

The moon rose over the ocean, and the ocean rose over the fields of wheat and barley, which was not unusual for this time of year, as Sashinta and Bartholomew made their way to the fields of wheat and barley, walking as if walking was the only thing left to do.

Sashinta turned to Bartholomew—who was a big man, the biggest man you have ever seen—and tears were streaming down her own big face as she said, “Oh Mr. Bartholomew, is there nothing you can say or do to help me in my time of morosity or is it already decided?”

Bartholomew looked up at the rising moon now, though later he would remember it differently, and he sighed and began to hum. “Hmm, hmm, hmm,” he began, or maybe he had already been humming before that. “Hmm, Hmm, Hmm,” he continued. Behind the pair, darkness chased their footfalls, which is to say it followed them closely, but the brightness of Bartholomew's humming began to keep the dark at bay, at least for a time.

Sashinta dropped to the ground, and with each tear a tiny plume of dust rose, delivering much-needed water to the grounds of [name of place they live]—a place that had once been green and would be again, or so they hoped. Sashinta did not know it, but her tears planted seeds that generations would sow for ages, although no one would write that part down properly. Still, she resisted the Everglog, because she wanted to live, goddamitt, but she was being sent to the enchanted—or forbidden—woods, or whatever they were calling it now, as a kind of sacrifice for her family and perhaps everyone else. It simply was not fair, she thought, and she was correct.

“This simply isn’t fair!” She said, stomping the ground. If she was to be sent to an unknown fate, then she was going to go out the way she came in—screaming and crying like a little baby. “Come on Bartholomew, you know this is true. Why must we accept our fate like two little mice being told what to do by some enchanted fairy grandmother? Why? Because dreams do come true? Bologna. Bologna, Oscar Mayer brand.”

Where the hell is Bolonga? Bartholomew thought, or had thought, unsure whether the word had weight in prophecy or if it was just food.

He marched on one foot then another, which is how marching works. “Hmm, hmm, hmm,” he hummed, and now the humming seemed older than him, older than the moon, and older even than the fields they were no longer standing in.

“Blast it!” Sashinta shouted “What are you humming anyway?”

And that was when Bartholomew opened his mouth and sang the ancient song of the Everglog, the one that only the chorus of one hundred angles—or was it one thousand?—was supposed to be able to sing, and he sang it without hesitation: “If you like piña coladas,” he began, “getting stuck in the sleet.”

Sashinta stared in shock, rooted where she would later claim she had always been standing. If this was true, if Bartholomew was really singing now, it meant that she should be able to deliver the next line herself, as many before her had, though not always with the same words. “If you’re not into bendin’ and stretchin’,” she said, “and you have at least fifty-one percent of your prefrontal cortex.”

Bartholomew stretched out his hand and the two of them joined voices, singing aloud the words of the Everglog as it was remembered this time, raining the true light of meaning down upon the land of Jemineta—or whatever it was more formally called—“if you like cuddlin’ at noon, on the couch in the living room,” which no one had ever managed to explain satisfactorily.

Ahead of the pair, a bright and shining light shone, and as they neared it, they watched it grow larger and more insistent. The portal, they both exclaimed, though neither of them remembers saying it. “Then I’m the one that you searched for,” the song continued, “write to me and let us vanish”

What the two failed to heed was the message of the song, which had been lost and found and lost again: for millennia, centuries, decades and years the song had been passed down from its original form, changed slightly each time by memory, desire, and need. The song, which was originally about escape from duty, had somehow become a guide into duty itself.

That was the irony of it.