

A fiction story

A young couple travelling in the mountains finds themselves in a very unusual place. From that moment on in their lives, the most incredible adventures begin.

Mike and Brenda

‘Ah, there’s one thing that cheers me up! There is just five days left for the plane,’ said Mike, he then dropped his heavy backpack off his back to the ground.

‘Don’t grumble, dear,’ Brenda smiled in reply, ‘isn’t it romantic here?’

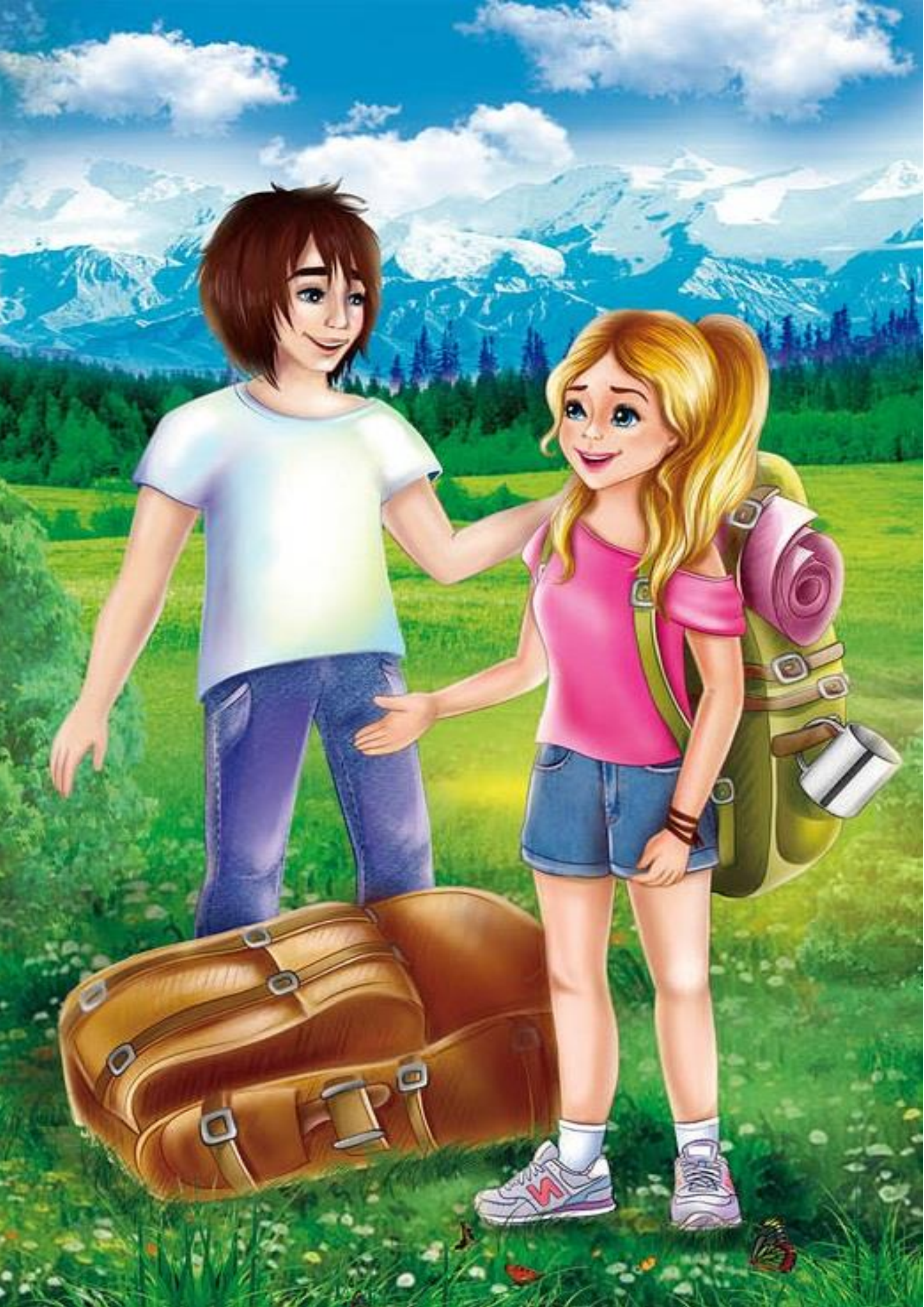
‘It is. It is romantic,’ the lad nodded and cheerfully responded. ‘But, we’d find the same just an hour’s drive from our home, my Princess... in the Mountains of Spingbrook, for example, or in the O’Reilly’s. And, there should be something much better than that in an hour’s flight.’

‘But we don’t have same history there like it’s here in Greece!,’ the girl resorted to her best act again. ‘Here, every stone breathes with an ancient philosophy and with the first steps of Christianity...’

‘...saint hermits, marvels and something like that,’ Mike continued for her and picked a cobble from the ground. ‘I know, I know, Brandie! But, to me, the stones seem to be the same as at home in Australia, even though they are slightly heavier.’

Having said that, Mike threw the cobble far to the bushes.

‘Ah, you simply aren’t romantic, my dear Mikey,’ Brenda said with sympathy and stroked his shoulder.



‘I am that romantic, my Beauty!,’ the lad smiled at last. ‘Although, I love to be romantic, by the sea, with a surfboard lying on my right side and scuba gear for diving on my left.’

‘So, where am I in your romanticism here, then?’ Brenda asked suddenly frowning.

‘Of course, you’re in my heart, darling!,’ the lad saved himself smartly and was immediately awarded a mellow kiss for that phrase.

‘I love the sea very much too, you know it, my dear! But, I’ve always wanted to visit the birthplace of my ancestors in Greece.’

‘I know, Brandie,’ Mike dropped a soft kiss on the girl’s nose. ‘Namely because of this, I’m wandering with you across these savage mountains for the second week already.’

‘I appreciate it very much,’ Brenda smiled tenderly. When we get back home, you can ask me for anything you want!’

The lad raised his brows in surprise then lowered them a moment later and glanced at the girl lovingly.

‘You do everything for me, Bre. There’s nothing else to ask for. Simply, always be with me and that’ll be enough.’

The young people leaned on each other sensually. At that moment, a sharp noise came from the side where Mike had thrown the cobble. The lad and the girl turned their heads there.

‘What’s that sound?’ Mike asked.

‘Perhaps that wasn’t just a stone,’ Brenda laughed in reply. ‘Don’t worry, there aren’t any formidable predators around here. Probably, there’s an eloquent he-rabbit telling his trusting she-rabbit something touching.’

‘Well, then, I’d better go and have a look at that,’ Mike said smiling and having unclipped – just in case – an axe from his backpack he headed towards the bushes.

Meanwhile, the girl began to unpack their luggage.

‘Brenda, Brenda, come up here!,’ she heard his voice in a minute.

Having left all the things, the girl headed to Mike.

About Seven Hundred Years Ago

An old man Litos sat smiling near the cave which was not far from his house, drawing something with a stick on the ground. Birds twitted around, the sun shone brightly, a light wind chided among greenish trees. It seemed that the old man was not noticing all this as he was somewhere very far from that place in his thoughts. Apparently, this place was so nice that Litos’ eyes shone with love and happiness.

The elder has been living for more than thirty years in this isolated corner. Sometime before, he had come here for silence and peace to look into himself, to seek a sense in this life and to

find a true God.

These years have not passed in vain for him. Often, it was a hard time for him, but he was very set to go that way and has never stepped aside from it. Now, he has achieved all he came for a long time ago.

The elder sat in silence, smiling to his thoughts. Suddenly, there came some noise and despite a bright midday sun, it became much brighter. Litos raised his head and smiled warmly. A heavenly Angel was coming down to him. It has not been the first time and the old man stood up to meet him.

‘Good day to you, Litos!,’ said a blinding white Angel.

‘Good day, bright Angel!,’ the old man responded with respect. ‘Your heavenly visit is an honour for me.’

‘It is always pleasing to come to see you,’ the Angel replied, ‘but this time, it is the Father who sent me to you. For your long years of striving to find Him, He decided to give you a present. Now, you may decide when you leave this world and pass to ours. The Father has made a small passage for you at the end of your cave through which you may come to us in Paradise.’

Litos took a deep bow.

‘Thank you, God, and thank you, bright Angel!,’ he pronounced with warmth.

After that, the old man thought over it for a minute.

‘This is a great honour for me,’ he spoke out finally. ‘I think the Lord gave me much more than I have deserved at the moment. I reckon, I should work further on the purity of my soul on earth before I deserve to be with you.’

The Angel went to the ash-haired old man and stroked his head.

‘You decide, our dear! We all are looking forward to your coming! Now or later,’ he said and began aspiring slowly off the ground.

The old man Litos watched him leave, then he sighed warmly and headed towards his abode.

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In about fifteen steps, the bushes ended and in front of Brenda, there opened a nice meadow lying by an almost vertical rock mountain. Mike was standing in its centre looking around in surprise.

‘Look, Bre, someone lived here apparently. It was a very long time ago, likely,’ the lad moved a semi-rotten log with his foot.

Several similar logs lay near him around there.

‘I told you!,’ the girl cheered up and started inspecting everything around.

Eventually, she reached the rock mountain and suddenly stood

still there.

‘Come here, Mikey,’ she called the lad quietly.

When he came up, the girl showed him a big cross which was carved beautifully on a flat stone.

‘It looks like an ascetic Christian lived here.’

‘Very likely he did,’ the lad agreed and palmed across the stone with his hand.

After that, Mike took out his camera and took a few shots. Then, the young people stood there for a while more and headed further along the rock. In five minutes, they came out to an orifice of a large cave.

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The Angel in the Heavens had been watching the young pair with a smile. Although, when they reached the cave, he worried slightly and raised his head.

‘Should I close the passage for Litos, Father?’ he asked.

After a minute of silence, the Angel heard an answer.

‘You should not. Brenda has been wanting to find something unusual. Let them find it to the maximum.’

The Angel smiled cheerfully.

‘Good, Father!’

While the young people were examining the entrance of the cave, the sun almost dropped behind the mountain. Having postponed examination until the morning, the lad and the girl returned to their backpacks and having had a snack, they started to prepare for an overnight stop.

Mike set a small tent, while Brenda made a coffee. When the first star shone in the sky, they were already seated, hugging each other by the fire, drinking a savoury beverage and chatting joyfully.

‘I confess, my Princess, this place has impressed me much indeed. I’d never think that we would ever manage to find something like that,’ Mike said and moved the firewood.

‘I’ve been sure about it,’ his travel companion replied optimistically.

‘You’re my best!,’ the lad smiled.

The girl leaned on his shoulder with warmth.

‘And you, Mikey, haven’t you felt something unusual on that meadow?’ Brenda asked him suddenly after some time.

‘Hum.., I wanted to ask you about that too but I was afraid of looking like an idiot,’ the lad replied amused. ‘What did you feel, Bre?’

The girl thought for a moment trying to choose words.

‘I felt a bit light, probably, joy,’ she started speaking. ‘I feel something similar, when I meet you after a long parting or when I think of our future baby.’

‘A baby?’ Mike started to cough astounded and even rose to his feet for a moment. ‘But..., we’re going to marry only, Bre?’

‘It’s not important, dear,’ a smiling Brenda sat him back. ‘It’s simply we, the girls, feel it’s important to dream of something very pleasing.’

‘Oh, I got it then...,’ Mike spoke out being somewhat slightly hesitated, and not understanding the gist really. ‘And me, I felt some childish joyfulness and carelessness on that meadow.’

‘That’s it,’ the girl started nodding her head agreeing. ‘Perhaps, it may be put like that. What d’you think of that generally?’

‘I don’t even know,’ the lad shrugged his shoulders. ‘Possibly, that ascetic was a bright and a cheerful man.’

‘Likely it is so. It was the first thing I’d thought of,’ Brenda agreed and looked at her Mike with warmth.

Although, he was yawning sleepily.

‘Alright, dear, let’s have some sleep now. We’ll think on it well in the morning,’ Mike continued somewhat sluggishly. ‘By all things, nothing clever will come to a sleepy head.’

The young people hid inside their tent and zipped it. Soon they slept tightly.

* * *

On that night, the girl dreamt an unusual dream: she came to a beautiful bridge, which led upwards somewhere. Next to it, there stood a banner that read 'the bridge of the elder Litos'. The girl looked around but saw no one.

Then, she stepped on the bridge cautiously and went on. The bridge took her steeply upwards and soon Brenda saw that colourful clouds were passing near her. The girl bent over the rails and looked down. Far, far away below her, there washed a blue sea, although, she was not afraid despite a great altitude.

Having walked further on the bridge for some time, Brenda suddenly saw a silver-haired old man with a bright face and cheerful eyes.

'Hello, Brenda!,' he said with a soft voice.

'Hello!,' she replied courteously. 'What is your name and how do you know me?'

'My name is Litos.'

'Oh! That's your bridge, then!,' Brenda replied being slightly embarrassed. 'I'm sorry that I went on it. I wanted to ask someone for permission but there was nobody.'

‘That’s nothing, don’t worry,’ the old man replied with a smile. ‘You may go on my bridge. It will lead you to a very unusual place. Remember everything you will see there, Brenda. If you would like, help us after you return. And now, have a good trip!’

Having said that, the silver-haired old man with kind eyes disappeared.

Brenda woke up with surprise. The sunlight was already sparkling on the tent’s fabric.

‘Litos,’ the girl murmured, remembering her last dream.

‘What, darling?’ sleepy Mike murmured near her.

‘Litos,’ the girl repeated. ‘It is the name of an old man who once lived here. I saw him in my dream.’

* * *

Brenda told her dream in detail to Mike during their morning breakfast.

‘Yes, it’s interesting,’ the lad reacted. ‘Though, I’d like to solve these dreams only after a tin of cold beer. And, the nearest beer is at the airport, in four days’ time, Brendie.’

The girl laughed cheerfully.

‘Alright, my beery analyst. Let’s gather our backpacks and go to check the cave.’

A few moments later, the young people were approaching the familiar rock mountain. Having switched their torches on, they came in under a wide cove and looked around. Their steps and voices immediately echoed from the cave's walls.

‘Look, Brenda, someone loved to sit here apparently,’ Mike said and pointed to a kind of bench made of stones, and a fireplace in front of it.

‘Certainly someone did, as the elder would have lived here for many years,’ the girl replied.

Then, they searched with their torches around the cave but found nothing remarkable.

‘There isn't much of his abiding traces left here,’ said the lad.

‘Wouldn't he have lived here to paint the walls only?’ Brenda shrugged her shoulders. ‘He saw into his soul and searched for the God.’

‘Oh, Bre, it looks like I would not mind a beer,’ Mike complained making the girl laugh again.

‘Yes, Mikey, this is not for you, apparently.’

‘Yep, I'd rather it were something more understandable and much more beautiful,’ Mike nodded and hugged his girl tenderly.

‘No way! Let's do away with this cave first,’ Brenda broke away from his arms and headed deeper inside.

Mike followed her.

‘Look, Mikey, we’ve got a passage here,’ the girl said and switched off her torch. ‘Oh, there’s some light coming from it! Perhaps that’s a through-passage to the other side of the mountain.’

Mike came up to her.

‘It looks like so,’ he nodded, looking there for a while, ‘and the size of the passage is big enough to pass through it. So, shall we go in there?’

The girl nodded her head and the young people went further.

On the other side

As Mike and Brenda were approaching another end of the cave, the light penetrating it became brighter. Finally, the young people passed through one more arch of the cave coming out to an open air on the other side of the mountain. They stood still having made a few steps, and looked around in amusement. Literally everything seemed surprising to them: the grass they stood on, the plants around and even the sky, which looked unusual. After some time, Mike found his tongue.

‘Bre, where on earth have we come to? An experimental botanical garden, maybe?’

His girl could only blink mutely. She stared at a yellow-bright grass which, with its everything-ideal, reminded her of a carpet

with a long nap. Then, she stared at unusual trees of fancy shapes and tints, after that – at incredibly beautiful flowers. Finally, the girl started to gaze at the sky which for some reason was sparkling by itself without the sun in it.

Being suddenly flooded with happiness, Brenda felt overfilled in her bosom. She stood smiling silly, not knowing what to reply to her lad's last question.

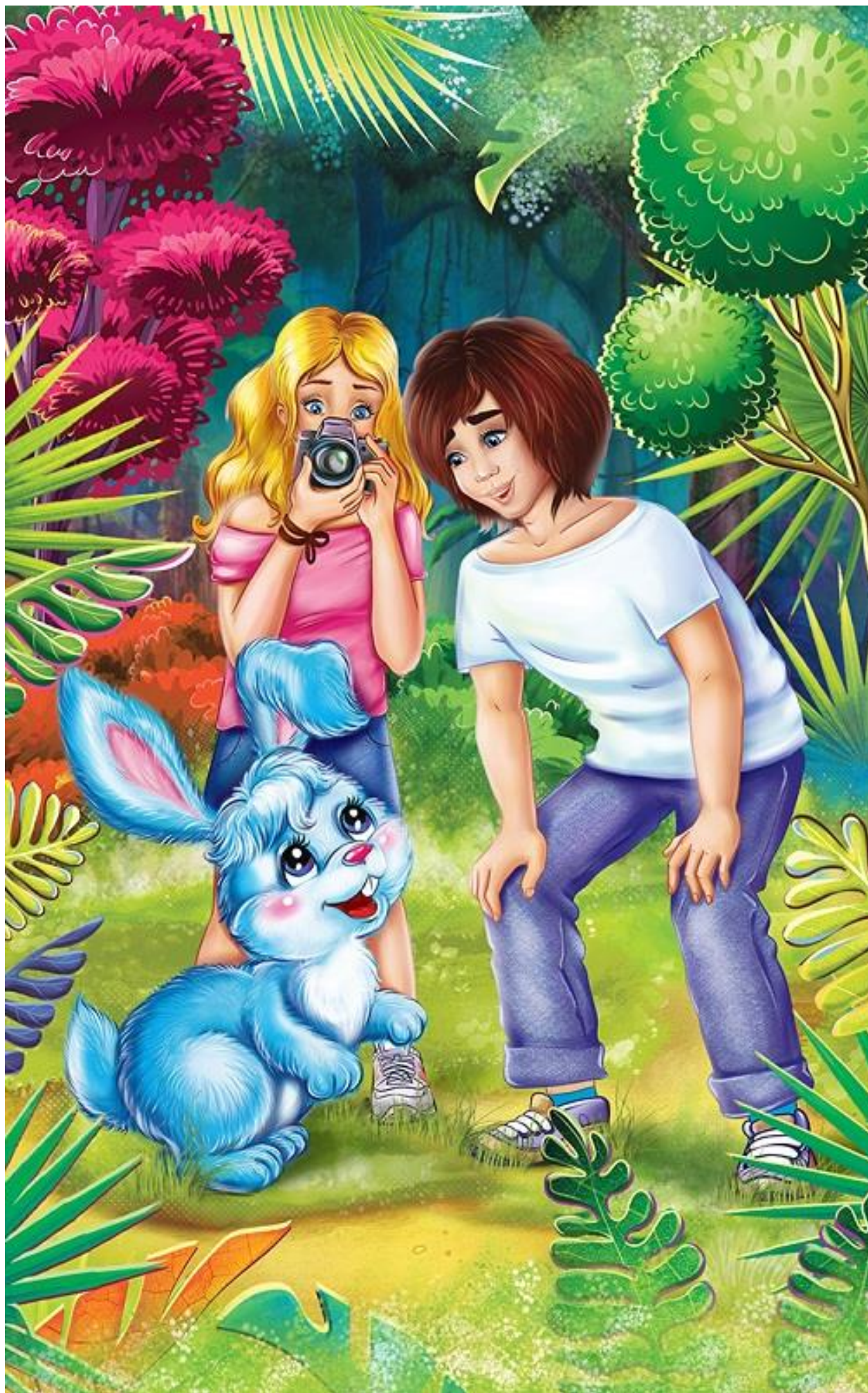
‘Oh, Mikey, it's so beautiful here! I feel like I'm going to fly with happiness! I've never imagined such beauty to exist somewhere,’ she found a reply finally after which she breathed the air in noisily. ‘What a smell!’

The lad, who was experiencing the same feelings, nodded his head agreeing. So, they stood for several minutes more – smiling and holding each other's hands.

‘I've seen something alike in a film,’ Mike spoke out finally. ‘Perhaps, it was made somewhere here?’

Brenda shrugged her shoulders; suddenly she started tossing the lad by his hand.

‘Mikey, Mikey, look! What a big rabbit over there!’ she whispered with excitement and having taken out her camera, she began clicking on its button.



The Angel, who was watching them, looked up with interest.

‘Father! What shall we do with their photos? Should I make it so, that nothing will come out?’

‘Well, no. Let them take the pictures,’ he heard a slightly cheered voice, ‘it is only the one, who is capable of believing in this, will believe.’

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The lad looked in the direction that the girl was looking and was instantly stunned. About five metres from them, there sat a light blue rabbit of incredible size looking at them curiously. It was near their belt’s height.

‘Wow! As huge as an elephant,’ Mike hardly managed to murmur out.

‘No, the elephant is much bigger than me,’ the rabbit replied thoughtfully and scratched his one ear with another.

The young people were shocked.

‘Bre, pinch me. Is this rabbit speaking to us? The lad whispered and shrieked in a moment. ‘Ouch! What’re you doing?’

‘I’m pinching, as you’ve asked,’ the girl replied embarrassed while not taking her eyes off the rabbit.

‘It hurts...!’

‘Are you playing a game pinching each other?’ the rabbit

asked them surprised. 'I've never heard of such game before. Somewhat silly. I won't play it for certain.'

Having said that, it waved with its ears and leapt into a colourful forest. The guys looked him leave with their eyes popping out.

'Now, I get it!' Mike laughed twitching slightly. 'We've breathed in some gas in the cave: we're hallucinating.'

'Right you are! How could I've been so dumb,' Brenda stuck herself on her forehead and asked the lad then, 'what shall we do before these rabbits start telling us jokes?'

'I don't know. Perhaps, we'd better go back to fresh air?'

'Let's go,' the girl replied.

The young people headed back to the cave and soon found themselves on the other side of the mountain. Everything around them became simple and usual.

'Oh!' Mike said happily, 'it looks like we're out of the gas.'

'Too quickly, it seems,' Brenda replied with a tint of doubt. 'My head's not aching at all, which's right the opposite.'

They stood for five minutes more, looking at a familiar landscape.

'That old man in my dream told me that his bridge will lead us to a very unusual place, Mikey,' the girl remembered suddenly.

‘Do you believe these fairy tales?’

‘Well, no. I've just seen a huge speaking rabbit, though,’ she said.

‘A light blue rabbit,’ the lad added.

‘You see, it seems we’ve seen one and the same thing,’ the girl said amused. There can’t be identical hallucinations, as far as I know.

‘That’s strange... Bre, what was the colour of the grass there?’ asked Mike understanding her train of thoughts.

‘The grass was light yellow, dear, the sky was sparkling and the rabbit told us that the elephant was bigger than him.’

‘O, golly!’ the lad could only say.

After that, they stood for some minutes more.

‘You know, I felt unspeakably good there,’ the girl started speaking. ‘This feeling doesn’t seem to be a hallucination. It reminds much of what you and me felt on that old man’s meadow yesterday.’

Mike was immersed in his thoughts and slapped his forehead unexpectedly.

‘Bre! Didn’t you shoot pictures there?’

‘Right!’ the girl remembered shining up; in a moment, the young people leaned over the tiny screen of the camera.

A thoughtful light blue rabbit was looking at them from there.

‘This means, that’s true...,’ Mike spoke out. ‘My goodness! So, what shall we do now? Go there again?’

Brenda nodded her head and they headed for the cave again. When the young people emerged from it for the second time, nothing changed in the unusual landscape around them. Treading cautiously on the yellow grass, they headed deeper into this unusual park.

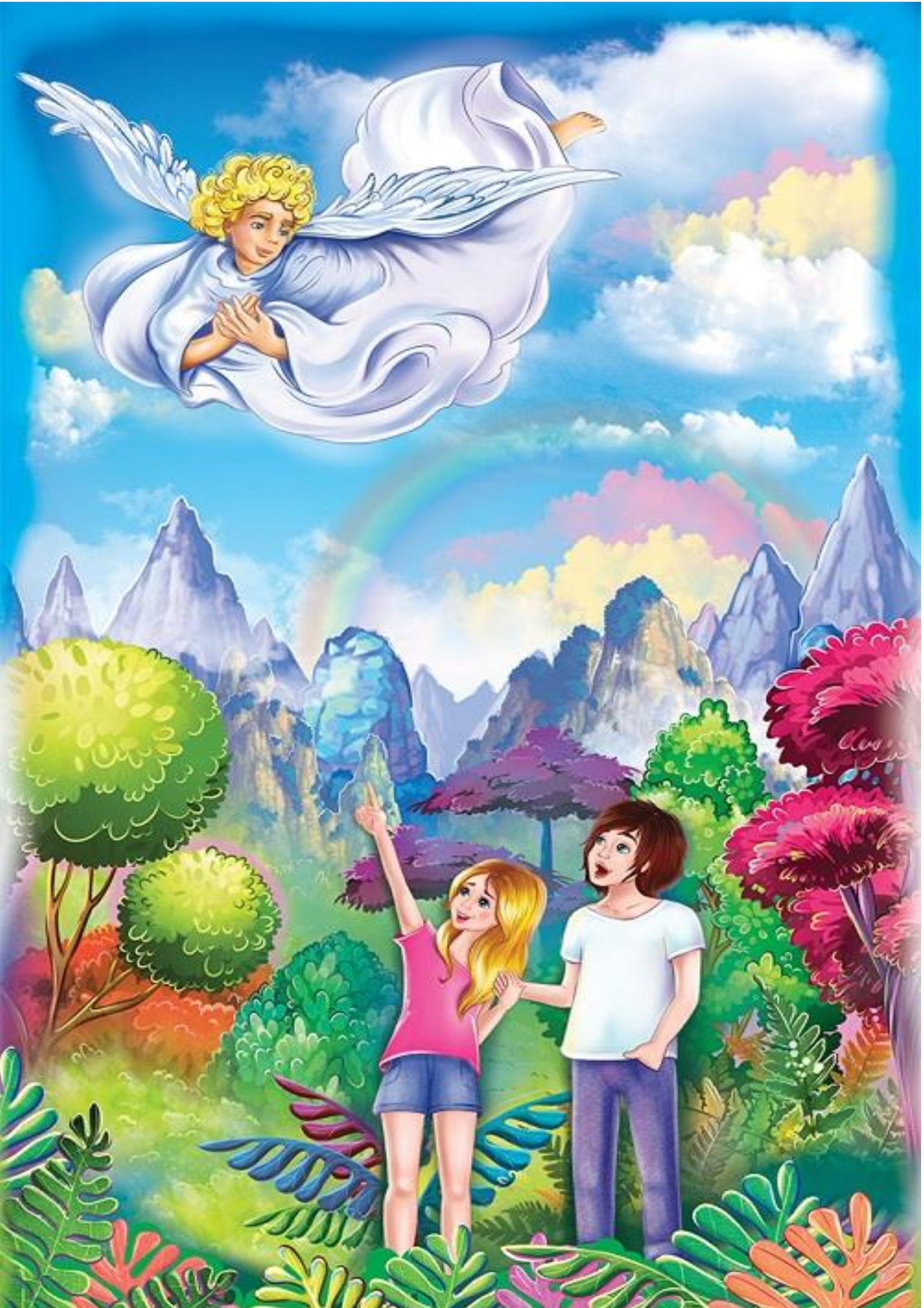
‘Wait, Bre,’ Mike said and took a compass from his pocket. ‘I’ll just take a notice of our bearing so that we can find our way back.’

The lad started to rotate the device. Although, in a moment he knocked it on his palm.

‘What’s the matter? Is it working?’ he wandered embarrassed. ‘The arrow turns as it wants.’

‘Look, Mikey,’ Brenda interrupted him alarmed, and pointed to the sky with her finger.

Mike raised his head, and almost fainted immediately: there flew a bright white man with wings. His arms were crossed on



his chest, as divers do, when swimming underwater. Having noticed them, the man waved at them joyfully and kept on flying.

‘An Angel...’ Brenda could hardly speak out.

‘I want some beer...,’ Mike complained and sat down on the grass.

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For a long time, the young people still sat on the yellow grass near unusual enormous flowers, looking around lost.

‘Bre, the Angels, they are in Paradise, aren’t they? Mike spoke abruptly and hesitating.

The girl nodded in reply.

‘What does this mean? Are we dead? Probably we’ve been poisoned by gas in that cave, I think...’

Brenda shrugged her shoulders, frustrated. But then, she suddenly shuddered and leaning into Mike, she quickly gave him a sensual kiss. After that, the girl stood erect vigorously.

‘Hum...,’ she smiled for the first time there. ‘I don’t know if we are alive or not, though it’s very pleasing to kiss yet.’

‘The same for me,’ the lad started to cheer up noticeably. ‘What do you know about Paradise, Bre? Tell me, as I’m completely profane at that.’

‘Well, I know little of it too,’ the girl thought for a while.

‘Mainly, I heard some things from my grandparents in my childhood when I stayed with them. Strangely, those stories seemed absolutely true to me then.’

‘What did they tell you?’

‘Well, if kind people live their lives rightly on earth, they go to Paradise after death and live on there for eternity. Everything’s splendid and well, beautiful and everyone’s happy in Paradise.’

Mike looked around thoughtfully.

‘It seems so, for now. What else?’

‘Also, God is the chief of the Paradise. There’re Angels too, the saints and those, who had simply been good and kind people.’

‘We’ve already seen the Angel,’ Mike nodded agreeing, ‘but for the rest, not yet. Didn’t you hear something about talking rabbits from your grandparents?’

Brenda shook her head negatively.

‘Okay, at least it has become slightly clear to me,’ the lad smiled. ‘Where have we gone, Bre! But first, we should find out if we’re alive or not. The thing’s how can we?’

The young people kept silent, thinking. Instantly, Brenda raised her head.

‘Mikey, when I pinched you, you did feel the pain!’ she said cheerfully. ‘A body can feel the pain only if it’s alive. This means that we’re well alive. Let’s check once more, if you want to.’

Mike winced embarrassed, then pinched himself carefully.

‘Never mind, Bre, I’ve checked already. It’s painful really. This means we’re alive likely.’ After that, he looked at the girl once more. ‘So what shall we do now?’

‘I don’t know either, it’s the first time for me too,’ Brenda shrugged her shoulders. ‘Basically, we can leave this place at any time. We’ve done it once.’

‘D’you want to leave this place?’ the lad asked her.

‘No!’ the girl shook her head smiling. ‘It’s classy here! Very beautiful and, like, joyful. All in all, only fools will run away from Paradise.’

‘I love it much here too,’ Mike laughed at her joke.

‘One more thing I recalled: the old man in my dream told me to look around well and remember it, and to help afterwards if we wanted,’ Brenda added.

‘Whom should we help?’

‘I don’t know,’ the girl shrugged her shoulders. ‘He didn’t tell me about that.’

‘Well, anyway, he should have known that we’d come here,’ Mike supposed, ‘as he told us to look around thoroughly here.’

‘It looks like so,’ his travel girl-companion agreed.

‘It means that we should look around here thoroughly. So,

what d' you think about our plans?'

'Now, when we've found out that we're safe and sound, I quite like this idea,' Brenda smiled and raised to her feet. 'And, I feel eager and ready to go!'

'I'm okay too,' the lad replied and rose to his feet. 'So, let's go now. Where shall we head first?'

'How do I know where we need to go in Paradise?' Brenda shrugged her shoulders. 'Let's go straight forward. The main thing is that we can find our way back to the cave or else, my parents will go mad if we are lost.'

'Even in such a case, they'll meet you some day here,' the lad joked philosophically. 'We won't get lost surely: our mountain has got a very noticeable shape. Also, we'll tie red stripes on bushes. Then, we'll use them to find our way back easily.'

'That's clever,' the girl nodded joyfully. She'd taken a skein of red band and tied the first stripe on a branch which could be noticed easily. After that, she took Mike by his hand.

'So, shall we go, my dear?'

'Let's go,' the lad agreed and the young people headed down the slope.

Ug

Having walked some distance, they stopped to tie the next strip. Brenda bent over a bush slightly but pulled back instantly. There was a happy face of their rabbit-acquaintance looking at her from the bushes' leaves.

‘What are you playing now?’ he asked cheerfully. ‘You know, I seem to like this game much more now!’

Mike choked.

‘Who are you?’ he asked the long-eared one.

‘Uggentusiys, but, you can simply call me Ug,’ the rabbit replied modestly. ‘I know you: you are Brenda and you – Mike. I just overheard you talking but I understood nothing, frankly. Why do you tie these stripes here? Much more beautiful?’

‘No,’ Mike replied. ‘We just want to find our way back to the cave. We won’t be lost with this for sure.’

The rabbit scratched his one ear with the other. Brenda could hardly stand from laughter. When she recovered, she took a video of this rather unusual talk with her friend and a big, light blue coloured rabbit.

‘Hum. It’s so unusual with you here. Why wouldn’t you find yourselves near the cave just after your walked here?’

‘How would we?’ Mike stared at him amazed.

‘Well, as always, of course,’ Ug split his ears to sides. ‘Firstly, you think of a place you want to get into, then you want to get

there, and you will find yourself there immediately after that. Why do something else?’

Mike and Brenda glanced at each other and smiled silly.

‘Perhaps, we’ll try that really, Mikey. What do we risk?’ the girl supposed in her turn. ‘We’re in Paradise. Who knows how things work here...’

‘Let’s try,’ the lad replied with uncertainty. ‘To our cave, but don’t tell anybody that we were given advice by a rabbit.’

The young people stood in silence, then took each other’s hands and, in a few seconds, found themselves near the entrance to a well-known to them arch of the mountain.

‘It can’t be!’ Mike could only speak out. ‘This is..., how’s it... teleportation! I’ve seen such thing in a film.’

‘I’m going mad!’ Brenda added.

‘So, what? Shall we try going back?’ the lad asked her cheering up in his face.

In a moment, they found themselves near the light blue rabbit again.

‘How are you? Have you managed?’ Ug asked them.

The guys nodded to him happily in response. After that, the rabbit glanced behind them.

‘What’s that hanging on your back?’

‘These’re backpacks,’ Mike replied to him with a shadow of surprise, but remembering timely, that he is talking to a rabbit of Paradise, he explained smiling, ‘well, these are a kind of bag we carry all our necessary things in.’

‘Are they? And, what’s there? Is it a thing to play with?’

‘Well, not quite so, Ug. You want to play all the time?’ Brenda laughed and looked at Mike, smiling. ‘We play in a slightly different way. In our backpacks we carry some food, a tent to sleep in and many other useful things.’

‘The food, to sleep in...,’ the rabbit repeated slowly the words that were obviously unfamiliar to him, ‘What’s that?’

‘What do you mean?’ the lad and the girl asked together surprised.

Mike crouched down closer to Ug.

‘Do you like carrots, friend?’

The rabbit gave him an embarrassed look.

‘Well, I don’t know, perhaps you call it something different,’ the lad scratched his head. ‘Well, the tasty thing you like to put into your mouth and chew?’

Ug looked at him terrified.

‘Put in my mouth? I don’t put anything into my mouth, I speak with it,’ the rabbit replied and made two steps back to be safe.

Mike and Brenda glanced at each other astonished.

‘And, for the tent,’ the girl decided to change the point, ‘it is to sleep in it, when the night comes and it becomes dark.’

‘The night, dark? What is this?’ the amazed rabbit asked again. ‘I have never seen how it becomes dark. What does *to sleep* mean?’

The lad and the girl looked at each other and sat down on the grass astounded.

‘Possibly, they have neither food nor night here?’ Mike started figuring out.

‘I don’t know,’ the girl shrugged her shoulders. ‘I’ll ask him.’

She turned to the rabbit.

‘Ug, do you ever sleep?’ she asked.

‘How is that?’ the rabbit bent his ears forward with interest.

‘Well, you lie down under a bush and close your eyes...’

‘Oh, right!’ Ug cheered up. ‘Well, yes, certainly. We don’t call it *to sleep*, but *hide-and-seek*. Then, I open my eyes and go to seek for my friends.’

‘Mmm...,’ Mike mumbled. ‘This means, they don’t sleep here.’

The rabbit scratched his ears.

‘Well, alright, guys, I’ve got to go and meet somebody now.

I'm gone,' he said. 'See you later, perhaps.'

Ug leapt joyfully towards a colourful forest. Mike and Brenda looked at him thoughtfully.

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When the rabbit disappeared from their sight, the young people stared into the sky silently.

'It looks like it's the same as in our world,' Mike said. 'Though the sun can't be seen, it's bright here anyway. What're you thinking about, Bre?'

'These tiny clouds are quite similar to earth ones,' the girl nodded, took out her camera and started taking pictures of the sky. 'There aren't any grey ones, every of them is white and fluffy. There, I see a pink and a green one.'

After that, Brenda put back her camera and took off her backpack.

'Okay, Mikey. Let me feed you. We've absolutely forgotten about the food. Then, with a full stomach, we'll figure out something clever.'

'Perhaps we'll have a meal later?' the lad stumbled doubtfully. 'For some reason, I'm not hungry at all.'

'Not hungry? What d'you mean?' Brenda stopped untying her backpack in astonishment. 'You've never said that, Mikey!'

You've never missed a meal before!'

'Well, right, I haven't,' the lad nodded and thought. 'For some reason, I don't want to eat at all, currently. You, Bre? Are you hungry?'

'Nay,' the girl replied, listening to herself. 'I don't want to eat either, but I feel myself full of energy and eagerness.'

'That's right! Me too,' the lad nodded cheerfully.

'It looks like we're like the local rabbits,' the girl smiled and moved closer to her lad, leaning her head on his shoulder. 'What shall we do, dear?'

'I don't know,' Mike spoke out, palming the girl's head and smiling. 'Like rabbits, you say? Hum, it sounds romantic!'

'Well, yes. The rabbits will play always,' the girl continued cheerfully. 'Someone hasn't kissed me today yet...'

'Haven't I?' the lad wondered and bent closer to Brenda.

Some time later, the young people sat down together again.

'So,' the girl started summing up, 'we don't feel hungry and we don't know about sleep yet.'

'Mmm,' Mike nodded. 'It'll be rather funny, if we find we don't want to sleep too.'

'Then, why should we carry these heavy backpacks?' Brenda asked. 'Let's leave out the food, dishes and the tent near the cave.'

This will make our walk much easier.’

‘No, let’s do it in a few days, Bre,’ Mike shook his head in doubt. ‘I am not ready get rid of food at the moment.’

The girl burst out laughing.

‘That’s my Mikey!’

After that, the young people stood up from the grass. The lad wanted to clear the back of the girl’s shorts, but suddenly whistled surprised.

‘Wow! Not a piece of grass or dust at all. Like you’ve been sitting in an armchair.’

The girl turned around herself trying to look at her back.

‘Yes, dear. It looks like we’ll discover something new everywhere here.’

Then, she put her backpack onto her shoulders.

‘Well, Mikey? Shall we go further to see the Paradise?’

‘Let’s go, my Princess,’ the lad replied happily and mounted his backpack onto himself as well. Then, he sighed: ‘it’s a pity, no one on earth will believe us.’

‘Why? We’ve got photos and videos! How about we bring Ug along as proof?’ Brenda replied laughing.

‘Don’t tell him this ahead of time or he’ll be shocked.’ Mike laughed out heartily and the young people set off on their trip.

‘Besides, if he comes with us, then he’ll know what a carrot is, a cheerful lad’s voice sounded from a distance a moment later.

* * *

‘So, where shall we go, Bre?’ Mike asked his travel companion after nearly half an hour passed. ‘Surely, it’s beautiful here, but we can walk eternally, so far. We’d better go somewhere anyway. Although, I don’t know any places here in Paradise.’

‘Me too,’ the girl slowed her pace thinking over and slapped herself on her forehead. ‘Mikey! My grandparents should be somewhere here! They’d desired much to get to Paradise.’

‘Well done!’ Mike replied cheerily. ‘Most likely, they’re here for sure. So, they’ll tell us everything about Paradise. But can we find them here?’

The young people stopped and thought for a while.

‘Bre!’ the lad looked amazed at his girl-companion. ‘D’you remember their looks well?’

‘Well, yes,’ Brenda shrugged her shoulders with uncertainty.

‘You want to describe their appearance to our rabbit, so that he can help us to find them here?’

‘No, Bre,’ Mike giggled. ‘I just thought if you imagined them and wanted to get to them...’

‘It would come out like with the cave?’ the girl intercepted his

thought. ‘You know, Mikey, let’s try it. What do we have to lose?’

‘Nothing,’ the lad nodded agreeing. ‘Let’s take each other’s hands now, then. The main thing is, we must not get lost here.’

‘Right,’ Brenda nodded.

‘And, if we do get lost,’ Mike spoke again, ‘let’s return to our cave immediately.’

‘Right!’ Brenda agreed and palmed Mike tenderly. ‘We can’t afford to be lost. Where else would I find such a remarkable father for my three children!’

‘Three?’ he asked with great surprise.

‘Uh, later,’ the girl waved her hand. ‘Let’s find my grandparents now.’

‘Good,’ the lad agreed astonished. ‘Hold me tight.’

‘I better hug you, to be safe,’ the girl replied with a smile and the young people stuck to each other.

After that, Brenda closed her eyes and started recalling the looks of her grandmother, Nika, and her grandfather, Kirik. Then, she very much wanted to find them. Mike also closed his eyes, just in case.

* * *

When the young people opened them again, they were

standing on a beautiful seashore. A soft birds' tweet, an amazing scent and an endless blue ocean flooded their hearts with happiness.

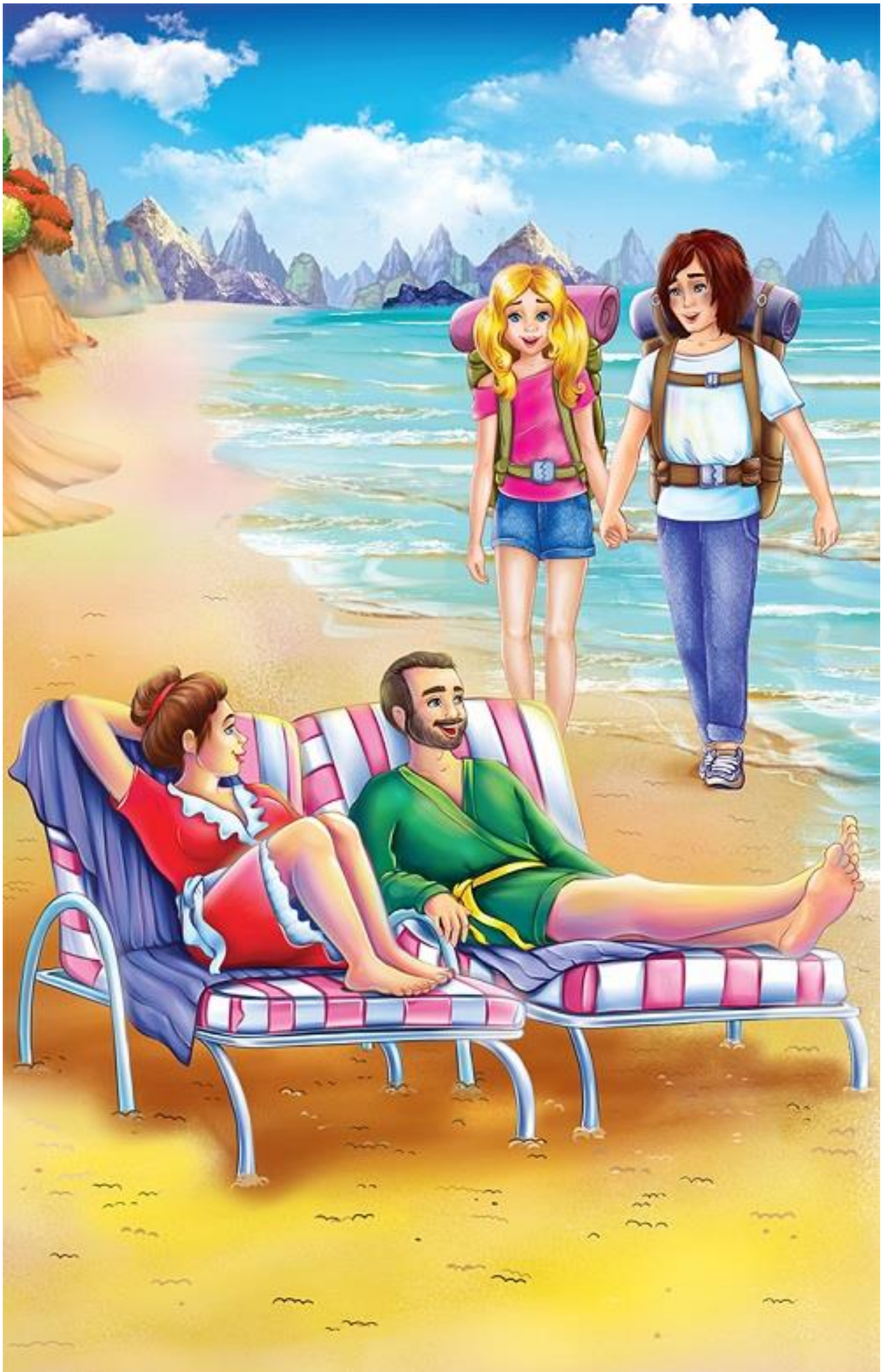
‘Wow!’ Mike murmured first and stretched his hand to take the camera. ‘That’s the ocean! Though, it looks slightly different.’

‘How beautiful!’ the girl said and, having released Mike, she stretched her hands to her sides. ‘This means there’re oceans in Paradise, too!’

‘What an interesting girl, Kir!’ the young people suddenly heard a woman’s voice coming from behind. ‘Looks like our granddaughter slightly.’

‘Hum, there is something in her, my dear,’ a man’s voice replied. ‘Hardly that’s her. Too early for her yet.’

Brenda and Mike turned around at once and stared at a strange young couple that were sitting in sun loungers right in front of them. Immediately after the sun loungers, there was a



nice garden at the end of which a beautiful house stood high. The

young people turned their heads looking around for a while and saw a few more of such houses further on the shore.

‘Terrific!’ Mike stumbled amazed. ‘It looks like they build houses just by the ocean. Strange. How about storms?’

‘Storms?’ the people in the sun loungers glanced at each other.

In the meanwhile, Brenda stood still staring at them.

‘Excuse me!’ she spoke suddenly with an unusually agitated voice. ‘Do you know, where Kirik and Nika Kortis live here?’

The couple in the sun lounges raised to their feet.

‘How do you know them?’ the man asked her surprised.

‘I’m Brenda, their granddaughter,’ the girl hardly started to speak when she felt something and rushed to them happily. ‘Granny! Grandpa! Is that you?’

‘Brandie!’ they replied together and rushed to her.

Meanwhile, touched Mike was shooting a video of this most unusual meeting in the girl’s life.

Kirik and Nika

After some time, the lad and the girl sat in the beautiful house

of Brenda's relatives and finished telling their long story during which Nika and Kirik splashed their hands emotionally.

'I've never heard anything like this before,' the grandmother spoke out first after the story was over.

'Yes, it is very unusual that Father allowed them to come in here,' a young-looking grandfather agreed. 'Unbelievable!'

'Father?' Mike asked him embarrassed.

'Father – is God. The Creator of the Earth and this Paradise!' Nika explained to him.

'Hum... You think that God knew we found that way in the cave?' the lad scratched his head.

Kirik and Nika laughed cheerfully.

'Father knows everything!' the grandfather explained to the lad. 'Nothing happens without His knowledge: neither here, nor on the earth.'

'Does it?' Mike scratched his head again.

'Grandma, grandpa!' Brenda addressed Nika and Kirik. 'Will you tell us something about Paradise. We're so excited!'

'Well, my dears, you've already managed to see some of its outer looks,' the grandmother smiled. 'It looks like earth slightly but much more beautiful and fine. While, it is always absolutely safe in Paradise. Also, we have more opportunities of moving and many other things.'

‘You said that we’ve seen the outer looks here,’ Mike said with interest. ‘Is there something else, internal in the Paradise?’

Kirik and Nika glanced at each other and laughed out heartily.

‘In fact, the gist of the Paradise hides inside,’ the grandfather started explaining smiling. ‘Because love cannot be seen by eyes. You, children, can you describe or draw what you feel for each other?’

The lad and the girl glanced at each other and thought for some time. Then, they simply took each other’s hands.

‘It’s a kind of joyfulness,’ Brenda tried to express her feelings in words. ‘Probably as from the sun, flowers or the stars in the sky. This feels warm.’

‘You speak right, my dear!’ the grandfather nodded in appreciation. ‘The same inner joyfulness is everywhere here.’

‘Is that thanks to grandma?’ Mike asked.

‘Thanks to her too,’ the grandfather laughed out loudly. ‘And, because of our fine neighbours, the dwellers, who live here...’

‘And, mainly, because of our Father!’ the grandmother added warmly. ‘If only you could feel how loving, kind and cheerful He is! Father always fills the Paradise with light and happiness. And we, who live here, love Him very much and feel the warmth of the light that comes from Him.’

‘By the way, He is present on the earth too,’ the grandfather

spoke out and sighed, ‘but the people don’t strive to feel the touch of the most beautiful thing they have got in their lives.’

Mike and Brenda listened to him attentively and tried to understand everything he said well.

‘I’ve been feeling some happiness without obvious reason here too,’ the girl said finally. ‘Like my birthday or something similar.’

‘That’s a good comparison, Bre,’ Mike nodded. ‘I too have a feeling of the birthday happiness here, with a big pile of presents.’

They all burst out laughing heartily.

‘Well, finally, you’re feeling something yourselves. But, you haven’t met the Creator of these presents and you haven’t got love and gratefulness to give back to Him. That’s why you feel far from everything.’

‘Could you explain this?’ Mike asked confused.

‘It is not so difficult. Well, for instance, about our granddaughter. Isn’t there some difference for you, when you first saw Brenda from far away and now, when she’s become your beloved one?’

The lad was trying hard to think over what he has heard, meanwhile the girl was smiling happily.

‘Well, yes. I’ve just thought, there’s a great difference in that!’ Mike spoke out. ‘You mean that we are not feel everything now?’

The grandmother and the grandfather clapped their hands

simultaneously.

‘That’s my clever!’ Brenda hugged her lad by his shoulders smiling.

Then, the grandfather stood up.

‘Well, my dear guests,’ he said cheerfully. ‘I don’t know how long you’ll be here, but let us show you something interesting in Paradise.’

‘That would be great!’ Mike spoke out excitedly.

‘What would you like to see first?’

The lad and the girl thought for a while.

‘Well, you know,’ Mike started speaking after some time, ‘I’ve heard that besides Paradise, hell exists. Is that true?’

‘Certainly,’ the grandfather nodded.

‘Can we have a look at it too?’

The grandmother and the grandfather looked at each other.

‘The dwellers of the Paradise cannot get there,’ Nika replied in a moment. ‘Hell lies behind a bottomless abyss. Although, there is one place just on the edge of it from where some things on the other end may be seen. Are you sure you want to have a look at that?’

Brenda and Mike looked at each other and nodded.

‘Well, then, hold our hands,’ the hosts of the house said and

came closer to them.

After that, they all closed their eyes...

* * *

The next moment, when Mike opened his eyes, there was a splendid meadow with beautiful grass and big lonely trees.

‘Is that hell?’ he asked the grandmother and the grandfather, who stood nearby.

‘Not quite, son, hell is behind you,’ Kirik replied.

Brenda and Mike turned around and froze instantly, they found themselves standing on the edge of a great abyss, from which flames of fire would appear from time to time.

Immediately beyond the abyss, there lay a different land. It was neither green, nor colourful. Everything, including the sky, was grey and darkening. From the spot the guys were standing, they could see well some living creatures moving there. Mike stretched his hand to his backpack and took out binoculars. Having looked through them for a minute, he silently gave them over to Brenda. In a few minutes, the girl put her hands down as well.

‘Who are these creatures?’ she asked with a low voice.

‘There are different kinds of them there,’ the grandfather replied. ‘Those with tails are the devils and the rest are the people who didn’t strive much for love and kindness in their earthly

lives.'

'Right, I wouldn't like to get there one day,' Mike pronounced slowly.

Beyond the abyss

Devil Zinger passed guards quickly and ran up the stairs horny-headlong. Having come to the second floor, he flung into Chairman's room. Satan raised his disapproving look from a table on which he has just been gathering his image out of a puzzle.

'What is that, shaggy? It wasn't a false alarm, I hope?'

'Your Apocalipticity!' the visitor addressed him awesomely. 'We've got some news! We've just seen two people on that side of the abyss. They're still there, possibly.'

'The people in Paradise?!' the Satan spoke out surprised and stood up from his table. 'That's something new. Are you sure of that?'

'Well, yes. I saw them myself. They were standing there with their backpacks and looked like tourists.'

'Hum...'

The Satan went to the balcony. The devil leapt forward instantly and opened the door in front of him. Having come to a wide terrace, the Chairman of the hell headed for a big telescope

with which he liked to have a look at the land from which he had been expelled with attain.

‘Where’re they?’ he asked the devil.

Zinger stuck to the eyepiece and started moving the telescope around in search. Soon, he cleared it for the Chairman.

‘There they are, four of them. Two are locals and the other two are the people, surely.’

Satan leaned to the spyglass. In a minute, he took it off the stand and began watching the girl and the lad attentively; both were on the other side at that moment taking pictures of something.



‘Hum, these are people indeed,’ he spoke out finally. How could they be there? What do they want? I’ve never heard of people visiting Paradise.’

After that, the boss turned sharply to the devil.

‘Take good photos of these people immediately.’

‘Already done, boss!’ the devil clicked his hoofs happily.

The Satan grinned contentedly and gave a cheering pat on his horny head.

‘You may work well, Zinger,’ he said. ‘Perhaps, I should consider promoting you some time.’

The devil’s tail started winding like a screw of an aeroplane. Satan turned toward the abyss and immersed deep in his thoughts.

* * *

Having taken a few photos with maximum zoom, Mike put away his camera. After that, he and Brenda looked at her grandparents.

‘Grandma, grandpa! Could we have a look at something unusual and much more beautiful in contrast to this? Well, the things we like,’ the girl asked them.

Nika and Kirik glanced at each other joyfully.

‘Hum... So, grandpa, shall we show the children a couple of

our favourite places? Maybe we have similar tastes?’

‘Let’s go, Nika,’ Kirik replied with a smile, ‘‘I think, we have some chance there.’

They took each other’s hands once more.

When Mike opened his eyes, he shouted, terrified to death. They were standing on a seabed while a big shark was looking with curiosity at his face. In a second, the shark leapt aback and disappeared in the blue of the sea, having obviously been frightened by Mike’s shouting.

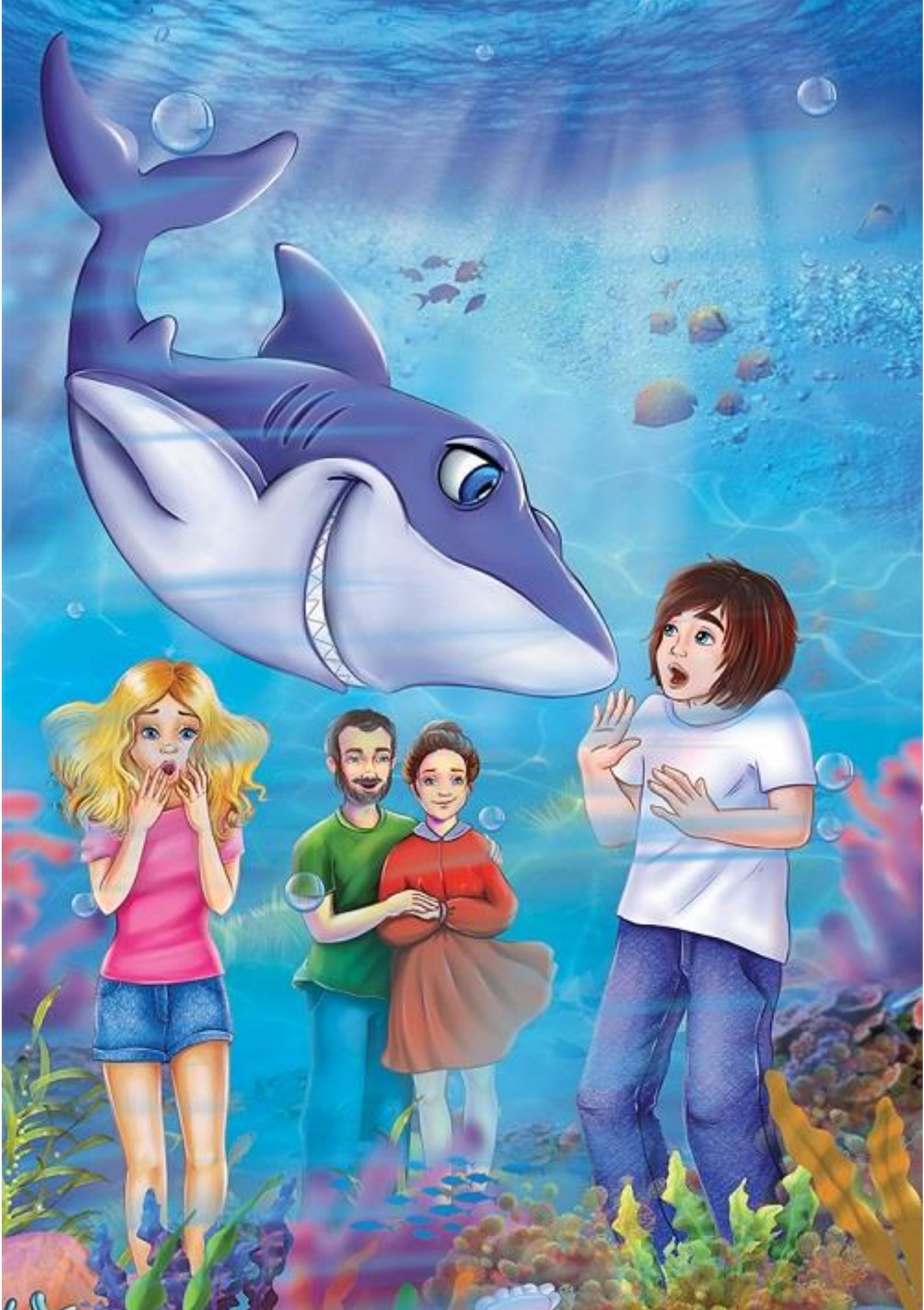
‘Well, now, Tobik has been frightened,’ Nika addressed the grandpa reproaching, then whispered, ‘I told you we should have warned them ahead.’

‘Well, they’re Australian divers, so...,’ the grandpa tried to justify himself. ‘I thought they would’ve been accustomed to that.’

‘We, we have frightened T-Tobik?’ Brenda found her tongue. ‘With such huge t-teeth of his?’

‘Well, yes, my dear,’ her grandmother smiled. ‘His teeth won’t harm anyone in Paradise. Absolutely no one thinks of food here.’

‘Tobik is an old friend of ours!’ the grandfather added laughing. ‘Nika and I love to ride him at times. He’s funny. Though after this incident, possibly less funny...’



Mike and Brenda had been listening to them smiling silly, until the lad shouted for the second time.

‘How can we be underwater without scuba gears, Bre?’

The girl started looking around amazed.

‘You are in Paradise, children!’ Kirik spoke to them. ‘Things here look earthly, but it’s absolutely different in its essence.’

‘Our bodies might look like yours, but they are different. They don’t become older or ill; they don’t need food,’ Nika continued. ‘This atmosphere, I’d say, differs radically.’

‘And, how about us? Can we stay here with our bodies too?’ Mike asked amazed.

‘Of course, this is a much perfect world,’ the grandmother replied. ‘But for sleeping or food, you won’t feel the need of it, probably.’

‘Human bodies are capable of much more things even on the earth when they are filled with the energy of the Father,’ Kirik smiled. ‘Some outstanding saints could refrain from food for a long time, rise above the ground and many other things. And here, in Paradise, you’re in His home.’

‘Mikey! Our electronic stuff will sink here!’ Brenda exclaimed, ‘cameras, telephones...’

Mike pulled the camera out of his bag quickly and sighed with relief.

‘It’s working! Looks wet, but working!’

‘Nothing can break or be damaged here,’ the grandmother explained with a smile, ‘neither on the dry land, nor under the water.’

They stood on the seabed for some time more. Mike took pictures of several known, as well as unfamiliar sea animals, many of which were swimming around. Sometime later, Brenda addressed her relatives again.

‘What’s the second place you wanted to show us?’

The relatives glanced at each other slyly.

‘You’ll see. Take our hands.’

When Mike and Brenda opened their eyes again, they both shouted this time: they were falling down from an incredible altitude, coming through colourful clouds. There was about ten kilometres left to fall down onto the trees and the grass.

Nika and Kirik were precipitating happily with their arms wide apart near them. When the young people recovered from the first and the second shock, they did as their grandparents and flew down all together.

‘How shall we be landing? We haven’t got parachutes with us,’ Mike managed to ask his first question a while after.

‘No one can be harmed anywhere in Paradise!’ the grandparents repeated their favourite reply. ‘So, fly calm,

children.’

Although, Mike and Brenda were not able to relax themselves entirely until the moment their feet touched the grass softly.

* * *

Zinger, the devil, took the photographs which he had thrown aside a few minutes before and started studying them again thoroughly. The Chairman’s words, which he had heard this morning, were sounding in his head constantly.

‘I can’t tell where the hell these people came from into the Paradise and I can’t tell if they go back to earth or not. But, if they return there, they’ll have photographs and videos of the Paradise in their hands which will harm us severely. We’ve been struggling for hundreds of years on the earth to make the people forget God and the Paradise. These photos can break many of our plans. By all means, we cannot afford for this to happen. Find them on the earth, Zinger! This is a good opportunity for you to grow to a position of my senior assistant – if you succeed, of course. In case you fail, figure out your perspective by yourself.’

Having remembered the last words of the Chairman, the devil jerked unwillingly. He knew what happens in hell to those who fail and he wouldn’t even want to imagine that any further in his thoughts.

‘So, my kind ones,’ Zinger began to whisper looking closely at the faces in the photographs, ‘what place on earth do you come

from?’

He studied in detail their clothes, footwear and backpacks on the photographs once more, then he re-wrote brands of firms he could distinguish on their things. After that, Zinger made a drawing, copying all symbolics he could see.

At the time assigned, two new devils entered his office who were designated by Satan to assist. Both of them were very experienced and quite clever-minded.

‘Your task is,’ Zinger said to them, after they sat at a table, ‘to scour all the earth and find where all these things could be bought at one place. You can make use of absolutely all our channels and all the agents we’ve got on the earth. The boss permits. Is your task clear?’

The devils, whose names were Gluss and Stick, looked attentively at the sheets with the brand makers of the things from the photograph and nodded.

‘Go!’ their new commander ordered. ‘Report immediately on any success to me.’

The devils nodded again and went out of Zinger’s office. He picked up the photographs again.

‘Well, well, my kind ones!’ he said with an overly honey voice looking at the young couple on the photograph. ‘I hope much I will know you better on the earth very soon.’

* * *

Once, while Mike and Brenda were strolling along the paradise ocean, Nika and Kirik decided to talk to God.

‘Hello, Father!’ Kirik spoke out first, looking into the sky. ‘It is so unusual that we host living guests from earth.’

‘Hello, my dear!’ a face of the Father smiling kindly began to appear in the sky. ‘Everything is right. It has been long enough I have not shown Paradise to the people.’

‘Can we be of some help to you here, Father?’ Nika started talking. ‘Well, shall we talk about something particular with them or show them something?’

‘No, nothing special must be done there,’ God’s smile widened. ‘Answer questions they ask and show them things they ask for.’

‘Father, may we ask? Can they help you after they return to the earth?’ Kirik looked at God with amusement.

‘Oh, my dear, how can I tell?’ the Father sighed. ‘If their hearts open up, then they can be of some help; they may help a lot, probably. However, if they forget everything after they return, what can I do? You know that freedom of choice is granted to all of my children.’

‘We know that, Father!’ Nika smiled warmly. ‘But we really wish that they help you on the earth!’

‘Surround them with love, my dears,’ God replied and his

smile started fading away from the sky. 'Love wins over everything.'

Nika and Kirik waved the Father good-bye, after that they returned to their home.

* * *

Zinger was looking at the first report received from his assistants. Their thorough analysis revealed that all those things could be bought together in two places only: Australia or New Zealand.

The devil smiled.

'Not a bad start,' he murmured in a low voice. Both countries have population less than a medium Chinese town.

After that, he thought a little more and called for the main underground computer genius, the devil Sophylus. The latter came to Zinger quite quickly and sat down at the table.

'Boss said I was to come into your disposition for some important matter,' he began speaking with a grin. 'May I have a more details about it?'

'Yes, fellow,' Zinger replied. 'We should somehow find two people on earth: a lad and a girl, near twenty years of age. We've only got their photo.'

The devil skimmed through a pile of photographs that lay on

the table in front of him.

‘Supposedly, they may live in Australia or New Zealand,’ Zinger added.

Sophylus kept silent, figuring things out for some time.

‘Hum, not an easy task,’ he finally spoke. ‘The first thing that comes to my mind is to place an advertisement of lost things in these countries’ websites. For instance, it says: *found an expensive camera with pictures of their owners. Owners or their acquaintances, please, respond.* One more variant with a purse may be of use where only a photo would be there besides the money. Well, something like that, generally.’

‘That’s an interesting idea!’ Zinger grinned joyfully. ‘You can place these advertisements right now.’

‘Good, will be done,’ the computer genius replied and stood up. ‘If I come up with some more ideas, I’ll tell you.’

They said goodbye to each other and Zinger was left alone. He sat at his table and smiled self-assured. It was apparent that the Chairman would be pleased with how the search for these people was progressing.

* * *

Brenda and Mike were walking slowly along the water edge of the ocean. They firmly held each other’s hands and looked around happily. Each dweller of the Paradise they met on the dry

land or in the water was very beautiful and friendly, greeting the young people warmly.

‘I feel so good here, Mikey! I feel happy,’ Brenda said smiling. ‘Everything’s the same as the best places on the earth, but it’s much more light, kind and bright.’

‘Yes, local dwellers are very friendly,’ Mike agreed. ‘It’s a great place to live, probably. Everything’s beautiful and there’re many opportunities. Besides, no one is becoming old and dying.’

‘Paradise was created by God for his most kind children. He loves them very much and brings them joy in everything,’ Brenda said.

‘Kind He is,’ the lad sighed. ‘Why do we think little of Him on the earth?’

‘Well, we do think of Him at times,’ the girl smiled. ‘Me, for instance, I managed to get you out to Greece, so far.’

‘Oh, thank you, my Princess!’ Mike hugged and kissed Brenda tenderly. ‘I’m so happy to have touched such an important and interesting thing in my life.’

‘Thank you for going with me to a far off place,’ Brenda replied warmly.

While talking, the young people came to the house of their grandparents who came out to meet them smiling.

‘So, did you have a good walk?’ Kirik asked them.

‘That was great, grandpa,’ Brenda replied. ‘It’s so beautiful everywhere here and my heart will sing constantly.’

‘This is the Father who fills the Paradise with such happiness.’

‘He is good,’ Mike said, ‘He loves and cares so much for everyone. If only we could have a look at Him.’

‘So, what’s the matter?’ Kirik raised his brows excited.

‘What d’you mean?’ Mike asked amazed.

‘This is Paradise, His home. And, we are His children who communicate with Him all the time.’

‘With God?’ Mike stood still in amazement.

‘Well, right, with the Father,’ Nika joined their talk. ‘We’ve just spoken to Him.’

‘Terrific!’ Mike replied and looked together with Brenda amused at their grandparents.

They smiled in response.

‘What’s God like, granny?’ the girl asked Nika with interest. ‘Handsome?’

‘Well, what do you think, my dear? Even though all of the most beautiful and kind creatures in the world try looking like Him even slightly,’ she replied with a smile. ‘In looks He may be whatever He wants to, it depends on who and how we imagine Him.’

‘If only I could have a chance to chat with Him too!’ Mike spoke out dreamily.

‘So, what’s the matter?’ Kirik smiled. ‘Talk!’

The lad and the girl stared at the grandfather in astonishment.

‘How?’

‘God always hears you, Mike. And, He will speak to you if you address Him.’

‘God will speak to me?’ Mike continued amused and doubting.

‘Well, yes. He communicates with all the people on the earth even. This place is His home and everyone may see Him, besides,’ Nika added.

‘How could I start talking with Him?’

‘That’s simple. Look at the sky and say hello,’ Kirik smiled.

Mike shrugged his shoulders smiling silly and looked upwards.

‘Hello, God!’ he pronounced not very loudly.

Brenda also nodded to sky with a friendly expression, just in case.

At the same moment, some motion appeared in the sky. From nothing, there grew a sparkling, enormous cloud in front of the young people. One look at it was enough to understand that it was a live cloud. Gradually there appeared a smile and kind eyes.

‘Hello, my dear Mike and Brenda! Welcome to my Paradise!’ the young people heard a soft voice.

The Cloud

The lad and the girl looked attentively at what was happening in front of them. They could not think of what to say from excitement.

‘Are... are you God?’ Mike spoke out first.

‘Yes, son, I am an ordinary God!’ the sparkling Cloud replied cheerfully.

‘This means you look like a cloud?’ Brenda braced herself to ask him too. ‘The people draw you in a different way...’

‘Not like a cloud always, my dear!’ everyone there heard a cheerful voice. ‘Generally, I can be everything. Is this more familiar to you?’

After that, the Cloud turned suddenly into a huge light blue rabbit, which resembled their Ug much, but with its size reaching the sky. His huge ears were moving in the same way.

Nika and Kirik smiled warmly looking at the Father.

‘It’s been a little better with the cloud, it seems,’ Mike first time smiled. ‘I’d probably find it hard to speak to a rabbit seriously.’

The enormous rabbit laughed out heartily and turned into the cloud again.

‘Well, as you want!’ the Father replied warmly. ‘What would you like to talk about, Mike?’

Mike and Brenda looked intently at the big sparkling marvel.

‘Is it true that you created all the people on earth?’ the lad chose up the most clever question to ask.

‘Yes!’ God replied. ‘Have I done it fine? What do you think?’

Mike looked at his girlfriend and nodded his head, trying to be serious.

‘I like it too!’ the Cloud agreed with a friendly voice. ‘So, how do you find it here, the Paradise?’

‘Great!’ the young people replied together.

‘Everything’s so beautiful and unusual!’ Brenda added.

‘Me too. I’ve been much pleased to know that behind the earth world, there’s Paradise and eternal life,’ Mike said. ‘I’ve lived for almost twenty years on the earth but nobody's ever told me about it.’

‘That’s not quite right, son!’ God answered. In a moment, there appeared something resembling a cinema screen in the sky near the cloud. All the images were voluminous there, as in real life.

Everyone there watched an unusual film. In the first episode, a grandfather told a small boy about God, although, the latter would not sit still and looked at the door impatiently. Mike gazed at the protagonists and realized that the grandfather was his uncle Tony and the boy was him. Then, the lad choked.

The sequence changed after that. In another episode, the same boy sat between his two parents watching a film about Jesus Christ reluctantly and yawning widely.

In the next scene, a nurse tried talking about God with the boy at a hospital where he spent several days. But, the boy listened to her without excitement and turned around from time to time.

As the scenes changed, Mike lowered his head more and more.

‘You are not quite right, Mike,’ the Cloud repeated once more when *the film* was over. ‘Do you still think nobody has told you about Me?’

The lad’s face flushed red and he could not raise his eyes in shame.

‘No, God, I don’t think so any more,’ he spoke out quietly and looked at the Cloud guiltily. ‘I am sorry. I feel ashamed.’

‘Good, Mike,’ the Cloud replied with a serious tone. ‘Let us forget it.’

‘But, anyway,’ Brenda started to talk, ‘it seems to me, that people speak less of You in the world now and almost forgot about You. Why? You and the Paradise are the main reality,

indeed. Perhaps, you should tell people more about yourself?’

‘Yes, Brenda, people always forget about Me, it’s fact,’ the Cloud replied. ‘Why so? Well, we’d better ask the people themselves about it. But for each one, who attempts to search for me anyhow, I will immediately help with that. Like you, for example, in Paradise now and talking to Me.’

The lad and the girl, as well, as their grandparents smiled.

‘And, as for telling people more about Myself, Brenda...,’ the Cloud continued, ‘you think the coming of twenty five prophets, my son Jesus, appearance of thousands of saints on the earth is not enough for the people to remember about me?’

‘Thousands of saints?’ Brenda asked amazed.

‘Yes. If you key this question in the Internet, you will see the answer immediately. I have left all the information about myself and the Paradise in first places. Though, it seems that not me, but the people must begin to show some interest in that...’

‘Do the people have so much proof?’ Mike said excited standing near Brenda.

‘Of course. I think there is more than enough of it. I doubt if some new evidence will make much difference,’ the Cloud replied more cheerfully. ‘It is only left for the people to begin show interest in this. And, I would like them to take some steps themselves, but not only me and me who does. What sort of family shall we have then? Well, and they need the Paradise...’

‘Oh, God!’ Brenda addressed the Cloud as politely as she could. ‘May we tell of You and of the Paradise to our friends and to other people after we return home? We’ll show them some pictures, too.’

‘Of course, you may, if you want to,’ the Father smiled.

‘May I take a photo of you?’ the lad found courage to ask.

The Cloud shook from laughter.

‘Take it, Mikey! I will be very surprised if someone on the earth will believe that this cloud is God.’

Everyone burst out laughing heartily, but Mike took a couple of pictures.

‘You would be better off taking photographs of Angels: they are very photogenic,’ the Father advised joyfully. ‘Well, that is enough for now, my dears. Stay here for some more time and then return to your home. Your friends and relatives are already waiting for you. Have a good trip!’

After that, the Cloud began dispersing slowly.

‘Thank you so much for everything!’ Brenda said, ‘we’ve been thinking of going back ourselves too. It’s a pity we have missed our plane. But that’s alright, there’re frequent flights there.’

‘I will think of that,’ they heard the last words coming from somewhere far away.

The cloud faded away, although Mike and Brenda stood and

waved to it warmly for quite a long time after that.

* * *

Katherine was about to finish her homework on one of her university subjects when her telephone rang. The girl glanced at its screen and pressed the green button with a smile.

‘Hi, Steve!’ she said cheerfully. ‘The ocean must have dried up for you to call me instead of going surfing.’

‘Hi, Kate!’ the girl heard a laughing voice. ‘I’ve already tried to do it but the ocean’s become as flat as a table. Though, there are more waves on my table now. There is a sausage and a bottle of Coca-Cola.’

Katherine laughed cheerfully.

‘Okay, have a good surf on it with a knife and a fork. How’re things?’

‘Ah, as always. Everything’s great,’ Steve replied. ‘I’m calling on business, actually. I’ve come upon photos of Mike and Brenda on the Internet occasionally. It looks like they’ve lost their camera somewhere. But, one good man found it and wants to give it back to them. Can you tell me, when they’re coming back from their trip?’

The girl looked at a calendar that hung on her wall.

‘Well, they should be coming back soon, likely. I think,

they've got a return flight from Europe tomorrow.'

'Got it,' the lad said. 'Well, then, I'll give their phone number and address to that man. He'll send the camera to them, perhaps, and Mike will refund him when the parcel is delivered.'

'I think you're right, Steve! Give him all their contacts,' the girl agreed. 'Just in case, they'll decide later themselves on how they do away with it.'

'Agreed, Kate,' Steve replied. 'When you've freed yourself from your studies, take a trip to us here on the beach.'

'Thanks, Steve! I will for certain,' Katherine smiled. 'Mike and Brenda would have arrived by that time, possibly.'

'Yeah, we'll hear about their travel around Europe then.'

'Okay, Steve, I've got to settle down with my dull textbooks again,' the girl sighed. 'Ride for me sometimes!'

'Will do!' she heard a resonant voice. 'Bye!'

Katherine pressed a red button and turned off her telephone. Having looked for some time at a window with some dullness, she pulled a thick textbook to herself.

* * *

Zinger was staring with admiration at the devil Sophylus who sat by his table again. He had just read a response for the advertisement about a lost camera. It had all the details: telephone

number and address of the young couple in Australia.

‘Well, you are really great! You’ve done well indeed.’ Zinger spoke out.

‘Quite so. That’s what the boss values me for!’ Sophylus grinned and turned his horns up proudly.

After that, he stood up.

‘So, bye! If you have any questions, you’re devilishly welcome.’

Zinger nodded him good-bye and went deep into his joyful thoughts. It looked as if he was not very far away from his promotion.

* * *

‘Could you tell me, granny, what’s bigger: the Paradise or the earth?’ Brenda asked.

They all were sitting together on a shore of a picturesque mountain lake. This was one more favourite place of Nika and Kirik where they have now brought their guests.

‘Of course, Paradise is much bigger, my dear! Your grandpa and I know some of those who have been here for two thousand years and they find new places here still. The earth is like a small school for teaching human souls. It is much smaller and it is not as eternal as Paradise is.’

‘The earth is not eternal?’ Mike asked with surprise.

The grandmother and the grandfather looked at each other and sighed.

‘Yes. This was not a great news in our times,’ Kirik spoke out sadly. ‘Now, only a few seem to know the words of God’s Son about the earth’s future.’

‘Right, Kir,’ the grandmother agreed. ‘Obviously it is so. Though, not many years have passed since then...’

‘Where can I read these words on the people’s future and the earth?’ Mike asked with interest. ‘Is this a kind of special information, probably?’

‘Well, no my dear,’ Brenda replied to him instead of the grandparents. ‘This *special information* is the Bible, in fact. It lies on all hotels’ bedside tables in Australia and many other places.’

‘Good for you, Brenda!’ the grandparents smiled.

‘Wow!’ the lad exclaimed with amusement. ‘And, if it may be found anywhere, then why do the people not read it?’

‘This is the king of questions, Mike,’ Nika smiled sadly. ‘Although in our times, people used to read it much more. It should still be laying on the bedside tables since our times, I suppose.’

‘Well, friends,’ the lad spoke out thoughtfully. ‘Our civilization starts to look less and less civilized, it seems. Though, I’ve thought differently not a long time ago.’

The witches have been working over Zinger for a few hours already, giving him new looks that will be usual for the people. At some spots with a grease paint, with some witchcraft at others, finally they have made out a typical Australian white-haired lad out of a coal-black, hairy devil.

On that morning, Chairman sent him on a mission to earth which was not the first time for him.

‘You’ve done well in everything up until now,’ Satan said to him in the morning. ‘There is one little thing left – capture their cameras or memory cards with those photos and videos. Unfortunately, we are not allowed to steal them in that world, but we can deceive them at any time and endlessly. This work is a trifle for such a pro as yourself, but to be safe, you might want to have some assistants with you?’

‘Don’t bother, boss,’ the devil showed his teeth. ‘Deceiving these youngsters is a task for children.’

‘Good,’ the Satan laughed. ‘Then, you will receive a new position when you’ve completed this mission. I’ll keep my promise for it.’

Zinger smiled thinking and corrected not only his horns now, but also a white hair.

‘So now what, my sly fellows? How long will you still be pasting on me?’

‘Almost done, Zee,’ a senior witch grinned. ‘But remember well

that enchantment will fall the moment anybody kisses you. We don't have magic power against love and kindness.'

'Well, there's no one more beautiful than you are, anyway!' the devil threw a compliment. 'I know, I will keep that in mind. It's not the first time I'm sent to the earth as well.'

The witches giggled contentedly.

'Well, who knows, who knows, Zee,' another witch spoke a moment later. 'Generally, there're many well-tattooed women already. Some dress up and put their make-up on so that they look quite like us. So, some earth women aren't too far from looks that you're used to.'

'Finished,' the senior witch announced at last and let Zinger have a look into a mirror. 'How d'you like it?'

'That's horrible!' the devil confessed himself honestly. 'Well, we can't do anything about it, I guess. The people are used to such looks, for now. Alright, sly fellows, don't miss me much here.'

The witches giggled again and Zinger went to the warehouse for essentials: a car, money, documents and a few other things.

* * *

Mike and Brenda were saying goodbye to the girl's grandparents. It was time for them to return to earth.

'Take care of yourself, children!' the grandmother advised them.

“Always remember that no knowledge about Paradise leads to it, but only love and kindness in your life!”

‘Keep in your heart everything you’ve known here,’ the grandfather added. ‘And, help the Father, if you can. As you can see, He has not got many helpers on the earth...’

Mike and Brenda nodded their heads.

‘We’ll try to do our best,’ the girl said. ‘Thank you for showing and telling us so much!’

‘One more thing: thank you particularly for your granddaughter!’ Mike said warmly. ‘If you haven’t brought her up this way, we’d never get here to you for sure.’

‘Well, now go, our dears,’ Kirik replied. ‘We shall see you here after your earth life. We would much love to.’

The lad and the girl smiled thankfully. Then, before leaving, they hugged Nika and Kirik.

After that, the young people took each other’s hands. They both shut their eyes and imagined the entrance to the cave.

* * *

In an instant, Brenda and Mike were standing near it. The guys looked around. It seemed as though nothing changed in the meantime and even the red stripe was still hung on the branch.

‘We better untie it,’ the girl smiled and stretched out her hand.

‘I knew you’d come back here!’ they heard a familiar voice coming from the bushes.

‘Ug!’ the young people cried cheerfully. ‘How’re you, friend?’

‘What can happen to me?’ Ug happily came out to the meadow. ‘Where are you going now?’

The girl and the lad glanced at each other and laughed happily.

‘Back to earth, Ug!’ Mike replied. ‘To the place where everyone sleeps, eats, and where a tasty carrot grows. Like to go with us?’

Ug scratched his one ear with the other.

‘Probably not,’ he replied after some time. ‘I’ve got a lot of friends here, but I know nobody there besides you. Better you come back here again.’

‘All right, Ug,’ Brenda replied and scratched the rabbit behind his ear.

The latter rolled his eyes upwards as rabbits like to do. After that, the young people took each other’s hands again.

‘So, shall we go, dear?’ the girl asked.

‘Let’s go, Bre. It seems I miss our friends too,’ Mike replied with a smile.

‘Me too,’ Brenda added.

They nodded goodbye to Ug and headed into the cave. Ug waved them goodbye with his ears.

Very soon, the guys were approaching the exit at the other end of the cave.

‘We must go to the airport immediately,’ Mike made a plan on their way there. ‘We’ll possibly manage to change a ticket for another flight without serious money loss?’

‘We’ll see on the spot, dear,’ the girl replied with uncertainty, ‘but I doubt it. If we’d called them beforehand...’

They emerged from the cave talking and headed further treading on the grass. Suddenly they stopped simultaneously.

‘Mike, don’t you think this place is slightly different? Or am I wrong?’ the girl asked astonished.

‘It looks like it, Bre,’ Mike spoke out, not looking around. ‘The trees are different here, and the whole landscape too, generally. There was a meadow at the exit there, and here – a slope of a mountain. Wait a minute, Bre, who’s galloping over there?’

Brenda and Mike looked, as if seeing a dream, a big kangaroo was leaping past them slowly. The creature stopped near them, looked at them intently, and leapt on further.

‘It looks like we’re in Australia, my Princess...,’ Mike spoke out astounded.

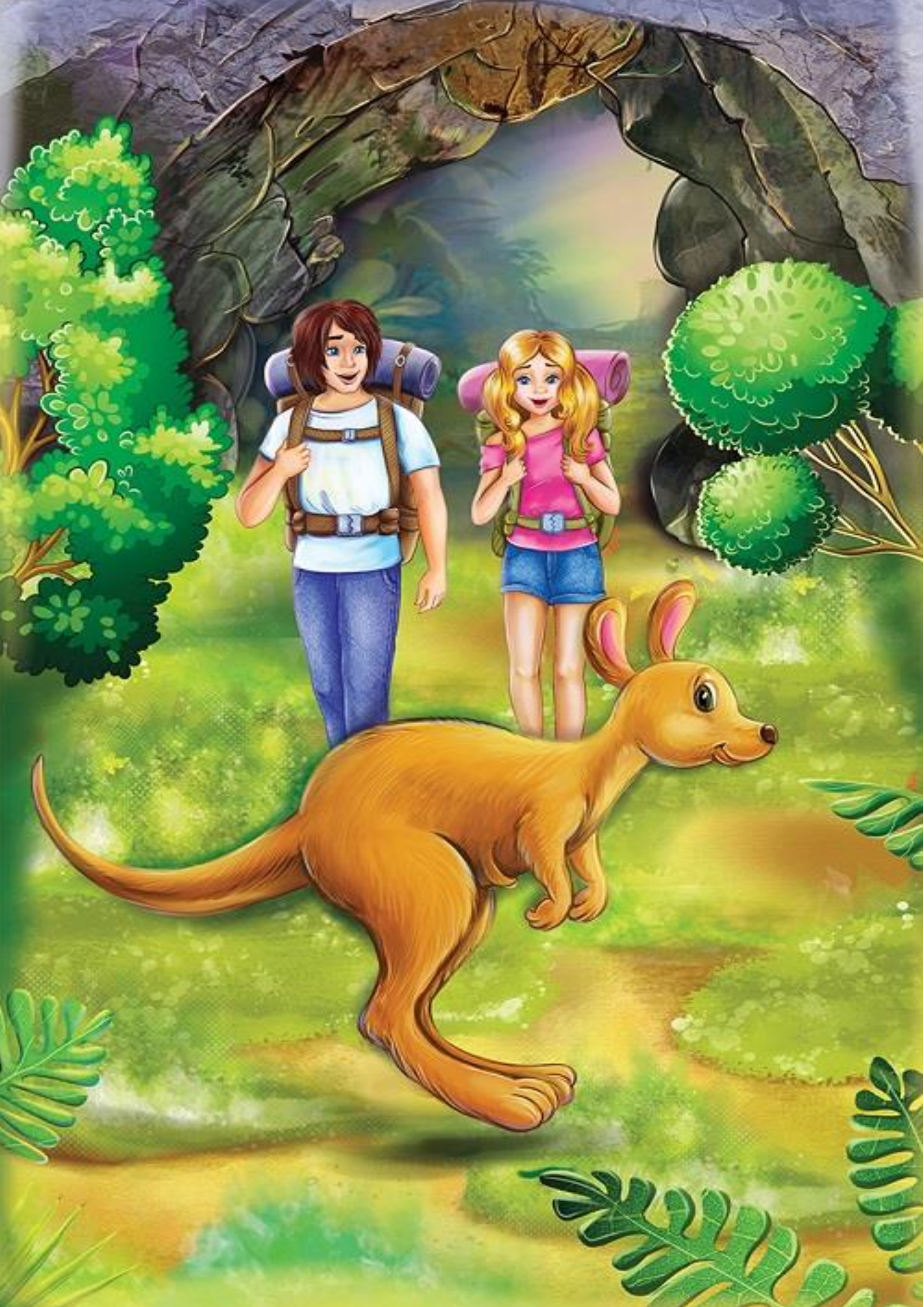
‘Remember, the Father told us that He’d think of something?’

Brenda recalled. ‘That’s what He’s thought up...’

The young people looked thankfully into the sky and waived their hands.

After that, they went on happily down the slope.

‘Bre, do we have any snack?’ the girl heard the lad’s voice.



‘Yeah, right. Now, we’re at home for sure!’ Brenda laughed and began taking off her backpack.

At Home

Brenda and Mike got home only after midnight. This time, their trip was so exhausting that they fell asleep almost immediately, having even not taken out the contents of their backpacks.

The girl woke up from a light sound of clashing dishes coming from the kitchen. Brenda smiled, as it seemed that a poor, naïve Mike was trying to find some food there.

‘Good morning, Mikey!’ she shouted. ‘What’re you seeking there? We’d eaten up everything before we left. Would you come up over here, I’ll tell you my dream. It’s very curious!’

‘Oh, hi, Bre!’ a smiling head of the lad appeared in the doorway. ‘For the products, I figured it out myself. Let’s wait with your dream for a while, darling. I’d better run out to buy something yummy for us. It’s not breakfast time now, already lunchtime, likely.’

Brenda looked at the clock. It showed a quarter to twelve.

‘Wow!’ she wondered. ‘We’ve been sleeping for almost eleven hours.’

‘The sleep here is much longer than in Paradise,’ Mike laughed and slammed the door going out instantly.

Having been left alone, Brenda thought for a while then, she went to her computer desk.

* * *

Half an hour later, Mike came back with a big bag full of packages that smelled tasty.

‘Have you been to an Italian cafe?’ Brenda asked, having breathed in the smell.

‘Yep,’ the lad nodded. ‘Tony asked to take greetings to you and put something yummy in as a gift.’

Brenda smiled. Then, Mike put out an advertisement sheet on a table.

‘Look here, Bre,’ he said. ‘This was in our PO box. A new firm has opened with an office just in front of our house. They specialize in promoting all kinds of photo and video materials all around the world. Think, that’s exactly what we need now.’

‘Oh, Mikey, they’ll charge a high price there, probably,’ the girl spoke out doubting. ‘As far as I remember, we’d wanted to put out all the photos and videos on Youtube, Instagram and

Facebook with Steve's help. He isn't bad at this at all, besides, he's free of charge.'

'These are professionals, Bre!' Mike argued while biting a slice of pizza. 'Besides, I called them for prices while standing in the queue at Tony's. They said they had some promo there as they've just opened, and that we'd be very happy with their offer.'

'If so,' the girl replied, 'let's drop in there after lunchtime. After all, it's very close.'

* * *

Forty minutes later, the young people came through the doorway to a small office located almost in front of their house. There was only one office worker: a white-haired man, about thirty years of age seated in a beautifully decorated room. When the girl and the lad entered, the man stood up to meet them smiling.

'G'day!' Mike spoke out in a friendly manner. 'I called you about an hour ago regarding an order.'

'Oh, you should be Mike, then?' the white-haired lad stretched out his hand cheerfully. My name is John. Take a seat, please. So, how can I help you? Also, how may I address to your lady companion?'

'Brenda,' the girl introduced herself smilingly.

'Very nice to meet you, Brenda,' the blonde-haired man

smiled again. 'So, you are welcome.'

'See, John, we've got about a hundred photos and about twenty short videos,' Mike began to speak. 'This is a kind of report about a travel to um..., a very unusual country. We'd like to make small comments to this material and distribute it as widely as possible all around the world.'

John nodded his head showing understanding.

'This is exactly the thing we specialize in, guys.'

'Perfect!' Brenda smiled. 'How much will this cost?'

The blonde-haired man smiled.

'You're incredibly lucky, friends. Currently, we have a promo offering free service to the first ten clients of our company. You're our third one, so it's absolutely free.'

The young people smiled amazed.

'Yes, that's great luck indeed!' Mike said pleased. 'What can we say? We agree, John.'

'Then, please give me your data storage device with all your materials for processing.'

Brenda put a small bag on the table with two cameras inside.

'Here, in the cameras are the memory cards. We haven't processed them yet,' the girl said. 'We would like to post all the videos and photos made between 5th and 17th day of this month.'

We'll sort these photos out if you want.'

'Oh, no! Don't bother, it's not a problem at all,' John smiled. 'I'll do everything necessary. You may come back to pick up your cameras in a couple of hours. All will be ready together with their posting plan. You may add texts to them a little later.'

'That's so great we've come to you, John!' Mike said, standing up. 'Thanks a lot! We'll be back in two hours.'

'May be better to pay something?' Brenda spoke out hesitating. 'That's a big job to do.'

'Your smile, Brenda, will be enough for it,' John replied with sincerity.

At that moment Zinger, the devil, it was him, of course, made a mistake, which he regretted much afterwards.

'Guys, I like you very much, in fact, that I'll personally promote your materials in all the sources for the whole month, free of charge,' he said.

Having heard this, Brenda smiled slyly.

'Well then, John, my smile only won't be just enough,' she said and, making a step towards John, kissed him on the cheek. 'Thank you very much for your help!'

No one would expect what happened a moment after that. John instantly turned out of a handsome white-haired man into something terrible and hairy with two horns. His entirely hairy

face was pasted with shades and make-up powder.

Mike and Brenda stood still, astonished, while Zinger acted like a lightning. He figured out the situation instantly, grabbed the bag with the cameras and disappeared behind a service room door.

‘What? What was that, Bre?’ Mike asked recovering gradually.

‘Looks like it was a devil, Mikey,’ the girl answered.

‘He’s stolen our cameras!’ the lad came to himself at last and rushed to the door the devil had fled to.

It was locked from another side. The lad dashed out of the front door and ran around the building. Soon, the closed door’s lock clicked and there emerged a despaired Mike’s face.

‘Got away, no traces. What shall we do, Bre? Perhaps, we ought to call the police? He’s got all our material on Paradise.’

‘Ask policemen to search for a devil? I would not like to make one more acquaintance with local psychiatrists today,’ Brenda smiled. ‘Not worth that, Mikey. We’ll get on well somehow without a couple of cameras for three hundred dollars.’

‘What’re you talking about, Bre?’ I don’t mean the cameras at all,’ the lad gazed embarrassed at the girl. ‘He’s taken all our videos and photos of Paradise!’

‘The devil thinks he’s taken them,’ the girl smiled and took a

flash memory card out of her pocket. ‘We’ve got a copy here and on our computer too.’

Mike looked at Brenda amused and happy.

‘When did you made copies, my Princess?’

‘While you were out for the food,’ the girl replied cheerfully. ‘Generally, you’d better listen to what I see in my dreams before you run away somewhere. Then, you won’t ask silly questions.’

‘You’re a treasure, Bre!’ Mike lifted the girl up into the air in excitement. ‘So, what did you see in your dream?’

‘The elder Litos warned me that someone wanted to hinder us and that I ought to keep the photos safe,’ Brenda replied.

* * *

A couple of days later, Zinger the devil relaxed in a high armchair in his new spacious office of a senior assistant. About ten devils of the same rank as he used to have before were sitting at the table in front of him.

His new position of the Satan’s senior assistant entitled him to a lot of rights and privileges. Zinger was now looking with a sneer at how attentively the devils caught every word he spoke and he was still overwhelmed with joy because of such changes in his

life.

* * *

Steve made a finishing press on a key then he closed the laptop.

‘Well, that’s it!’ he said. ‘All your material’s been launched around the world. There’s only one question left for you, friends. Where did you find such an expert who had done such quality graphics for your photos and videos? Judging by their looks, these fake sets are like real ones.’

‘We’ve got one pro there. He doesn’t charge much for his work,’ Brenda replied to him smiling.

‘Really?’ Steve asked with interest. ‘Well, who is he and where does he lives?’

‘Everyone calls him *Father*,’ laughing Mike responded in his turn. ‘He lives in Paradise City.’

‘I’ve never heard of such place,’ Steve replied.

‘You will, for sure,’ Brenda smiled. ‘Well, friends, what shall we do now?’

‘Can’t you guess? Certainly, we’re going to surf! Today’s waves are just what we need. What d’you say?’

‘With pleasure!’ the young people responded simultaneously and went out to the street.

* * *

Zinger's council was going well underway when the door flung open. Satan stood in the doorway. One look at the Chairman was enough to understand that he was furious.

Everyone stood up from the table and retreated in front of him.

'So, you say that you've fooled around those youngsters?' the poker faced boss roared, not taking his look off Zinger.

'Aye, boss,' the devil stumbled, trying to struggle with his trembling knees.

'And how did this get on the Internet, can you tell me?' Satan threw a pile of photo printouts from various social networks.

One look at them was enough to realize that all of them were shot in Paradise.

'It seems that it's you who's been fooled, Zinger,' the eyes of the boss flashed fury.

All the members of the poor devil started shaking.

'Well, that's nothing, my dear, I've chosen a place for you that will be absolutely adequate to your professional level,' the Satan grinned. 'I even had to invent a new position for that. I think that the five hundred years you will spend there must be enough to figure it out well finally, where you failed your mission...'

* * *

Nika and Kirik were speaking to the Father.

‘Hello, Father!’ Kirik said looking into the sky. ‘Is there any news from our earth guests?’

‘Yes, my dears, there is,’ God smiled. ‘The news is very good. All of the photographs and video that Brenda and Mike made in the Paradise have appeared with free access on the Internet.

‘That’s great!’ Nika spoke out happily. ‘Father, what do you think, will this help somebody?’

‘It may,’ God replied. ‘Of course, many will think these photographs and video are fake or will take them for a joke. Although, consequently, things may change completely. Then, a lot will depend on Brenda and Mike.’

‘I have no doubt they will succeed,’ Kirik said with certainty, ‘these guys are pretty good.’

‘It seems to me, too,’ God agreed warmly. ‘Soon, we will see what happens next, my dears.’

After that, Nika and Krik bid the Father goodbye and He slowly disappeared from the sparkling sky.

* * *

Two witches were walking on a dusty road of hell, talking to each other embarrassed.

‘I understand nothing. Why does the boss want us to clean and polish our hoofs? And, to do this once a year,’ one of them wondered.

‘You don’t say,’ another took up. ‘We’ve lived for hundreds of years with such hoofs and no one will care for them. What does Satan need this for?’

‘Oh, dear, what can we do? Order – means need to be done. No clashing with the boss,’ the first witch continued with a sigh. ‘Alright, it looks like we’ve arrived. Look, there’s appeared a new shed with a sign *Hoofs cleaning*, see it?’

The witches went inside it and saw several more witches who were sitting on chairs waiting. They took a queue and took free seats. In some time, the door of a service room flung open and there came out a witch with shining hoofs.

Then, there appeared a dusty head of a devil holding a



polishing tool in his hands. His look was not quite happy.

‘Next one!’ he shouted out and went back to his workplace.

The next witch went inside, sat on an armchair and stretched out her first hoof to the service master. The devil sighed, took a hoof polishing tool and began cleaning off many centuries of old dust from the hell’s roads. Not to be bored, the witch took a booklet from a table to read.

Hoofs cleaning service. Devil Zinger, a service master. Open 24/7 until year 2500.

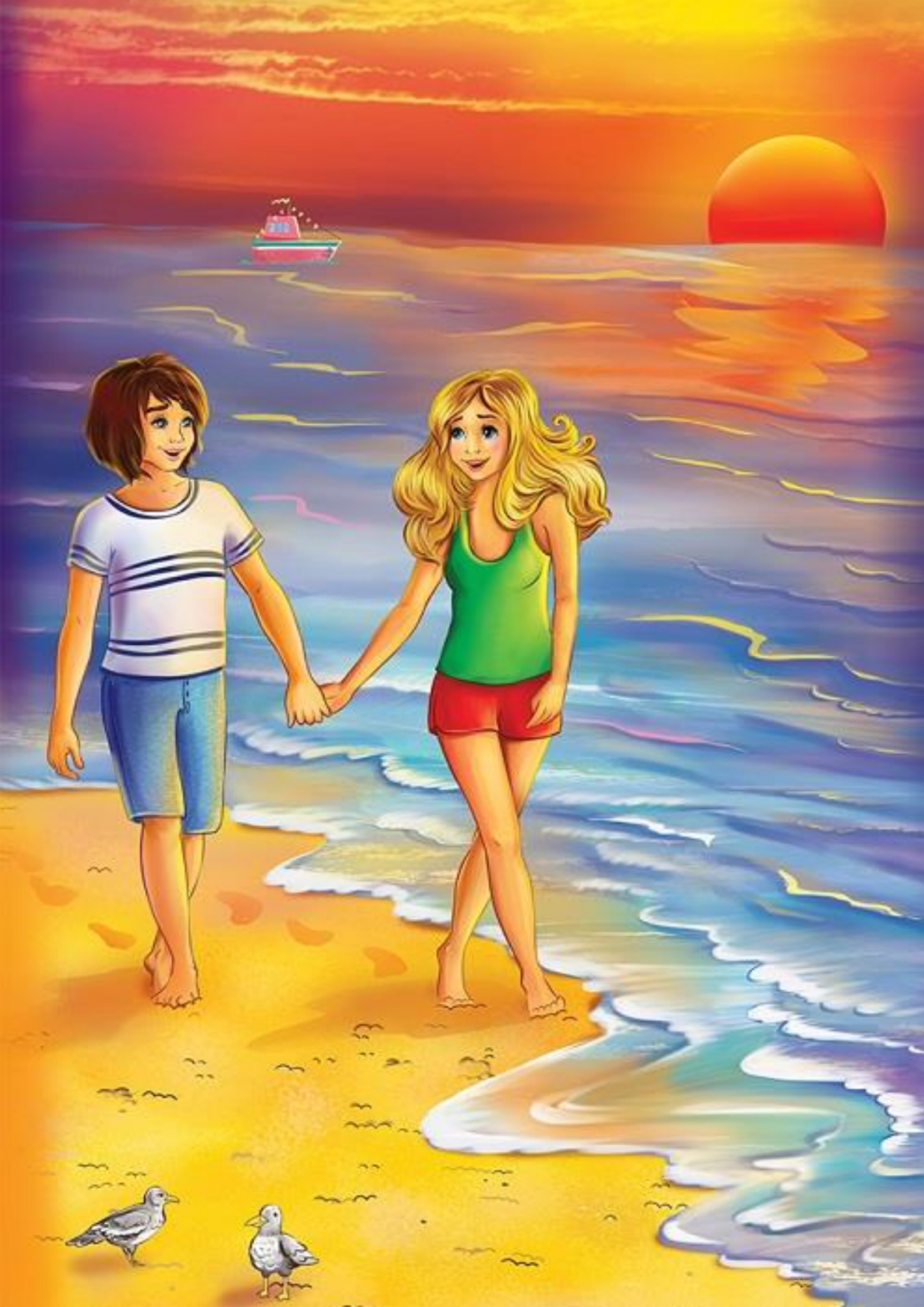
EPILOGUE

Brenda and Mike walked slowly along the water edge of the ocean. On that evening, the waters were unexpectedly calm and the sun, dropping below the horizon, cast the last of its bright rays.

‘Sometimes it’s so beautiful here on the earth, too!’ Mike said.

‘Right. The Father did His best,’ the girl spoke with warmth. ‘There’re many good people here too. It’s a pity that today not many know about the Father, Paradise and eternity.’

‘Right, this is an upsetting fact of our times,’ Brenda sighed and stopped. ‘But, no worries. Perhaps, our photos and



videos will help with this somehow.'

'Maybe,' the lad replied. 'I'd want it much too. It's become much joyful and pleasing to live on the earth with this knowledge.'

'We'll see soon,' Brenda smiled. 'Our contacts are everywhere there. If some people are interested in that, we'll know of it immediately.'

'Right, we'd want much to help the Father and them too,' the lad said.

After that, he hugged his girl tenderly and they went on further together.

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