



Couette's Story

Earth of Ilmaos
412th year of the lunar calendar



Everything had begun here... The place stunk death. A smell much starker than the one coming out of him, of the blood on his clothes, of his rusted coat of mail and the putrid water in his flask. The barbarian pushed the door and entered the old cabin boarding the river with the same unpleasant feeling he had had three months ago: how could someone living in such a wrecked place afford what he held in his bag?

– Graou, what a pleasure to finally see you! I thought the task was too hard and wasn't expecting you anymore.

The old sorcerer put back on a shelf the jar he was holding, and in which were floating horrible disembowel little reptiles. He rushed at him.

– So, do you bring me what I asked for? Did you find it?

The barbarian searched his bag and pulled something out that he gave to the old man, whose eyes were sparkling.

– Algremor's spell book, I can't believe you found it, well done Graou!

He was about to open it when the giant hand of the barbarian held him.

– Where are the 1000 gold coins?

The sorcerer swallowed with difficulty and mumbled:

– I... I lied to you. I don't have the money I promised you. I'm just a poor sorcerer who sells potions in the market...

The barbarian's hand clenched violently on the handle of his giant mass. The sorcerer took a step back.

– Calm down, Graou, you did me a big favor in finding this book and I want to reward you. What I am going to give you is worth all the gold in the world...

He took a book on a shelf and opened it. There was a hole in the pages and he pulled out a little velvet bag he gave to the barbarian.

– Here, take this... This is the most precious thing I own.

Graou opened it, hoping to find maybe a few diamonds he could have sold in the village. But the little bag only contained two wooden medallions, decorated with different symbols: A circle with four lines

on one and three whirls on the other. His hand held more firmly the handle of his mass. The old man quickly explained:

– Let me tell you a little about these! I created this first talisman. This circle with the four lines is the symbol of the human body, of which he knows every secret. This medallion can link with its bearer. About this second one, it has been created by another powerful sorcerer named Zenar. You see the three whirls? They symbolize the space, because this medallion is able to link with its surrounding environment. Apart, they are nothing more than two ugly locket. But if you own both of them, you hold the secret of immortality!

The barbarian remained silent. This last word had not had the expected effect on him and the sorcerer resumed telling the story.

– Listen to me, here is just what you have to do: Carry the body medallion on you, because it protects you from aging. As long as you wear it, your body won't grow old and will remain forever the same as today. Moreover, if you hide the space medallion in a safety place, you can escape to any other kind of death. Indeed, if one day death is about to hit you, the body medallion will react and rejoin the space one, transporting you with it up to the safety place. Then you can hide the space medallion again and continue to live your eternal life! Do you understand the power of these artifacts? I would not give them to you for anything if it weren't Algremore's spell book.

Regarding to the apparent stupidity of the barbarian, the old man thought it would be wise to warn him about an inappropriate use of the two medallions.

– But you have to be very careful when you use their power. Don't wear or give the space medallion to anybody! It has to stay in a safety place, or else the consequences would be disastrous. You may for example...

He couldn't finish the sentence, since the enormous mass of the barbarian had hit him violently in the face. The old sorcerer took off in the air towards the opening of the chimney where he sank and burn in dark green flames. The patience of the barbarian had reached a limit. He had barely understood anything to the old man story. What was clear is that he had searched this bloody spell book for months and received nothing as a reward. He was about to take off when he came back to pick up the two locket, which were lying next to the chimney. Who knows, maybe he could sell them for a few bronze coins at the village. He shoved them into his bag and left the old cabin. He did not look back but mumbled a few words.

– Magic is such a piece of crap! It's only good for little girls playing the skipping rope!



*Peru, French archeological site Equateur,
12 000 years later*



– Camille? Camille??

The skipping rope was dancing around the little girl. She jumped from one foot to another, while singing some nursery rhyme she knew by heart.

– Couette, are you here?

The voice sounded a little worried.

– Yes daddy, I'm right here!

The skipping rope ended on the red Converse shoes, at the bottom of the jeans overalls.

– Couette, I told you a thousand times I don't want you to enter the ruins. It may be dangerous! Daddy was worrying about you!

– I'm sorry Daddy, please don't be mad at me. It is just so boring to stay in the site. I wanted to see the painting of the great hall again! Maybe I can help you understand it!

He smiled and kissed her hair, right between the bunches, like he always used to do.

– I'm sorry sweetheart, but you are way too young!

– It's my birthday today, I'm six years old! I'm sure you have forgotten again!

The archeologist smiled at her daughter and searched his pocket.

– Of course I haven't forgotten! I wanted to wait until tonight to give you your present, but never mind! Happy birthday sweetheart!

She jumped for joy, while tearing up the gift paper around the packet he had given to her. In was a little box and she opened it. Inside, she found a little locket in wood. There were a circle and four dark lines painted on it. She remained silent, without any idea of what to say.

– Do you like it? Her father asked.

– Yes... It is beautiful... But what is it, dad? It looks very old!

– It is a medallion that we discovered yesterday evening in the ruins of the cemetery. The symbol painted on it represents the eternal youth. I wanted to you to have it, to always remain as beautiful and malicious than you are today.

He hung the medallion on her daughter's neck and kissed her again.

– Now, I want you to be very careful with it. It has not been worn for more than ten thousands of years. It is pretty difficult for you to imagine such a period of time, but just picture yourself a world of beasts and sorcerers, of battles and magic, where there were no Converse shoes, no overalls and no skipping rope. You would have been very unhappy in such a world like this!

She thanked her father and hugged him tightly in her little arms.

– Ok, now I want you to stay right here. I'm off telling the team to finish the dig without me, because I'm bringing my sweetheart to her favorite restaurant!

– Really? Great, hurry up daddy, I'm already hungry!

He laughed and left the room, giving a last look at his lovely daughter. Her skipping rope was already flying around her again, the medallion dancing on her shoulders. This is the last picture he got from her. Five minutes later, the walls of the great hall collapsed in a terrible cracking and a whirl of dust, burying the little girl under the rumble.

The team Equator worked three days long to remove all the debris. They never found the little girl's body, neither the wooden medallion.



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421th year of the lunar calendar



The barbarian had finally trapped them. The six goblins were leaning back on the dead end wall, brandishing ridiculous swords and jabbering God knows what in a fuzzy dialect. Graou tightened his hand on his huge mass, covered with fresh blood. He had caught three by surprise, a few ones in the stairs and the rest of them were taking their last gasp here. He grinned from ear to ear, showing his rotten teeth. Two hundred gold coins for the bunch of goblins who had stolen diamonds extracted from the south tunnel. The bounty was his! He would make a feast of this gold, and maybe finish the night with one of Maggie's girls, or maybe two. After all, he had got a big appetite!

He left the mass over his head, ready to crush the poor goblins, who screamed out of terror. That was his favorite moment: when the bones crack, when the blood squirts on his skin... But none of this happened. He just felt something burning against his heart and heard the sound of cracking wood. He had just realized that this was coming from the medallion he wore on his chest, when the thing happened. He suddenly felt like his body was parceling out in two different entities and that something he did not know was destroying one of them to replace it. The pain forced the colossal beast to lay a knee on the ground. He forced himself to breathe deeply, until the attack was over.

When he opened his eyes again, everything looked different. He pushed on his legs to rise again, but they felt so weak that he could barely stand. He looked about for the goblins, who had certainly taken advantage of the situation to escape, but they still stood against the wall and observed him astonished. Suddenly, a strident voice he had never heard shouted through his lips:

– Oh my God, what a bunch of ugly monsters, Daddy!!!!

He could not understand what was going on. Something had taken possession of his body and he barely could move his limbs. His head was at once filled with strange pictures of a world he had never seen, where people dress with disturbing and colorful clothes, travel with flying metal horses and live in giant city of lights. He felt a terrible fear which wasn't his own, growing in him. There was no reason to worry, these were just a few goblins and he was about to sort them out. But the goblins did not look afraid at all anymore. They laughed at him and came toward him, brandishing their blades. All of a sudden, he realized that they were much taller than him. How could that be possible? He was a giant beast, ten times larger than these tiny little goblins! He stood up of all his height and raised his mass, which seemed much lighter than it used to be. He realized with horror that he was now holding one handle of a skipping rope. He looked at himself in a mad rage. There was nothing remaining of the huge beast he used to be. He looked now more like a little girl with a hideous blue overalls, a red shirt on the shoulders and some very uncomfortable boots at his feet. He also felt something moving on his head and saw two brown bunches with red glints on the sides. The last thing he had the time to notice was that the symbol of the medallion he still wore around the neck has changed. There were still the three familiar whirls, but a circle and three lines had appeared around them, like on the medallion he had hidden in the cemetery nine years ago.

There was no time to wonder about this. The goblins were just about to give him a working over! But the next second, he realized he was now rushing through the dark tunnels to escape them, screaming like a little girl. He was not doing anything. The other half, probably the little girl whose body had replaced his, had taken control of his legs and was running away. He was not really in the mood to agree with her, but at this time this was probably the best thing to do! He therefore left her bring them through the corridors, simply indicating her in his head the way leading to the exit. He was still holding in his hand one handle of the skipping rope...



To be continued...