



**ROYAL  
DE LUXE** NANTES

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### **Legend of the young archaeologist**

Once you have borne witness to the strange adventure I had several years ago, I think that few of you will give my confession much credit, and for this reason I would rather mask my identity.

Let it simply be known that I am a great archaeologist, on secondment to the History of Sciences and Technology department of one of the world's leading universities, to explore harebrained phenomena.

I was with my secretary, who is more beautiful than a field of poppies growing on a camel's back, and (god forgive me) whose round and flexible anatomical shape I admired.

We had been marvelling, in innocent intimacy, at a heap of ancient statues that had been lined up in the warehouse.

My mind was surprised by a Celtic cross made of stone set down close to her.

"My dear secretary," I said "have you noticed the small anomaly in the centre of that piece of granite?"

"Oh yes doctor, there's a kind of hole in it that was not there last week."

As I put my finger in the centre I jumped up immediately, for at that precise moment I felt pressure on it that rendered me incapable of removing it.

My finger was stuck!

"My dear secretary," I said in a panic, yet with all the composure I could muster, "It seems to me that this stone has swallowed up my finger and is sucking it in."

No sooner had I uttered these words than suddenly, my entire hand had been submerged.

"Wait doctor, I'm going to help you"

As she leant in towards me, she gripped my hand with both of hers in an attempt to remove it.

With that move, despite being terribly worried, I felt the caress of her hair on my face and the intoxicating smell of her perfume; leaning forward a little, I was also able to catch a harmless glimpse of the hollow of her corsage, where two little balloons floated around to the rhythm of her movements.

My mind was torn, mangled and lost by extreme, contradictory emotions.

It was at this point that she let out a scream.

“Doctor, both of my hands have also been swallowed up in the cross!”

I will spare you some of the details at this point. Suffice it to say, we were both pressed up against one another and completely swallowed up by the stone, all except her stiletto heels that fell to the ground of the warehouse.

A few seconds later, breathless from all the adventure, we found ourselves on the ground on the other side of the statue, but the warehouse had disappeared!

The wind was blowing around us and we found ourselves on the centre of an Irish mountain.

A dozen horsemen appeared, their horses galloping, from all over.

“Dear secretary,” I said, my mind disorientated, “I do believe we have just travelled through time.”

Her messy hair seemed to me more beautiful than transparent jellyfish dancing at the bottom of the sea.

“Oh my dear doctor, my heart is racing, like it does when I find myself in front of the beauty products in my local supermarket...”

However, the horsemen had already begun to surround us and were eyeing us in an unsettling way.

One of them spoke in an indecipherable language that seemed to me short and precise.

My amazement was at its peak when my secretary answered him in the same tone.

“Dear doctor” she said, the torn strips of her clothing revealing, here and there, patches of naked flesh, “It’s Gaelic that dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century before Jesus Christ.”

I was dumbstruck by the extent of her linguistic knowledge.

Hundreds of people started to emerge from all over, came towards us and settled down on the ground in a large circle.

Then, an old man appeared wearing a simple tunic down to his feet.

He seemed very important, for the crowd stood to allow his approach and the knights dismounted.

He wore a small bag over his shoulder,

from which he produced a kind of seed the size of a horse dropping.

He spoke for a long time and this is what my secretary translated for me:

“Strangers, you are gods come from elsewhere.

But if your goal is to conquer our island, show us the strength of your powers!”

Having said this, he extended his left thumb skywards:

and the fog suddenly descended onto the plain.

Then he brandished his right thumb and belched dirtily three times in our direction.

Then he spat and farted so loudly and for such a long time that we could hear the thunder shaking the sky.

This being done, he spoke again:

“Your turn!”

My dear secretary and I were stunned.

All of a sudden, she noticed a harp in the arms of a young man.

She stood up, proud as a herd of does jumping from a cliff into the sea, her hair a shimmering waterfall, pointed the index finger of her left hand and said:

“Could I have that?”

The old man nodded.

Holding the harp in her arms, she started to play an old Irish tune.

The infinite purity of her voice filled the crowd with emotion.

The old magician was petrified: the hidden face of his island rang in his ears, and as these hundreds of people settled down again on the stones, charmed by this miracle, I murmured into her ear:

“My dear secretary, I did not know you had this gift! I am amazed, you know that?”

The old man shot me a look, demanding silence.

Then she stopped, pointed the index finger on her right hand and started singing an Irish rock and roll song and dancing like an eel wriggling out of the moon.

At this point, all of the Gaels were gripped by a hallucinatory enthusiasm. They laughed and touched their arms or shoulders and when it ended, silence stretched over the mountain ridges.

The old man, admitting defeat, threw the seed of horse dropping on the ground close to the cross. All of a sudden, a huge tree with no leaves appeared in slow motion. Its trunk and branches were completely white and covered with black stripes as beautiful as a zebra's coat.

This sumptuous vision was stunning to the whole assembly and out of respect, they retreated.

It was like a solitary dream of a fog lost and placed on the sea.

Then, some women placed fabrics at the foot of the tree, like a carpet. Feeling very honoured, we sat on them in the fog, with the crowd surrounding us, their eyes more curious than those of an old Viking in front of a mobile phone.

A bolt of lightning pierced us and we found ourselves back in the warehouse facing the cross. We were breathless, our clothes were torn and our minds disconnected.

My dear secretary said to me:

“And now, dear doctor, how about we go for a pint of Guinness!”

However, behind the cross, the old man with his bag over his shoulder had followed us.

He left the warehouse on tiptoes and disappeared into the city.

**© Jean-Luc Courcoult, author/ director of the street theatre company Royal de Luxe**