be skirted by getting a bit out of the road. Just along the route there was a thick forest and he decided to hide in it and watch people's reactions in front of this unexpected obstacle.

The road was very busy and there was a constant movement – many people and carts, loaded with various goods from all over the empire, passed. Most of the travelers were traders, some of them he even knew personally, but none of them bothered to move the stone. Many couriers, sent to do some task, also passed



through, preferring to go around the stone as well. Even a couple of soldiers walked down the road – their furlough was over and they were returning to the observation tower, located 15km from the capital, in the mountains. As if they hadn't noticed the big stone, they just went round him...

Many passers accused aloud the emperor of not taking care for the roads in the empire – how did he let such a big stone to appear in front of them. But none of them did something to solve the problem – neither to notify the authorities, nor to try alone or with someone else's help to move it. This made the wise man sad... At some point a peasant came along. He was pushing a small hand-cart, loaded with fruits, obviously on his

way to the market in the capital. When he reached the obstacle (the stone), he stopped and left the cart. He looked at the road, went round the stone to see it better, thought for a while as he continued to look around and when he saw that he was all alone and no one could help him, he rolled his shirt sleeves and began to push the stone in order to move it out of the road, towards the river. The man tried for a long time, he was pushing, moaning, sweat flowed from his forehead, but finally he managed to push the stone aside. He sat by the road to rest and after some minutes he took his hand-cart again – he wanted to be on time in the capital to sell his fruits. As he was passing through the place where the stone had stood a couple of minutes ago, he noticed something. One of the paving slabs was missing and there was a hole and a small pouch in it. The man stopped again, reached in the hole and pulled out the pouch. It turned out to be filled with gold coins...

Lao Shu loved to reward people, who acted in the way, which he with all his wisdom considered as the right one. That is why before placing the stone he had hidden the small pouch with gold coins. This was the prize for the one who would make an effort to overcome the obstacle and to move the stone!

Besides the unexpected wealth, the man learned a valuable lesson, which none of the other travelers managed to:

Every obstacle, but difficulty, is also an opportunity which can teach us, we can benefit from it and improve our situation!





THE OTHER HALF



Father and son began working together. The young man had learned many things. This knowledge, as well as the experience of his father made people talking about them, to call them The Masters. The father was proud with his son and the son – with his father.

Once upon a time, there was a famous master. He was so good in his work and his hands – so skillful, that Rulers from distant lands competed in inviting him to build bridges, stone fountains or temples.

The master was young, around thirty years old, but had left behind numerous beautiful and beloved constructions. His young wife was standing up for him – she was tall and slender, with elegant figure and beautiful eyes. Her name was Bana. She was quiet and shy, but she supported her husband in everything and so, without his noticing, she was opening new ways and opportunities in front of him.

The beautiful Bana was mother of their already three-year old son – cheerful boy with mischievous blond hair and clever eyes. Little Mani – that was how they called the child Mannyl, was tireless in his games and was constantly asking questions about every unfamiliar animal or nice pebble he had found. The father – the young master Nile – often looked at his infant son, noticing that he was playing long with the small white round stones and was arranging them in various figures. In such moments the boy seemed to forget the whole world, creating a new one at that time.

– He’s got talent, – the father was saying to Bana. – He can put little things in a way that doesn’t exist anywhere else. It obviously exists in his hands and his smart head. The two

parents brought up their child with lots of care and love. Master Nile was often taking Mani on the sea shore, where they were building together beautiful sand towers – after that they destroyed them with laughter and rebuild them – but in a different way and the new towers were more beautiful than the previous ones. Afterwards, during the night, the sea was erasing their traces and was making the sand even, so on the next day they could build another towers, embrasures and cities.

When time came for Mannyl to finish school, his father called him and they sat together on the shore, where they were often going, and Nile said:

– Mani, my boy – time is passing and you are already old enough. After the last school day you will begin to see the world in a different way. The care-free years of your childhood will remain behind you. Have you thought what you want to do in future?

– Of course, Dad, I have. I want to help – I want to work with you and to learn from you everything you know.

Master Nile smiled a bit – he was pleased, but slight sadness passed through his eyes.

– What will I teach you, my boy? I am a self-taught master, I have built many temples and roads to them, people appreciate me and invite me everywhere, but I was always hurt here – and he pointed at his chest – that I wasn't able to learn. My life went in another direction. Every time, when

I look at a bridge I have created, I think – well, if I had travelled and learned more, this bridge would have probably been stronger and more beautiful. Do you know that the strength and the beauty of the bridge depend on many things, even on the place where you will build it?

– I know, Dad, maybe I can't say it as well as you did, but no matter what you have done with these two hands, it have only earned you blessings on your way.

Master Nile kept silence. He looked at the bulging veins on his hands – a sign for hard work and many efforts.

– I want to build something very important with these two hands, my son. I want to lay the foundation of your future. I have saved some money want to send you to learn abroad. It depends on you what you will bring us when you come back.

– I don't want to leave, Dad. I'll miss the sea...you... Mom. How will I be able to learn when my heart will be here with you?

– You can do it, my boy. You are smart and very talented – grain by grain you will gather your future happiness and I think that you will come back one day here to build it. You will tell your mother that you are leaving gladly. She can bear her sadness, but yours will be too much for her to cope with. Your mother is a good and smart woman, but she is very fragile.



Mannyl gulped down the tear which was playing in the corner of his eye, embraced his father and set off for home with confident steps and after a week – for his future days.

* * *

Four long years passed. The sadness fell like a dark shadow under the eyes of the mother. In the hair of the father white threads could be seen. And Mannyl had grown into a man. One day he returned to his parents – happy, smiling and filled with gratitude. He had put a lot of effort during this period and had appreciated what his parents had done for him.

Father and son began working together. The young man had learned many things. This knowledge, as well as the experience of his father made people talking about them, to call them The Masters. The father was proud with his son and the son – with his father.

But time was passing and Manny, unusually for his age, wasn't filled with joy. Something weighed heavy upon him, yet he alone didn't understand what. Even tired of work, he was again often going to the sea shore – just as in the old days in his childhood. In the mornings he was building his favorite sand cities, although the sea was taking them one or two days after that. However, the anxiety in his chest remained. Once he decided to talk with his father: – Something is missing, dad. As if the other half of me is not here, but is living somewhere far away. I have the need to find me, to find myself.

– To find yourself? But aren't you the architect, the master, traveled through many lands and gathered a lot of knowledge? Aren't you pleased with the job you are doing and the trace you are leaving? – I am pleased. Even I could say that I am happy – answered Manny – However, I do not understand whether our job is meaningful to someone else. I know for us it is, but is it to the others? As soon as we build a bridge we leave. And what about those who go across it?

The father was silent for a while and answered: – Son, the bridge connects two shores, but also two worlds. It turns the impossible into a possible. Builds a road and for those who cross it remains the choice. Those who want to go across it will and those who do not want to – will not. But will not also long for the other world. You must discover the missing part, to understand what it is and to find it. This is the only way in finding your true path.

– But dad, how am I supposed to know whether I have found my path, the true one?

– Your true path, my boy, consists of two inseparable parts – the one is to feel happier by your work, and the other – with your work to make other people happy. Manny! did not answer, but did not forget his father's words. He continued often to walk on the sea shore and to build sand castles, even though their life was so short. Every day he made a different one, he built them with love and with incredible ease, and as if by doing this he was checking the beauty and the harmony of his future construction. One morning, Manny! with surprise found out that his castle, which he left unfinished, but considered to finish, if not taken by the sea, was not only there but fully built. Someone else had built the other half. And how! In an interesting and unusual way. The lad looked around but did not see anyone. He spent a few moments waiting on the shore and soon enough left.

On the next morning Mani went to the sea shore – this time earlier. The sun was just about to rise like a golden ledge above the sea, high in the sky a bird flocks were slowly raising and the autumn was making its first steps on the sand and the trees. When Mani headed to his sand construction from the previous morning from afar he noticed a bouquet of flowers dancing around the castle. When he came closer, he noticed that this was the scarf of a girl standing by the shore. In this moment the wind blew away the scarf from the girl's shoulders right into Mani's hands. The young man needed a few moments to match the things:- Hello, was it you to take the impossible task of saving my sand fantasies from the hands of the wind?

The girl turned and carefully nodded.

– Thank you for noticing them. I did not think that they are of any importance.

– You leave too soon to know how many people come here just to see them. Examine them. Enjoy them.

– Are they, but what do they see in them? They are so... sandy. One colored. Cannot remain for a long time and wet. So easily destructible.

– But beautiful! People appreciate them, love them, and you do not know but they even name them.

– ?

– Yes. For instance the White castle. The melancholic

one. The castle of the white algae, of the 8th towers. “Do you remember the autumn castle? – They talk to each other sometimes. – Oh, it was not, though prettier than the Castle of the two storms. Or than the one of the Water magic...”

– Wait, wait. And all this happens around my castles?”

– Yes, you obviously do not know what you do for these people – the young girl was explaining and Mani thought that till her scarf is in his hands it was not possible for her to leave – The pass by your castles, not standing for a long time, sit somewhere for a while and enjoy everything. Their gaze starts from your castle, makes a big circle and comes back to the castle. I watched them many times. When they head back to their work, they leave with happy faces.

– Do you think so?

– I am sure.

Both of them remained silent for a few moments. The morning wind was playing with the girl’s hair and crystal sea droplets were falling on to the walls of the castle.

– And you? – asked Mani – How do you feel?

– Me?

The young girl turned to him and as if a dozen of stars were blinking in her eyes.

– I can tell you how I felt when I finished the other half of your castle – she said – you know that a rock can be carved, but not sculpted...

Mani nodded.

– I felt sculpted.

The girl kept her look for a moment on the sand castle, placed a white shell from her palm on it, and quickly left. After a few moments she was far away.

Mani stood at the shore, the morning sun started to shed golden light on the castle's towers. "They are leaving with happy faces – he reiterated the girl's word – ... The other half ... Sculptured..." – Is it possible? – whispered Mani. He looked at the scarf, left it on the sand and ran to catch up with the girl.

Postscript (P.S.)



Dear reader-traveler,

Hope that you liked our stories.

*It would be a great day for us, if you share your own story,
thought or just a picture, related to the themes of our book by*

*e-mail: **euroguidance@hrdc.bg***

or directly on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/storiesofchoice>



Inspirators

Most of the characters' names and stories in LaFri's adventures are inspired by real persons and organizations that can support the process of searching one's talent, vocation, as well as the continuous improvement of knowledge and skills.

NeRa – Nevena Rakovska, Business Foundation for Education, nevena@jobtiger.bg

GeRak – Gergana Rakovska, Business Foundation for Education, grakovska@jobtiger.bg

The story "Bridge" – Foundation for Civic Education "MOST Bulgaria",

winner in the National competition for good practices in the career counseling 2013,

www.most-learning.net/moodle/

The story "Earth" – Vocational School in Agriculture "Kl. Timiryazev", winner in the National com-

petition for good practices in the career counseling 2013, www.zpg-sandanski.com

The story "Water" – University of Economics – Varna,

winner in the National competition for good practices in the career counseling 2013,

www.ue-varna.bg/bg/index.php

The masters of bread, Nasa and Ev – Nadezhda Savova and Evgeni Mitev,

"Bread Houses" Network, www.bread.bg



Guardian Bo – Boriana Georgieva, artist and specialist in European educational projects,
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Lion Ya – Yassen Spassov, musician, lector and trainer in the education field, y.spassov@mail.bg

Lioness Na – Nadezhda Boneva, student, photographer and explorer,
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Lioness Ve – Veneta Kuyova, explorer of the serendipity,
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AlHo – prof. Alexandra Hong, National academy for theatre and film arts (NATFA),
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GoDe – Georgi Denichin, Taiji teacher, www.joo.taijiquan-bg.org

Soul – the story is devoted to the Bulgarian “St. George” Zograph Monastery on Mount Athos
(the “Holy Mountain”) and the meetings with the Bulgarian monks there.

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"All right", LaFri was saying to himself, "I realized how important is to know myself and my driving forces, to believe in the way, which I have taken, and to be open for the experiences, which life offers. And now what? I am feeling wiser, but also a bit confused. It looks as if all this knowledge, which I have received during my journey with GeRak and NeRa, could not release me from my fears and doubts, but rather put many other questions..."



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FOR CAREER COUNSELORS
volume
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