

Karpova and Slavinska

The Old Lanterns Tales

The mystery of the stone lions
The old lantern took a day off



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Сказки старого фонаря/

The Old Lanterns Tales

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Карпова Славинская

Сказки старого фонаря/

The Old Lanterns Tales

THE OLD LANTERN: THE MYSTERY OF THE STONE LIONS

A long, long time ago, in times that even your moms and dads no longer remember, the world was filled with magic and fairy tales. Many of those tales were so wonderful that they have survived to this very day.

In one very beautiful city, in a stone house by the river, a child used to cry at night. No one remembers whether it was a boy or a girl, but the little one cried so sadly that everyone who heard the crying began to feel sad too. They felt so sorry for the poor little child that tears came to their eyes all by themselves. Whenever night fell over the city, everyone living in the big stone house listened anxiously, waiting for the sound of the child crying. One night, they pressed their ears to the walls for a long time, but heard nothing at all. And from that time on, every night, whenever the moon appeared in the sky, wonderful things happened in the world.

In the city of Saint Petersburg, which stretched along the seashore, there lived not only people, but stone guardians as well. They always stood still and silent, warming themselves in the sunshine, because magic happens quietly. That is what makes it magic.

And so, for several centuries, four stone winged lions stood high above the Bank Bridge over the Griboedov Canal. They were big and grand, with magnificent golden wings. But if you looked at them closely, you might notice kind little sparks in their eyes. Or perhaps they were only reflections of sunlight? Locals and tourists hurried back and forth across the bridge, passing the stone lions, and no one knew the answer.

When the sun sank below the horizon, the city was covered in a deep blue evening, and lights began to shine in the windows. A passerby might have noticed bright sparks running across the golden wings of the stone lions.

But people were always in such a hurry to get home that they never noticed. And even if they had, they would surely have thought they had imagined it.

But as soon as the streets became empty and the clocks on the city's main towers struck midnight, the four lions sighed with relief, stretched like great cats, and jumped down from their

pedestals. Their paws landed softly and silently, and their wings shone with pure gold. They did not go out to wander around or frighten people passing by. They spread their enormous wings and flew off in different directions across the city to listen.

The lions quietly landed on the roofs of houses and listened carefully to see if there was a child somewhere who was crying and could not fall asleep.

— Shhh...

One of the night guardians became alert and pressed his ear to a chimney. No one was crying

in the apartment two floors below, but the kind lion's sharp ears caught some very quiet sounds that caught his attention. The lion spread his wings and first soared into the sky, then dropped like a stone and flew toward a dark window. He moved one wing, and magical golden dust sparkled from it. The window silently swung open, and the lion found himself inside a cozy child's bedroom.

It was the bedroom of a little girl. The lion looked around and noticed that all the toys and books were neatly arranged on the shelves, the pencils and paints were tucked away in little boxes, and bright drawings hung on the walls. The lion narrowed his eyes happily because he liked it when children's rooms were tidy. But

there was something in this room that worried the night guardian: the little girl was sleeping badly. She tossed and turned because she was dreaming about a day that had been far too noisy. The lion sighed and gave a very quiet growl — soft, almost like the purr of a giant cat — then he flapped his wings, sending magical, colorful sparks flying all around the room. The sound of the wind in the chimney turned into a quiet lullaby, and the little girl immediately stopped tossing and turning. The lion looked at her drawings one more time and quietly jumped out of the window, just as he had come in. The window closed behind him at once, as if nothing magical had happened there at all.

The winged lion sometimes jumped from roof to roof, and sometimes soared high into the sky, which was gradually filling with heavy, dark clouds. He flew so high that sometimes he disappeared from sight completely. Then he would glide down smoothly and silently, suddenly appearing somewhere else, cutting through the rain clouds with his powerful body.

For centuries, the night guardians had been helping little children sleep peacefully, and they never grew tired because stone lions were very strong. They had never regretted leaving their pedestals long ago and choosing to help people. They only looked stern and cold on the outside. In truth, each lion had a warm and very kind heart beating inside its stone chest.

The lion was sitting on the roof of house number seven on the Moika River embankment. He was just about to go down and have a chat with his old friend, The Old Lantern, when he heard a tiny child's voice. He flapped his golden wings and disappeared into the night sky. The lion flew above the ground and could see the city streets below, its many canals and rivers enclosed by stone embankments, and its countless bridges. When he flew over the Bank Bridge, he dipped lower and made a circle above it, checking to see if his brothers were there. They were gone, which meant the magical lions had plenty of work to do that night.

The lion flew toward a window where a little boy was quietly crying. The child had hidden under his blanket, covering his head completely. Perhaps he did not want to wake his mother and tell her that something had frightened him.

Once inside the room, the winged guardian looked around and noticed moving shapes on the wall beside the child's bed. A large tree with a thick, fluffy crown stood outside the window, and the moonlight made its shadows fall across the bedroom wall. The shadows were huge and moved about, forming all kinds of strange shapes. No wonder the boy was frightened and could not fall asleep. Without thinking twice, the lion sat down in front of the window and spread his wings. They were so large that they covered the entire window. The shadows disappeared, and the room immediately became warm and peaceful.

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