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FALLEN LEAVES

FALLEN LEAVES

A KINGDOM OF FIRE AND TREES

edited and designed by

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Just after leaving his dark, boring room without any incentive to his imagination, Irkae feels happy, alive: he knows that an adventure awaits him in which he can prove himself and free himself from the chains of monotony and social imprisonment. On the other hand, there is Amner who, after having achieved freedom once, realizes that nothing of that unlimited time was worth as much as the freedom of those who know their limits. Several minutes of silence pass in which the two retrace the different phases of their lives, until Irkae says: "Tell me more, what is The Old Tree? Why does it need to be brought back to life?"

"You ask me a lot, Irkae, you ask me to relive moments that will live forever like me. For now, know that it was my mistake."

Irkae realizes that, out of respect for his partner, it is better to avoid asking further questions but he knows that with time the whole story will become clear to him.

"How do we bring The Old Tree back to life?"

"You should know that The Old Tree is perfectly symmetrical as if to demonstrate the perfect harmony of nature. Now only one half is devastated, perpetually on fire while the other still retains its green falling leaves. With each day that passes, the fiery part incorporates a small piece of the other, threatening the hope of being able to bring the tree back to life."

"So basically we need to find an antidote to the cause that provoked the destruction of the tree?"

"Exactly"

"And what is the cause of its destruction?"

"A firefly. Yes, I know it may sound strange but not all that glitters is gold. I learned this in a hard way. It all started with my desire to go beyond my limits and with the meeting with a black cat who promised me freedom"

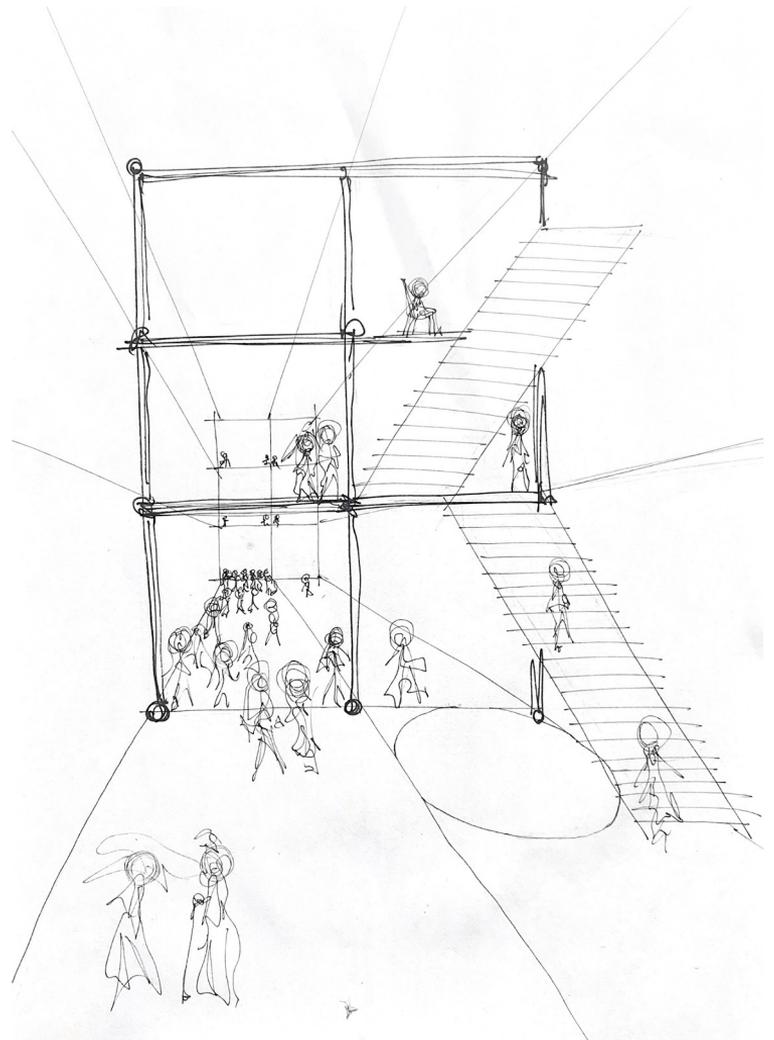
"Amner, it sounds really tormenting what you went through. Do you know what the antidote is?"

"No, but I know who to turn to to find out: Master Haakon. I grew up watching him prepare his potions and ointments in his shop and walking among the immense stacks of books on the history of Grasill, home of The Old Tree."

The two continue their journey on the dark and hard concrete of the city until Amner takes Irkae into an alley and touching an amethyst and emerald amulet they find themselves in another dimension: they are in Grasill, home of The Old Tree and home to their next adventures

"CITY"

Nicolò Calanni Macchio



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Irkae is shocked by what he sees and if he had thought his life was dark, now, he can say for sure that, compared to the apocalyptic scenario in front of him, the sad concrete of the city is a luxury. Yet once again he can't be sad, anguished but only completely human: in the **natural and pure search for life**. And paradoxically what he has in front of him is anything but life: there is a thick, hot fog, ash in the air, land devoid of any hint of green, animal skeletons on the arid ground and burnt branches everywhere. Anmer's tension is evident but she continues determinedly towards Master Haakon's house as if the landscape around her was a routine scenario. The two arrive at a hut in the middle of that gloomy immensity and Irkae understands it was the home of Master Haakon. Anmer is about to knock but the door is opened at that moment by a tall man, wrapped in a velvet cloak, with a face marked by age or at least only half of it: the other half has obvious red burns that go from the forehead to the chin without leaving a single flap of skin free. The thing that strikes Irkae's sensitivity the most is that perfect dividing line between healthy and burned skin.

"I was waiting for you Anmer, you and your companion"

"It was Master Haakon who suggested I ask you for help, Irkae"

"What? Why me?"

"My son, I sense the innermost feelings of every individual's soul and you, my dear, desperately need this journey. And I feel, therefore, that you will be the best to fight for a cause that is not completely yours. Please, take a seat, I'll explain everything to you."

The three enter Master Haakon's house and Irkae is struck by the immensity of books, vials and stuffed animals he finds: he understands that he is finally in the world as he has always imagined it, far from boring human artificiality.

"Irkae, listen to me carefully, I didn't choose you only for your great soul but also because you have a great gift: you are the only one between the world of Grassil and Earth to have a version in both dimensions. This is the reason that pushed you to feel unsuitable, out of place in every moment of your existence. You can end your suffering and our suffering. Let me show you how"

Irkae feels dazed and confused: not only has he recently discovered a new world but he has also discovered that he has another version of himself in another dimension.

"Irkae, are you okay?" Anmer asked

"Yes, tell me Master Haakon"

"I know this will shock you, but you should know that the version of you in the realm of Grasill is malevolent, devoid of mercy, and with a greedy desire for destruction. With the destruction of half of the Old Tree, the Bad One became stronger, leaving only you as a glimmer of hope. All of us in the world of Grasill have been destined to an existence with half our bodies disfigured. But not Anmer because she made a deal with the black cat, helper of the Bad One. Help us Irkae, only you can do it. Be undaunted, decisive and save us and yourself from harm."

Irkae, who until a few hours earlier had only been concerned with his plans, now finds himself having the weight of saving an entire dimension on his shoulders.

"Irkae, my son, are you willing to do this?"

"I... I don't know... you're asking a lot of me"

"We know, and we wouldn't do it if we didn't have to," Anmer replies

"I don't know what to say... I'm shocked to have discovered the existence of another dimension and another me in it"

"Irkae, listen to me, I know how disorienting a discovery like this can be. But all of us will help you in your endeavor, we all recognize your value and we will always be close to you"

Irkae is hesitant, he knows well that he doesn't necessarily have to accept but he knows that he has never been selfish and blind to people's suffering.

"I accept it, for you and for me"

"Well done my son, we are proud of you"



“MASTER HAAKON”
Nicolò Calanni Macchio

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After receiving information from Master Haakon on where to find the Bad One and after receiving a series of objects for the mission (a poisoned sword, a shield and an armor), the two begin to walk towards Mount of Olives where the Bad One had been seen. But Anmer suddenly stops.

"What is it Anmer? What's wrong with you?"

"It was the black cat I was telling you about, now he will surely go and report everything to his owner. Damn! This shouldn't have happened!"

The two decide not to stop due to the unexpected encounter but to continue their journey as the Mount of Olives was getting closer and closer. The two companions are already on its slopes and they can see the cave of the Bad One. As they get closer and closer they find themselves in front of a completely dark cave, devoid of life and any sign of presence until they hear a meow and immediately understand who it belongs to.

The black cat, once the meowing stops, begins to speak: "Come closer, my master is waiting for you" Irkae and Anmer look at each other with a mixture of fear, anxiety and excitement in their veins but this doesn't stop them because they decide to advance into the cave without looking back.

"Silly of you to believe you can defeat me, I am the direct descendant of The Old Tree, the only one to boast direct descent. You will never, ever have power over me."

The two companions find themselves in front of a tall, muscular boy with shoulder-length hair, eyes of a terrifying blue and above all, if all the other inhabitants of Grasill were half disfigured, he was completely disfigured.

"You are wrong, I am also the direct descendant of The Old Tree"

"Have you come here, then, to claim your place?"

"No, I have come to save your people, whom you yourself are oppressing with your delusions of power. What would you gain from destroying The Old Tree?"



"BLACK CAT"
Nicolò Calanni Macchio

"You're wrong, I'm not destroying it but I'm transforming him into its nature that comes closest to me, this makes me the true descendant. As a child, people didn't understand how I could be the one. And at their expense, they have now understood it. The Old Tree looks more like me every day, give up."

"I will not give up when your lust for power leads you to destroy innocent people. Do you want power? Take it. But don't oppress those who are not guilty, people are disfigured, they are dying of hunger due to the lack of food"

"I am not willing to empathize with those who have made me a recluse from society just because of my appearance. And I decided that if I were to be burned and transfigured then they should be too" he said shouting and drawing his sword.

The Bad Guy is getting closer and closer with the palpable intent of completely ending their existence. The two companions begin to prepare for the fight by drawing their swords in turn. It is Anmer who uses the sword first but is immediately wounded and sent away. Thus the duel begins and the metallic sound of swords begins to echo in the air. Anmer is injured in both an arm and a leg and desperately wants to get up but is unable to because she remains on the ground due to the weight of the black cat which in the meantime had settled on her abdomen. The Bad and the Good continue to fight in a surreal scene in which two physically identical figures fight to kill each other. The Good One seems to have the upper hand due to his more vigorous figure, until the sword falls from his hand. The Bad One picks it up to prevent his rival from taking it back and uses it to injure his arm and weaken him. The Good One is relieved because he manages to stay alive following the blow.

He gets up with more vigor than before trying to catch the sword dropped by the enemy and succeeds. He grips it with incredible strength and then delivers a blow to his leg. The Bad One falls panting in pain, the cat tries to get closer but Anmer's sword makes him fall helpless to the ground.

"Anmer what should we do now?"

"We must take him to Master Haakon"



“DUEL”

Nicolò Calanni Macchio

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The two arrive at Master Haakon's residence where they are joyfully welcomed by the old man given the success of their venture. The Bad One continues to struggle looking for a way to escape but Anmer, who fears nothing given her immortality and her urgent desire to make up for her mistakes, holds him tight.

"Excellent work my children"

"Master Haakon what will we do now?" Irkae asks

"We must sacrifice him and make sure his blood is absorbed by the roots of the tree and push his body into the core of The Old Treen"

"You will never do this to me! You will regret it bitterly."

Irkae stops for a second: from the beginning he knew that the plan involved hurting the Bad One, yet now, either due to the strong physical resemblance between the two or due to his condition of a man in captivity, he feels he is about to commit an act of pure evil. He knows that if the Bad One remains, many more deaths will follow, but he can't forget that ultimately what he has in his hands is a life.

"Irkae, you will have to make the sacrifice"

"No, now you're asking too much of me, I can't be the one to do it. I left my world, my father, to come and embark on an adventure I knew very little about, and I agreed to expose myself to death for the protection of your people. But this is really too much."

"It won't work if someone else does it," said Master Haakon

"Irkae, please don't let our efforts be in vain"

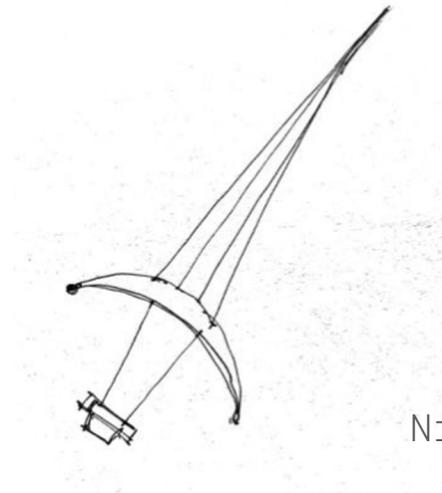
"When must we make this sacrifice?"

"This evening"

“You bastards let me go! I won't let you do this”

Irkae is saddened by his destiny that has increasingly shackled the freedom he thought to obtain precisely thanks to this adventure. He realizes that perhaps freedom has not been entrusted to him, but given that he is committed to this mission and given the desire to save his people he agrees to do so.

Evening falls on the horizon and Master Haakon begins preparations. On a wooden table he places a sharp dagger with a golden handle and falling leaves, a rag and some water. The victim, the Bad One, is placed in the center of the field in front of The Old Tree, terrified and frightened given the fate that awaits him. Irkae, who now seems to have reached a state of apathy due to the incessant flow of thoughts that flow inside him, grabs the dagger and with a quick and decisive movement cuts the victim's throat, and pushes his body into the core of The Old Tree, leaving Master Haakon and Anmer immediately afterwards. He no longer wants to hear their words, their justifications, he feels he has committed an impious act and the only thing that allows him to move forward is the knowledge a lot of people will be saved.



“DAGGER”

Nicolò Calanni Macchio

3 years have passed since the sacrifice, the world of The Old Tree has returned to shine: no one has their face split in half anymore, nor does nature suffer. Everything seems perfect and in harmony, but if there is someone who doesn't want to know anything about others it is Irkae. After the evening of the sacrifice he tried to return to his dimension, disappointed by the failure to obtain the freedom he so desired. Yet fate has had other surprises in store for him: he can no longer return to the other dimension because, having destroyed his only version in the dimension of The Old Tree, it is necessary for him to remain there. He therefore spends days in which he is unable to eat, sleep or live due to feelings of guilt. And as if that wasn't enough he feels terribly mortified for the pain he is causing his father given his sudden departure for the dimension of The Old Tree. So, one evening, while everyone was celebrating the anniversary of the liberation from the Bad One in a tavern, he goes away into the woods and under the moonlight he holds the same daggers used 3 years earlier. He observes its glimmer under the bright moonlight and, with his face streaked with tears, plunges the dagger into his chest.



“NEW LIFE”

Nicolò Calanni Macchio

1- Search for life and freedom

2- Fear of the unknown and ambition

3- Inability to bear delusions

4- Impact of nature on us

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