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## Helith Æðelstān

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For Tim Plester  
Mono

*[Long creak]*

...

A long time ago...

A million years ago...

Or... wait...

Or... on the contrary...

A million years later...

Or...

Almost right now.

So...

Almost now.

6

5

4

3

2

1

Ah, not now.

6 more minutes!

Will you be waiting?

Will I be waiting?

So...

What is the time?

Good question!

Is there a better question?

Maybe...

What is a question?

That's the question!

This story took place in the earldom of Charlaponapirbroschpshire.

Surrelmurfurnowell County.

The city of Icendsshryukryumvsburry.

Tainigiantanthai Street.

Swamp number 4.

The postal code is 666SIA.

Decoding of the index:

666 is...

6 holy virtues.

6 sacred oaks.  
6 pardoned witches.  
SIA is...  
Satan.  
Illuminati.  
Arthur the King.  
Actually... the swamp...

...

Once...  
This swamp was visited by the ancient Romans.  
They said the following:  
"We will build a new Rome here!"  
Then they drowned.  
The catapults sank.  
The statue of Jupiter drowned.  
The "Colosseum-DIY" set sank.  
They founded New Rome in the depths of the swamp waters.

...

Once...  
This swamp was visited by ancient Vikings.  
They said the following:  
"No, we will build a new Rome here!".  
They built.  
Then they drowned.  
The dragon boats drowned.  
The first edition of the Little Edda drowned.  
Burzum's last album sank.

...

Since then, strange creatures began to inhabit this swamp.  
Giants with rat-like features.  
Flying women in white dresses.  
Transparent dwarves.  
Two-headed mermaids.  
Toads are jugglers with human faces.  
Silver dragons.  
Talking stumps in pince-nez.  
Naked people lying in the grass.  
Flying wrinkled heads with a finger instead of a nose.  
And many, many others.  
They all lived their light weightless lives.  
They looked at the sky every day.  
They sang songs every day.  
They thought about beautiful things every day.  
They talked to the Heavenly Deer every day.  
The conversation was about the following.  
- Hello, Heavenly Deer!  
- *[Heavenly Deer Sounds]*  
- What's new?  
- *[Heavenly Deer Sounds]*

- How are your children, wife, mother?

- *[Heavenly Deer Sounds]*

- Yes, thank you. Yeah. We went there last Tuesday. We spent a lot of... effort. The service was... tolerable. It's been worse. It's been better. This story is similar to the case of the black unicorn. Last year we rented an apartment inside the black unicorn. We arrived at the black unicorn at the appointed time. Then we pressed the doorbell button.

- *[Heavenly Deer Sounds]*

...

Swamp.

What do we know about swamps?

What do the swamps know about us?

What can the swamps teach us?

What can we teach the swamps?

The swamp is a symbol.

A symbol is a sign.

The sign is an enchanted reality.

Enchanted reality is a shaky process.

A shaky process is a quagmire.

A quagmire is a swamp.

A swamp is a swamp.

Dead end.

This is a dead end.

...

What am I doing here?

What am I doing here again?

Why am I suffering?

Why am I suffering again?

Why do I need all this?

What have I done wrong?

Is it a snail or a rock?

...

The small, shaggy, unwashed, mud-smelling creature had three crooked arms and three crooked legs.

It had oyster shells instead of eyebrows and eyelashes.

It had a bunch of algae instead of a nose.

It had snow-white snake eggs instead of teeth.

It was completely covered with thistles.

It had a piece of rotten rope instead of a tail.

It had a huge dried stingray instead of a headdress.

It was this creature that asked itself these questions mechanically.

...

What am I doing here?

What am I doing here?

...

The creature spent whole days digging in the thick dark mud.

The creature sometimes took out small dirty stones, shells, coins, fishhooks or something similar from the mud.

The creature always raised dirty finds above its head and let out a triumphant cry.

The inhabitants of the swamp and the Heavenly Deer tried not to notice this creature.

The inhabitants of the swamp and the Heavenly Deer preferred to mind their own business.

This creature had a name.

James XI.

That was his name.

James XI has been lonely since the creation of the world.

He's used to being lonely.

Sometimes he was especially lonely.

Sometimes he couldn't cope with being alone.

He imagined nonexistent relatives at these moments.

For example, Uncle Tizman...

- My name is Tristan! Not Tizman! You are little... ungrateful...

Then he tried to talk to the fictional mother.

The fictional mother of James XI usually answered as follows:

- I have overcome all forms of related models of intersubjective relationships.

You and I are just two beings in a deterministic world of suffering. We don't know what self-care is. We do not know with whom to share the care of ourselves. Not knowing who I am is my political position. Not trying to find out who I am is my ethical position.

...

Lonely James XI found something in the mud.

A dirty handkerchief.

He let out a triumphant yell.

He lifted his find up over his head.

As far as the length of his arms was enough.

Suddenly, all the inhabitants of the swamp and the Heavenly Deer noticed this gesture, but immediately they turned away in disgust.

The handkerchief was dirty, smelly and full of holes.

It's not worth their attention.

"I'm not worth their attention"

Said the handkerchief to James XI.

"It's not worth their attention"

Said the first hand of James XI

"It's not worth their attention"

James' second hand said.

"It's not worth their attention"

Said James' third hand.

"It's not worth their attention"

Said the first leg of James XI.

"It's not worth their attention"

Said the second leg of James XI.

"Your legs are deceiving you"

Said the third leg of James XI.

"You have no legs,"

Said James' fourth leg.

"You only have two legs,"

Said James' tail.

...

James XI spread a handkerchief on the swampy ground.  
Then he lay down on the handkerchief.  
Then he turned into algae.  
He always turned into algae when he went to bed.

...

A royal carriage was passing by.  
In the carriage were King Thistle, Queen Begonia and Princess Asparagus.  
Queen Begonia and Princess Asparagus were swearing very loudly.  
The carriage stopped.  
Princess Asparagus screamed.  
"I curse you, Father! Now you have to marry the first person you meet. Whoever it is!  
- Serves you right!  
Queen Begonia suddenly supported Princess Asparagus.  
- Come what may!  
King Thistle replied.

...

The king opened the carriage door.  
He took a step.  
He stepped on a handkerchief.  
King Thistle got his foot into the algae.  
These were the algae that James XI turned into  
- Here's your husband!  
Princess Asparagus and Queen Begonia exclaimed.  
- Come what may!  
King Thistle replied.

...

The royal carriage went to the Royal Silver Castle very quickly.  
The king took off his royal boot, to which algae and a handkerchief stuck.  
In the pre-holiday rush, he did not have time to figure out who would become his future husband - algae or a handkerchief.  
The royal family put a boot with algae and a handkerchief on a golden pillow.  
The royal family sent messengers to the Royal Silver Castle.  
Messengers brought the news of the upcoming royal wedding to the castle.  
Messengers reached the castle and delivered the news.  
Everyone who was in the Royal Silver Castle began to prepare for the wedding ceremony.  
The cooks began to prepare sweet potato pudding and beetroot juice.  
The servants began to decorate the Royal Silver Castle with gray swamp flowers.  
A huge snow-white dragon arrived at the castle to conduct the wedding ceremony.  
An orchestra of half-human-half-icicles playing ear flutes has arrived.

...

Finally...  
The royal carriage has arrived at the castle...  
The servants closed the windows.  
Shoots of crystal oaks began to sprout through the royal pearl floor.  
The royal castle is filled with eyeless fairies.

The ceremony has begun.  
The dragon sang a song.

...

Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!  
Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!  
Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!  
Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!  
Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!  
Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!  
Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!  
Glory to the trees!  
Glory to all those gathered!

...

Then the dragon announced a boat with seaweed and a handkerchief and the king as husband and wife.  
And then the real party started!  
Dancing!  
Music!  
Jugglers!  
Druids!  
Feast!  
Fireworks!  
The pool!  
Air hockey!  
Chariot racing!  
Spiritualistic seances!  
The "Jump over the vampire" game!

...

Suddenly the algae turned back into James XI.  
James XI woke up.  
Then he fell into a huge pot of potato pudding.  
James XI mistook potato pudding for swamp mud.  
James XI dipped his hands into the potato pudding and began to rummage there.  
He's found something!  
He found a cockroach!  
James XI lifted the cockroach up over his head.  
The entire length of his crooked arms.  
He let out a howl of victory!  
No one paid attention to James XI and the cockroach.  
Soon the party was over.  
The newlyweds went on a honeymoon.  
The dragon flew to Scotland.

James XI and the cockroach ended up in a garbage and scraps bag.

...

Who's here?

Is that what I think it is?

Are you echo?

Are you my echo?

Touch me.

It's you?

I don't feel it.

I don't feel it.

I don't feel it.

Oh!

I feel it.

You're the ring.

Are you a ring?

No?

Are you a finger?

Am I a ring?

Repeat. I can't hear.

You ask, what came first, a finger or a ring?

Oh, it's easy!

Right answer...

Ah, you didn't finish...

Sorry...

I'm sorry!

Well, say it again.

Well, that's enough.

Stop being offended.

I'm sorry.

I get down on one knee and solemnly apologize.

Everything is fine?

Excellent.

Repeat your question...

What...

...appeared...

...before...

...finger...

...or a ring...

...in the world...

...where there are no limbs...

...

Looks like we're here for a long time, James!

You know, I'm already used to you.

You're a good guy, man!

10 out of 10.

...

James, do you really think there is no afterlife?

James, do you really think that life has no meaning?

James, look at me.

Why did your eyes go out?  
Who puts out your fire?  
Is this the life you wanted?  
Me?  
What about me?  
This is not my story.  
When it's over, I'll go back to my parents.  
I will start my life anew.  
I will correct all my mistakes.  
James... are you crying?  
Did I say something wrong?  
Why do your tears look like fireflies?  
Why are your tears so cold?  
And... do you miss your swamp?  
Has it ever really been yours?  
The whole world is a swamp.  
The whole universe can become your swamp.  
Oh, it's not... tears...  
And what is it?  
Lord...  
James...  
You don't care about the swamp.  
You don't care about me.  
You don't care about yourself.  
You don't care about anything...  
What do you care about?

...

James XI got angry.  
Because of anger, he increased fivefold and tore the garbage bag.  
A black frog with wings and a squirrel tail flew by.  
She grabbed James and took him to her nest.  
The nest was located on the top of the highest mountain in the world.  
There were no eggs in the nest.  
The nest was empty.  
The frog turned into an old man. He said the following:  
"It's not just a nest. It's an extension of my body. The nest is literally my back.  
You're good at finding things in mud and potato pudding. Imagine that my back  
is mud or potato pudding. You have to find something in my back. I'm going to  
bed. My daughters will be watching you.

...

Three of his daughters lived in a man's mouth.  
Hannah had one mouth.  
Jane had two mouths.  
Dorothy had three mouths.  
The man fell asleep.  
Hannah, Jane and Dorothy turned to James XI.  
- This man is not our father. We are his prisoners, just like you. He turned into a  
frog, then he stole us, then he turned us into girls.  
Hannah who had one mouth said:

"My name used to be Tom, and I had three noses. I worked as a baker.

Jane who had two mouths said:

- My name used to be Tim, and I had two noses. I worked as a stable boy.

Dorothy who has three mouths said:

- I used to be called Tham (Tham is a short form of the word Thames). I worked by the river.

James asked:

- How can I help you?

They told him the following:

"You're good at digging in the dirt." You have to find in the dirty body of this old man his dirty soul. Then you have to lift this soul up to the sun. Let the hot sun rays dry the dirt covering this pure soul. Then let the pieces of dried mud fall off by themselves. May this soul be cleansed. Let this evil person become a good person."

...

...

James set to work.

He had been rummaging through the body of an evil sleeping old man for a very long time.

For a second, it even seemed to him that there was no soul at all in the body of the evil old sleeping man.

But here... he found it.

The soul was dirty, slippery, smelly.

James lifted his soul high above his head into the sky under the sun's rays.

As far as the length of his arms was enough.

And he let out a triumphant yell.

The hot sun lit up this dirty soul.

The rays of the hot sun dried the dirt covering the soul of the evil old man.

The dirt dried completely and began to crumble.

When the dirt crumbled, there was nothing left.

It became clear to everyone that the soul of the evil old man was 100 per cent dirt.

Hannah, Jane and Dorothy began to shed tears for the old man's soul.

Their tears turned into a river.

The largest and cleanest river.

The current of the river carried James back to his swamp.

The water was cool.

The water whispered something to James, but he was not able to understand anything.

James returned to his swamp.

The inhabitants of the swamp did not even notice that James was missing.

When James returned, he immediately began to rummage in the mud again.

...

"The Origin of the swamps"

Poem.

From t"The Anthology of the Best Verlibres authored by Anonymous Banshee Witches of Post-War West Wessex" book.

...

Ahem... ahem...

...

Swamps.

Swamps.

Swamps.

Repeat?

Swamps.

Swamps.

Swamps.

Would you like to do it again?

Swamps.

Swamps.

Swamps.

A swamp is a union of water and earth.

The swamp is the consequence of endless rain.

The swamp is.

Unfortunately, there are only two definitions for the word swamp in the dictionary of metaphorical definitions.

Swamps.

Swamps.

Swamps.

...

Swamp.

Swamp.

Swamp.

...

Peek-a-boo!

The swamp water began to boil

The swamp water hissed.

The swamp water turned yellow.

The swamp water became fire.

Strange incredible creatures came out of the swamp water.

Remember when I told you about the drowned Romans and Vikings?

Well...

The ancient Romans and the ancient Vikings did not waste time in vain all these long centuries.

The ancient Romans interbred with the ancient Vikings and became known as the "ancient Romkings".

They, ancient or old, came out of the swamp waters.

They came out to fulfill an ancient prophecy.

Arrange a world catastrophe!

This catastrophe had to consist of two components.

The first component is the Old Norse end of the world - Ragnarok.

Whoooo!

The second component is the ancient Roman end of the world...

The ancient Roman end of the world... is...

This...

How would...

Friends, do any of you know anything or have heard about the eschatological ideas of the ancient Romans?

How did they imagine the end of the world?  
Does anyone have any ideas?  
You all failed the Roman mythology exam!  
Please accept my congratulations.

*[If anyone knows anything and answers...*

*Thanks!*

*It is very interesting.*

*But we should follow the script.*

*You don't know anything about ancient Roman eschatology according to the script. That's why you all failed the Roman mythology exam!]*

I also failed the Roman mythology exam!

And the ancient Romans also failed the exam on ancient Roman mythology!

So...

Ancient Romkings got out of the swamp water and staged

the global

literally

natural

UPHEAVAL of the WORLD!

...

*[Long creak]*

The sky and the swamp swapped places.

The top and bottom have swapped places.

Everything turned upside down.

And the Ancient Romkings saw that it was good.

And they went back to the swamp waters... to read books on ancient Roman mythology.

...

The Heavenly Deer were the first to sense something was amiss.

They've become as small as bed bugs because of the great upheaval.

They were constantly itching and wanted sugar.

They were getting smaller and smaller.

...

Giants with rat-like features hid in caves and became insanely afraid of everything.

They literally turned into fear.

...

Flying women in white dresses stopped flying.

Their skin gradually turned into scales.

From now on they were busy for days only with the production of skin mucus.

...

Transparent dwarfs were overgrown with orange moss and lost the power of speech.

...

Two-headed mermaids lost their memory and began to behave like ordinary fish.

...

Juggling toads have forgotten how to juggle.  
They began to slowly and sadly turn into frightening centipedes.

...

All-all-all the inhabitants of the swamp have changed.  
Previously, the inhabitants of the swamp were carefree.  
They used to look at the sky.  
They used to sing songs.  
They used to think about the beautiful.  
They used to talk to the Heavenly Deer.  
And so on...

But everything has changed.  
The past cannot be brought back.  
Dark time.  
A dark era for the swamp.  
The end of a beautiful time.  
The end of illusions.  
Everything can't be good forever.

Blah.  
Blah.  
Blah.

...

Blah.

...

And what about our hero?  
How did our James XI survive the great upheaval?  
He didn't notice anything.  
He continued rummaging as before.  
He used to dig in the dirty mud of the swamp.  
Now he was rummaging through the heavenly crumb.

...

Awww  
Whoooooo  
Aaaaaa  
Boooooo  
Koo-koo  
Cuckoo  
Whoooooo  
Whoooooo  
Uiiiiiii  
Whoooooo  
Babooooo  
Shhh

...

A small goat was hiding in the paws of a huge white swan with a sword in its beak.

...

James XI was rummaging through the heavenly crumb.  
Instead of the usual dirty stones, snails, coins and rags, his hands found stars and rainbows, destinies and images, the unprecedented and the super-

unprecedented.

He rejoiced at every thing he found.

And invariably he lifted every find into the sky above his head.

As much as the length of his arms allowed him.

And he let out a triumphant yell...

Only this time the whole other world rejoiced with him.

Another world that was hidden behind an ordinary sky.

And this world was like a whole group of creatures:

A huge white swan with a sword in its beak.

On it was a huge white parrot with human arms instead of wings.

On it was a huge man with the head of an elk and hooves instead of hands.

On his shoulders lay a huge white fur seal.

On it, leaning on only one toe, stood a snow-white luminous figure of a man.

This figure was larger than all these creatures combined.

And its index finger was pointing at something that was literally bigger than anything.

And they all rejoiced at James' findings.

And James was glad of their joy

It seemed that James was getting lighter, cleaner and bigger.

Then James turned into milk.

Then the milk turned into a bed.

Then the bed turned into the wind.

Then the wind blew away the dry leaves.

The sky turned a soft pink color.

James has grown wings for himself.

James has grown wings for himself.

Wings.

But they were invisible wings.

Real.

Non-metaphorical.

But invisible.

...

You were me once, James.

But you forgot everything.

You forget everything every time.

Time after time.

Time after time.

Let only turquoise stones surround you.

Blue bonfires.

Steaming cups.

Cold drops.

Vibration.

Vibrations.

How many limbs do I have?

How many limbs did I have?

How many limbs will I have?

Sand in a bottle.

Bottle in the bag.

Water on the feet.

I wash this water off with sand from a bottle.  
Bald head.  
Bald head.  
I do not know what to do if I relate myself to others.  
I do not know what to do if I do not relate myself to others.  
I have no proof that I am human. I only have a human body.  
But I have no proof that I am human.  
I see a fly, James.  
I'm looking at a huge world, but my eyes only see a fly.  
The world is awesome.  
The fly is also awesome.  
My brother was ripped off.  
My sister stayed.  
It's a different sky.  
This is the fear of the current moment.  
Who am I?  
Where did I disappear to?  
There are fewer and fewer roads every day.  
Boundless space.  
...  
A lamb was flying in the sky.  
The lamb looked like Benbecula Airport.  
The lamb's tail looked like Merlin's staff.  
The sheep's eyes looked like yesterday's haggis.  
The lamb flew by.  
James XI should forget about this sheep.  
How to forget about a sheep?  
These are not my fingers!  
This is not my tongue!  
This is not my language!  
Lamb!  
Lamb!  
Lamb, tell me an ancient gloomy tale of a British proto-continent.

...  
The ancient monster opened its mouth.  
The ancient monster exhaled a piece of earth.  
A piece of earth levitated in huge clouds of warm dense steam.  
Two nations appeared.  
The first had mushroomed bodies.  
The second had rainbowed bodies.  
End.

...

*[Long creak]*

Obviously, the world is shaped like a wheel.  
The shape of a triangular wheel.  
The wheel rotates by itself.  
For no reason.







Am I stuck?  
Am I stuck?  
Am I stuck?  
Am I stuck?

...

*[Long creak]*

It started to rain.  
A new swamp will appear very soon.  
James XI will become James XII.  
Somewhere far away...  
On the world's highest mountain...  
Next to someone's nest...  
There was a pile of dry dirt...  
A small glowing speck was lying in this pile.  
The grain was slightly larger than an atom.