

## **For God.**

Jaffa Forbes is a part-time writer and Christian, although his writings are not specifically to do with religion.

He likes telling nice stories with good messages.

The following is such a story.

## The Three Magniloquents

Open your eyes. Let the flickering light blind you as it shines through the shutters.  
I am going to tell you a story.

I heard of this tale from a drunken conman, a rough fellow who came sadly into my bookshop one winter's day to trade a cup of tea for a conversation. To me, this sounded like a reasonable enough exchange and therefore he embarked on the strange happenings concerning The Three Magniloquents and the House of Gio. All of which I will recount for you now.

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A long time ago, in old Yugoslavia, in some long forgotten place that is now part of north Croatia, there lived during the 'Golden Age' of Western Europe, a young poor fool of a man – a peasant farmer - by the name of Androv Peckov.

You may be able to see him now; he is heading across the white barren and snow-laden lands towards his cousin's house some 10 leagues away from his own wooden cottage. The snow is thick and relentless, and as he walks the trodden path he pulls his thick white scarf closer to his neck.

Notice how his face is sad and twisted bitter, and he walks with a weary gait whilst singing a slow and sad song that makes the trees turn bare and begs the wind to cry out. The song he sang was in the sad, soothing local style of *medimurje*, and went like this:

*Sara, Oh Sara,  
I drew you a tree,  
And painted it white  
So all you could see  
Was not the picture  
Or painting or  
Anything real,  
But Sara, Oh Sara,  
Look lovely at me...  
Look lovely at me.*

With these solemn and sighing words and other such lyrics, Androv sung of the sad tale of his beautiful Sara, who had so bluntly refused his piteous attempts to court her in his yokel type manner.

Thus that deep affliction - the tricky melancholy of love - had stung him! And very soon the sagging sadness was so deep that he could do nothing but stand still in the pale, snow

surroundings considering whether or not it would be simpler to end his life at that very moment.

It is fortunate that this moment of ridiculous nonsense was snapped in half by a sudden jovial sound of singing. Singing! A merry and throaty tune that was accompanied by what seemed to be the conjunction of a type of guitar and a type of flute or fife.

And, as Androv looked back over the hill he had just trudged through, there came one-by-one the appearance of the strangest procession he had ever seen.

The first man appeared to be the singer of joyous tune, and he sang it loud and clear and strong in a harmonious rustic tenor tone. As he sang he swayed side to side and waved a quite battered green cap in his hands, making extravagant motions to convey the laughable song he was singing.

He was middle-aged, but rugged and had a certain handsome look about him. Certainly, Androv assumed him to be a proud man. Of all the three only he rode a horse, a great, sleekly brown stallion that, as if intoxicated by his owners charm, swayed side to side with the man at a slow plodding pace.

The song the tenor was singing was another traditional folk one of the area – called a *gusle* – and it went like this:

*Veni! Vidi! Vici!*  
*I came and I saw and*  
*I Conquered!*  
*But you crafty,*  
*You strong,*  
*You wonder!*  
*You left me alone*  
*For a song!*  
*Veni! Vidi! Vici!*  
*I came and I loved*  
*And I left!*  
*So you Wonder,*  
*You Fame,*  
*You Gorgeous,*  
*You're here in my*  
*Mind,*  
*You're here in my*  
*Mind today!*

Behind him rode an old, withered man, on an equally old and withered mule. This man said nothing and did not even smile, but played a local type of stringed guitar used in this type of song, called a *gusla*, which strung out such beautiful notes that Androv completely forgot of Sara, or anything else.

At the back of the procession was a pale and fresh faced youth, who did not ride on any horse or mule, but strode along on his feet. He wore clothes that befitted one in a royal court of the Medieval Days and played on a wooden fife a merry and wondrous but quite haunting fugue that jokily played over the top of the tenor's deep and jolly *gusle*.

The tune and the procession got louder and closer as Androv stood stuck to the snowy floor.

Soon, they had passed him altogether without even a glance at the sad stranger on the side of the road.

As the three men made the slow and happy tracks into the distance, Androv felt the swelling joy and happiness that had filled him disappear and fade out. Soon, the chilling fingers of unrequited love and an unjust world crawled their way back onto his heart and Androv felt a great surge of desire to be near the three strange men again.

He started running to catch up with them. For a fleeting moment, he noticed a small, deep black stain that had somehow flourished on his pure white scarf. But this was a minor problem, and he would wash it out later.

Soon he was once more bathing in the light of the happy procession and its rousing tune. Approaching the pale-faced youth at the back, Androv addressed him and said:

“Sirs! Who are you? And where are you travelling to?”

The fife player opened his mouth to speak, but before he had said a word Androv was addressed boldly by the middle-aged singer at the front of the procession, who had steered his stallion abruptly around to face him.

“Where are we travelling to?!” he cried in disbelief, half-laughing at and half-berating poor Androv, “Why? Are you not from round here? Do you come from farther away than even us? Or are you deaf and blind?”

“Sir,” said Androv meekly in reply, “I do not understand you. I come but from 5 leagues away, and I am on my way to my cousins who lives another 5 leagues westerly. I cannot think where you should be travelling to in this place.”

At this all three men laughed out loud, although the old man's laugh was sinister and the fresh-faced youth's was weak and immature.

Finally, shaking his head slowly and still laughing, the tenor replied:

“Good man, we are on our way to the House of Gio! Where else?! And as for whom we are... We are the Three Magniloquents, we are the dust and the gold, we are the traders and the buyers, we are nothing and we are everything... But come man! Come with us good fellow! Come and see the wonders of the House of Gio!”

At this, Androv Peckov forgot all about his cousin, and went jovially with the Three Magniloquents on their way to the House of Gio.

The first thing Androv noticed about the House of Gio was that it was not, in actual fact, a house. Rather, the three men and he entered into a small clearing in a rather dense pine wood.

All around the clearing the signs of winter had faded away so that the snow was no longer visible and instead a warm, gentle summer breeze blew calmly in the clearing. The grass was a deep healthy green and the flowers of spring were poking out of the shrubberies, but the most amazing thing about the House of Gio was the people. They stood, a good number, singing or dancing or talking around a large warming fire in the centre of the clearing.

The Three Magniloquents had stopped their own playing and singing and had disembarked their animals (leaving them to wander freely). They also seemed to forget Androv, who stood in awe as they ran up to and started exchanging, as if to a party of old friends, greetings and news to various strong and valiant men or other diamond perfect damsels in flowing gowns.

You must remember that Androv, although from a less developed country at the time, was still a rather modern young man compared to the sight he saw now. It made him think of fairytales and dreams and wonders and of days gone by.

Just when he believed that this wonderland could get no better, Androv saw a sight that made his heart melt.

A short distance from him stood his beautiful Sara, looking incredibly more divine like than before, and in a moment she had run smiling to him and embraced him with a tender passion.

"Oh Androv!" she cried, "If only you knew... why didn't I tell you! How much my heart burns for you! Day and night I look to the stars and wish to be held in your arms!"

Androv Peckov said nothing, for the awe and splendour of his dreams coming true had struck him speechless. Instead, with his lovely Sara at his arm, he started to parade with joy around the House of Gio.

As he walked, people whom he had never seen before in his life came up to him and said such wonderful things.

"Sir!" said one handsome man, "Are you not the Great Androv Peckov?"  
"That is I," he replied.

"Good man!" cried another, "Do my eyes deceive me, or are you Peckov? The hero of our glorious citadel Dubrovnik? Who so valiantly destroyed the gargoyle that dwelled there?"  
"Yes," he replied, "I am. Yes, I am."

“Gracious sir!” said a fair-headed maiden, “Is it Androv Peckov? The greatest writer in all of Europe? Whose words fill the land with beauty and serenity?”  
“I am,” he replied, “I am. I am.”

To a greater or lesser extent, the poor fool of Androv Peckov went on believing what all these men and women claimed him to be, until in a blink of an eye they were all gone.

Everything vanished; all the compliments, all the beautiful maidens, all the handsome knights, all the dreams, all of Sara, all the happiness and lastly all of The Three Magniloquents.  
It had all gone.

And yet, when Androv looked around at the emptiness, he was sure that the House of Gio had not been a dream or figment of the mind... for was he not in a clearing of a pine wood? And was that not the scorched earth of a recent fire?  
But instead of lush grass there was just the constant, chilling snow, and instead of joy there was a deep sense of loss.

A depression clung to Androv, but thankfully - if one could be thankful - his vast sadness was overtaken by a rising sense of puzzlement and curiosity. Not only at what had happened, but also at the black stain on his scarf, that had now grown to quite a considerable size.

Consumed by these thoughts, Androv Peckov made his way to his cousin's and said no more about his strange adventure.

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Some weeks later Androv Peckov was back at his small wooden cottage. He was, for the hundredth time, attempting to remove the black stain from his favourite white scarf. Although he had washed the material several times, the stain was no smaller or bigger than what it had been at the end of his escapade some weeks before.

It is of interest to the reader that during this period of reality, Androv sought little comfort from real things. He drowned himself in writing about what he had seen and refused to see anybody. The only person whom he would allow in would have been his beloved Sara, but the fact that she did not come proved to Androv above all that the House of Gio had been a dream; although admitting this fact caused an even deeper melancholy.

Just as he was thinking this very thought, Androv Peckov heard in the distance a song that made his heart leap dramatically in excitement.  
Why, it was the roaring sound of the tenor, and the delicate sound of the *gusla*, and the beautiful rolling fugue of the fife! Surely this must be The Three Magniloquents again!

In an uproar, Androv Peckov dropped the scarf that was in his hands and ran till his heart ached, towards the sound of the music. Sure enough, there was the strange procession once more, and the feeling of joy swelled up inside him again.

“Sirs!” he cried, the joy mixing with confusion and anger, “Why did you leave me so suddenly? Why, for one moment I was in ecstasy, and the next plunged into misery? Are we not companions?”

Once more, the fresh-faced youth made to respond, but he was cut in this time by the wizened, prune-faced old man on the mule.

“Fool!” he spat, “Why do you complain? Are we brothers that the secrets we possess should be yours also? Are we your servants that we should obey you? Even if, as you so want to believe, we are companions, does this mean we should divulge our innermost selves?”

“Enough!” cried the middle aged tenor laughing, “My good friend here on the mule is quite right, Sir Androv Peckov, and yet I see how you yearn for the wonders of the House of Gio... Here! Take this!”

He flourished a silken scarf from under his coat and presented it royally to Androv. “This, my friend, is the map, the key and the window to the House of Gio. As long as you have it, the House of Gio will always welcome you.”

At this the three men turned suddenly as if one, and proceeded to move away from the direction they had been coming. For, if reader, you are still awake, you will observe that The Three Magniloquents had no longer the key to the House of Gio.

Oh how easy! How wonderful! How blissful that Androv Peckov now had in the grasp of his hand the opportunity to fulfil his desires!

And sure enough, as long as Androv went with the silken material in his hand, the House of Gio always welcomed him. The beautiful dream Sara was always there, and so were all the wishes of Androv’s heart.

At first, he concluded to go to the House but once a week, but this was not enough. So he resolved to go every day, but this too was not enough. The House of Gio consumed him, infected him and grew like a secret, painless disease slowly taking over. Soon, he was going two times a day and spent hardly any time in the real world, for the dream one was by far superior in every way.

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It so came to pass, dear reader, that one day the real Sara (who was quite plain in honesty) came to the house of Androv Peckov in order to talk and reconcile with him.

She had missed his affections and realised that despite his foolishness, Peckov was a kind man at heart.

But alas, upon knocking on the door there was no answer. She returned the day after, but Peckov was not there then either. Eventually, Sara went to find Peckov's cousin and together they charged through the door of Androv's wooden house to find it empty and deserted, long abandoned for the riches of dreams and wonders in the House of Gio.

Needless to say, no sign of Androv Peckov was ever seen again. All that remained of him was his meek little wooden house, an array of rotting food in the larders, and a black scarf that had once been white.

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As to what happened to The Three Magniloquents? Well, the story of Androv Peckov is said to be only a single piece of a much larger jigsaw, and certainly only a chapter in a far larger book that told of who these strange people were, who they worked for, and how they met their end.

For us though, the lesson is this: Do not dwell in fantasy so much that you lose sight of how insignificant you really are. But instead, accept with a grateful heart whoever you might be, and let this thankfulness spill out into real action.

Go out into the world and do something amazing! Go and face a fear! Go and take part in a random act of kindness! Go and make up with that friend you've been arguing with! Go and tell somebody you love them. Go and please, I beg you, do something worthy of reality.

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With this, the poor fool of a tramp left my book shop and left behind a distinct smell of sewage. Despite this, I have reached the conclusion that perhaps the man who walked into my shop that day was no fool; but the wisest man on earth at least.