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FRENCH LEGENDS



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Abelard and Heloise

The touching story of the love of Abelard and Heloise has found its way into Breton legend as a tale of sorcery. Abelard was a Breton. The Duke of Brittany, whose subject he was born, jealous of the glory of France, which then engrossed all the most famous scholars of Europe, and being, besides, acquainted with the persecution Abelard had suffered from his enemies, had nominated him to the Abbey of St Gildas, and, by this benefaction and mark of his esteem, engaged him to pass the rest of his days in his dominions. Abelard received this favour with great joy, imagining that by leaving France he would quench his passion for Heloise and gain a new peace of mind upon entering into his new dignity.

The Abbey of St Gildas de Rhuy was founded on the inaccessible coast near Vannes by St Gildas, a British saint, the schoolfellow and friend of St Samson of Dol and St Pol of Leon, and counted among its monks the Saxon St Dunstan, who, carried by pirates from his native isle, settled on the desolate shores of Brittany and became, under the name of St Goustan, the patron of mariners.

St Gildas built his abbey on the edge of a high, rocky promontory, the site of an ancient Roman encampment, called Grand Mont, facing the shore, where the sea has formed numerous caverns in the rocks. The rocks are composed chiefly of quartz, and are covered to a considerable height with small mussels. Abelard, on his appointment to the Abbey of St Gildas, made over to Heloise the celebrated abbey he had founded at Nogent,



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near Troyes, which he called the Paraclete, or Comforter, because he there found comfort and refreshment after his troubles. With Nogent he was to leave his peace. His gentle nature was unable to contend against the coarse and unruly Breton monks. As he writes in his well-known letter to Heloise, setting forth his griefs: "I inhabit a barbarous country where the language is unknown to me. I have no dealings with the ferocious inhabitants. I walk the inaccessible borders of the stormy sea, and my monks have no other rule than their own. I wish that you could see my dwelling. You would not believe it an abbey. The doors are ornamented only with the feet of deer, of wolves and bears, boars, and the hideous skins of owls.

I find each day new perils. I expect at every moment to see a sword suspended over my head."

It is scarcely necessary to outline the history of Abelard. Suffice it to say that he was one of the most brilliant scholars and dialecticians of all time, possessing a European reputation in his day. Falling in love with Heloise, niece of Fulbert, a canon of Paris, he awoke in her a similar absorbing passion, which resulted in their mutual disgrace and Abelard's mutilation by the incensed uncle. He and his Heloise were buried in one tomb at the Paraclete. The story of their love has been immortalized by the world's great poets and painters. An ancient Breton ballad on the subject has been spoken of as a "naïf and horrible" production, in which one will find "a bizarre mixture of Druidic practice and Christian superstition." It describes Heloise as a sorceress of ferocious and sanguinary temper. Thus



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can legend magnify and distort human failing! As its presentation is important in the study of Breton folklore, I give a very free translation of this ballad, in which, at the same time, I have endeavoured to preserve the atmosphere of the original.

THE HYMN OF HELOISE

O Abelard, my Abelard,

Twelve summers have passed since first we kissed.

There is no love like that of a bard :

Who loves him lives in a golden mist!

Nor word of French nor Roman tongue,

But only Brezonek could I speak,

When round my lover's neck I hung

And heard the harmony of the Greek,

The march of Latin, the joy of French,

The valiance of the Hebrew speech,

The while its thirst my soul did quench

In the love-lore that he did teach.

The bossed and bound Evangel's tome

Is open to me as mine own soul,

But all the watered wine of Rome

Is weak beside the magic bowl.



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The legend of Ys

In the early days of the Christian epoch the city of Ys, or Ker-is, was ruled by a prince called Gradlon Meur, which in Celtic means 'Gradlon the Great.' He ruled over the kingdom of Cornouailles in the West of Brittany. He was renowned for his military victories, and after a war with one of the Nordic countries, he met a beautiful Scandinavian princess, who was seen as a witch, but he was determined to take her for his wife. She offered him a beautiful horse, called Morvach. Having spent some time in Scandinavia, he returned home to Brittany. During the voyage home, his wife gave birth to a daughter, but she died in the process. Because the daughter was born at sea, she was called Dahut, and she became a woman of the sea.

Gradlon started a long period of mourning, and he directed all his love and devotion to his daughter. Gradlon became a saintly and pious man, wanted to live peacefully. He also paid more attention to the needs of his people. He met a hermit one day in the forest and he became converted to Christianity. It was a time when churches and cathedrals were being constructed all over the country. He appointed Saint Corentin in Quimper as his counsel to help him reign in a pious manner, and acted as patron to Gwrenol , founder and first abbe of the first monastery built in Armorica. All was well for Gradlon, except that his daughter refused to accept religious



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instruction. She preferred to listen to the ocean, rather than the speech of a bishop. Gradlon loved his daughter too much to oblige her to convert, and left her follow her own path, much to the dismay of Saint Corentin.

As time passed, Dahut became a strikingly beautiful woman, but with each day, she became more and more carefree, provocative and proud of it... She also tired of religion, and became increasingly bored with it. She became so bored that she asked her father to build her her very own city, which just happened to be the same area where she loved playing as a child.

At first, Gradlon refused, but then gave in, much to the chagrin of Saint Corentin - who repeatedly advised him against doing so - and built the city in secret for his daughter.

One day, Gradlon led his daughter to this sacred place, and she stood there rather perplexed to contemplate this magnificent white city, the most beautiful place in the world.

Thus was born the City of Ys where Gradlon and Dahut settled in. Unfortunately, this paradise was anything but a virtuous city. It was dominated by the seven deadly sins, it gained a reputation for debauchery. The merchants became stinking rich by attacking merchant vessels which passed by from other countries. Saint Corentin was far from happy. He put pressure on Gradlon to build a Cathedral in his city.



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Gradlon did so, in spite of the protests of his daughter, and her angry outbursts. But the biggest cathedral in the entire kingdom remained empty. Despite the best efforts of Gwenolé, they never manage to fill it for more than one day. He warned Gradlon that the Gods' patience was running out, but the population were not interested. He tried to get Gradlon to get involved and act, but he was becoming old, and weaker by the year.

The notoriety of the city had extended across the entire continent, and princes from all the kingdoms around came to court Dahut, renowned for her beauty. Dahut was only too happy to have their attention, every evening there would be a banquet, and she would decide which knight she would spend the night with. Her servants gave the chosen knight a mask, so that he would not be recognised when he went to see the princess. But this mask was bewitched, and at daybreak, it would strangle the unlucky person who wore it. A man dressed in black, was ordered to remove the body of the victim, and drop it in the chasm of Huelgoat, as an offering to the sea.

One evening, however, a magnificent handsome, bearded prince, dressed in red, who pretended that he came from the limits of the kingdom, arrived in the Princess' court in the City of Ys. He resisted the attacks of the Princess and she fell under his charm. She was so much under his spell, that she did nothing unless her prince agreed to it. She became a slave to his love, and for the City of Ys, things went from bad to worse.



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Besides being a religious man, Gradlon was a prudent prince, and defended his capital of Ys from the invasions of the sea by constructing an immense basin to receive the overflow of the water at high tide. This basin had a secret gate, of which the king alone possessed the key, and which he opened and closed at the necessary times. He kept the key on a chain around his neck at all times.

Dahut, who on one occasion while her father was sleeping gave a secret banquet to her lover, in which the pair, excited with wine, committed folly after folly. Her lover convinced her to give him the keys to the city, and ordered her to go and steal the key from her father whilst he was asleep. She crept into her sleeping father's chamber she detached from his girdle the key he guarded so jealously but then she saw that this prince was, in fact, the Devil, and before she could do anything, the Devil had disappeared, and all of the lock gates were opened. The water immediately rushed in and submerged the entire city.

King Gradlon was awakened by St Gwenolé, who commanded him to flee, as the torrent was reaching the palace. He mounted his horse, and, taking his daughter behind him, set off at a gallop, the incoming flood washing around the horse's fetlocks. The torrent was about to overtake and submerge him when a voice from behind called out: "Throw the demon you are carrying into the sea, if you don't want to die." Dahut at that moment fell from the horse's back into the water, and the torrent immediately stopped its course. Gradlon reached Quimper safe.



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and sound. The city was now submerged though and disappeared for ever.

Dahut did not die, however. She became a mermaid, and was known as Morgane. The souls of the city could not be saved though. They were cursed, condemned to err in a devastated underwater city. For them to be saved, a survivor had to agree to go to the submerged cathedral and receive the mass of the priest of the ghosts.

If you should ever go to Douarnenez one day, on the day of spring tide in March, look out to sea off the coast of the bay. When the sea is at its lowest, you will see the cross on the spire of the cathedral poking out of the water, the last relic of the city is visible only once a year.



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The Story of Merlin and Viviane

In the heart of the Breton countryside, lies a mystical forest, a place of legends...

Come with me, and I'll take you on a journey to the legendary home of kings, magicians, fairies and much more...

Welcome to the enchanted Forest of Brocéliande...

This is Merlin... He was a master of disguise, and a famous wizard in Breton legend. He was the advisor to King Arthur, and his knights of the round table, and he was known for his amazing wisdom.

Meet Viviane... She was the daughter of the Lord of the Manor in Brocéliande. She lived by the lake. Her father had met a fairy and gained her affection, and the fairy had promised the Lord that their daughter would fall in love with the wisest man in the world, and that he should grant her all her wishes, but they would never be able to force her to accept his wishes. One fateful day, Viviane was lying down near the fountain of Barenton when she saw Merlin for the first time. Merlin smiled and said „hello“, but started to walk away.

Viviane was not willing to let him leave so easily. She was curious and wanted to talk to him. She wished him happiness and honour (as people did in those days!)

He heard her beautiful voice, and turned around, captivated... He had never been moved this way by a fair maiden.



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Her asked her name, and thus began the first conversation. Merlin said:

„I am returning to my master, who teaches me magic. He has taught me to build a castle before a man could count to 20, and fill it with soldiers. I could make a river flow next the spot where you lay. I can call on spirits and see into the future“

Viriane was amazed by Merlin.

„I wish I could share your wisdom.“ She was curious to discover the hidden talents that she had inherited from her fairy mother. „Teach me your secrets and I will pledge my love to you.“

Merlin accepted, and traced mystical characters in the grass. Almost instantly, these characters came to life in the forest. A castle appeared with a beautiful garden, and a carnival began before their eyes.

Viriane asked him:

„Tell me Merlin, how did you do it?“

But magicians don't like to reveal their secrets... „I'll teach you in good time,“ he said...

He then made the castle disappear, but kept the garden for Viriane to enjoy.

They made a pact to meet one year later in the Joyous Garden, that he had created in the forest. Viriane had waited patiently for him to return, and absence had certainly made the heart of Merlin grow fonder.

He had fallen in love with her.

She kept on asking him to reveal how he could create such magical things. She wanted to know three things:

- How did he make water flow in a dry place?
- How did he take different forms at the drop of a hat?



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- How could someone be made to fall asleep by someone else? Merlin was suspicious, but Viviane explained:

„I want to put a spell on my parents. If they knew I was with you, they would kill me“

Merlin told her what she needed to know. They spent eight blissful days together in the Joyous Garden.

He left, but came back when the sweet briar roses were in bloom. Viviane knew that she had to keep Merlin for herself. She knew he was old really, even if his appearance was young and handsome and she felt sad. She asked Merlin for one more magic secret. But Merlin knew already what she was going to ask about and had a sad face.

„Why are you sad?“ asked Viviane.

„My fate worries me“ replied Merlin.

„It was predicted in the stars a long time ago, that I would meet a girl who would imprison me for the rest of my life...and I don't have the power to refuse your requests.“

Viviane gave him a huge hug and said: „Why can't you be with me always? I have left my parents to be with you, and you have all my thoughts and desires“

Merlin was so emotional that agreed to her last wish. She asked him to tell her how she could always keep him near her, and keep them bound by their love. He told her how she could make him a prisoner of their love for ever.

That evening, when Merlin laid down to rest, Viviane waited for her lover to fall asleep, and walked around him nine times, waving her cloak above his head. She whispered the words that Merlin had told her. When he awoke, Merlin found himself in the Joyous Garden with Viviane once more.

Viviane turned to Merlin and whispered to him:



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„You are mine forever. You can never leave me now...” Merlin acknowledged that it was his desire to remain with her for the rest of his life.

With that, he left the world of men, and became the eternal companion for Viriane.

Love had triumphed over Wisdom.



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GREEK LEGENDS



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The Legend of Apostle Andrew

Cypriot tradition holds that a ship which was transporting Saint Andrew went off course and ran aground. Upon coming ashore, Andrew struck the rocks with his staff at which point a spring of healing waters gushed forth.



Using it, the sight of the ship's captain, who had been blind in one eye, was restored. Thereafter, the site became a place of pilgrimage and a fortified monastery stood there in the 12th century, from which Isaac Comenius negotiated his surrender to Richard the Lionheart.

In the 15th century, a small chapel was built close to the shore. The main monastery of the current church dates to the 18th century.



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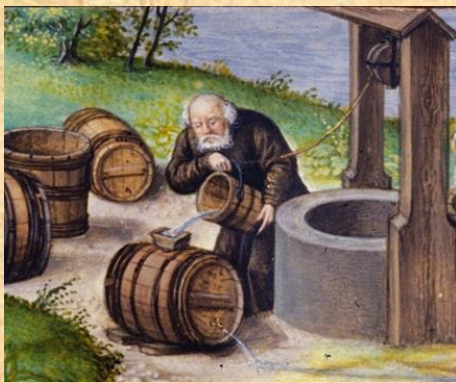
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Did people drink water in the Middle Ages?

One of the oddest myths about the Middle Ages is that people did not drink water but only wine, ale or some other kind of beverage.



The truth is that the water was infected and so many avoided to drink it. Many where however the water recourses which had clean water, but only the privileged had access and some farmers in the country. Also many used to dilute water with wine.



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Fountain of Youth

The source of youth is a legendary source that was believed to have given youth to anyone who drank her water. The initial versions of the myth are not known, except some blocks in Spanish chronicles who managed to maintain the myth.



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Robin Hood

Robin Hood is a figure which is known that „he stole from the rich and gave it to the poor“ and that he fought injustice and tyranny.

Some claim that the origin of this legend come from real illegal people or from their stories ,like the one from Hereward the feeble ,the one from Eustace the monk and William Wallace .



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The right of "First Night" was real.

The virgin birth appeared initially as a legal term in Byzantium in the 12th century and was related to women's marriage law.

Later, the urban myth developed that in the Middle Ages, local rulers had the right to "the first night", with virgin couples of couples who had just married.

This reputation has spread widely in France in the 19th century, but historians later state that there are no reports of fetal-throat.



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The Vikings wore horn helmets

The fierce people from Scandinavia never wore horn helmets.

The capable warriors who believed in eternal life were fighting with axes, hammers and other less sophisticated weapons.

The shield was necessary - but not the helmet, as it would delay them and limit their visibility.

The Vikings have gone through history as a wild people with light colors and characteristic helmets with horns on their heads because they were imagined by Scandinavian artists of the 19th century.



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In the Middle Ages they did not use cutlery

Usually people in the Middle Ages have lunch with their hands.

Of course, they did not always eat with their hands. Sometimes they used knives and spoons, utensils quite widespread during the medieval period.

The fork, on the other hand, was already known from the 6th century in Byzantium, while the Italian Middle Ages learned it in the 11th century.



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In the Dark Times people never traveled

Several reports show that people during the Middle Ages traveled.

It was quite common to move inland, even outside the border.

In addition, local lords often visited churches and monasteries in other provinces.

So the idea that a man of the Middle Ages was born, grew up and died in his village is a generalization within the bounds of the myth.



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Women had no rights

The notion that women were their men's suits and decorative feminine objects does not apply.

Women were therefore in a position to inherit, buy and sell property, and also have the right to open their own business.



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Myths and legends from the Fall of the City (Constantinople)

Traditional and wonderful legends have developed around the fall of the city to feed the nation's hopes and courage for centuries. "Again with Times and Times".

When Constantinople fell to the Turks, a bird undertook to send a written message to Trebizond to the Christian Empire of the Pontus for the Fall of the City.

As soon as he arrived there, he went directly to the Metropolis that the Patriarch held and left the paper with the message on the Holy Bank. No one dared go to read the message. Then a lad, a widow's son, went and read the ugly martyr "Get the City, Pathheia Romania".

The congregation and the Patriarch began to lament, but the young man replied.

"And if the City fell, and if Rome, once again with time and time, again it will be ours! "



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The Marbled King

The most popular legend has to do with the last emperor who became marble in the temple of Hagia Sophia. The tradition passed through the mouth immediately after the occupation of Constantinople.

When the city passed into the hands of the Turks, the people could not believe that such a building had come into Muslim hands. They betrayed that the king was hiding behind a column of the church of Hagia Sophia, lost in the corridors and remained hidden there.



The waiting hours "marred" him. It is a fact that no one found the corpse of the last defender, Emperor Constantine the Palaeologus. He was lost and believed that the Angel of the Lord hid it and marred it.

Once will come the moment when God's breath will give him strength and life again and everything will be over from the beginning. The City will again be free.



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The last Emperor of Byzantium, the marbled King whose tradition wants him to wait somewhere patiently when he resides on the throne of the King's City, was born 612 years ago on February 9, 1404 and died May 29, 1453 defending the city among his soldiers.



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The Holy Bank

The Holy Trinity was made of gold. On top of it was hanging 30 crowns of the emperors, among them that of Grand Constantine. And it is said that this was done to remind Christians of Judah's treachery. The thirty pieces of silver.

According to the tradition before Mohammed II occupied Constantinople, the Emperor Constantine ordered to transfer the holy bank and all the relics of Hagia Sophia away from the city so as not to fall into the hands of the Turks.

Three Venetian ships then started from the city full of all these heirlooms, as the legend says, but the third of them carrying the holy bank sank into the waters of the Bosphorus in the Marmara region.

Since then, to the point where the holy bank is sunken, the waters of the sea are always calm and serene, regardless of the weather conditions prevailing in the surrounding area.



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The phenomenon is witnessed by modern Turkish scientists, who have occasionally tried to find out why this strange phenomenon is due, but due to the muddy composition of the seabed, they have been fruitless.



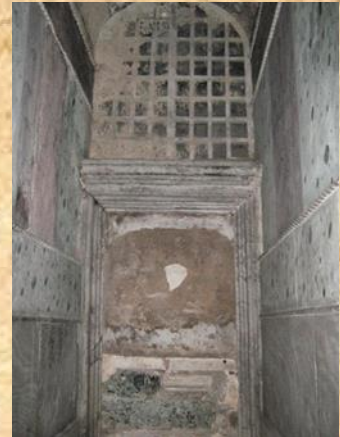
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The Pope of Hagia Sophia

Another legend of particular love is the legend of the pope of Hagia Sophia. Tradition says that when the Turks entered the church, the priest interrupted the operation and hid behind the sanctuary



At that point where it was hidden while there was a door, "as by magic" the door became a wall that no one has ever been able to break since. Neither the Turks nor the Greek craftsmen who brought them for this purpose were able to break down the wall.

The legend concludes that when Hagia Sophia becomes a Greek church again, the priest will come out of the sanctuary and complete his unfinished work.



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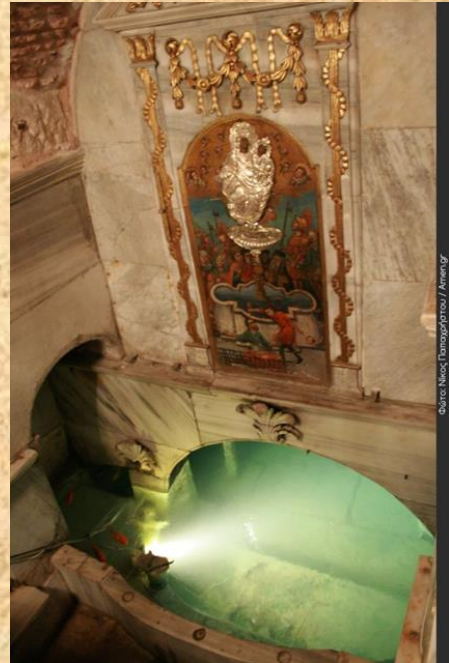
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The Fish of the Monk

When the Turks took the City, a monk fried seven fish in the pan. He fried them on one side and when he was to turn them on the other, one comes and tells him how the Turks took the City.



Then I will believe this, says the monk, if the fried fish are alive. He did not save the word and the fish jumped alive from the pan and fell into the water nearby.

And they are the living fish to Baluchi, and they will look half-frozen as the time comes to get the city. Then they say there will be another monk coming and they will derail them.



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ITALIAN LEGENDS



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THE LEGEND OF LYCANTHROPE IN APULIA

Apulia, land of mysteries and medieval legends, is also the land of the "Werewolves", creatures that would have afflicted the nights of the Apulian people.

The lycanthrope (from the Greek "lýkos", "wolf" and "athropos", "man") is also called werewolf, probably as a derivation of a word of the ancient dialect from Molfetta "lëpòmënë" (Molfetta, a splendid coastal city in the province of Bari).

According to the most popular legend, Licaone, King of Arcadia was father of many sons among whom Peucezio, from whom the name of the ancient land of Bari derives, Peucezia precisely.

The king of Arcadia was punished by Zeus because he committed a bad behaviour.

Zeus transformed him in a wolf.

According to this legend, the dual nature of the sovereign, man and wolf, would have manifested for the first time in Apulia.



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In the Middle Ages, the births of the night between 24 and 25 December were considered bearers of the curse because only Jesus Christ would have to come to the world in that day.

Recovering from the curse was not easy: some claimed a true rite of exorcism, for others the only salvation of the lycanthrope was to bite another man.

This creature, during the transformations, became almost immortal, he could be blessed only by a silver bullet, metal that for centuries symbolizes the purity that can destroy impurity, in this case the forces of evil.

The legends tell us about semi-human beings of great stature, agile and very strong running in the fields or jumping with one single leap the high fence walls; their fury could be mortal for the poor people who met him.

The famous tower called "Luponimo", located in Bitonto area is still visible among the large olive trees.

The name would be linked to the ancient legend that in the past the structure would have been a night shelter for a monstrous and dangerous werewolf.

In Bitonto it is still possible to hear old tales, narrated by old people, on the famous wolf man, "u Lupomn" in the local dialect ("Lup" stands for wolf and "Omn" stands for man).

These terrifying meetings were not only limited to the rural areas but often even in the town centre.



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Perhaps the name of the ancient tower came from "Lupis", the family name of an ancient and noble family in Bitonto that originally owned it.



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LATVIAN LEGENDS



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Lāčplēsis

Lāčplēsis is regarded as the Latvian national epic. The epic was written by Andrejs Pumpurs (1841-1902), who based his story line on existing Latvian folklore. The epic conjures up images of black magic, and also takes its fair share of shots at Germans.



Christianizing knights from Germany invaded Latvia in the 13th century and, by the 1800s, their descendants continued to wield enormous power and influence in Latvia.

The poem recounts the life of the legendary hero Lāčplēsis, chosen by the gods to become a hero of his people. His name means "Bear-slayer", because as a young man, living as the adopted son of the Lord of Lielvārde, he kills a bear by ripping its jaws apart with his hands. At the castle of Lord Aizkrauklis, he spies on the activities of the witch Spīdala, who is under the control of the Devil, and the holy man Kangars, who is in reality a traitor plotting with crusaders to replace the old gods with Christianity. Spīdala tries to drown Lāčplēsis by throwing him into the whirlpool of Staburags in the Daugava, but he is rescued by the goddess Staburadze and taken to her underwater crystal castle. There



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Lāčplēsis meets and falls in love with the maiden Laimdota. Shortly afterwards, Lāčplēsis becomes friends with another hero, Koknesis ("Wood-bearer"), and they study together at the Castle of Burtņieks, Laimdota's father.

Kangars provokes a war with the Estonians, and Lāčplēsis sets out to fight the giant Kalapuisis (Estonian: *Kalevipoeg* (the "Kalapuisis" name is derived from *kalapoiss*), probably refers to the hero of the Estonian epic poem *Kalevipoeg*), to win the hand of Laimdota. He defeats the giant and the two make peace and decides to join forces to fight their common enemy, the German missionaries, led by the priest Dietrich (Dītrihs). Lāčplēsis performs another heroic deed by spending the night in a sunken castle, breaking the curse and allowing the castle to rise into the air again. Laimdota and Lāčplēsis are engaged. In the following episodes, Laimdota reads from the old books about the Creation and ancient Latvian teachings.

Laimdota and Koknesis are kidnapped and imprisoned in Germany. Spīdala convinces Lāčplēsis that Laimdota and Koknesis are lovers. Lāčplēsis returns home to Lielvārde, and then sets sail for Germany. His ship becomes lost in the Northern Sea, and he is welcomed by the daughter of the North Wind. In the meantime, Dietrich and the Livonian prince Caupo of Turaida meet with the Pope in Rome to plan the Christianization of Latvia. Lāčplēsis begins his



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dangerous journey home from the Northern Sea. He fights monsters with three, six, and nine heads on the Enchanted Island. Finally, he encounters Spīdala on the island, and frees her from her contract with the Devil. Lāčplēsis is reunited with Laimdota and Koknesis, who escaped from Germany but were then trapped on the Enchanted Island. Koknesis declares his love for Spīdala, and the four friends return to Latvia.

A double wedding is celebrated during the Jāņi (Midsummer festivities), but the heroes soon set off to fight the German crusaders. After several battles, the Germans are pushed back, and their leader, Bishop Albert, brings reinforcements from Germany, including the Black Knight. At Dietrich's bidding, Kangars finds out the secret of Lāčplēsis' strength and treacherously reveals it to the Germans: Lāčplēsis' mother was a she-bear, and his superhuman strength resides in his bear ears.



The German knights come to Lielvārde offering to make peace. Lāčplēsis organizes a friendly tournament, during which he is goaded into fighting the Black Knight. The knight cuts off Lāčplēsis' ears. Lāčplēsis, still, having not yet completely lost his strength, explodes in anger and lifts the knight, to throw him in the river from a cliff. But the two combatants fall into Daugava river, because the knight, when thrown, grabs Lāčplēsis, and they both



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disappear into the water. In the same moment Laimdota's life ends.



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The origin of the Latvian flag

Many legends about the origin of the Latvian flag come from the early Middle Ages. One of them, describe events that occurred before Christianity was established in the Baltics: "A Latvian castle was surrounded by Estonian troops. The siege lasted several weeks and the starving residents considered surrender. The only alternative was to charge over the battlements to break the enemies' lines. Knowing this, an old kokle (Latvian lute) player, suggested a short prayer and full scale attack. A ram was sacrificed and the old man took off his shirt and dipped it in the sacrificial ram's blood. The shirt was completely soaked in blood except where it had been held. The old man attached this red-white-red coloured material to a shaft. Waving this as a standard the warriors attacked and drove their enemy away. Ever since then Latvian fighters have used this flag."

That is the legend. What about more reliable sources? In the late 1860's one Latvian student (later Dr. Lautenbach-Jusmins) at the University of Tartu, checked The Rhyme Chronicle of Livonia (the chronicle of the Order of Livonia in two volumes written in rhymes, recording the history of Baltic's from the 1290's and glorifying the German crusaders) and found at lines 9219 through to 9223 information on Latvian flag:



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"A Brother and a hundred men had come from Wenden to Riga to defend the land, as I have heard. They had been notified. They came in a courtly manner, with a red banner which was crossed by white, in the manner of the Wends. Wenden is the name of a castle from which this flag became known, and it is located in the land of the Letts, where women ride in the same fashion as men do. I can tell you this in all truth; this is the banner of the Letts.
 „From Livlandische Reimchronik by Dr. Ausma Regina Jaunzemils, Stanford University)



The current design of Latvian flag was approved in May 1917, at a meeting of the Art Promotion Association. The designer was Ansis Cirulis. The red colour of the Latvian flag is a particular dark red tone that is

referred to as „Latvian red“ in the rest of the world. The flag's colour proportions are 2:1:2, but the correlation of the width and length of the flag is fixed as 1:2. During the Soviet era the use and keeping of this flag was prohibited. Only in the spring of 1990 was the red-white-red flag restored as the official Latvian flag.



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Legend of Big Christopher



Once upon a time, long ago, before the city of Riga was founded, a tall strong man named Lielais Kristaps (Big Christopher) carried people across the river Daugava. Kristaps lived in a cabin on right bank of the river. While sleeping one night, Kristaps heard a small child crying on the other side of the river. He immediately rose to fetch the child, and began to carry it across the river. Half way

across, the child became so heavy that Kristaps barely managed to get to the other bank. Exhausted, he laid the child down to sleep in his shack, and fell asleep himself. The following morning Kristaps awoke to find a large chest of gold coins where the child had been. Upon his death, the money was used to found the city of Riga; the first building was built on the spot where Kristaps' cabin had once stood.



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In 1682, Michael Brinckmann made a 236 meter high wooden statue of Christopher that was erected near the present Alberta square, at that time on the bank of the River Ridzene (which now flows underground). The statue, which was often covered with ribbons and flowers, was so well-liked that it was the only catholic statue that survived the Calendar Uprising of 1584. Big Christopher has for long been a symbol of the city and seafarers asked for his protection before going on long journeys by lighting candles and putting flowers in front of the statue.

The original statue is located in Museum of History of Riga and Navigation.



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Medieval Castles of Latvia

Grobyna Castle Ruins



The castle was built in the middle of the 13th century. It was a Convent type castle, the governor's seat and the supporting point on the way to Prussia; During the Kurland Dukedom it had a residential character. The castle was destroyed in the 18th century. Several tales are connected with the castle: both about the underground paths and an unhappy love and a knight's daughter being built in the walls.

Different important men have visited the castle such as the duke Jacob, the Prussian King Fredrick Wilhelm III, the Swedish King Charles XII. Grobyna.



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Aizpute Castle Ruins

In the 13th century on the bank of the navigating River Tebra at that time, there used to be a Kursu castle at the Prussia- Riga road. The conquerors built the Kurland Bishopric Castle instead of that, but on the opposite bank



The Livonia Order Castle, which is still preserved partially. The stories tell that an underground path used to link the Middle Ages castle with the Franciscan's women's convent.



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Dundaga Castle

A Baron of Dundaga castle was friendly with elves. He allowed the elves to have parties and celebrate in his castle. One condition of the elves was to be left alone at their parties. Once, the King of elves celebrated his wedding in the castle. The Baron's sister noticed a light and heard music in the hall of the castle. She went to see what all the commotion was about. She knew that it was prohibited to interfere while the elves partied. Her curiosity could very well mean a death sentence for her. She believed that the elves would not discover her, but they did, and the King of the elves ordered that the Baron's sister, who was wearing a green dress, be buried alive behind the walls of the castle. Since that time, the Green Baroness haunts Dundaga castle.



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Durbe Castle Ruins



They started to build the castle in about 1263 to protect the road Livonia-Prussia. It is built on an artificially made hill. The castle was destroyed during the Poles- Swedes and Northern wartime. On the castle hill in an oak tree there is a sign made in 1990 to memorize the Durbe battles. At the same time there is a memorial stone brought from Lithuania.

Durbe battle took place at the River Trumpe. On the right bank of the river there were about 4 thousand Zemaitians, on the left bank at least five times bigger Livonia Order army. When the battle began, the locals didn't attack Zemaitians, but the order army and destroyed it completely. About 20 thousand men were killed on the field. In the centre of Durbe there is the Durbe Lutheran Church and at the church you will find a monument put up to memorize the deportation victims.



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Ludza, Rezekne & Vilaka Castles

After the death of Volkenberg, the owner of the castle, his daughters Roze, Lucija and Marija got rich inheritance and it was divided among them. Each sister built a castle on the inherited land. Roze was the first to built it and called it "Rezekne", then Lucija built "Ludza" and Marija built "Vilaka". Up to now Roze is sitting on the gold throne in the underground kingdom of Rezekne castle. She is guarded by two fierce watch dogs. One dog on a gold chain is on the right and the other on a silver chain is on the left. Every 9 years at Easter Roze leaves her underground kingdom to find a young man who could free her from curse. An order to do that it is necessary to take her gold cross and sprinkle it with sanctified Easter water. Many young men tried to do it but evil forces prevented them from doing it. If somebody wasn't frightened, the cross became too heavy and the road to the church seemed unattainable. Young men couldn't pass this trial and used to throw the cross down. At this moment low crying was heard and the princess returned to her underground kingdom for the following 9 years.



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Swedish Gate in Priekule

It is the former Priekule Manor House gate (1688). The main function of the gate was to control the trade road to Lithuania and collect the tax for the Baron Korf. Legends tell us about the valuables built in the gate and the underground paths there. Not far from that there is the manor tower built in the 19th century. At this moment there is a school in the tower. The renewed Priekule Church, which is connected with the tale about Priekule's Ikars, is near.



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Namej's ring



According to popular legend the Semigallian king Namej made a ring called the "Namejs" so he could be identified by his family. But his enemies got hold of this information and sought the ring to kill the king (during a war) to have victories. The villagers also created these rings in order to protect the king. And for this reason Namejs is a popular ring for Latvians. In 1287, the

Semigallian castle was destroyed by the Livonian Order. In 1335, the wooden castle Kalnamuiža was built by the Order of Livonia near to the site of the former Semigallian fortifications, destroyed by the Lithuanian forces in 1345.



A second legend story of the crusaders into Latvian Middle Ages,



describes the German slowly moving territory in the taking over tribe

after tribe. Namej, the Semigallian king, was the last to subdue to the crusaders' power. Namej and his people left their land and went south into Lithuanian territory.



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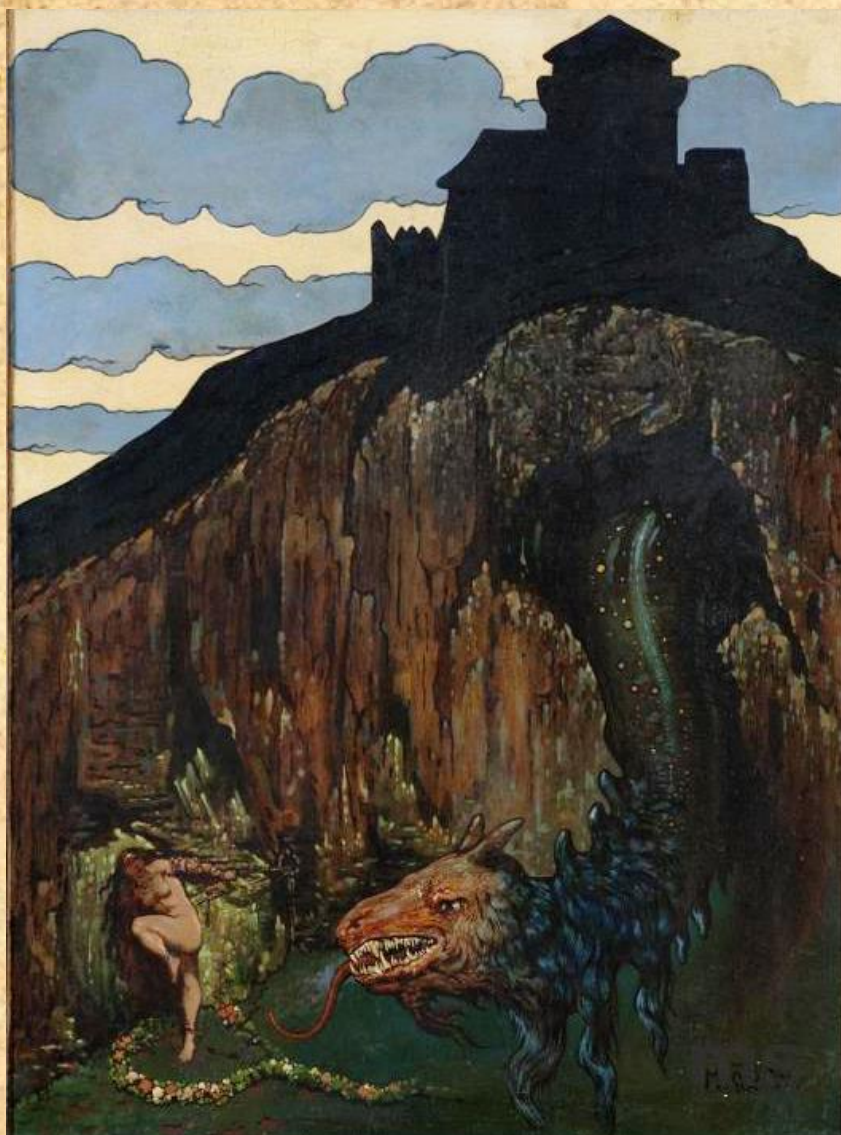
Namejs didn't want his people to forget their heritage and their origins and had the Namejs ring designed for all of his people so that they could identify each other and have a common bond. Now it is a popular ring among Latvians that live outside of Latvia because it shows their love for Latvia and recognition of their heritage.



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POLISH LEGENDS



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The legend about The Warsaw Mermaid

Long time ago in the Atlantic Ocean an underwater kingdom existed where semi-women and semi-fish lived. They were beautiful and their tails were covered with shiny scales. Two sisters arrived to the Baltic's Water. They were amazed by the sights which they saw. One of them was so keen on surrounding Islands that she made her mind to stay there. She became a pride of Copenhagen. Once upon a time in Poland the second sister arrived to Gdańsk, she was sailing along the Vistula river to the South. She stayed near by one of the villages. Every evening she sang stunning songs. One evening the mermaid, as usual, was singing at the shore and was looking at the shining moon. She did not realise that somebody was looking at her from behind the tress. Suddenly, the mermaid was caught by a fisherman and imprisoned in a shed. She was crying and asking for letting her go. The fisherman had release a plan to become the reachest person in the world. A couple days after she was heard by some other fishermen and they helped her. They let her come back to the water. She sang the most beautiful song in their whole life. She promised them to protect their village. And that small village become a big and beautiful city. They called it Warsaw. The citizens of



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the Polish capital did not forget about their marine patron till today Warsaw Mermaid with a sword lifted up and shield in another hand to protect their city. It also reminds the citizens of the fact that a real strength and sensitive heart gives freedom.



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Legend of the Wawel Dragon

Many, many years ago, when Krakow was still the capital of Poland, there lived in the castle on the Wawel mountain King Krak with his daughter Wanda. All the citizens in Krakow loved their kind-hearted King and the loving Wanda. For many years everyone lived peacefully and provided for the well-being of their town. Amongst them lived one of the cobbler's family, a capable and hard-working apprentice by the name of Dratewka.

One day the in a cave in the Wawel mountains, an evil dragon had settled. He had three heads and his body was covered in scales. When he was angry he went into such a rage that the mountains shook and he breathed fire and smoke from his mouth. He made the whole town afraid. In order to calm him down the people put a sheep in front of his cave everyday. But this was not enough for him. Once a year even a small girl had to be sacrificed.



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Many of the citizens tried to fight against the dragon. However, no-one was able to beat him. The council of elders spent days and nights trying to find a solution but they couldn't find one. At long last there were no more girls left in Krakow, only Princess Wanda. The dragon became more and more impatient. Since there were no other girls to be found everyone knew that it was the king's daughter's turn. There was great mourning all over Krakow. The king announced to the whole country that he was looking for a brave knight who could defeat the dragon. Many courageous knights came and fought without success against the beast. Most were killed in their fight. When all hope had been abandoned, the cobbler's apprentice, Dratewka, appeared before the king. He asked for permission to fight the dragon. The king listened and agreed to what he was intending to do. The young man got to work on his plan straight away.



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From the butcher he got himself a sheepskin. From all the citizens he collected brimstone, salt, pepper and pitch. He filled the sheepskin with these and sewed it up tightly so it looked like a real sheep. At night he put the "sheep" in front of the entrance to the cave. The next morning the hungry dragon came out of the cave and ate up the sheep straight away. Shortly afterwards he felt a terrible burning all over his body. He tried to stop the burning by drinking massive amounts of water. He drank so much that the bed of the river Wisla could be seen. He carried on drinking until eventually he exploded with an enormous bang. There was great joy throughout Krakow. Drateurka married Wanda and they lived happily together for a very long time to come.



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SPANISH LEGENDS



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Lovers of Teruel

It is said that at the beginning of the 13th Century, there lived two families at Teruel, the Segura family and the Marcilla family, both of them well known in the city: the first one because of their wealth, the second one because of their blazons.

Isabel was part of the Segura family, as well as Diego was part of the Marcilla family. Since both of them were children, they had shared games and friendship, and when they grew up, they firmly fell in love with the other. But, Diego, who has an ancient lineage, was not so rich, and Isabel's family didn't find him a worth candidate to marry her daughter. So, they forbade Isabel to see him.

The young man thought he maybe could reach wealth and proud by taking part in the war against arabs, so, he decided to enrol in Christian army. But before, he made her loved Isabel promise she was waiting for five years. After this period, he would be back to marry her when he were a rich man. If after five years Diego was not back at home, she would be free of any compromise. It was very difficult to say goodbye, and time passed without Isabel having any news from Diego. Meanwhile, Segura family prepared for her daughter a very interesting and profitable wedding.



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When the end of the time approached, Isabel parent's insisted so much, she could continue denying to be married.

Diego was a famous knight, who reached muslim lands for his king. He was coming back when the time had nearly ended and somewhere close to Teruel, he was told about Isabel's wedding. So, he hurried up, trying to arrive before Isabel got married, but he failed.

When Diego arrived to Teruel, at night, Isabel was already married, and he went to her new house. He was anxious.

It seems Diego managed to climb to Isabel and her husband's bedroom balconies. Isabel, when she realized somebody was at the balcony, was close to start screaming, but she suddenly recognized Diego was that strange man. Fortunately, Isabel's new husband was asleep.

Diego remind her the promise he did, but as Isabel was resigned to live a life without love close to her husband, Diego asked her to kiss him for the last time. When Isabel refused, Diego's heart broke and he dropped dead when he reached the street out of Isabel's home.

Diego's body was found, and people suspected it could have been a murder, but the body didn't have any sign pointing in this direction. Marcilla family was absolutely devastated and they prepared his burial. The church was



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crowded with all the people from Teruel. Among them, Isabel with her husband, looked absolutely upset.

It is said that in the middle of the ceremony, Isabel approached to the place where Diego was laying. He looked his face for a long time, kissing him finally. And when she did that, she fall down over Diego's body. She was dead. Both of them were finally joined by death



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The aqueduct of Segovia

A long time ago, before this aqueduct were built, people from Segovia had to walk a lot to take water they needed for their daily routines. Some of them, if they needed a lot of water, were forced to travel more than once. This was the case of a maid, who everyday had to go to take the water to the fountain several times a day.

This routine annoyed her, and so, the girl filled it was the most horrible task she had to complete. One day, a really hot day, the maid was desperate and screamed she would give anything if she had the fountain in front of her home, and this way, not having to walk everyday to take it.

Suddenly, she heard a voice calling her, and she could see in the way after her a young girl. The maid, angry, asked the girl what she was searching there, and the girl asked her if she was in fact determined to give anything for a fountain in front of her house. The maid said that was right, but unfortunately, she had nothing to give. The girl reminded her she had a treasure: her soul, and asked her if she was willing to offer her soul. The maid, laughing, confirmed she was agree, because her soul had no use.



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At that moment, the girl disappeared, and turned into a black-haired man, with short hair, dress in black, handsome, with a beautiful voice. He declared, he was interested in the exchange. The maid insisted in being convinced.

The girl, who was suspicious, alleged in fact for the exchange to have a value, the water had to be at its place before the cock started singing next day. Even having so few time, the man confirmed the transaction by shaking her hand. The maid realized his man was frozen, and suddenly, he disappeared.

The girl, who continued her walk, nearly had forgotten everything when at the night, a horrible storm shook Segovia, as never it has been seen before. The maid, frighten, went out her house.

She found the strange man. He was not elegant, but terrible. Into a red flame, he was carrying huge stones, from one place to another.

When he saw the maid, he started laughing. She realized it was the Evil who she had in front of her, and her soul must have a value if the Evil was determined to do all that work to have it.

The maid got back to the bed, extremely frighten and regretting her words. So, she begged to God the deal not having a value.



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His praise was listened in Hell, and as the Evil, who thought he didn't have to hurry up, starts speeding down his work.

After the night, only one hour before the dawn, and with only one stone to be placed, the sun rose and just before the Evil could place the last stone, the cocks sung. But the aqueduct was already finish, and remains there to show the power of Evil and the power of God.



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The golden inattainable goat

Tierga — close to river Isuela, born at Moncayo mountain —, as many other places, was founded by muslims. Their houses, white and small, where all together near the castle in narrow streets, to try to be protected from the frozen wind. There, alone and far away from the rest of the population, the Lord of the Land had his home.

His fortress was nearly impregnable for weapons at these times, but when Alfonso I, the Fighter, who reconquered Sarakusta, after having besieged Tarazona and Calatayud ordered to siege Tierga castle, he didn't have any possibility to ask from help.

Tierga was sentenced and its defenders, knowing that, decided to adopt some preventive measures. They decided, before giving Alfonso I the keys of the city, to hide his most valuable treasure (a golden goat) under the floor, in a passage communicating with the river. They covered two possible entrances to the passage, so that nobody knew it was there and so, try to recover them after.



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In fact, Tierga, where defeated by Alfonso I, the Fighter. Most of the muslims remained living there. Today, even when it has been searched for centuries, nobody could find the Golden Goat.



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The day Belmonte was Lost

At the beginning of 8th Century, as it happened in all the other towns close to it, Belmonte was conquered by muslim army. They governed the town, and muslim and Christian tried to live together but separated in town. Muslims lived in the lowest part of the town while Christians occupied upper part, close to the castle, so that they couldn't escape without crossing the muslim part.

In a tense moment, when both communities were confronted, muslims sieged Christian, who were fortified in the castle. Situation was so difficult for them that they seriously thought about surrender. They lasted a bit more than expected due to something one afternoon happened.

In fact, while men were awake over the wall, women were sewing and repaired clothes with the last light of the sun. Then, the Virgin appeared to them, and told them not to surrender. As a prove of her visit, she left them a carving with her shape.

After knowing what had happen, they decided not to surrender and resist, until they were forced to lay down arms, but agreeing their lifes will be respected. But before, they should decide what to do with the carving, and decided to hide it into the wall until they were free.



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Years after, even centuries after, Belmonte was released by Alfonso I and the Cristian population grow up again. Nobody remembered the carving of the Virgin. Peace and new military techniques made the castle unnecessary, so, it collapsed bit by bit, so that one day, the carving of the Virgin appeared. A church was built for her, and she was called „Our Virgin from the Castle“, who can still be seen over the ruins of the old fortress.



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The reconquest of Maluenda

Many of the towns all along the Ebro's valley, such as Belchite, decided to surrender without fighting as soon as Zaragoza was conquered by Alfonso I the Fighter, but it was not the same what happened with other important muslims town, such as Calatayud, Daroca or Tarazona. These towns resisted and opposed, but were finally also conquered.

In fact, the aragones king, grown up by the success conquering Zaragoza, and helped by some French knights, as Guillaume du Poitiers, walked to Calatayud — defended by its castle and considered the key Town along Jalon river — and sieged it. Meanwhile, he left the town.

He travelled to Daroca and Cutanda, but the walk wasn't easy, because close to Daroca, there were Malueda — where many muslims were settled. A terrible fight took place there, close to the first houses of the town, and it not only caused Christian expedition to lose time, but also caused several human lost in the Christian army.

Alfonso the Fighter finally defeated the muslim army in Maluenda. But aragones army had to stay there to bury their corpses, help the injured and take charge of the prisoners. Then, some stonemasons, who took part in



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the expedition cut and raise the White Cross — today still visible — and placed it in the same place the battle took part, to remember all the people who died there.



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Women, winners facing the Pedro the Cruel's army

Everybody knows that aragoneses and castilians, leaded respectively by Pedro IV the Ceremonious and Pedro I the Cruel, fought during the „War of the two Pedros“, causing the death of an important part of the aragoneses population. For this reason, some of the aragoneses towns were inhabited by Castilians.

Castilian army — while the aragoneses king was defending Rosellón — sieged Calatayud and finally captured the town which allowed them to enter Jalon and Jiloca valleys.

As a consequence of this loss, an important part of the towns closed to Jiloca river were conquered by Castilians: Paracuellos, Maluenda, Velilla and Morata, among other towns. They finally faced Fuentes de Jiloca.

Castilian captains, to try to save lives in their army, organized the battle during the hours in which men were working in the fields. They approached this way, convinced that conquering the city would be easy. But actual situation was different and bitter for Castilians, who were surprised.

One of the women took the place of Captain, the rest of them — with the help of elderly men and children — hid



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in the wall and defended the city, not allowing the Castilian army to conquer the city, and giving the men time enough — armed with stones, spears, and field tools — to arrive and attack the army from the back part. For the first time since the war has started, Castilian army had to abandon the conquest.



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Water Become Blood

In the Kingdom of Aragon there was a fight for the supremacy of the three coexisting religions: Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

In the last part of the 14th Century, dominico and Franciscan monks tried to convert muslims and jewish to the Christianity.

In the little town of Cimballa, close to Calatayud, took place an incident which helped defeating the other religions.

One morning, after the dawn, a priest from Cimballa was celebrating the mass. It was a working day and there were very few people, because most of the men were working at the fields. The church was really dark, and there were only two lighted candles. After the consecration, the priest hesitated about if Christ was really there. At the moment, the water in the holy chalice turn into real blood.

All the participants spread the incident, and Cimballa became place of pilgrimage. Even the news arrived to the King, and King Martin, Monastery Piedra's benefactor, ordered, in 1398, bring there the blood of the miracle, not only to keep it safe, but also to make the Monastery became famous.



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INDEX

French Legends.....	3
Greek Legends.....	16
Italian Legends.....	33
Latvian Legends.....	37
Polish Legends.....	49
Spanish Legends.....	55



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Zespół Szkół nr 5 im. Jana Pawła II
ul. Staszica 10, 44-330
Jastrzębie - Zdrój, Poland
www.zs5.jastrzebie.pl



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