

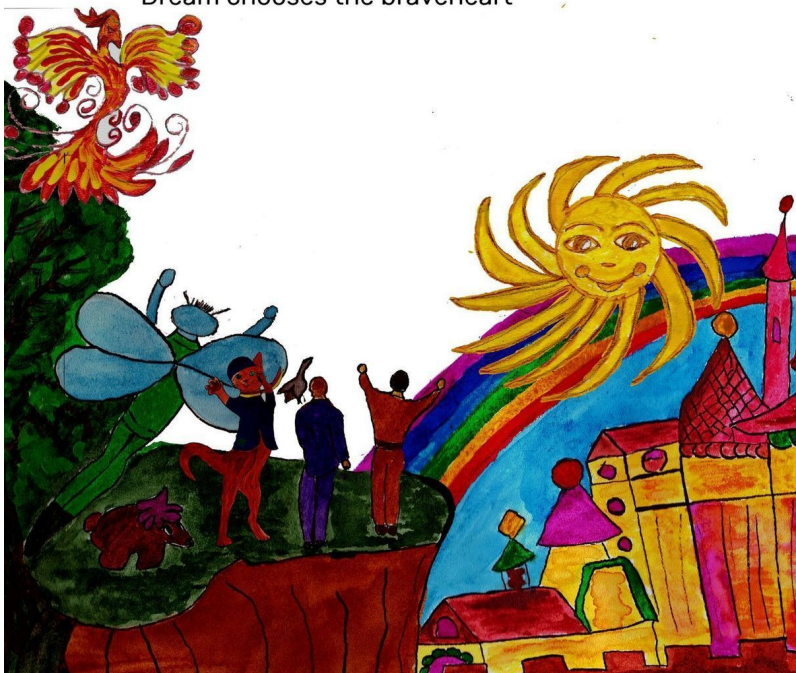


Natalia Isaeva



AZOURLAND

Dream chooses the braveheart



Natalia Isaeva
Azourland. Dream
chooses the braveheart

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Аннотация

Crown Prince Zlat and the country boy Khayat both dream of glory. Angry rock is inexorable, their meeting is inevitable. Which of them will catch luck by the tail: the prince or the beggar? On the way they are waiting for deft smugglers; heroes incur the wrath of the king of the sea; Monsters will chase them. Will they be able to go through all the turns of fate on the way to a dream?

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Azourland

Dream chooses the braveheart

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*Azourland is an island of fairy tales,
A real spirit of mischief.*

*Do not stand at the door, romantic,
Look into this region of magic.*

*Be polite, more polite with the heroes of these days,
Interesting meetings will be throughout the book.*

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Prologue

A long time ago the Heart was born on Earth. “Thump, thump, thump, thump,” the Heart begins to beat. It was hot, he suffered quite a bit from loneliness, he wanted to love, and once he found it, he was happily willing to fight for his beloved – a dream. The dream was... that’s another story. As soon as the Heart wanted to talk seriously with her about their feelings, she would joke and slip away.

She thought: “If I’m a dream and so beautiful, then the heart must obey me, I will decide when he is to beat and when to freeze.” The Heart, was hopelessly in love and promised to fulfil all her desires. The dream answered: “I want you, my love, to create for me a whole island of a fairy tale. On this island, anything I may desire will be fulfilled. I will invite guests and let anyone who wishes, reach its dream.”

“Oh, dream, this does not happen, desires can be fantastic and at times unreal,” answered the heart. “I want such an island,” the dream cried and stamped her foot. “I will not argue with you, my lady... so be it,” answered the heart.

A fairy tale island appeared on all maps of the world, it was Azourland, since then the heart of the island is beating at a will of the dream, and the dream, a barefooted girl with funny pigtailed sits on the seashore and welcomes guests.

Soon people, birds, animals, and sea dwellers learned about the wonderful island, each of them wanted to fulfil their dream, therefore they settled Azourland. They built cities, founded countries, loved and suffered for their dreams. Every day on the island someone had a wish come true. The dream claps and rejoices and the heart beats with it in time.

The days, years, and centuries passed by. The fairy tale island welcomed more and more new inhabitants, no matter if they were a bird or a man. Anyone from the island could fulfil its dream, such is the law in Azourland. The heart of the island and its beloved dream sometimes wondered at the strange desires of the inhabitants of the island, their aspirations and hopes.

Gradually the island began to develop its traditions, each of the countries on the island acquired its own identity. These changes liked the dream. She was trembling to meet every new desire and with pleasure performed them.

In the Wonderful Green Forest where people, birds and animals lived a tradition has developed and all significant events were included in the book *Chronicles of the Wonderful Green Forest*. The dream was very fond of reading this book in the evenings to the heart and they laughed together at the amusing adventures of forest animals.

As a reward for the book the dream gave to the Wonderful Green Forest an amulet – “The Sandglass of Time” and appointed the guardian of this watch, magician and sorcerer Khronos. The new amulet helped the inhabitants of the country

managed time. It was an honourable reward and a great responsibility. Residents of the Wonderful Green Forest after this gift have changed a lot, their life was now full of deep meaning, they had great figures and philosophers.

One of them became the leader elk, the first head of the Wonderful Green Forest. His descendants still remember him with pride and tell of his glorious exploits. A lot of things happened in the Wonderful Green Forest, but one of the most important things happened recently, the elk Chernobrov will tell us about it.

Chernobrov the elk came to visit the family of swans and their children, Sudarushka and Zakharchik. He went every year to visit his friends from the Fiery Country, he was impatiently awaited by two young swans. They were very fond of listening to the tales that Chernobrov told them.

Two families sat at the table with delicious food, they ate and drank and they decided to make each other happy with stories and fairy tales. The Elk Chernobrov was the first to take the floor.

PART 1

The Fiery Country

The neighbour of the Wonderful Green Forest was the Fiery Country. Its people's temper was hot, they liked to organise competitions and tournaments most of all. Who of them will jump further or climb a high mountain and the most favourite match they had was the game: "What is this? Guess."

The rules were simple: a thing was hidden in the trunk and it was locked with 6 locks one by one for 6 contestants so that no one could see what lay in the trunk. The chief judge was the ruler of the Fiery Country, the wisest Arlat and five witnesses who were chosen from the inhabitants.

People gathered from all four ends of the world on the square near the palace at noon, anyone who wanted could take part in the match.

It was necessary to ask questions to the owner of the outlandish thing and he could answer the question: "Yes or no." The one who first guesses what is hidden in the trunk wins in the match. If no one guesses, then the owner of the thing will win.

The only condition was to make a thing with own hands in order to show the skills. It was necessary to invent and make something that no one saw or knew in the Fiery Country.

After that, the owner of the outlandish thing received the title: “The Wisest Master of the Fiery Country”; the position of vizier for a year; and 100 druns from the state treasury. The druns are gold coins, where a fiery spark-amulet of the Fiery Country was depicted.



The druns

There haven't been new viziers in the country for five years, because all the participants in the tournaments lost, none of them

managed to sustain more than seven questions.

The wisest Arlat was in sorrow and he waited each year with hope, that there would be a new vizier and the wisest master at the tournament.

Guests from all over the country came to the contest this year and the only participant decided to cheat. He hid the living bird into the trunk and this violated the rules of the tournament.

When there were no more questions for the players and everyone was quiet in the joyful expectation of a miracle. The judges opened six locks, the trunk lid was lifted and the bird fluttered and flew away. Sighs of regret passed through the crowd, reproaches in deception. This bad participant tried to prove that he had made the bird himself, but no one believed him. Do not deceive your brothers, they feel lie in a mile. That grief-participant was beaten for his lie, he wanted to escape from the crowd that followed him and wash himself of rotten tomatoes.

The tale about Hayat, the inhabitant of the Fiery Country

Time passed. A young man, named Hayat, grew up in one village on the shore of the lake. He, like all children in the country, dreamed of the glory and title of “Wisest Master.” Of course, he thought that he had no talents. He tried to master the modelling on the potter’s wheel, made of wood, knit knots from ropes but nothing outstanding or surprising happened to make it, but Hayat was in a cheerful disposition, he wasn’t upset and did not lose his dreams.

He sat on the shore of the lake in his free time and admired the sunset and he dreamed that he had created such a useful and beautiful thing that would be needed in every house in their Fiery country.



The lake

He learned each year that no one had won in the tournament, the hope in his soul began to melt. He thought: “If all these clever people who live next to me could not invent and make something like that, how can I find strength and skills for this?”

Day after day he looked at the sunset and asked the Sun to send him a small clue: “How should he behave in order to win a match?” His thoughts were sincere and once the Sun responded to him.

Hayat heard a soft and mocking voice in his head: “Why do

you, Hayat, complain about your fate? You waste on moaning the strength, that you will not succeed. Go to town on the market square in front of the palace, find out how the competition is going. Listen, what questions are asked. See what the participants are doing.

You have to learn how to swim if you want to swim across the lake but you can run along the shore, everyone knows how to wail and only it will not be of any use to this.” Hayat was frozen from such speech. He realised that if you want something, you have to go towards your dream.

Hayat's journey to the capital of the Fiery Country

He went to the capital the next day. The capital met Hayat with the beauty of its white palaces, the cool of fountains, the singing of birds. Talkative girls ran through the streets. The smell of flowers was around their inhabitants.

Hayat was walking and thought that once upon a long time ago his country was a scorched desert, the roll-field was the master of this wasteland. Volcanoes in the East flooded the desert with fiery lava so that all living things perished in seconds until the great ancestors had extracted a fiery spark from the mouth of the main volcano of the Phartha volcano and had not enclosed it in a glass vessel.

Since then the fiery and deadly wind has changed into a warm breeze. Flowers blossomed and people began to live in the Fiery Country. Hayat thought: "After all, if each of his great ancestors thought that he would never manage to obtain a fiery spark, the eternal wasteland on the place of the Fiery Country would remain on the map of Azourland."

There were no participants in the competition this year. Residents stood in the square, waited and went to their homes disappointed. The Ruler Arlat was very sad because for several years none of his subjects could show skill and ingenuity.

In the evenings he looked at a fiery spark that shone like

a beacon on the main tower of the palace and hoped that changes would come to his country. The country will sigh, a fiery spirit of creative skill will fly over its inhabitants, which its people have known since ancient times.

Hayat spent several days in the capital. He looked to his relatives, visited his neighbours' relatives, handed gifts and presents to everyone and went back home.

His mood grew better day by day: after the trip, he became confident that he could realise the dream and not in order to become famous and get the title or be liked by neighbour girls, or brave his glory in the circle of friends. No, now this dream has become his air, his life, his connection with great ancestors with their power and glory. He himself became a dream.



Hayat

Hayat and the bull Oklush

Hayat returned to his usual life. He spent on the shore of the lake evenings and pondered what could be interesting for the inhabitants of his country to see, so that they were pleased and aroused surprise. His imagination painted bright images of fountains, squares, streets, the market square in front of the palace. In his hands, he usually kept a thin twig, which he picked up on the way to the lake. Hayat drove this twig along the wet sand, drew fountains and squares in the sand in his imagination.

A thought often arose in his head: “How nice it would be to draw a colourful drawing from his memories and show it to his neighbours. After all, my grandmother Nairi has never gone outside the village, she did not see the beauty of the capital’s palaces and fountains.”

Smooth waves lapped his drawings from the sand, destroying all his works without a trace.



The stones

One day Hayat looked at the shore of the lake and noticed that there were lots of coloured stones around him. They shone and gleamed in the sun, beckoning with their colours, but no one could solve their mystery. Hayat collected stones and began to consider, they were blazing in blue, green, red, orange and yellow colours.

It's strange, but in our village, no one uses or somehow apply these multi-coloured stones. Rarely children for the sake of fun throw them into the water, competing, who will throw more when they play into the 'frog'.

Hayat brought a few stones home. He often took them in his hands and noticed that the stones sometimes leave a colourful dust. If you rub them on clothes, then there were coloured stains on it, which quickly disappeared when they hit the water or crumbled. After some time, Hayat forgot about the stones because he had an occasion with him.

The spring has already come to the fields, it was time to plant a thurba. Thurba is a plant with large juicy fruits, similar to a turnip, from its fruits people in the village bake bread. The seeds of the thurba are tiny, so they are difficult to disperse in the field, in order to disperse the seeds correctly and evenly, they are spit out of the mouth along the furrow. In the Hayat's village, it was an honourable and important work. The seeder collected small slippery seeds in small portions into his mouth and spit them evenly along the arable furrow.

It was impossible to disperse the seeds with the hands because they slipped and woke up. It turned out "somewhere empty, but somewhere densely," the plants were uneven, the fruits were small and crooked. You will not get a good harvest from such a field.

Hayat took the position of the seeder. The field began to sow, Hayat was doing his job well, but he suddenly stopped, slipped on a wet hummock and flew down to the ground. He did not notice that next to him was the most butted bull of their village, it was Oklush. He was just harnessed to the plow.



Oklush and Hayat

Oklush was a bull with an unrestrained and self-willed temper, but strong and hardy, he worked one for three. So, while Hayat was flying down, he spits out the seeds that he had in his mouth and hit the bull directly into the eye.

Oklush jumped and howled in pain – he broke free and flew to Hayat. Hayat was frightened and ran from the bull, the bull did not stop until he drove Hayat to the tree. Hayat was sitting on a tree and could not get off it. The villagers were running up to the tree, trying to drive away the bull, but it was not possible. Oklush was furious and wanted to take revenge on the offender.

Only when it came dark, the bull managed to drive away from the tree and Hayat could get off it.

The next day the situation repeated, when the bull saw Hayat on the field, he again became furious and ran after him. Again, Hayat spent the whole day on the tree. The plowing stopped because the bull did not stop. All the villagers tried to pacify the bull all day long.

Hayat goes to the road

Hayat returned to his usual life. He carried out on the shore of the lake and he could see what was happening to him. His imagination was painted bright images of fountains, squares, streets, the market square in front of the palace. He usually kept a thin twig in his hands, which he picked up on the way to the lake. Hayat drove this twig along the wet sand, drew fountains and squares in the sand in his imagination.

The village leader decided how to deal with the bull and Hayat, the decision did not take long to wait. A convoy of merchants passed their village, which followed toward the Flying Rocks.

There was enough cloth for sale in the village, only the exit to the market square was postponed because of fieldwork. He decided to send Hayat with the convoy.

Hayat was supposed to take the cloth to one merchant in the city, to help him in trading in the market and to get the household utensils for the villagers and transfer it to the village with the next convoy.

Mindful of the history of the bull, the village leader strictly forbade Hayat not to appear in the village until the fall until the harvest, and by that time the bull will forget his offence.

What's to do? Hayat got ready for the journey, soon a merchant convoy arrived. Hayat took with him several multi-coloured stones from the lake just in case, hoping to find an

application for them. Hayat set off with an easy heart, the cloth of the villagers was excellent, it was a pleasure to trade them. The city was not far away and Hayat had more than once visited it.

After a few days, Hayat arrived with the goods to the merchant. On the first day of the trade, Hayat was very fortunate – he sold all the cloth, only a measured piece remained. Another day he spent in the bazaar, buying everything necessary for the villagers and negotiating with the convoys of merchants about the delivery of goods to the village. It took him two days.

“What’s to do?” Hayat thought. “You cannot go back; the village leader forbade you to return until the fall. There is much time ahead, he has already done his work. What should he do?”

That’s the way he thought, sitting on the square at the fountain he came to the idea: “Go on a trip, see other countries in Azourland. Suddenly he will find a craft that will allow him to surprise other people, win a contest ‘What is this? Guess’.”

No sooner said than done. Hayat bought at the market the things he needed and set off to the road to the Wonderful Green Forest. He heard many stories about this country. Such as the animals there can speak and the country is governed by the elk leader. This country is unusual, magical. Hayat thought that it was better not to find a place to see something new or to learn amazing craftsmanship.

Hayat's adventures in the Wonderful Green Forest

The weather was wonderful in summer, the sun shone brightly and called to take a trip.

Hayat had been going on the winding roads for several days, a good wind brought him coolness. He heard a stream rustling in front of him. After walking along the stream for few miles, it turned into a full-flowing river. Across the river stretched a quaint wooden bridge, on which a skilled master carved birds and forest animals. "This is the border of the Wonderful Green Forest," thought Hayat and stepped onto the bridge.

A flock of birds swirled over his head and sat on the railing of the bridge. They were falcons and hawks – guardians of the border of the Wonderful Green Forest. Their heads were decorated with metal helmets, forged to emphasise their significant and warlike appearance. The leader of the guardians was one of the falcons.

The leader looking attentively at Hayat, started to speak to him in the native language of Azouland.



Falkons

“Hello, traveller,” said the main falcon to Hayat, “you have decided to cross the border of the Wonderful Green Forest. And everyone who comes to our country must pass a test to show if he is good natured and has good intentions.

To pass this test you must have a light heart; do not hold grudges against the inhabitants of the Wonderful Green Forest. This is our law and we honour it from the beginning of time.

If you, the traveller, do not pass this test, then you must leave at once and have nothing to do with country.”

Hayat answered the Falcon: "I am ready to take the test; my intentions are good. I've heard so much about your wonderful country and I wanted to take a look at it for myself, we say in the Fiery Country: 'The best song that you sing yourself; the best thing that is done by you'."

"Then traveller," said the main falcon, guess this riddle:

*"It's red and furious,
Eats the forests, expels the animals.
Burns but it's afraid of water."*

Hayat thought for a moment then replied, "It's a fire, it's capable of destroying all life in its path,"

"Your answer has deemed you worthy for a traveller," said the falcon.

"So, remember, while you are a guest in our country, that an uncontrolled fiery temper burns everything in its path, leaves nothing alive, be afraid to get to its fiery impulses. Behave yourself peacefully and respectfully, warming all those who are next to you, like a flame in the hearth, continued the falcon."

"Give your name traveller, so that forest animals and birds can speak to you in the language of Azourland," the falcon asked.

Hayat responding, "My name is Hayat."

"Know, Hayat, that to seek shelter anywhere in our country, you will need to speak your name. You are considered equal to us and we considered you our brother.

In the Wonderful Green Forest, we consider money

superfluous, Mother Earth gives us food and shelter. We provide good service to each other instead of money.

Anyone who is a visitor or resident of our country will help animals and birds build huts and carve wood. For every good job you complete, food will be given,” said the falcon and added, “if you Hayat, agree with our laws, pass this bridge.”

Hayat passed the bridge, and the guardians flew into the clouds, from where they watched vigilantly beyond the borders of the Wonderful Green Forest. Hayat was surprised by such an interesting technique and his conversation with the main falcon.

He could now talk to the birds and forest animals of this magical land. He would like to explain to the bull Oklush, that he accidentally spat into his eye and did not want to offend him.

The beauty of the Wonderful Green Forest

Hayat walked through the woods and was surprised by its beauty. The forest seemed unusual and magical to him. In the Fiery Country the houses, the earth, the trees were coloured in red, yellow, ocher, orange. The Wonderful Green Forest was full of other colours.

The sky was blue overhead, the meadows and edges were green, here and there the wooden huts of forest animals came across. Bright and juicy fruits ripened on the branches of the trees. The meadows were dotted with flowers: bright blue cornflowers, white daisies, yellow dandelions, red poppies. Hard-working bees collected nectar, deer and roe deer grazing in the meadows. The animals welcomed Hayat, wished him luck and a wonderful journey in their country.

Hayat behaved kindly with the animals as the main falcon had told him. He met a young badger and helped him fix the roof of his house.

The badger started to cook dinner for Hayat. He went to his pantry for tasty white mushrooms, which he fried on the hearth with branches. They drank tea with raspberries and fir cones. Afterwards, the young badger treated Hayat with honey.

Honey was a special delicacy, it was eaten only on holidays in the Fiery Country. So, they spent an evening having pleasant

conversation. Hayat talked about his life in the village and asked the young badger about his traditions and customs in the Wonderful Green Forest.



The oak

The following morning Hayat said goodbye to the young badger and went on a journey through the Wonderful Green

Forest. After a while walking through the forest, he encountered an evergreen oak which was at the centre of an intersection of cross roads, and this intersection was at the centre of the Wonderful Green Forest.

The oak was so wide that it would take at least seven people wrap their arms around it. The sun shone brightly on the crown of the tree and its roots went deep down into the earth. In the morning the sun gave the branches of oak life-giving warmth, the earth gave its roots life-giving water, so the oak remained forever green.

During the autumn and winter seasons, it was warm in the meadow around the oak. Forest animals and birds in the very worst frosts were basking at his trunk. In its crown bright birds lived. Their feathers were painted in all colours of the rainbow and behind their tails were bright trails. Birds sang songs, their melodic trills penetrated into the very heart of any person.

Hayat and the keeper of the sandglass

Hayat stood and admired the oak tree. And then he heard a noise and rustling in the bushes:

“Where are these squirrels? It’s already morning and time to pick mushrooms and berries and they’ve disappeared. These are not squirrels, this is only a punishment for me. Why did I contract them? I’d be better contracting the hares. But no, I put my trust in these redhead squirrels. Break me thunder. Only troubles and misfortunes come to me from these squirrels.”

These words belonged to man, a century old, with a white beard. He was dressed in a green caftan, he had bunnies on his feet. The buttons of the caftan looked like strawberries. On his head, he wore a green cap with a yellow rim. The old man looked funny.

In his hands, he had a basket in which he collected strawberries in a meadow. Hayat could see that it was difficult to pick berries. The old man groaned as he bent to collect the berry. Sweat ran down from his cheeks.

“I’m a poor hundred-year-old old man picking berries alone without an assistant. There is no hope for squirrels, maybe someone will hurry to help me,” the old man wailed.

Hayat went out to the strawberry meadow and said quietly: “Hello, dear old man, let me help you in your business.”

“Sounded as if someone said something in my ear?” The old

man began to look around and around.

“That my friend was me. My name is Hayat,” the young man answered more loudly.

“Why are you talking so quietly, young man? As if you’re embarrassed? You need to speak confidently when you propose a good deal,” answered the old man and continued. “Hello, Hayat resident of the Fiery Country, I’ve been waiting for you a long time, it’s been a week since you came to the forest and I’ve been waiting for your arrival.

A wonderful forest is a magical land, all travellers come to the evergreen oak, no matter what way they go, from the West, even from the East. The travellers seek an answer for the hidden questions under the crown of the oak, illuminated by the sun, in its roots, which covered the entire forest. Sooner or later they will find the answer. If you are here Hayat, then you will find the answer.”

Hayat stood in thoughtfulness. “How does he know, about my dream to win in the tournament? What is this, a guess?” Hayat shrugged his shoulders and said in the customary manner to address the elders of Fiery Country, “Venerable elder, let your years last, and your life will be filled with rivers of honey, may I help you?”

“Of course, help me collect these strawberries. I’m old, my back is stiff. These redhead squirrels ran away somewhere. I wish fleas attacked them. I believed the stories that they are the best collectors of nuts, berries and mushrooms in the forest. They

showed me their own diplomas, records of harvesting nuts, but they have no discipline and none came to work this morning.”



The berries

Hayat took the basket from the old man and began to collect strawberries. He worked hard and the old man was sitting on the stump, watching him silently. An hour later the whole meadow was emptied and the ripe strawberries gathered filled the basket. They took the berries together to the old man's house.

The house stood on the North side of the evergreen oak. The house looks to be plain. When they approached it, the

door opened hospitably by its own. The house smelled of grass, mushrooms and berries. All the furniture was blue, there was a golden rocking chair, a large boiler hung above the hearth with unknown liquid boiling, yellow smoke rose above it.

Hayat saw many amazing and incomprehensible things, he opened his mouth to ask the old man: “What are these things for?” But the old man did not have time, gave him a bucket and sent to the lake for water to make tea.

On the way to the lake, Hayat pondered the events of the morning. With a smile he guessed that this old man was the famous magician and sorcerer of Azourland, Khronos the guardian of the sandglass, the main amulet of the Wonderful Green Forest.

It was said that Khronos was the same age as the evergreen oak and was famous for its wisdom, knowledge of magic and sorcery. The sandglass imparts it to foresight so he can look into the future, but he never does it, no matter how much you ask for it. Do not even ask because Khronos would become angry and he could cast a spell for you to grow donkey’s tail as a punishment. Many people turned to Khronos for advice, only he did not help everyone, but only those who were worthy of his help.

The squirrels' boasting

Squirrels ran on the shore of the lake. "One, two, three, four, ten, twenty. How many are you here?" Hayat could not count because the squirrels were spinning in front of each other, quarrelled, bragging about their tails.

"My tail is the best, see what a wool: soft, smooth and how the sun shines!" One of the other squirrels shouted.

"You're lying, you have a shabby tail. It would be better for you not to go to the venerable squirrel if you cannot see this truth. Mine on the other hand is brown-gold wool," answered another squirrel.

"You both do not understand anything about tails," interrupted the third squirrel, "since you cannot see that my tail is better than yours. Just look at this chocolate shade."

"Do you still ask whose tail is the best?" Squealed the fourth squirrel, "You all need to see Dr. Owl so that he will prescribe you a remedy for dementia, because you are not healthy, since you do not see, my tail is the best squirrel tail in the whole forest."

On the lake, there was a hubbub of squirrel voices. It was impossible to understand what was happening. Hayat stood, listened to the squirrels and decided not to interfere in squirrel quarrels. Hayat didn't have a tail and squirrel tails were all the same to him – fluffy and brown. Hayat did not understand these squirrel disagreements.

Then the quarrel became a fight. The squirrels rolled around, thrashed, tore the fur off the top of each other's bodies. The most vindictive of the squirrels tried to spoil the tail of a neighbour. Whatever the matter is, it is not known, only here a large white bear appeared on the meadow, named Grumbler. At that time, he was going for the water to the lake. Grumbler had a harsh temper, he could not stand noisy squirrels, so he scraped squirrels in a pile and threw them into the lake.



Grumbler

Every morning is the same. “And why the creator rewarded the squirrel with tails and such loud voices,” said the bear and raised his head to the sky, “if only the fleas attacked these squirrels. Who has the best tail? What’s the difference? As if

there are no other activities in the forest as only to measure the quality and size of tails?”

The squirrels with an offended look climbed out of the lake and wandered off to dry their tails. The bear took water and went back to his den. Hayat also got water and went to the house of Khronos.

Hayat's life in Khronos's guests

Khronos suggested Hayat live with him and help him in gathering berries, mushrooms and nuts. Hayat agreed. So, the days passed unhurriedly. During the day Hayat was busy harvesting and, in the evening, he spent time with Khronos in a pleasant conversation.

He learned much about the customs of forest animals and birds. Khronos told him about other countries of Azourland: Oceania and the Flying Rocks.

Hayat talked about his life in the village and his dream – to win in the tournament “What is this?” Khronos asked in detail about the rules of the tournament. Hayat told Khronos about the properties of multi-coloured stones and Khronos showed him a book, *Chronicles of the Wonderful Green Forest*.

Hayat could not read or write and had never seen a book before and was surprised that they recorded different events. Khronos promised to teach Hayat to this skill, and the lessons began.

First, Hayat learned to keep a goose feather in his hands and draw sticks, circles, squares. This really was a difficult skill for him to learn. He also taught him how to write letters and read syllables. In the Wonderful Green Forest, they say: “Obstinacy is your friend, who will give you a hand so that you will be a master of any science in Azourland.”

When Hayat learned to read, Khronos showed him his library.

What interesting and amazing books there were, every time Hayat read about the exploits and adventures of the heroes in the books, his imagination would capture the spirits in such colourful painted pictures. One day, Hayat drew a black and white drawing and complained to Khronos that in his imagination the picture was painted with colours, in fact, no one else saw a drawing other than black colour.

Khronos also became interested in the thought of using colours, because throughout Azourland there are no other colours except black.

From that day the idea to make coloured paintings began to boil in both their heads. They tried to use different plants, the bark of trees and other materials that were in the forest with no success. The paint did not stick, it would crumble or the colour turned out to be dirty.

For some time, they were forced to stop their experiments because of the events to follow in the Wonderful Green Forest.

The most useful tail

The squirrels did not cease to quarrel over their tails. All the forest animals that went to the lake in the morning were tired of watching how every day the squirrels measured their tails and make noise. The animals complained to the leader and he came to the lake to deal with the squirrel conflict.

Early in the morning forest animals gathered at the bank of the lake to watch the negotiations. The leader asked the squirrels to stop quarrelling. To this, the squirrels answered him, stating that he does not understand much of squirrel tails, because the leader has a small stump, and for him not to judge the beauty of the squirrel tail.



Forest animals

This behaviour did not please to the forest inhabitants. They

thought that the squirrels were conceited and even wanted to drive the squirrels out of the forest. The squirrels responded with a refusal to leave the forest, because the forest is their home and whoever disagrees can leave get out and live in the forest thicket behind a black strip.

The forest thicket was behind the black strip in the woods and was a dangerous and damned place where none of the animals dare to go.

The leader elk consulted with Khronos and invited the squirrels to hold the election of the best squirrel tail. The rules of the election have been established. The squirrel, who takes part in the contest, had to promote its tail in order to persuade the voters to vote for them. A prize was created for the winner of the elections – a squirrel with the best tail would be inscribed in *the Chronicle of the Wonderful Green Forest* and all other squirrels would have to accept this for one year, until the next election.

Squirrels scattered around their huts to prepare for the election with the satisfaction, to write laudatory speeches about the beauty of their tail. This however, added more problems because now the foxes were outraged. They also had beautiful tails and they also wanted to get into the election.

The leader elk announced the election: “The best tail election is open to everyone.” Anyone who had a tail could take part in it. This news angered the squirrels, they wanted to withdraw their candidacies from the election because this election was only to include the squirrels.

After this complaint from the squirrels, other animals began to laugh at them and said that the squirrels were frightened by the free competition between the tails because they know their tails are of little value, they do not shine with beauty, they do not bring any benefit to the forest community.

After such news, the squirrels united and began throwing items from the trees onto the other animals. Forest animals responded to the squirrels by fighting and getting into brawls, resulting in damaging their tails.

This disgrace was repeated exactly until the leader elk decided that the election of the “Best Tail” was renamed into the election of “The Most Useful Tail for Society.”

After this announcement, all the beasts were confused and saddened: “No one could come up with a good use for a tail in society?” But the fighting in the forest stopped. Beasts began to look for the advantages of their tails. Discussions, whose tail is most useful, began in the morning and did not stop until sunset.

A coalition of foxes was formed in the forest. They believed that their tails were the most useful for society because in the winter they sweep their tracks with them, that is, they clean up the trails. In the elections, they considered themselves to be clear favourites. This news blew up the forest society, the squirrels again strongly resented this and could not find any benefit for their tails.

All these tailed games made the forest dwellers so exhausted that the leader elk announced a month of silence before the

election. Anyone who talks about the tail of his or someone else was declared disqualified. His candidacy would be removed from the elections and he would not be allowed to vote on the election.

So hard bans the leader elk was forced to take after the incident with thrushes. This thrush only returned to the forest from the guests. On a visit he spent several months, so he did not know about all these skirmishes and fights in the woods because of the tails.

Upon returning home, this thrush perched on the branch of a tree and sang a funny song about the tails, paws and mustache that he had heard at a party. He did not manage to finish the first verse, as he was captured by squirrels and foxes, who strictly observed the ban on the leader elk: “Do not say the word ‘*TAIL*’ in the forest.”

Although, ardent supporters of their tails, squirrels and foxes organised two secret societies. These societies gathered at night to discuss how to shame their tailed rivals.

And here in broad daylight, some thrush dares to declare about the tail, such a violation of the order did not allow anyone in the forest.

Thrush did not have time to recover, as he was put under house arrest, and the falcon guard watched him round the clock. Thrush tried to justify himself, saying that he knew nothing about the ban, but his protests were greeted with a whistle, a hooting and a statement: “That there is nothing to sing dirty tailed songs in a decent society.”

A ground patrol from a pack of wolves was launched along all forest paths, and falcon guard flew in the air. Forest residents were preparing for the elections, which were scheduled for the day of the harvest celebration.

Pre-election race

Hayat and Khronos were delighted with the news, suggesting that everything in the forest was getting better, and continued their experiments with paints. Hayat guessed to pound the multicoloured stones, mix the powder with droplets of nut butter. Such paint was easily smeared on thin paper, but after drying, the paper curled and crumbled. Khronos suggested painting the fabric and Hayat remembered that in his travel bag remained a piece of cloth. The paint fell well on the fabric but only when applied with the fingers. This turned out to be very inconvenient to draw. Hayat tried to draw with thin twigs, but they tore and spoiled the canvas.

The forest did not subside. The nerves of the election participants were strained to the limit. Despite the ban on mentioning anything about the tail, there were rumours that the secret society of squirrels split into two halves. One half of the squirrels wanted to provoke a fox pack. In their opinion, it was necessary to get foxes to violate the 'tailed ban', so that they are banned from participating in elections, then the squirrels will get rid of their worst rival.

The other half of the squirrels advocated that the squirrels should not do this and then all the squirrels are to be disqualified. However, the opinion of all the squirrels converged in one that they must certainly win at any cost so as not to shame their

whitish honour.

One squirrel from the camp of provocateurs had told her neighbour about the tree that they could not see the foxes winning the election and twisted an indecent figure of three fingers on a paw (in the common people it is a very bad gesture). The squirrel did not consider that her neighbour, the magpie, was the main person to spread gossip in the forest.

The magpie was fascinated by such stunning news and visited the clan of a squirrel enemy – a flock of foxes. Magpie told about the artful, insidious plan of squirrels to discredit foxes.



Foxes

In response, the foxes staged a silent procession along the main forest trails and so tails, that in the morning they cleaned and cleared the roads from the fallen leaves. Once again proving to the entire forest society the value of its tail. After that, the foxes strengthened their status and were considered the first favorites to win. Already every second of the forest residents was ready to vote for them in the elections.

The leader elk did not comment on this event, because the

foxes did not violate the ban, and cleaned up the forest – it is even encouraged, although he had the idea that the actions of the foxes fall under hidden propaganda. Only the truth is which is not forbidden, it is allowed.

After the fox's speech a wave of rumours swirled around the squirrels, suggesting they would stage a coup with a secret society, provocateurs and rebels pacified. A blatant squirrel was put under house arrest. Her neighbour, a magpie, told her friends that this 'talkative' squirrel, when she saw the fox procession, fainted; It was hardly pumped out by other squirrels and at home, she beats her muzzle against the wall and sends flea curses to the whole fox family.

In response foxes smuggled into the forest some moth insects, which spoiled the whites of the tail, leaving huge bald spots. The moths were caught by the falconers and deported beyond the boundaries of the Wonderful Green Forest. During the interrogation, the moths did not admit how they got into the forest, because they were paid a whole mug of honey.



The moths

Foxes let out a rumour that someone who encroaches on their honour with their words or actions will deal with the flock of moths. How the foxes had so much honey was the real question. Only how not to believe to this fox clan, if in trickery they have no equal.

Squirrels gnawed all their claws on their paws, but provocation against the fox stopped. At a meeting of a secret society, the squirrels decided that the enemy must be beaten by his own weapon, that is, by cunning. A new secret plan was urgently

developed at the headquarters of the squirrel.

Contract promises

Hayat and Khronos sat on the threshold of the house and discussed their problem with applying paint to the canvas when a squirrel delegation appeared on the threshold. Khronos, as much, opened his mouth in amazement when he saw on his doorstep these shameless werewolves and the main instigators of the riots in the Wonderful Green Forest.

The squirrels took advantage of his astonishment and read the following petition: “According to the agreement that the squirrels and Khronos signed at the beginning of the summer, Khronos undertakes to help them, the squirrels, their advice in any difficult situation, no matter what squirrels they get, so Khronos is obliged to help the squirrels to win ‘Tailed elections’.”

Khronos was very surprised by the petition and the behaviour of the squirrels themselves. But aloud said: “I need time to think, I’ll give you an answer tomorrow.”



The contract

In the furrows of squirrels, indignant murmurs and cries were heard, but Khronos was adamant. One of the most hysterical squirrels even started rolling on the floor, only she was immediately dragged from the eyes by other squirrels. On this note, the squirrel delegation was forced to retire.

Hayat remained silent and waited for his mentor Khronos to tell him, but he, like water in his mouth, typed the whole evening in silence around the hearth. Khronos was pondering about something...

With the first rays of the sun, there were squirrels, their mood was decisive, but they were afraid of approaching Khronos' house

without permission. Khronos, as if nothing had happened, went out on the porch, stretched, greeted the squirrel and went with a bucket to the lake for water.

The squirrels followed him, but they were afraid to ask about his decision. Khronos brought water, made his tea and turned to the squirrels:

“Did I understand correctly, dear squirrels, that you, at last, remembered the agreement that we agreed upon at the beginning of the summer?”

The squirrels nodded in agreement.

“As far as I remember, dear squirrels, that according to this agreement your squirrel clan had to help me in harvesting.”

The squirrels again nodded in agreement.

“In the contract, it was said that you, squirrels will have to collect berries, mushrooms and nuts at my request, carry out any of my assignments.”

The bravest squirrel replied: “Yes.”

“I will help you if you fulfil your part of the contract,” said Khronos and grinned at his beard, “so you must gather 20 squirrels of ceps and dry them, 15 raspberry baskets in prickly bushes, 5 bags of walnuts. Nuts stuck, cores in a mortar crush, squeeze out the nut oil.”

The squirrels began to resent such a difficult task and the amount of work. They did not negotiate such slavish conditions at the beginning of the summer. In response to these exclamations of squirrels, Khronos objected to them that it was also a difficult

task to help win elections because everyone understands that the fox will win. At the mention of the worst enemy, the squirrels gnashed their teeth.

Khronos laughed and invited the squirrels to terminate the agreement by mutual consent. The squirrels conferred and decided to fulfil the task of Khronos.

In the clearing the work was boiling to make everything, the squirrels called all their relatives. Khronos walked between them and checked the quality of mushrooms, berries and chuckled.

Squirrels worked for two weeks, not interrupted by day and night. When the work was finished, they could hardly stand on their paws. All works were performed with excellent quality; therefore, the contract obligations were fulfilled by the squirrels.

Khronos ordered the election of one squirrel from the squirrel clan, which would represent all the squirrels in the elections. Tomorrow morning, he will wait for her to visit.

Squirrels must fulfil one more condition – to sit and wait for the election to begin, if at least one of the squirrels violates this obligation or again takes up a provocation, then Khronos will not fulfil his promise, and then it is already clear to the squirrels that there is no victory.

The next morning the squirrel, which the squirrel clan had chosen, came to the house of Khronos. He met the squirrel, closed the door behind her, lowered the curtains on the windows, no matter how hard they tried to pry and hear that there were other squirrels in the house of Khronos, they did not get anything

done.

From the chimney stacked yellow smoke. “He must be conquered,” the troubled squirrels concluded and dispersed to their homes. There was a week left before the elections. Squirrels ran to the house of Khronos every day to see how things were going, but they did not find out.

Adventures of the cat Sigalt

Three days before the contest, such a devastating event occurred that stirred the entire forest community, holding the elections was in danger, and the squirrels had nothing to do with it.

March cat, named Sigalt, illegally procured valerian infusion. “Here’s the brat!” There were rumours that this was somehow related to the foxes, but there were no facts, there was no evidence.

“Is this where the guards looked?” This question did not leave the mouth of the forest community. “Valerian infusion is forbidden in the Wonderful Green Forest. Everyone knows what drunken wild cats are capable of! What do we pay our taxes for? Disturbances were experienced in every herd. Predators cannot provide us with security and order on the paths. Where did the birds look, if anyone can bring this poison to our forest? Smuggling Valerian! Where does this world go? But what about the vaunted custom of birds to check every traveler on the border and look for violations from a bird’s-eye view?”

The wolves and falcons who served as guards in the Wonderful Green Forest had only to clank their teeth and click their beaks when they heard these disturbances.

So, the March cat, named Sigalt, three days before the election, brought valerian infusion and smuggled it in. After that,

he imagined himself, at least, a tiger, and ran along all the forest paths with shouts: "I am a terrible Sigalt cat. My tail is the best tail in the world! It works like a compass, wherever I want, I twist there, and I can predict the weather. And if I want, I will send you hail and a fierce wind."

The behaviour of the cat did not fit into any stereotype. This wild cat molested all the ladies and fought with a ferret who stood up for his wife. Sigalt punched him in the face. The ferret did not dodge, fell from the tree, and the cat continued to pester the lady. He tried to give her valerian infusion. He promised to take her on a paradise trip to Oceania.

When the guards, wolves and falcons tried to arrest him, he showed the wonders of gymnastics, with the cat's ease he eluded their nets.

The cat violated all existing prohibitions in the wonderful green forest and almost ripped off the election, mentioning its tail, be it damned.

Such a disgrace has not been since the times of the great opposition between predators and herbivores. To solve this confrontation, the elk proposed to solve the 'food question' between predators and herbivores in a peaceful way. For which he was unanimously elected the first elk-leader.

He proposed to introduce food taxes for herbivores. From now on, every herd handed over milk, and birds discarded eggs, people baked cakes. These products were shared by the inhabitants of the forest. The bees could barter honey. (It was

considered a special delicacy since all the animals had a sweet tooth.)

Pie, eggs and milk were transmitted to predators. For this, the carnivores did not touch anyone in the Wonderful Green Forest, guarding its borders and internal order. In order to satisfy their hunting instincts, each predator, on reaching the age of majority, received a hunting license from the leader moose.

It was possible to hunt only in the forest thicket beyond the black line. Who lived there no one knew. The predators kept silence, but other animals noticed that sometimes not all wolves returned from hunting, and some on their return sat in holes and healed wounds. Doctor Owl has seen many such wounds but he also kept silence.

It was rumoured, that one of the hares saw something in the thicket behind the black line, but he was famous for his foes, and as they say: "Fear has large eyes, and the fearful hare is even more so." In general, no one believed the hare's assurances that terrible monsters live in the thicket. You never know that he dreamed of fear.

So, the March cat was not caught and put under arrest. Definitely, good luck on that day was on the side of the cat, as if they were drinking the infusion of valerian, and not the cat. The forest society watched the whole day, as the cat Sigalt deftly left the chase, while still having time to sing bawdy songs about the forest guards; hint to the inhabitants of the forest that it is necessary to elect him as the main guardian of order, as if he

alone is worth all of them.

Wolves and falcons, already, roared from such insults. Together, they drove the cat into a trap. While he was being led to the place of arrest, he shouted to the ferret's wife that he would return for her and steal her, because he was in love and ready to marry, which he admired the romantic ladies.

At night, he undermined and escaped from arrest. It was again rumoured that the fox had helped him to hide the truth about Valerian smuggling.



Sigalt

In the morning, the ferret, on the shutters of his house, saw a paw print of a cat and a rose with a pinned note: “I will love you forever...”

The ferret’s wife was flattered by such attention from the romantic, rebel and hero – the March cat. For a whole morning, she sighed on the porch and looked at the rose.

She was secretly envied by other ladies who did not have such romantic and brave admirers.

The ferret went with the complaint to the authorities, as the injured party, demanding compensation for moral damage. He did not get to the authorities, because the ferret clan decided to stop its attempts to raise this issue before the elections.

The ferrets were afraid to run into the fox, so they locked the ‘injured’ ferret in his house and gave him soothing herbs, reminding the ferret of his duty and duties to the clan. And it was also known from reliable sources (this version was distributed by the gossip magpie) that the March cat left the territory of the Wonderful Green Forest by a secret path. I wonder who showed him this secret path? Inflate the international scandal ferret clan afraid.

The whole forest was buzzing with news. The guards could not find the March cat, which again caused public discontent. In this turmoil, flew three days before the election.

The Election Day of the most useful society's tail

The elections were prepared thoroughly. On the clearing near the lake, they set up stands with benches. Each campaign headquarters was supposed to nominate one candidate from its clan. The commission headed by the elk-leader monitored the observance of order. Guests from other countries came to the Wonderful Green Forest. A dragon arrived from the country of the Flying Rocks, an octopus was expelled from Oceania. Many animals and birds were interested in the 'tail question'.

The clear favourites to win were clan foxes. The Foxes, taking advantage of their position, organised their own fan club and occupied the right tribune. From this rostrum came laughter, witty jokes. Foxes clearly celebrated the coming victory and the shame of the clan of squirrels.

Squirrels gloomy and sad sat on the left podium. Their hopes of victory melted away every minute. Khronos rejected all their pleas, although they failed to hint at the usefulness of their tail, to find out something.

Many squirrels took with themselves smelling salts, the most impressionable got the poison of fire toads, so that if they lost, they would be poisoned before everyone's eyes, just not to see their shame.

Poisonous toads, who traded their poison for strawberries,

were not fools either. They gave out the expired poison, realising that the squirrels in the tail of the tail are capable of everything, and who then needs these proceedings with the authorities if the squirrels lose. By and large, the toads did not believe in the victory of the squirrels and slipped them inactive poison. Squirrels did not understand poisons.

The central rostrum was occupied by animals who do not take part in the elections, and people who, as we know, have no tail. The election commission consisted of a herd of elks who also did not participate in the elections.

The election rules were as follows: a candidate for 'the most useful tail for society' made a speech, then he demonstrated the benefit of his tail. The commission followed the rules. The central tribune voted, and people counted votes. Thus, the animals observed honesty and truthfulness of calculations.

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