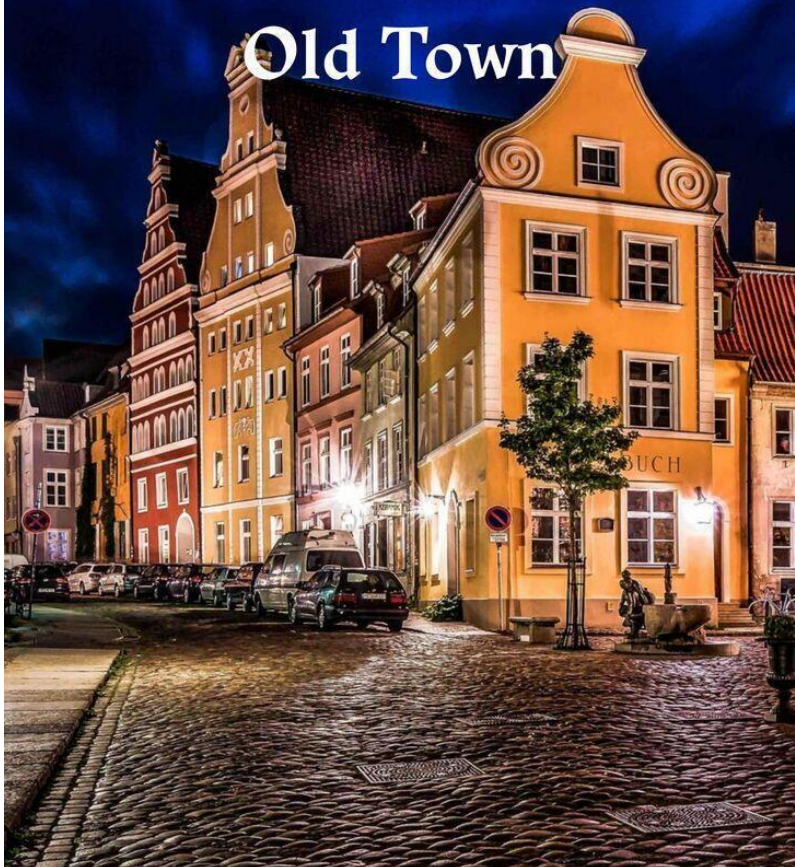


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Marina Britikova

The Secrets of the Old Town



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Аннотация

Every city has its own history, its own legends. Legends live on its streets, in the alleys, reflect in shop windows, and whisper their stories to passersby. The main character is a twelve-year-old boy named Artemiy, his classmate Vovka, the fairy Elina, and the tree elf Liren are ready to unravel not just one secret of the city. Together, they are heading towards adventures, solving intricate riddles, and discovering the truth.

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The Secrets of the Old Town

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«The Secrets of the Old Town»

Every city has its own history, its own legends. This one was no exception. Legends lived on its streets, alleyways, reflected in shop windows, whispered their stories to passersby...

Through the dark alleyways of the old town, an atmosphere of mystery and ancient history lingered. Ancient stone houses, like guardians of time, stood tall, their silent windows observing those who passed by. Facades made of weathered bricks and time-carved stones spoke of the long journey traversed within these walls.

Roofs adorned with antique tile slabs, hinting at the secrets held within. It seemed that each roof carried its own story — of rains weathered, of sunny days with the shadows of old tree leaves falling upon them.

The streets, like tangled threads of time, wound between the buildings, inviting on a captivating journey through history. The cobblestone pavement, worn down by countless generations, paid attention to every rustle, echoing echoes of the past.

Old lanterns, which cast their picturesque reflections on the narrow waters of stone-paved streams during the night, added a special romantic atmosphere to the city. Their soft light accentuated the details of the houses and created a sensation as if time had slowed down here.

Branches of old trees bent over houses and streets, as if

harboring the secrets of countless stories and conversations they had heard over the centuries. Spring flowers and leaves brought vibrant colors to the city, breaking the gray tones of antiquity.

This old part of the city, like a book filled with pages of time, narrated the past and provided a sense of connection to roots and ancestors. In every corner of this old town, a story was hidden, waiting to be uncovered by new seekers and adventurers.

In this old city lived a boy named Artemiy, with curly dark hair and sapphire blue eyes, twelve years old. Artemiy loved fairy tales and legends very much. He wanted to become an archaeologist or, in the worst case, a detective like Sherlock Holmes or Monsieur Poirot. He never fully decided.

But at his age, he knew more ancient legends than any adult. In his eyes, there shone an unwavering determination to uncover the secrets of the ancient streets and alleys, to discover something new and unexplored.

Story One

The Secret of a Ghost

Chapter 1

Mysterious Events: The Appearance of Enigmatic Phenomena

On that day, when the rays of the setting sun bathed the ancient houses in a golden light, an aura of mystery began to envelop the old town. Residents noticed strange sounds that seemed to emanate from the very past. The antique clocks on the main square started striking at an incomprehensible time, sometimes fast, sometimes slow, as if following a nonexistent rhythm.

Meanwhile, things began to disappear without any announcement. Clocks, jewelry, even old books from the library vanished without a trace. The inhabitants of the old town were perplexed; their houses and streets seemed imbued with an unexplainable magic. At night, the air grew still along the narrow alleyways, and winds carried whispers of unknown words. Mysterious shadows slid across the walls, leaving behind the feeling that they could only be seen out of the corner of one's

eye. Even the moon seemed to mysteriously illuminate the city, as if trying to tell its own story.

Artemiy, sensing that the city was speaking to him in its unique language, decided to take on the role of deciphering this eerie mystery. He was determined to solve it and prove to everyone that he was a great detective. Enlisting the help of his friend and classmate Vovka, the boys embarked on an investigation.

First, they questioned everyone they could about what they had lost. It turned out that there was no logic to the missing items at all: alongside precious gems, gold coins, and books, various trinkets vanished from the residents — vases, jewelry boxes, scarves, and even a shovel...

«Why would anyone need all this junk?» Artemiy pondered, sitting with Vovka in his room. «A real thief would rob a bank and be done with it.»

«That's the thing,» his friend added, «it's an unusual thief. And there's something mystical going on here.»

Vovka, a boy with red hair and freckles, was fascinated by everything supernatural. He loved reading scary stories and aspired to become an alchemist in the future, to finally invent the Philosopher's Stone.

«Maybe you're right,» Artemiy agreed, «but something still doesn't add up. We need a lead.»

Suddenly, a ringing sound echoed in the room, and a crystal vase fell from the shelf to the floor, shattering into tiny

fragments. Startled, the boys climbed onto a table and began examining what or who knocked over the vase.

«Let's take a look,» Artemiy suggested.

«I'm scared,» Vovka admitted honestly.

«Me too.»

«Then let's do it together.»

The boys pushed a chair against the wall, and with Artemiy climbing onto it, he peered at the shelf from which the vase had just fallen. In the farthest corner, huddled and trembling with fear, sat a tiny fairy.

«Don't be afraid,» Artemiy said, extending his hand, «we won't harm you.»

The fairy looked at them with her intelligent, perceptive eyes and blinked her eyelashes.

«I'm not scared,» she declared and flew to the writing desk.

It was a little girl with thick, sparkling hair that changed color from a soft green to deep blue, reflecting her mood. She had transparent wings, big blue eyes, a pink dress with matching shoes. Her name was Elina, and she had lived here for a long time. However, she had never shown herself or behaved anything but quietly. But due to recent events, she was forced to introduce herself to the boys. After all, this mystery troubled her as well.

«And besides,» Elina said, «her personal belongings also disappeared. That's why she wants to help, but in exchange, the boys must never reveal the secret of her existence to anyone, ever.»

The boys gave their word, and all three of them set out to solve this strange enigma.

Chapter 2

Artemiy Initiates the Investigation of Mysterious Events

Every day, the kids wandered through the city in search of any leads or clues. They stopped by old houses, walked along ancient streets and alleyways. Elina possessed magical abilities that allowed her to slip into corners where no regular boy could fit and eavesdrop on conversations.

The boys diligently recorded everything in a notebook: hints, events, stories from the residents. Then, together, they tried to analyze what was happening.

«Something doesn't add up,» Vovka said once again, «there's no logic to it. Look, the baker's rolling pin disappeared, the artist's brush, and from the bank, just ten gold coins...»

«Yeah, it's all very strange...» Artemiy agreed.

«But what if the thief isn't from your world, but from ours?» Elina suddenly suggested.

«How's that?» the boys exclaimed in unison.

«Well, think about it: there's complete chaos in the items that have disappeared. Most of them aren't valuable at all. They're just trinkets — no valuable paintings, no diamonds. There's a rolling pin, a brush, and only 10 gold coins, even though there

are a lot more in the bank...»

«There's something to that,» Vovka picked up.

«And how do we find out who in your world could be doing this?» Artemiy asked.

«I suggest we wait for the night and ask the old oak tree on the outskirts of the city. It knows everything...»

Everyone agreed and began to wait for the night...

Chapter 3

Who is the Old Oak? And Why Go to It?

«Who is this old oak?» Vovka asked Elina as they walked through the dark streets towards the city gates.

«The old oak isn't just a tree,» Elina explained. «It's a living witness of time, standing on this land for centuries. Every scar on its bark is like a page in a great book, recording the events that have taken place around it. When you touch its wrinkled surface, it's like reading the lines of that book. This oak has witnessed the rise and fall of civilizations, it has heard the song of the wind carrying tales of distant lands and adventures. It knows how the world changes around it and how we change ourselves under the influence of time. In its roots lives my old friend, the elf Liren. I hope he will help us.»

«Phew, and I thought we'd be talking to a tree,» Vovka said.

«In my world, that's entirely possible,» Elina laughed, and they continued on their way to the old oak.

Chapter 4

Elina's Friend: Liren

Liren turned out to be a tall, graceful elf with sparkling green eyes that reflected the richness of nature. His long hair, the color of autumn leaves, gently cascaded over his shoulders. He was dressed in something resembling a brown suit.

Liren was a woodland elf.

«Hello, Liren,» Elina greeted cheerfully.

«Greetings, dear friends,» the elf melodically replied. «I know why you've come, but unfortunately, I won't be able to help you.»

«Perhaps you have some guesses?» Artemiy couldn't resist asking.

«Alas, alas...» Liren began, then suddenly paused and pondered. «However, let's take a look into my magical book. Maybe it will provide some clues. Please, follow me.»

«But how are we going to fit through? The entrance under the oak's roots is so small,» Vovka marveled.

«No problem,» Liren answered, waving his hands and muttering something in a language unfamiliar to human ears...

At that very moment, the boys started shrinking until they were the size of ants.

«But now, my friends, passing between the roots won't pose

any difficulty at all. Please, proceed. I'll treat you to some tea.»

Chapter 5

Visiting Liren

Together with Elina, the boys followed Liren deeper into the tree. At first, the passage was narrow and dark, but then it widened and transformed into a huge, illuminated room. In the center stood a massive table. Bookshelves lined the walls. In the darkest corner, another table was covered with various vials, flasks containing liquids, and heaps of unfamiliar herbs...

«Please, come in, my friends. Make yourselves comfortable,» Liren said and pointed to the soft couches near the table. «I'll bring some tea now, and then we'll see what I can do for you.»

Liren disappeared into a nearby room and returned about ten minutes later, carrying a massive tray filled with steaming cups of tea, pastries, and various treats. The aroma of the tea was extraordinary — pleasant, foresty, with hints of blackberries. After the tea session, during which the kids recounted the mysterious story to the elf and explained why they came to him, Liren fetched his magical book, known in the magical world as the «Scrolls of Eternity.» This book was his most precious treasure, containing ancient knowledge, magical recipes, and secret spells passed down through generations.

The cover of the book was made from the skin of a rare

magical creature, and the pages were crafted from special paper that reacted to magical energies, changing its color and texture according to the content. As soon as Liren opened the book, it shimmered with multicolored lights, resembling a starry sky.

«The Scrolls of Eternity» held ancient legends about magical worlds, forgotten magical recipes, and instructions for performing spells of various levels of complexity, Liren explained. He also recorded his own adventures and observations of nature and magic within its pages. Reading the «Scrolls of Eternity» wasn't just immersing oneself in a world of magical knowledge — it was a journey through history and wisdom. Each page possessed its own magic, capable of answering questions, suggesting paths, and helping solve even the most intricate challenges.

«Wow,» Vovka whistled with delight, «I could use something like that for my math class. Then any problem would be a piece of cake...»

Elina pinched him and said, «Magic isn't a toy.»

«Absolutely right, Elina. Magic is serious business, and one should treat it seriously as well,» Liren said.

And so, ancient rituals, spells, recipes for magical elixirs, symbols and runes, magical philosophy... None of that fit. But here... Stories about magical worlds. Who and what do they involve? Here, perhaps, we will find something interesting...

Liren rustled the pages, searching for a new section. Finally, he opened the right page and delved into reading, murmuring

something to himself...

«Ah, here it is. Found it... Mysterious ghost thieves...»

«Who? Who?» Vovka asked eagerly.

«Ghosts,» Elina answered.

«Why would they need to steal something?» Artemiy wondered.

«Your city is so ancient and rich in history that it's inhabited by the ghosts of past residents. They steal items, trying to reconnect with the past or attract the attention of the living. Their actions can be unpredictable and tied to their own stories.»

«Now we just need to find this ghost,» Artemiy said.

They thanked the elf and headed home. The case of the missing items was slowly unraveling. But along with the lead came a new mystery.

Who is this ghost, and why is it stealing?

Now they needed to find it, but how... Our heroes decided to ponder this when they returned to their normal size and headed home...

Chapter 6

Who Is the Ghost? And Where to Find It?

«How will we find the ghost that's stealing?» Vovka asked.

«It's quite simple. We'll track it down,» Elina said and winked meaningfully.

«But can we really do that?»

«Of course, I'm a fairy, let's not forget that,» she replied.

«Then where should we start?» Artemiy intervened.

«We just need to decipher its motives, and for that, we need to talk to the residents again and uncover some unsettling family stories,» Elina said. «After all, many of the stolen items, like brushes and shovels, have now been joined by family silverware, ancestral jewelry, trinket boxes, and so much more...»

As the sun climbed high over the city, our heroes embarked on their investigation. And indeed, among the unwanted items like brushes and shovels, family heirlooms, and precious objects started appearing...

«Well, I guess you were right,» Artemiy said.

«Yes, you turned out to be right,» agreed Vovka. «But who is the thief?»

«I believe it's time to visit the old archive, where the city's entire history is stored. That's where we'll likely unravel the

secret of these disappearances.»

Deep within the heart of the ancient city stood its ancient library — a place where the soul of its history seemed to reside. Artemiy and his friends set out for this sacred place in search of answers to the enigmatic events shrouding the city.

Crossing the library's threshold, they felt a magical atmosphere, as if every book held a living secret of the past. The rows of shelves lining the walls were laden with centuries of knowledge — manuscripts, scrolls, and volumes dating back many centuries. There was everything here: ancient maps with pirate treasures marked on them, manuscripts recounting past events, even magical scripts... These manuscripts contained spells, symbols, and descriptions of magical artifacts that could be related to the current events.

With each page read, with each analysis of manuscripts and maps, our heroes delved into the city's past. They discovered hints, similarities, and threads that connected the past to the present. In the library, akin to an ancient labyrinth of knowledge, they sought keys to unraveling mysteries that could lead them to answers hidden somewhere between the pages of history.

Suddenly, Artemiy stumbled upon a very interesting book titled «Secret Diaries of the Residents.»

«Look what I found!» he exclaimed. The friends gathered around him and started examining the book. It recounted everyday life, dramas, secrets, and observations of changes in the city. One of the diary entries mentioned mysterious sounds and

shadows that appeared in the city, followed by the disappearance of items...

«Look,» Vovka suddenly said, «this was about 200 years ago. Could it be that history is repeating itself?»

«That's strange,» Elina responded.

The last line of the entry read: «After many years of searching, I have finally found the one behind all of this...» But the rest of the page had been torn out...

«We were so close to finding out,» Elina sighed.

«I think not all is lost,» Artemiy said. «Let's retrace our steps, find all those same clues, and they'll eventually lead us to the culprit.»

«What a great idea,» Vovka chimed in.

And so, our company set off once again on their adventure.

Chapter 7

Following the Trail

Guided by curiosity and the thirst for unraveling mysteries, our heroes set out on a journey through the historical sites of the old city. Their path led them to hidden places that bore witness to ancient events and could hold the keys to the enigmas surrounding the city.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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