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Natalie Jacobson

# *Fairy of Tapestries*

Horror stories about fairies and demons



Natalie Yacobson

**Fairy of Tapestries. Horror  
stories about fairies and demons**

«Издательские решения»

**Yacobson N.**

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People easily fall into the trap of magic. But is it worth breaking out of the web of spells? Everyone decides for himself. Anita becomes a hostage in a house where an evil fairy weaves tapestries from the blood of victims. Lotte weaves a nettle wreath with her bare hands to save her sister from the fairies' dance. Blanchiefler makes a dangerous deal with the black elf. Eugene reads books about the demon queen and accidentally opens her way to this world.

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# **Fairy of Tapestries**

## **Horror stories about fairies and demons**

**Natalie Yacobson**

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## THE FAIRY OF TAPESTRIES

All that remained of my brother's dead girlfriend was puzzles – a whole collection nailed to the walls.

“They look like paintings covered with light cobwebs. And from them...” Anita felt cold, her tongue seemed to be frozen, and it was impossible to finish the thought.

“I know you're cold,” whispered a voice in her brain. Probably it was not in reality.

Anita looked at the pieces of art collected by a caring hand like a museum mosaic. There are fantasy, landscapes, still lifes, portraits, and group scenes. Mostly the emphasis is on magical details that are sometimes difficult to see in the most ordinary-looking paintings. All assembled puzzles are carefully glued and inserted inside graceful frames, matched to the size. It's hard to be surprised here. Anyone who at least once in his life put together a jigsaw puzzle of a thousand or more details, knows what a painstaking work it is. Such toys are intended so that, having collected them once, then not to scatter them, but to nail them to the walls to decorate the interior. Anita herself never had the patience to complete a large puzzle to the end, so she respected the skill of another. The selection of paintings was especially good. My brother's ex-girlfriend had great taste. All images are bright and iridescent, but darkness gathers in the house next to them. Perhaps the whole point is that the house is old and gloomy. It is gloomy here even during the day.

“There's a whole exhibition here!” Anita walked through the corridors looking at framed puzzles. In a gloomy house, bright pictures were supposed to create a good mood. And instead they brought in something scary. It is strange, looking at them, as if dancing on a rainbow, so where does the feeling of evil come from. The black door to hell cannot suddenly open inside a fabulous landscape.

“Do not take them off under any circumstances!” warned the brother.

“Good. Although strange...”

“What?”

“They seem to be alive”.

“This is computer graphics, if you noticed, there is not a single classic picture. Aspazia loved only contemporary artists who create a picture based on a sketch or a photo processed graphically. And she compared the collection of puzzles to the weaving of tapestries”.

“What kind of comparison? Was she a restorer at a museum?”

But the brother had already left. The pictures of the dead girl looked at her with living eyes. Fairies, elves, mermaids and whole companies of magical creatures are all around, and they look as if from hell.

Well, the needlewoman was Aspazia. Aspazia! What's the name? What diligence does it take to collect all this with your own hands? Anita found one box and tried to put together the puzzle she had already started. It didn't work. Since it was already started, it means that Aspazia died before she could collect it. Really reminiscent of painstaking knitting: loop into loop. All the details are so small. So you can go blind!

Anita threw up a whole pile of parts and fell asleep among them without collecting anything. Outside, the rain pounded on the window. Singing in an incomprehensible unfamiliar language penetrated into sleep. This is neither English, nor French, nor German, not even exotic Arabic. He seems to be inhuman at all. Just a mixture of sounds and notes. This is probably the language spoken by the elves in the forest.

In a dream, Anita was stirring up the details of an unassembled puzzle. She dreamed of a beautiful, golden-haired woman weaving a tapestry thread by thread. Her ears ached from her song. The sound echoed like blows in a cauldron.

The woman is wearing a luxurious vintage dress in green. Behind the back is a sparkling cape. In curly hair, a cap with a veil. She herself resembles a picture from a medieval museum. She would rather be queen than work on a tapestry. For some reason she winds some of the threads from the tapestry on a spindle. Something is wrong here. Spindles were not used in the production of tapestries.

Anita woke up the next morning. The puzzle has been completed. Gray mice swarmed around on the floor. No, some creatures, not mice! Anita screamed, and they ran to the corners.

On the dusty floor, there are chains of footprints that resemble miniature human feet rather than mouse feet.

You can go crazy in this house! What kind of creatures did not start in the basements during the period that the house was not repaired. Probably, it will soon crumble from decay. If not for the urgent need, Anita would never have agreed to spend the holidays here. It was better to leave for the whole summer somewhere to the sea on a sunny and hot coast. Here, in a gloomy old mansion, even summer looked like late autumn. The sky above the rooftops is always cloudy, the park behind the fence is almost devoid of foliage, mostly thorny bushes and thorny trees grow in it. Even nowhere to walk. The only pleasing to the eye that there is, these are bright puzzle pictures. But from them for some reason the frost sneaks through the skin. Moreover, the feeling of fear in front of the images of elves and fairies has become much stronger than it was on the first day of arrival.

In the gloomy garden, under the thorny branches, there was a black headstone. It seems to be no surprise that there are burials on the territory of the mansion. Generations of one aristocratic family have lived here for centuries. Not her family. Anita's father bought this estate from some ruined aristocrat. He died before he could leave here. He seems to have been buried here. Surely there is a crypt somewhere nearby.

After a wonderful purchase, her father did not live long either. He caught some kind of infection, from which all the skin was covered with ulcers, similar to the marks of tiny hands, and died. Now Anita and her older brother Mark owned the estate. But what's the use of such ownership? It will take a lot more money to renovate a mansion than you can get from selling it. And if you don't repair it, it will soon fall apart. Cracks, like cobwebs, have already begun to appear along the walls and ceiling. They seemed to deliberately repeat the bends of the jigsaw puzzle. It feels like the whole house is assembled piece by piece by someone's skillful hand.

There was nothing to amuse herself with: no TV, no gym, not even a library. And the books in the old mansion certainly had to be stored somewhere. Naturally shabby. But what about without them? All aristocrats collected their own library. Why is it different in this house?

Anita walked through the rooms all day, but she never found the library.

At night she dreamed of a woman again. Her fingers quickly twisted the threads of the tapestry, the song flowing to the beat. Some strange creatures, like fabulous leprechauns, galloped around her hem and machine. And suddenly all the threads are in blood. They reach out for blood. From her blood! The tapestry is woven from Anita's blood and veins.

She woke up terrified.

The dream was so real. She watched it like a film on the screen with her own participation, and in this film she was butchered as in a torture chamber. A sharp spindle stabbed into her chest with a knife, not allowing her to breathe or move. And the beautiful singing woman pulled the veins out of her one by one. The pain in the dream was also real.

Even a murderer with a knife could not have scared her so much if he broke into an empty house, where there was not even a telephone to call the police. Even ordinary murder does not have the evil that was present in the dream.

Anita went out to the park. You need to walk a little, otherwise she will go crazy from a long stay in stuffy gloomy rooms. Even the puzzles on the walls were no longer pleasing.

Anita did not have her own car, but it was possible to try to get to the nearest village on foot. When Mark drove her here, on the way she noticed something like a tiny town. There should be

a bar or pub. Now she needs to sit in a crowded place and talk to someone, but as luck would have it, she could not find a way out of the park. The estate was too large. It's easy to get lost on paths that diverge in a maze.

Anita almost tripped over the grave under the trees. This is the one she saw from the window. The headstone is black. The piled mound of earth is quite fresh. It was recently loosened with a shovel. Mark said something about the fact that his girlfriend had to be buried nearby. This is probably her. There is no one else to be. Who else has lived and died on the estate in the last ten years? Only her father, that old aristocrat and brother's friend. But for some reason the inscription on the stone read Etna, not Aspazia. The brother's beloved was definitely called Aspazia. He even composed a madrigal in her honor, just like a knight from the old days. The poems were dedicated to Aspazia. Anita found them in an album that Mark had forgotten in the house when he left. Or maybe he just didn't want to take it with him. And who, then, is Etna? Aspazia's body is definitely buried somewhere nearby. And the thorny garden is an excellent setting for the burial site.

It's unpleasant to live next to the grave. Anita almost ran away from it. For some reason, something as oppressive with fear emanated from the damp earth as from bright puzzles in the house. But Anita returned to the collection of puzzles. It was already evening, and she did not want to spend the night in the open air.

The house was even darker than usual. Anita had to make an effort to turn on the lamp. The electric light snatched the inscription under the puzzle, hanging in the frame in the hallway: Etna. Isn't that the very name that is inscribed on the tombstone.

The puzzle depicts a pretty young blonde who has fallen into the clutches of some mythical creature with horns, wings and claws.

It feels like this plot is a warning. Anita turned away quickly. In many other paintings, where elves danced under the moon or fairies played pranks, one could also find scenes of violence against mortals, which for some reason she had not noticed before. And now she looked at them, and the floor trembled under her feet. Has an earthquake started? Anita was frightened. It seemed that the walls were shaking, and the puzzles were striving to fall out of the frames and again crumble into pieces. The living creatures inside them seemed to demand to be released. The sound of the thunderstorm that had begun outside the windows reminded of a hundred voices screaming for vengeance.

What will not seem when you are left alone for a long time with the gloomy gray walls of an abandoned house. It was time to go to bed. And it was scary to fall asleep. Dreams, like a door, led to something that she did not want to see. Anita wandered around the house for a long time, delaying the moment when she had to go to bed. We need to get out of here. But where? Where else would she be given a free overnight stay? The hotels are expensive and uncomfortable. And here is an old bed under dusty canopies, as if made for a princess. But lying on it, Anita stubbornly felt like a victim, not a princess.

In the third dream, she came close to the woman. Up close, she no longer seemed so beautiful. On the contrary, she hunched over, hunched over, shriveled like an old woman, and the romantic cape behind her turned out to be two sagging black wings.

"Why are you torturing me?" The question arose by itself, as if Anita's tortured soul had asked her with her lips.

The woman looked up. Not a woman – a fairy. And she had no eyes. A gnarled, strong hand grabbed Anita's hair and made her bend over the unfinished tapestry.

The fairy's whisper seemed meaningless.

"I gave my eyes to them to follow you humans from the tapestries. And you will give me your eyes for this. You've always loved reading fairy tales. Time to pay!"

The pain was burning. Blood dripped onto the tapestry, and the fairy looked prettier.

The awakening was painful. The sunlight burned. The eyes of the spies looked from the puzzles. Now she knew for sure that they were spies.

“Everything, as in the case of Etna,” Mark whispers over her deathbed. “I shouldn’t have brought people close to me here. There must be some kind of infection in the house”.

– She won’t live long!”

These are the words of the doctor. And the sigh of a brother. The latter smiled maliciously. It seems...

And then there was a dark space in the rainbow picture. You can’t get out of here. Either threads are twisting around, or parts of a puzzle. Is she inside the puzzle? It looks like it! Only here it is not as rosy as it seems from the outside. It’s cramped and cold here, and it hurts the eyes to look into the outside world. And it is possible to make out only the house, through which Aspazia is again walking, for some reason wearing her dresses. In any case, Mark and his few guests call this woman Aspazia. She’s alive again, and no one finds it strange. The brother, as if hypnotized, follows her, and even serves as a knight to his lady. His mother could not expect such tact from him, but this fragile woman, like a medieval fairy, conquered him. Or maybe she was a fairy to whom stupid charmed guys sacrifice their sisters and girlfriends. A workshop for either restoration or weaving of tapestries appeared in the corner room of the house. And in the garden under the thickets of juniper now lies a tombstone with the name Anita carved on it. It seems that Etna had the same before. In the same place. Two graves cannot fit in one place at once. But the inscription can be the same under the tapestry in the museum, and on the gravestone in the garden. Anita is also written under one puzzle in the house. And inside this puzzle is cramped and dark. Anita herself knows that for sure.

## Nettle wreath

“I’m going to dance with the fairies tonight,” Lida said with a conspiratorial look. After that, she did not return. The pharmacist’s daughter, who went to the same dances under the moonlight, did not disappear, but she was now sitting in her father’s shop motionless and deaf, like a doll. She was not even able to open the door to customers or serve potion. And what is most surprising, her father was unable to help her with any medicine. The girl fell into a stupor. Everyone thought that she had been abandoned by the guy she met at dusk, but Lotte knew for sure that the girls from the village went to dance with fairies at night. Not all! Only those who met strange strangers on deserted roads and invited them to dance. Lida talked and, apparently, now found herself in captivity of the fairies. Is it worth trying to rescue her from there, or upon returning back to the people, she will become stiff and indifferent to life, like Mimi, the pharmacist’s daughter. Lotta deliberately went to the pharmacy to look at her again, inventing a stupid excuse that she needed capsules for insomnia. As the pharmacist looked for them, she stared at Mimi, sitting motionless in the rocking chair at the entrance. The window beside her was curtained. For some reason the girls were hurting from the sunlight. And now a burn, not red, but black, was burning on her cheek. The skin itself disintegrated like ash.

“A rare skin disease,” the pharmacist explained.

From what disease can the skin become thin like a spider web, acquire a deathly porcelain color and disintegrate as ash from the rays of the sun? Having become ill, Mimi miraculously became a beautiful woman, but she could neither move nor speak.

“Her will is in captivity,” Lotta remembered an expression from an old book of fairy tales. “These are all fruits of the fairies!” Mimi did have a strange piece of fruit in her lap. The birds could have pecked it for a long time, but did not dare. The girl herself had not eaten anything for a long time, but the juicy slice did not wrinkle. It looked like a tongue torn out of someone.

“Eat me!” Didn’t Lotte hear it? When she walked by with a pack of pills for insomnia, a piece of fruit spoke to her? And she jumped on Mimi’s lap straight, as if alive. Yes, and Mimi’s dead eyes for a moment became malicious and meaningful. But Lotte passed by.

The first step is to save your own sister. We’ll deal with Mimi later. In an old fairytale book, she read in childhood a variety of legends about fairies and their fun with mortals. There was a legend “Magic Fruits” about a girl whose sister was seduced by fairies by persuasion to try such fruits. They are sweet, but having tasted them, a person leaves his consciousness captive in the kingdom of fairies, only an empty shell comes home. Or it doesn’t come at all, as is the case with Lida. But a captured person can be saved. In the fairy tale, the victim’s sister went to the fairies and when they, in turn, offered her harmful fruits, she refused them. The fairies tried to force feed her, smeared the juice of the fruit on her skin and closed lips, but the sister’s savior held out until morning. If you hold out until the morning, then the fairies must let your sister go. Is Lotte missing something? She frowned. She didn’t want to resist the fairies all night because of the dubious possibility of freeing her sister. But what if there is no other way out? What if Lida never returns, even unconscious? Everyone will think that she ran away with her lover? Or that a maniac killed her?

But she was definitely captivated by the fairies. Lotta was sure of it. On the night Lida left to dance, she had a dream. A voice called her. Ghostly figures beckoned her from the meadow. There was a whole round dance of them. The moon shone through the winged bodies.

“Let’s dance!” whispered unearthly voices.

Only one voice, rough and old, suddenly said:

“Don’t dance with them without a nettle wreath. On such a wreath, they will burn and will not be able to touch you”.

It was definitely the voice of her late grandmother – a healer, famous for her herbal infusions throughout the village. She would have easily made some kind of decoction to remove the poison of fairies from Mimi's body. Unfortunately, she died before passing on her skills to her granddaughters. Perhaps, in revenge on her, they dragged her granddaughter away. At one time, Lotte's grandmother saved not a single captive soul from the net of evil spirits. Recall at least the terrible wound of the lumberjack, who assured that the troll bit off his hand. The stump really began to overgrow with some kind of thorns, which moved like an independent creature and strove to bite someone. If it were not for the ointment of the old healer, the lumberjack would have had to chop off his arm on the shoulder, because she began to mutate.

Now Lotte herself stared in horror at the thicket of burning grass. Even in leather and gloves, tearing it will hurt.

"You should go to a round of fairies exclusively in a wreath of nettles", the edifying voice of the dead grandmother sounded deep in the subconscious.

Well, if she commanded so. Lotte had no gloves with her. In addition, she recalled that it was necessary to pick nettles for a wreath only with bare hands, otherwise her power against fairies would not work. And she began to tear stem by stem. Unbearable pain immediately burned her fingers, blisters swelled on the delicate skin, but Lotte consoled herself that freeing her sister was worth it. It's not bad to feel like a brave heroine from a fairy tale, but picking nettles turned out to be an unbearable torture. And yet she did it. And someone curious watched from the thicket as the beauty, now crying, now cursing, tears up the burning young nettles, and then weaves a wreath out of it with her bare hands.

Oddly enough, the wreath turned out to be luxurious. Nettle leaves are very beautiful as a crown. In this wreath, Lotte herself resembled a fairy of spring. Only now the wreath slightly burned the forehead even through the bangs. Blisters will probably remain.

Lotte frowned. Was it not necessary, while she weaved a wreath, to hum some kind of conspiracy that drives away evil forces? It doesn't matter now. It is done. The nettle wreath is gossip, and you can't grease the burns until you get your sister out. But where to go to free her? Where do fairies gather to dance? In a birch grove? In the nature reserve? On the bank of a fast river? In the woods? There are so many secluded corners around where you can dance away from prying eyes. Country girls, eager for fun, easily found a place where fairies dance. Only now their problem was that they were invited to these dances, but she was not. And no adorable strangers with flowers sprouting right in the skin have yet met on her way. There is no one to call her.

Lotte followed the path at random. All around there was a smell of wormwood, oak bark and pine needles. So she went into that part of the forest where no one went. The path here was barely trodden, and there was no one around. No people, no animals, not even singing birds. Only an ugly, gnarled tree stands at a fork. Lotte moved towards it. Probably, her eyesight became ill because of something, because it was worth reaching the tree, and this is no longer a tree, but a funny guy in fancy green clothes. The cut is similar to an antique camisole.

"You escaped from the museum window?" Lotte stared at him, discouraged. Usually she never behaved so brazenly with people, but the boy turned out to be so cute. I wanted to tease him.

He gazed at her with no less surprise than hers. And his eyes are so huge, bright green, like two sparkling emeralds. And the freckles on the cheeks for some reason are not brown, but golden. And shoulder-length hair is also millet color. Well, just a prince from a fairy tale. Probably an actor from the traveling troupe. Just what is he doing in the deep forest? Hunt girls? Or looking for trouble?

"How did you get here?" He asked curiously. "Until now, no one has come here".

Lotte opened her mouth in amazement. What is he saying? As if he imagined himself to be the master of the thicket. She wanted to answer something harsh, but stopped short, noticing how sharp the tips of his ears were. He just pulled a lock of wheat behind his ear. And his fingers have long

emerald nails. Is it really an elf? She tried to look behind him to check if the wings were fluttering behind her. All that was visible from the front was an elegant if old-fashioned outfit.

“Your hands are all burned,” the guy whistled suddenly.

How does he know about the burn? She hides her hands behind her back. How did he see?

The elf, meanwhile, carefully took her hand just above the elbow, so as not to touch the injuries.

“Such delicate skin and blisters,” he drawled sadly, as if he himself had been offended by something. “If you want, I will heal you. I know one source...”

“No thanks!”

He suddenly became even sadder, as if she had hit him. Lotte stared at his sunny eyelashes. It seemed that now a tear would flash under them.

“Do you want to dance at this intersection. With me?”

“Not with you!”

“Well, if you don’t want anything from me, then we will have to part. I will ask for the last time...”

“You’ll help me in something,” it occurred to her.

“Yes?” the elf was clearly delighted. Behind him, real wings suddenly fluttered. “Take me to the dance of the local fairies”.

He whistled again in surprise.

“And you are still a surprise. Do you want to burn yourself again? Fairy dancing is a dangerous place for someone like you”.

“Never mind!”

“Next time you might get your face burned, not just your hands”.

“Let’s go anyway!”

“But it’s really dangerous. I’m not lying to you”.

“Aren’t you at the same time with them?”

The elf smiled enigmatically.

“Everybody sometimes has disagreements”.

Is it true that elves are fairies? Some sources did not agree on this. And in general, it seems that the fairies have long quarreled with all their gentlemen, otherwise why would they invite someone from the village to dance. So Lotte decided to trust the elf, but still kept her guard. They walked through the thicket, where a narrow path suddenly appeared. The elf walked ahead. Everywhere there was a smell of not forest plants at all: honeysuckle, jasmine, even roses. More like garden scents

“By the way, your outfit doesn’t fit at all,” the elf turned to cast a disdainful glance at her long, flowered sundress. And suddenly the dress was different. Green as snakeskin, lush, fitted, with long sleeves so wide that they almost swept the ground. It looks like a medieval outfit.

“What for?”

“What do you think? In a country dress, no fairy will mistake you for hers”.

“I don’t need it!”

“Soon you will see what you need! By the way, I like you”. He tried to hug her. It turned out to be strangely gratifying. Much nicer than the hugs of a simple guy. “You are beautiful! But the wreath spoils you”.

Lotte realized that he was afraid of getting burned. If a wreath of nettles burns fairies, then elves, probably, too.

Soon they came. It was not yet dark, but melodic laughter was already ringing in the meadow. Beauties danced there. They all had bare feet. Clawed hands. The backs are winged. They moved so fast that they seemed dangerous. They can knock them off their feet if you approach them. The whole picture resembled Polovtsian dances, and if you consider that some fairies still grew horns or thorns made of skin, like living roses.

“So go!” the elf pushed her.

With a wingless back, Lotte felt stupid. In vain her new acquaintance tried. They will understand at first glance who she is.

And the fairies understood. Barely a dry branch crunched under her foot, as dozens of pairs of surprised eyes rushed at her.

“She came herself,” the fairy with branchy antlers, like a deer’s, disbelieved.

“Come here, dear”, almost affectionately called her fairy with the bindweed growing from the skin. “Treat yourself to the gifts of our land”.

It was just beginning to get dark, and a festive table with baskets of ripe fruits suddenly appeared in the meadow. Lotte looked him over. These are neither plums, nor peaches, nor apples, nor apricots, not even mangoes or quince. All fruits here simply do not have a name in humans. But how seductive they are.

“Eat me! Eat it up! Take a bite! Take a sip of our juice! Bite through the skin!” squeaked thin voices from the table.

Is this fruit talking to her? Doesn’t she dream? Lotte looked at the fairies. No, don’t dream.

“I do not want!” She said firmly.

The horned fairy snapped her fingers, and the table disappeared, and the fruits from it scattered across the grass in vile colorful creatures. Well! Well to be sure. And she almost bit off of this!

“Don’t break!” one of the fairies approached her, holding out a red fruit. Lotte suddenly felt that she could not move, as if the whole body was tied with ropes. This is how the magic of the fairies is chained. The elf stood behind a meadow under the shade of an elm tree and watched everything from a safe distance. He definitely won’t help. Most likely, he amuses himself at the sight of her helplessness. The fairy thrust the fruit directly into the lips of the motionless Lotte.

“Take a bite!”

A little more and would have to. But then the fairy screamed herself – burned herself, accidentally hitting the wreath.

“Leave her!” the horned fairy took its bearings first. “She doesn’t want to eat, let her not eat. Let’s better dance with her”.

Everyone giggled at once, as if it meant: let’s push her off the cliff. The music started playing. Lotte felt that she was free. She could move, but she could not get out of the fairies’ round dance. The legs began to dance themselves. That’s the fairies’ joke. She won’t be able to stop until they let her. So you can dance for centuries. She will grow old and die, unable to stop. Something needs to be done.

The moonlight was just silvery over the meadow. Lotte plucked some nettle leaves from her wreath and tossed them at the faces of the fairies dancing alongside.

“It burns! Bastard!” Several fairies tried to shove and scratch her, but each burned again on her wreath. How does this come out? Their clawed hands reach out to her shoulders and face, and invariably attack the nettle wreath. It attracts them like a magnet.

The horned fairy tried to cling to her throat, and burned the most. The burns did not go away instantly, which was especially surprising for the fairies.

“What do you want?”

“Let my sister go”.

The fairies didn’t want to agree, but the burns were blistering on their skin more and more.

“Okay. This is a little”, they finally decided.

“You have to be defeated by the village healer,” they lamented as they left.

Didn’t they give up too easily? Lotte stared after them in disbelief. The motley winged flock quickly disappeared. Instead of them, Lida stood in the meadow, pale and speechless, in the same heavy old dress as hers, only of a burgundy hue.

“She cannot leave if you don’t give her your wreath,” the elf said.

Lotte obediently took off the wreath and put it on her sister’s head.

“That’s good!” the elf was already standing nearby. He changed somehow. Dressed up. He became taller. And much prettier. His eyes were just shining.

“What happened to you?”

“You defeated them!”

“But what is to you?”

“That means I’m in charge now”.

“So what?”

“You helped me. I myself could not handle it”.

“I’m glad, but will you take me back. I myself can hardly find my way”.

“Oh, yes...” the elf hesitated slightly. “You see, the problem is I can’t let you go”.

Well, at least Lida has already left. No, she didn’t. She just disappeared. Only a wreath of nettles lay in the meadow where she had recently stood.

“What have you done to her?”

“Nothing, you only saw a ghost from the moonlight. The real Lida has already found herself a mate in my domain. She does not even remember that she came to us from people”.

“But I remember,” Lotte darted for the wreath, but the elf intercepted her. “You know, I’ve also been looking for a couple for a long time. But not a resigned old maid, but a clever dancer who will be able to plug even a flock of fairies into her belt”.

There was a red light in his eyes, like a fire in a meadow. He was no longer handsome, the features of a monster woke up in him. As she hadn’t noticed before, elves can be even more terrifying than vampires.

“You will not be able to intoxicate me with your fruit”.

“My kiss is no less dangerous than fruit.” He closed his long fingers around her burned wrists.

## Fight with a dream

I'm a princess. Grooms are obliged to fight for my hand. Such are the conditions in our country. Nothing can be done about them. Tradition is tradition. It doesn't matter how many kings have war elephants, knights and treasures as a gift for me. Each of the aspirants must take on the battle with my giant protector. Nobody knows that I will actually fight. And you can't defeat me. After all, a spell has been put on me. I kill and maim suitors one by one. Serves them right! There is nothing to marry a girl just because of her inheritance. What is the way to marry for profit and without love? Such suitors deserve a fair punishment. I go out to the lists, where tournaments usually take place, and enter the battle without any remorse. I know that I am much stronger and more agile than my opponents. It doesn't matter that they fought wars and I didn't. It is important that the most skilled knight of all existing is me. But I have a little black secret that no one knows about.

My father the king is pouting. After all, when he dies, I myself will rule the country. I won't have a husband, because no one can defeat me. And the condition that the groom must certainly go through the duel cannot be canceled in any way. The honor of the whole kingdom will suffer from this. The only thing that matchmakers can do is to put up some stronger opponent, for example, a giant or a magician. These tricks did not work with me either. I always conquer everyone. Every country can only dream of a queen like me. My father is angry with me, but he cannot do anything. He, too, begins to fear me, seeing how easily I defeat even the greatest warriors in battle.

When I become a queen, I will go to war to all nearby countries so that my kingdom grows due to the lands annexed to it by force. This is whispered to me by a creature who plans to become my advisor in the future.

Oh yeah, about this creature:

When a disgusting old man, a great sultan from across the sea, first wooed me, I fled from the castle and wandered through the black wastelands, where even the royal guards are afraid to look. Everyone just kept repeating how dangerous it was here, and that none of those who came here would return alive. Indeed, once, passing by in a carriage, I myself saw how people who entered these territories turn black and shrink before our eyes, turning into walking relics in minutes. Then such people can only be burned so that they do not infect others. This is what they do to them if they go beyond the line of the wasteland. After all, the infection from the wasteland spreads with the speed of a black wind. But only if someone brings it in. If no one goes there, then the epidemic remains within the dry land cracked. The cracks here are such that you can fall through them, like in a gorge. But I do not care! Better death than marriage to someone who is disgusting. I myself am a young girl of seventeen. Why should I be given, as a prize, to some old sultan or king? Better to get lost or die.

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